
Strategies of Islamic Religious Education Teachers in Strengthening Students' Religious Character through Virtual Reality Technology

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the strategies of Islamic Religious Education teachers in strengthening students' religious character through immersive learning based on Virtual Reality. The study is motivated by the challenges of the degradation of students' religious character in the digital era and the need for more contextual, interactive, and emotionally engaging learning innovations. The research employed a descriptive qualitative method with a field research approach. The study was conducted in a school environment that implements digital technology in the Islamic Religious Education learning process. The research subjects consisted of Islamic Religious Education teachers and students involved in Virtual Reality-based learning. Data collection techniques included observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. The data were analyzed using an interactive model consisting of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The findings revealed that the use of Virtual Reality supports teachers' strategies in instilling religious values through more immersive, contextual, and reflective learning experiences. The strategies implemented included simulations of worship practices, visualization of Islamic history, experience-based learning, and the strengthening of students' spiritual reflection. Immersive learning based on Virtual Reality also increased students' enthusiasm, empathy, spiritual awareness, and active engagement in the Islamic Religious Education learning process.

Keywords: *Islamic; Religious; Education; Virtual; Reality*

A. Introduction

The development of digital technology has brought significant transformation to the field of education, including the learning process of Islamic Education (Rahma, P. A. A., & Mufidah, V. N., 2025). The integration of technology in learning is no longer limited to the use of presentation media or digital communication platforms (Shofiyuddin, A., Kholiluddin, T., & Achmad, N., 2025), but has evolved toward the utilization of immersive technologies capable of creating more interactive, contextual, and meaningful learning experiences (Puteri, A. R., Nasution, W. N., & Nasution, M. I. P., 2025). One of the rapidly developing technologies in education is Virtual Reality (Kavanagh, S. et al., 2017). This technology enables students to interact directly with virtual environments so that learning does not only occur cognitively, but also involves emotional and reflective experiences (Rojas-Sánchez et al., 2023). In the educational context, VR is considered capable of increasing student engagement, strengthening learning experiences, and providing more realistic learning simulations.

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On the other hand, the main challenge of education in the digital era is not only related to mastering knowledge and technological skills, but also strengthening students' character, particularly religious character (Safiqo, T., & Ghofur, A., 2025). The openness of digital information flows, unlimited virtual interactions, and the lack of social control in digital spaces may influence students' behavior, morality, and religious values. This condition requires Islamic Religious Education learning not only to adapt to technological developments, but also to integrate religious values into digital-based learning processes (Rosyidah, A., Annisa, D., & Bashith, A., 2025). Therefore, strengthening religious character has become an essential part of transforming PAI learning in the era of digital technology.

Religious character in learning includes various aspects, such as spiritual awareness, discipline in worship, responsibility, honesty, empathy, and social behavior aligned with Islamic values (Rozi, B., 2025). Strengthening such character cannot be sufficiently achieved through conventional learning approaches that merely focus on knowledge transfer. Students need learning experiences that provide emotional engagement and real-life experiences so that religious values can be internalized more deeply (Khoiriah, B. H., Sutarto, S., & Wanto, D., 2023). In this regard, immersive learning through VR has the potential to create more contextual and reflective religious experiences.

Several previous studies have shown that the use of digital technology in learning can increase learning motivation (Nastiti, A. G. N. et al., 2024), student engagement (Sulistiyowati, C., & Asriati, N., 2024), and learning effectiveness (Sari, A. P., & Munir, M., 2024). Other studies also explain that VR-based immersive learning can strengthen learning experiences through more realistic visual simulations and virtual interactions. However, most studies still focus on cognitive aspects and the development of students' technical skills (Firmansyah, A. F., & Nurharini, A., 2025). Research specifically discussing the utilization of VR in learning to strengthen students' religious character remains relatively limited. In addition, studies highlighting the strategies of PAI teachers in integrating immersive technology into religious character education are still scarce.

In this context, teachers have a strategic role as facilitators, mentors, and role models in the use of digital technology oriented toward character building. Teachers are not only responsible for delivering religious materials, but also for designing learning experiences that can instill religious values through innovative pedagogical approaches. Teachers' strategies in utilizing VR-based immersive learning become an important factor in creating learning that is adaptive, interactive, and oriented toward strengthening students' religious character. Thus, VR technology functions not only as a learning medium, but also as a space for internalizing values and spiritual experiences among students.

Based on the explanation above, a deeper study is needed regarding the strategies of teachers in strengthening students' religious character through Virtual Reality-based learning. This study aims to analyze the strategies of Islamic Religious Education teachers in implementing VR-based immersive learning, identify forms of religious character strengthening developed through immersive technology, and formulate a conceptualization of learning that is adaptive to the development of digital technology and oriented toward strengthening students' religious character.

B. Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach using a field research design to analyze the strategies of Islamic Religious Education teachers in strengthening students' religious character through Virtual Reality-based immersive learning (Moleong, L. J., 2020). The study focuses on understanding the implementation of immersive learning in classrooms, particularly how teachers

integrate Virtual Reality technology into the learning process to foster students' religious values, attitudes, and behaviors.

The research was conducted in a school environment that has implemented digital learning innovation through immersive technology. The subjects of this study consisted of Islamic Religious Education teachers and students who were directly involved in Virtual Reality-based learning activities. The participants were selected purposively based on their involvement and experiences in the implementation of immersive learning in instruction.

Data were collected through classroom observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation studies (Jailani, M. S., 2023). Observations were conducted to examine the learning process, teacher-student interactions, and the implementation of Virtual Reality media in strengthening students' religious character. Interviews were carried out with teachers and students to explore their experiences, perceptions, and responses toward immersive learning activities. Meanwhile, documentation studies included learning modules, teaching materials, photographs, and other supporting documents related to the implementation of Virtual Reality-based learning.

The data analysis technique employed in this study was qualitative data analysis using the interactive model of Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman, which consisted of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldana, J., 2014). To ensure the validity of the data, the study applied source triangulation and technique triangulation by comparing findings obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation. Through this approach, the study aims to formulate a comprehensive understanding of teachers' strategies in utilizing Virtual Reality-based immersive learning to strengthen students' religious character in Islamic Religious Education.

C. Result and Discussion

1. Implementation of Virtual Reality-Based Immersive Learning in Islamic Education Learning

The research findings indicate that the use of Virtual Reality in Islamic Education learning provides students with a more interactive, contextual, and emotional learning experience. The implementation of immersive learning-based instruction was carried out through virtual simulations that enabled students to engage directly in religious learning situations. Islamic Education teachers utilized VR media to present visual and auditory experiences resembling real-life conditions, such as simulations of Hajj rituals, virtual mosque tours, and visualizations of the history of Islamic civilization (Tolibiin, M. S., & Ali, M. M., 2025).

Based on the observation results, students demonstrated higher levels of attention and engagement compared to conventional learning methods. The use of immersive technology encouraged students to participate more actively in the learning process because they not only received the material verbally but also experienced learning directly through virtual simulations (Baxter, G., & Hainey, T., 2024). This condition created experiential learning that helped students understand religious values more deeply.

The interview results with Islamic Education teachers revealed that the use of VR helped explain abstract materials in a more concrete and understandable manner for students. Teachers also stated that immersive learning was able to increase learning motivation because students perceived the lessons as more interesting and less monotonous. In addition, VR technology provided opportunities for teachers to integrate religious values into digital learning activities more adaptively in accordance with the characteristics of the digital generation.

These findings are consistent with David Kolb's experiential learning theory, which emphasizes that direct experience can strengthen understanding and the internalization of values in the learning process (Hamid, N., 2024). In the context of Islamic Education, immersive virtual experiences can help students build emotional connections with religious materials, thereby making the process of developing religious character more effective.

2. Islamic Education Teachers' Strategies in Strengthening Students' Religious Character

The study found that Islamic Education teachers implemented several main strategies in strengthening students' religious character through VR-based immersive learning. The first strategy was reflective learning. Teachers encouraged students to reflect after participating in virtual simulations in order to connect their digital experiences with Islamic values in daily life. This reflective process helped students understand the spiritual meaning of the material being learned (Savithri, Y., 2025).

The second strategy was simulation-based learning. Teachers utilized virtual simulations to provide religious experiences that were difficult to conduct directly in the classroom. For example, the simulation of Hajj rituals provided students with visual experiences regarding worship procedures, the environment of Masjid al-Haram, and the spiritual values embedded in the pilgrimage. Through these simulations, students not only understood the cognitive aspects but also gained emotional experiences that strengthened their religious awareness (Rohmah, A. N. B., 2022).

The third strategy was the habituation of religious values. Teachers encouraged students to practice religious values after the immersive learning process, such as discipline in worship, empathy, responsibility, and respect for others. In this context, VR was not merely used as a digital entertainment medium but was directed as a tool for value internalization and character formation (Lutfia, A., 2025).

In addition, teachers acted as facilitators and mediators in the use of digital technology. Teachers were not only responsible for operating VR devices but also guided students to use technology ethically and responsibly. This role demonstrates that the success of immersive learning is determined not only by technological sophistication but also by teachers' pedagogical strategies in managing value-based learning (Izzuddin, M. I., & Istanto, I., 2025).

These findings reinforce Thomas Lickona's perspective that character education requires the integration of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action (Mainuddin, M., Tobroni, T., & Nurhakim, M., 2023). VR-based learning enables these three aspects to develop simultaneously through more concrete and emotional learning experiences.

3. The Impact of Immersive Learning on Students' Religious Character

The research findings indicate that VR-based immersive learning has a positive impact on strengthening students' religious character. After participating in VR-based learning activities, students demonstrated improvements in several aspects of religious character, such as discipline in worship, social empathy, responsibility, and spiritual awareness.

Based on the interview results, students found it easier to understand religious values when they were able to observe and experience learning simulations directly (Papakostas, C., 2026). The visual and interactive experiences helped students become more focused and made the learning materials easier to remember. In addition, students admitted that they were more interested in

participating in Islamic Education classes because the learning process felt more modern and aligned with the development of digital technology.

The observation results also revealed that immersive learning increased active interaction between teachers and students. The discussion sessions conducted after virtual simulations encouraged students to express their opinions, experiences, and reflections regarding the religious values they had learned. This condition indicates that immersive learning not only enhances learning engagement but also strengthens the process of value internalization through more participatory communication.

These findings are consistent with previous studies stating that immersive technology can enhance engagement and emotional connection in the learning process (Readi, A., 2023). However, this study offers a new contribution by positioning VR not only as a cognitive learning medium but also as a medium for strengthening religious character within the context of Islamic Education.

4. Challenges in the Implementation of Virtual Reality in Islamic Education Learning

Although it provides various benefits, the implementation of VR-based immersive learning still faces several challenges. The research findings indicate that limited technological facilities are the main obstacle in applying immersive learning in schools (Saputra, A., 2020). Not all schools possess adequate VR equipment because the cost of procuring such technology is relatively high.

In addition, teachers' digital competence has become another significant challenge. Some Islamic Education teachers still experience difficulties in operating VR devices and integrating the technology into effective learning strategies. This condition highlights the need for training and digital competency development for teachers so that the utilization of immersive technology can be implemented optimally.

Another challenge is the limited availability of VR content based on Islamic Education. Most VR applications are still oriented toward general learning and do not yet provide sufficient materials that meet the needs of Islamic Education learning and the strengthening of religious character. Therefore, it is necessary to develop VR media that are more contextual, educational, and aligned with Islamic values.

Nevertheless, the research findings demonstrate that the use of VR in Islamic Education learning has significant potential to support the transformation of Islamic education in the digital era. With adequate facilities, media development, and the improvement of teachers' competencies, VR-based immersive learning can become an effective pedagogical innovation in strengthening students' religious character.

D. Conclusion and Recommendations/Implications

Conclusion

This study concludes that Virtual Reality (VR)-based immersive learning significantly enhances the quality of Islamic Education by creating interactive and experiential learning environments that strengthen students' understanding of Islamic values and religious character. Through virtual simulations such as Hajj rituals, mosque tours, and Islamic civilization explorations, students become more engaged, motivated, and emotionally connected to the learning process. The findings indicate that immersive learning supports the internalization of religious values, including discipline, responsibility, empathy, and spiritual awareness. Its effectiveness is influenced not only by technological innovation but also by teachers' pedagogical competence in integrating Islamic values into digital learning. Consistent with Kolb's experiential learning theory and Lickona's

character education theory, VR-based learning facilitates cognitive, affective, and behavioral development simultaneously. Although challenges remain, particularly in terms of technological facilities, teacher digital competence, and the availability of VR content, immersive learning demonstrates strong potential as an innovative approach to transforming Islamic Education in the digital era.

Recommendations/Implications

This study contributes to the development of Islamic Education theory by integrating immersive learning and experiential learning approaches into religious character education. The findings strengthen the perspective that technology-based learning can support not only cognitive achievement but also the internalization of moral and spiritual values. In addition, this study expands the application of experiential learning theory and character education theory within the context of digital Islamic Education.

Future studies are recommended to explore the long-term impact of VR-based immersive learning on students' religious behavior and moral development. Further research may also examine the effectiveness of immersive learning across different educational levels and Islamic educational institutions. In addition, future researchers may investigate the integration of other emerging technologies, such as Artificial Intelligence and Augmented Reality, in strengthening Islamic character education.

This study has several limitations. First, the research was conducted within a limited educational setting, so the findings cannot be generalized broadly to all Islamic educational institutions. Second, the availability of VR facilities and learning content was still limited during the implementation process. Third, this study focused primarily on teachers' and students' perceptions regarding immersive learning, without measuring long-term behavioral changes quantitatively. Therefore, broader and more comprehensive studies are needed to deepen understanding regarding the effectiveness of immersive learning in Islamic Education.

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