

Transforming Akhlak Learning Management in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah through Digital Pedagogy and Student-Centered Approaches

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ABSTRACT

The rapid growth of digital technology has changed the way children learn, interact, and develop moral understanding, creating new challenges for akhlak education in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. Conventional lecture-based approaches are often considered less effective in responding to students' digital experiences and contemporary social realities. Therefore, this study examines the transformation of akhlak learning management through digital pedagogy and student-centered approaches at MI Miftahul Ulum Jember. The study aims to explore how planning, implementation, supervision, and evaluation of akhlak learning are redesigned to make moral education more relevant, engaging, and effective in the digital era. This research employed a qualitative approach with a case study design. The study was conducted at MI Miftahul Ulum Jember, with the principal, vice principal for curriculum, and teachers serving as key informants selected purposively. Data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. The data were analyzed continuously through three stages: data reduction, data display, and data verification. To strengthen interpretation, the study applied content analysis, discourse analysis, and interpretative analysis. The findings reveal that the transformation of akhlak learning management was carried out through three major dimensions: digitalized planning, participatory implementation, and behavior-based evaluation. School leadership played an important role in providing policy direction, supervision, and teacher support. Teachers integrated videos, interactive quizzes, group discussions, reflection activities, and character projects into classroom practice. Observation results showed high student engagement, stronger collaboration, and consistent reinforcement of akhlak values through school culture. Documentation confirmed that moral objectives, digital strategies, and behavioral assessment indicators had been formally embedded into curriculum documents and school programs. The study concludes that effective transformation of akhlak learning management requires synergy among leadership, curriculum systems, teacher competence, and meaningful use of technology to sustain Islamic moral education in contemporary primary schools.

Keywords: Akhlak Learning Management, Madrasah Ibtidaiyah, Digital Pedagogy, and Student-Centered Approaches

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of digital technology has transformed how children learn, communicate, and construct moral understanding, creating new challenges for Islamic elementary education (Mustamiin, 2025). The development of digital technology has transformed the landscape of interaction and information consumption, including among school-age children. TikTok, with its short 15- to 60-second video format and personalized algorithm, has become a global phenomenon with very high user penetration, including in Indonesia (Maghdhuroh, 2026). Students in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah are increasingly exposed to social media, online games, and algorithm-driven content that often shapes attitudes more strongly than classroom instruction. While digital access offers opportunities for creativity and knowledge acquisition, it also raises concerns regarding cyberbullying, consumerism, disrespectful language, and weakened interpersonal empathy among young learners. In many schools, akhlak education is still managed through conventional lecture-based methods that emphasize memorization of moral concepts rather than internalization through meaningful practice. This gap between students' digital realities and traditional pedagogical management makes moral learning less relevant and less effective. Therefore, transforming akhlak learning management has become an urgent

educational agenda. Integrating digital pedagogy with student-centered approaches is crucial to ensure that moral education remains responsive, engaging, and capable of nurturing ethical behavior in contemporary Muslim children within rapidly changing societies today globally.

Previous studies have widely discussed character education, Islamic values transmission, and the role of teachers in cultivating akhlak among elementary students (Dharin, 2025). Several scholars have examined the effectiveness of habituation programs, storytelling, exemplary teacher behavior, and school culture in strengthening students morality (Widat & Wulandari, 2023). Other studies have explored digital learning in Islamic schools, mainly focusing on academic achievement, media utilization, or online learning experiences during the pandemic (Minarti, et.al, 2023). Research on student-centered learning has also highlighted the benefits of collaborative activities, inquiry-based tasks, and reflective learning for student engagement and autonomy (Lee & Hannafin, 2016). However, these strands of scholarship often remain fragmented. Limited attention has been given to how the management of akhlak learning itself can be systematically redesigned by combining digital pedagogy and student-centered principles in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah. Existing literature rarely addresses planning, implementation, supervision, and evaluation of moral instruction within an integrated management framework. This unresolved gap demonstrates the need for a more comprehensive study that connects educational management, digital innovation, and akhlak formation in one coherent model.

This study aims to examine how akhlak learning management in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah can be transformed through digital pedagogy and student-centered approaches. Specifically, This study describes a redesigned moral learning planning process where teachers integrate digital learning resources, interactive platforms, and student participation into curriculum objectives. Moral learning is implemented through student-centered strategies such as collaboration, reflection, problem-solving, and technology-supported project-based moral practices. Supervision and evaluation mechanisms are tailored to measure not only cognitive understanding of moral values, but also behavioral changes, empathy, responsibility, and digital ethics. This study also explores the barriers faced by teachers, including limited technological competency, institutional constraints, and resistance to pedagogical change. By focusing on these dimensions, the study aims to produce an evidence-based framework to improve the relevance and effectiveness of moral education management in contemporary Islamic elementary schools.

This study argues that effective transformation of akhlak learning management requires more than simply introducing digital tools into existing classrooms. Technology becomes meaningful only when embedded within student-centered designs that position learners as active participants in moral inquiry, reflection, and responsible action. It is hypothesized that schools adopting participatory planning, interactive implementation, continuous mentoring, and authentic assessment will achieve stronger moral internalization than schools relying solely on teacher-centered transmission. Digital media can expand opportunities for scenario-based learning, ethical discussion, peer collaboration, and home-school communication, thereby extending akhlak education beyond classroom walls. At the same time, managerial support through teacher training, leadership commitment, and clear evaluation standards is expected to determine the sustainability of innovation. The implications of this research extend to policymakers, school leaders, and teachers seeking to modernize Islamic moral education without abandoning its normative foundations. Thus, transformation is not a rejection of tradition, but a strategic renewal of its educational delivery for future generations globally.

2. METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive research type. The qualitative approach was chosen because it is in line with the research objective, which is to understand the phenomenon in depth, holistically, and contextually based on the perspective of the research subjects (Sugiyono, 2022). Descriptive research aims to describe, explain, and analyze the actual transforming Akhlak learning management, along with the obstacles and opportunities it faces (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This research focuses on the process of meaning and interpretation of the collected data, not on hypothesis testing or

statistical generalization. The research was conducted at the MI Miftahul Ulum, located in Jember. This location was chosen purposively, considering that MI Miftahul Ulum has taken the initiative transforming Akhlak learning management. The research was conducted over a period of three (3) months, covering the stages of preparation, data collection, data analysis, and report writing. Research informants were determined using purposive sampling techniques to ensure that rich and relevant data was obtained from parties who directly understood the management of marketing and delivery services (Patton, 2015). The criteria for informants were as follows:

No	Role/Category of Informant	Number of People	Reason for Selection
1	Headmaster	1	The principal was selected because of his/her role in leading policy, supervision, and decision-making related to akhlak learning management in the madrasah.
2	Teacher	2	Teachers were selected because they directly implement akhlak learning, interact with students, and provide practical insights into teaching strategies and classroom challenges.
3	Curriculum Waka	1	The vice principal for curriculum was selected because of his/her responsibility for curriculum planning, program coordination, and aligning akhlak learning with institutional goals.
Total informants		4	

The data collection process was carried out through three main techniques: observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted directly on akhlak learning activities, teacher-student interactions, school culture, and managerial practices related to planning and evaluating instruction. Through observation, the researcher obtained factual descriptions of behavior, situations, and program implementation in the field. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner with the principal, the vice principal for curriculum, and teachers in order to explore their experiences, perspectives, strategies, and challenges in managing akhlak learning. This technique allowed the development of questions according to the context of participants' responses. Meanwhile, documentation was used to examine written data such as curriculum documents, teaching schedules, lesson modules, school programs, meeting minutes, activity photos, and evaluation archives. These three techniques were applied in an integrated manner through methodological triangulation so that the data obtained would be more accurate, in-depth, and academically accountable in accordance with qualitative research requirements.

Data analysis was conducted continuously from the beginning of data collection until the completion of the study. The first stage was data reduction, namely selecting, focusing, simplifying, and organizing raw data obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation so that they aligned with the research focus. The second stage was data display, namely presenting the data in the form of narratives, matrices, tables, or thematic categories to facilitate understanding of patterns and relationships among findings. The third stage was data verification, namely drawing tentative conclusions that were continuously tested through rechecking, source triangulation, and further data exploration until valid conclusions were reached. The analytical methods employed included content analysis to examine documents, policies, and learning materials; discourse analysis to understand meanings of language, narratives, and participants perspectives; and interpretative analysis to interpret findings based on relevant social contexts and theories. Through these stages and methods, the study is

expected to produce credible, systematic, and meaningful findings for the development of akhlak education.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

Interview data from the principal, vice principal for curriculum, and teachers revealed that the transformation of akhlak learning management at MI Miftahul Ulum Jember has been carried out through three main priorities digitalized planning, participatory learning, and behavior-based evaluation. Visually, the findings can be summarized as follows are principal emphasized policies on the use of digital media, teacher training, and routine supervision; the vice principal for curriculum explained the integration of akhlak values into teaching plans, learning schedules, and school programs teachers described the use of educational videos, interactive quizzes, group discussions, and character projects as instructional strategies. All informants acknowledged a shift from conventional management toward a more adaptive and student-centered model of akhlak learning. The data pattern shows that managerial actors (the principal and vice principal) focused more on policy, coordination, and systems, while teachers highlighted technical implementation in classrooms. In addition, all participants agreed that technology was not the ultimate goal, but a tool to strengthen moral internalization. This description reflects both vertical and horizontal relationships in learning management: policies originate from leadership, are translated into curriculum structures, and are realized in classroom practices.

Teachers also stated that students were more enthusiastic when akhlak learning involved case-based videos, simulations, and digital reflections than when conventional lecture methods were used. Nevertheless, several challenges were identified, including limited facilities, unequal digital competence among teachers, and restricted instructional time. Analytically, this pattern occurs because educational transformation cannot be achieved solely through formal directives it requires collaboration across all organizational levels. The principal functions as the driver of change, the vice principal for curriculum as the system designer, and teachers as implementation agents. Students enthusiasm for digital media can be interpreted as a reflection of a new learning generation that responds more positively to visual, interactive, and experiential methods. Meanwhile, technical barriers indicate that pedagogical innovation always depends on the readiness of human resources and infrastructure. Therefore, the interview findings confirm that successful transformation of akhlak learning management depends on synergy among leadership, curriculum design, and teachers' capacity to use technology pedagogically.

Observation data showed that the transformation of akhlak learning was not only visible in documents or participants statements, but also clearly reflected in daily classroom practices and the wider school environment. Visually, the observational findings can be summarized into several indicators. Teachers began lessons by showing short videos about honesty and responsibility; students were divided into small groups to discuss the moral messages presented in the videos; teachers acted as facilitators who guided discussions rather than as the sole source of information; students presented group results and responded to one another's ideas; at the end of lessons, students wrote personal reflections through digital worksheets or classroom journals; the school culture reflected habits such as greeting others, queuing properly, punctuality, and environmental cleanliness. Akhlak learning was implemented through a combination of technology, social interaction, and habitual practice.

The observational pattern indicates that student activity was more dominant than teacher lecturing. Student engagement was high when they were invited to evaluate moral cases, collaborate in groups, and connect lesson content with everyday experiences. Teachers were observed asking guiding questions more often than giving long explanations. In addition, akhlak values were not taught only inside classrooms, but were reinforced through a consistent school culture. This description demonstrates that the student-centered approach was genuinely implemented because learners actively constructed meaning through dialogue and reflection. The use of digital media also appeared simple yet functional rather than symbolic. Analytically, this pattern occurs because moral education is more effective when students experience, discuss, and practice values directly instead of merely memorizing

them. Group activities foster empathy, responsibility, and the ability to respect others' opinions. The teacher's role as facilitator indicates a paradigm shift from teacher-centered instruction to learner-centered pedagogy. Meanwhile, a school culture aligned with classroom lessons suggests that moral internalization requires an ecosystem rather than isolated teaching sessions. If schools rely only on classroom material without social modeling, moral messages become weak. Therefore, observation findings confirm that the transformation of akhlak learning management succeeds when digital strategies, participatory methods, and institutional culture operate in an integrated manner.

Documentation data strengthened the interview and observation findings through written and visual evidence available in the madrasah. The documents analyzed included the school curriculum, teaching modules, lesson plans, supervision schedules, activity photographs, evaluation reports, meeting minutes, and character habituation program archives. Visually, the contents of these documents revealed several main patterns are teaching plans stated akhlak learning objectives that were not only cognitive but also affective and behavioral; learning modules included the use of videos, digital presentations, online quizzes, and collaborative projects; supervision schedules showed regular monitoring by the principal; student evaluation reports contained indicators such as discipline, responsibility, cooperation, and politeness; activity photographs documented congregational prayer, social service programs, morning literacy sessions, and school clean-up activities. The transformation of akhlak learning management has been institutionalized within the school administrative system rather than remaining an individual teacher initiative.

The documentation pattern demonstrates continuity between planning, implementation, and evaluation. What was designed in curriculum documents was consistent with classroom practices and school programs. This description suggests that the transformation was not incidental but systematically planned. Evaluation documents containing behavioral indicators also show that the school views akhlak as an outcome that can be continuously monitored. Analytically, this pattern occurs because effective educational organizations require innovation to be formalized in official documents so that change can be sustained even when personnel change. When akhlak values are embedded in lesson plans, supervision, and assessment systems, all school members share the same operational reference. Activity photographs show that moral education was translated into real social experiences, allowing students to learn through collective action. The integration of digital media in modules indicates that technology has been accepted as part of pedagogical strategy rather than as a threat to Islamic tradition. Therefore, the documentation findings suggest that the transformation of akhlak learning management at MI Miftahul Ulum Jember occurred simultaneously at structural, cultural, and pedagogical levels, increasing its potential for sustainability and replication in other madrasahs.

Discussion

The interview findings suggest that the core implication of transforming akhlak learning management is the creation of a more responsive moral education system in which leadership, curriculum governance, and classroom pedagogy become mutually reinforcing. This matters because moral education often fails when policy decisions remain disconnected from instructional practice. The interviews showed that principals promoted digital policies and supervision, curriculum coordinators institutionalized values into learning programs, and teachers translated them into participatory activities. The functional effect is stronger coherence between vision and implementation; the dysfunction appears when digital competence, facilities, or time allocation are insufficient. Why does this pattern emerge? Organizational theory explains that change becomes effective when authority structures, middle management, and frontline actors share aligned goals. In educational settings, leadership support correlates positively with teacher innovation and student engagement.

Recent studies confirm that school leadership strongly influences digital transformation and pedagogical adaptation (Nalda, et.al, 2020), while teacher agency determines whether reforms reach classroom reality (Mitchell, 2015). Research also shows that student-centered moral learning improves responsibility and ethical reasoning (Hurley, 2024). Digital tools enhance interaction when pedagogically guided (Sailin & Mahmor, 2018), but weak infrastructure can widen implementation gaps (Dominguez, et.al, 2009). Therefore, interview evidence indicates that successful akhlak transformation depends on systemic alignment rather than isolated innovation.

The observation findings imply that the practical function of transformed akhlak learning lies in shifting students from passive recipients of moral messages to active participants in ethical meaning-making. This is significant because values are more deeply internalized through experience, dialogue, and repeated practice than through memorization alone. Classroom observations showed videos used as moral triggers, collaborative discussions, student presentations, reflective writing, and reinforcement through school culture. The functional outcome is increased engagement, empathy, cooperation, and behavioral consistency. Possible dysfunctions include superficial participation, overreliance on technology, or uneven facilitation skills among teachers. Why does this relationship occur? Constructivist learning theory argues that students build understanding through interaction and reflection, while social learning theory explains that behavior develops through observation and modeling. Recent studies report that collaborative learning strengthens prosocial attitudes and emotional competence (Liorent, et.al, 2022), reflective pedagogy improves moral judgment (Hedberg, 2017), and school climate significantly predicts student character outcomes (Cardenas & Reynolds, 2023). Therefore, observation evidence shows that the strongest pattern emerges when digital media, active learning, and ethical school culture operate as one integrated ecosystem.

The documentation findings imply that sustainable transformation in akhlak learning management occurs when innovation is embedded into formal systems rather than depending on individual enthusiasm. This matters because many school reforms disappear when leadership changes or when practices are not codified in official procedures. Documents at the madrasah showed moral objectives in lesson plans, digital strategies in modules, supervision schedules, behavioral indicators in assessments, and records of collective religious-social activities. The functional consequence is institutional continuity, accountability, and shared standards across stakeholders.

The dysfunction may arise when documentation becomes symbolic compliance without authentic implementation. Why does this structural pattern appear? Institutional theory explains that organizations become stable when norms are formalized into rules, routines, and evaluation systems. Research demonstrates that curriculum alignment improves implementation quality (Jatau, et.al, 2026), while sustained digital integration requires policy support and monitoring (Hakim & Hayat, 2024). Therefore, documentary evidence confirms that akhlak transformation becomes durable when pedagogical change is institutionalized structurally, culturally, and administratively across the school system.

4. CONCLUSION

The most important finding of this study is that the transformation of akhlak learning management in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah becomes effective when digital pedagogy is integrated with student-centered approaches and supported by institutional leadership. Moral education is no longer limited to transferring ethical concepts through lectures, but develops through participation, reflection, collaboration, and habitual practice within the school environment. Technology functions best as a medium that enriches learning experiences rather than replacing teachers' moral guidance. The key lesson from this research is that akhlak education remains relevant in the digital era when schools successfully connect Islamic values, innovative pedagogy, and everyday student experiences in one coherent learning ecosystem.

The strength of this study lies in its contribution to educational scholarship by offering a renewed perspective on moral learning management in Islamic primary schools. Rather than examining akhlak education only as classroom instruction or character formation, this research places it within a comprehensive management framework that includes planning, implementation, supervision, and evaluation. Methodologically, the qualitative case study approach provides rich contextual insights into how transformation occurs in real school settings. The study also contributes theoretically by linking leadership, curriculum management, digital pedagogy, and student-centered learning into one analytical model. Empirically, it enriches the limited literature on Madrasah Ibtidaiyah as a specific institutional case.

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research was conducted in only one madrasah, so the findings cannot be generalized to all Islamic primary schools with different social, cultural, and organizational contexts. Second, the study focused mainly on school leaders and teachers, while students and parents were not included as primary informants. Third, the qualitative design emphasizes depth of understanding but does not measure causal effects statistically.

Fourth, the topic was limited to akhlak learning management and did not examine broader outcomes such as long-term behavior change. Future studies are recommended to use comparative, mixed-method, or longitudinal designs.

5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

If any, thanks are addressed to official institutions or individuals who have provided funding or have made other contributions to the research. Acknowledgments are accompanied by a research contract number.

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