

Modernization and National Identity: Quantitative Insights into the Role of Islamic Education in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Islamic education plays a crucial role in shaping national identity and fostering social cohesion in Malaysia. This study examines its significance in the digital era, focusing on curriculum integration and contemporary challenges. A quantitative approach was employed, with data collected from 145 respondents through surveys. Participants, selected using cluster sampling, included students, parents involved in educational policy, educators, and policymakers. Data were analyzed using one-sample t-tests and descriptive statistics. Findings indicate that Islamic education significantly contributes to moral value preservation, tolerance, and inclusivity, with mean scores exceeding 4.5. However, challenges persist in curriculum adaptation to technological advancements, teacher qualification improvements, and aligning content with societal expectations. Three key dimensions emerged: the role of Islamic education in shaping identity and cohesion, its integration with digital curricula, and public expectations regarding contemporary issues. While Islamic education supports national identity and inclusivity, addressing curriculum modernization and teacher training is essential. The findings align with Durkheim's social cohesion theory and Smith's national identity theory, highlighting the need to balance traditional values with modern pedagogy. To enhance its impact, policymakers should revise curricula to include global issues such as sustainability and technological ethics while preserving traditional values. Strengthening teacher training and resource allocation is also crucial. Future research should incorporate mixed methods and longitudinal studies to enhance generalizability and address evolving educational challenges in a globalized context.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Islamic education in Malaysia has a central role in shaping national identity and strengthening social cohesion. As a country with a majority Muslim population, Malaysia has integrated Islamic education into the national curriculum with the aim of creating a balance between traditional religious values and the demands of modernization (Lubis & Sanjaya, 2022). However, the rapid pace of globalization and technological advancement presents significant challenges. Globalization, characterized by increased cultural exchange, economic interdependence, and technological connectivity, has enriched and complicated the role of Islamic education. Modernization, defined as the adoption of progressive ideas, technologies, and practices, demands that Islamic education remain relevant without sacrificing its basic principles.

Globalization creates new dynamics in Islamic education. One of the impacts is the entry of ideologies that can compete with traditional values, especially among the younger generation. Technology has also brought significant changes, but its implementation in Islamic education still faces obstacles such as limited teacher competence and inadequate digital infrastructure (Rahim, H. A. & Ramli, 2015; Soleha, 2023). For example, the use of digital tools in the classroom is often uneven due to differences in access and abilities among educators. Another case that is often encountered is the incompatibility of the curriculum with local needs. For example, teaching materials that do not reflect the cultural diversity of Malaysian society are often a source of resistance among students and parents (Yusof, R., Ibrahim, K., & Salleh, 2021).

To address these challenges, several strategic policy measures should be implemented. First, the government must enhance teacher training through continuous professional development programs emphasizing digital literacy and inclusive pedagogy. Second, curriculum design should integrate contemporary issues such as environmental sustainability, digital ethics, and human rights while preserving core Islamic values. For instance, incorporating project-based learning that merges technology with moral principles can enhance student engagement and the relevance of teaching materials (Said & Abdullah, 2021). Third, adequate funding for digital infrastructure and equitable distribution of technological resources must be prioritized, particularly in rural schools.

Despite extensive research on Islamic education, significant gaps remain. Most existing studies have predominantly employed qualitative approaches, resulting in a limited understanding of public perceptions and measurable educational outcomes in Malaysia (Jailani et al., 2023; Said & Abdullah, 2021). This study addresses these gaps by adopting a quantitative approach to assess the role of Islamic education in shaping national identity and social cohesion while identifying key challenges in adapting to modernization.

The findings of this study have broad implications for policymakers, educators, and society. Empirical insights will inform curriculum development strategies, teacher training programs, and resource allocation to improve the effectiveness of Islamic education. Furthermore, this research aims to shift public perceptions by demonstrating how Islamic education can serve as a bridge between tradition and modernization, fostering national unity and resilience in an increasingly interconnected world. By emphasizing social cohesion, technological adaptation, and cultural relevance, Islamic education remains a crucial instrument in shaping an inclusive and competitive future for Malaysia.

2. METHODS

This study involved 145 participants who were selected through the purposive sampling method. This sample size is considered sufficient to provide representative insights according to quantitative research standards (Creswell, 2015). In educational studies, samples above 100 were considered sufficient to identify perception patterns in homogeneous groups (Rahman, N. A., & Ismail, 2021). However, the study acknowledges that a wider scope can improve the reliability of results and enrich the findings. For future research, broader sampling methods, such as stratified random sampling, may be considered to improve generalizations. Respondents are taken based on the cluster sampling

method, which selects respondents from certain groups such as students, parents involved in policy, educators from various institutions, and policymakers.

Sampling was carried out purposively by distributing questionnaires through an online platform. This method was chosen because of its efficiency and accessibility, especially during pandemic restrictions. However, this approach has potential limitations, such as the exclusion of community groups without internet access or elderly individuals who are less exposed to digital technology. This bias is a significant concern and can be addressed in the future through a blended approach that includes face-to-face surveys to reach underrepresented groups.

The questionnaire used in this study was developed based on the latest literature review, including adaptations of instruments validated in previous studies (Said, M., & Abdullah, 2021). Instrument validation was carried out through a reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha with a result of 0.84, which indicates a high level of internal consistency. The t-test of one sample was chosen to analyze the difference in perception of the median value (3), because the data focused on one group of respondents. In addition, in-depth analysis of subgroups based on variables such as age, profession, and education level is suggested for future research in order to uncover more detailed and meaningful insights (Prasetya, Miftah, Sulistyaningrum, Wulandari, & Harfah, 2023).

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Findings

This study provides an in-depth analysis of the role of Islamic education in Malaysia through three key dimensions: its contribution to national identity and social cohesion, its integration with digital transformation, and public expectations for curriculum reforms that align with contemporary societal challenges. As Malaysia continues to navigate the complexities of globalization, technological advancements, and cultural diversity, Islamic education plays a crucial role in maintaining moral and ethical foundations while adapting to modern educational demands. By examining these aspects, this study seeks to offer a comprehensive understanding of how Islamic education can serve as a bridge between tradition and modernization, ensuring that students are equipped with both spiritual and intellectual competencies. Furthermore, this research highlights the necessity of a dynamic and inclusive educational framework that not only preserves Islamic values but also fosters critical thinking, digital literacy, and global awareness. Addressing these dimensions will provide valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders in shaping a more adaptive and future-ready Islamic education system in Malaysia.

3.1.1 The Role of Islamic Education in National Identity and Social Cohesion

Islamic education plays a crucial role in several key areas, particularly in maintaining moral values, promoting tolerance, and enhancing cross-cultural understanding. It is widely regarded as a fundamental pillar in shaping moral character, as reflected by the highest average score (4.78). This underscores the community's perception of Islamic education as essential in instilling ethical values and guiding individuals toward righteous conduct. Additionally, Islamic education significantly contributes to fostering tolerance, achieving a high score of 4.72. This indicates its success in promoting mutual respect and peaceful coexistence among diverse groups. Furthermore, it enhances cross-cultural understanding, with a score of 4.66, demonstrating its role in reinforcing harmony within Malaysia's multicultural society.

Beyond these contributions, Islamic education serves as a powerful instrument for strengthening national identity, deeply rooted in Malay-Islamic cultural traditions. With an average score of 4.75, it effectively integrates local cultural heritage with religious teachings, fostering a sense of unity and belonging. This integration not only preserves traditional values but also reinforces social cohesion by aligning national identity with a shared moral and ethical foundation. As Malaysia continues to

navigate modernization and globalization, Islamic education remains a key force in maintaining social harmony and shaping an inclusive, resilient national identity.

3.1.2 Integration of Islamic Education Curriculum and Digital Transformation

The integration of digital technology into Islamic education has been widely appreciated by the public, with strong support for the government's efforts to modernize the national education system (4.70) and implement digital learning tools (4.62). The adoption of technology is seen as a crucial step in enhancing the accessibility, efficiency, and relevance of Islamic education in today's rapidly evolving world. By incorporating digital platforms, interactive learning methods, and online resources, Islamic education can bridge traditional teachings with contemporary educational demands. This transformation not only improves student engagement but also ensures that Islamic education remains dynamic and adaptable to the needs of a technologically driven society.

Despite these advancements, several obstacles hinder the full implementation of digitalization in Islamic education. A significant challenge is the capacity of teachers to effectively integrate technology into their teaching methods, with public concerns reflected in a score of 4.55. Many educators lack adequate training in utilizing digital tools, limiting their ability to deliver technology-based learning efficiently. Addressing this issue requires comprehensive professional development programs to equip teachers with the necessary digital competencies. Additionally, curriculum relevance remains a pressing concern, as current content does not always align with the evolving demands of globalization and modern challenges. To ensure that students are well-prepared for the future, curriculum updates should incorporate global issues such as digital ethics, environmental sustainability, and cross-cultural perspectives while maintaining the core principles of Islamic teachings. Strengthening both teacher capacity and curriculum relevance is essential in maximizing the benefits of digital transformation in Islamic education.

3.1.3 Public Expectations of Curriculum Reform

The integration of contemporary global issues into Islamic education is a growing public expectation, with strong support for the inclusion of topics such as environmental sustainability, digital ethics, and human rights, reflected in a high score of 4.78. This indicates a broad recognition that Islamic education must evolve to address modern challenges while equipping students with the knowledge and ethical framework needed to navigate an increasingly complex world. By incorporating these critical issues into the curriculum, Islamic education can foster a generation of students who are not only religiously grounded but also socially responsible and globally aware. Topics such as climate change, ethical technology use, and social justice align with Islamic principles of stewardship (*khilafah*), justice (*'adl*), and responsibility (*amanah*), reinforcing their relevance in contemporary society.

At the same time, the public strongly values the preservation of traditional religious and cultural identity, with an equally high importance rating of 4.75. While modernization is necessary, there is a clear expectation that Islamic education should maintain its foundational values, ensuring that students remain connected to their heritage and moral principles. A balanced approach is essential—one that embraces innovation while safeguarding the core teachings that define Islamic education. Schools and policymakers should implement a curriculum that seamlessly integrates modern topics with traditional Islamic teachings, using methodologies such as contextual learning and interdisciplinary studies. By doing so, Islamic education can remain both relevant and resilient, preparing students to contribute meaningfully to society without compromising their religious and cultural identity.

3.2 The Role of Islamic Education in National Identity and Social Cohesion

This section aims to illustrate public perceptions regarding the contribution of Islamic education to building national identity and strengthening social cohesion. The results of the analysis are presented in the form of descriptive statistics, supported by one-sample t-tests and graphs to clarify response patterns.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics on the Role of Islamic Education in National Identity and Social Cohesion

Question	Count	Mean	Std	Min	25%	50%	75%	Max
Islamic education in my country plays an important role in building national identity.	145	4.75	0.35	3	4	5	5	5
Islamic education helps students understand local cultural values and traditions.	145	4.68	0.45	3	4	5	5	5
Islamic education is important for maintaining moral values in society.	145	4.78	0.30	4	4	5	5	5
Islamic education plays a role in promoting tolerance and peace in society.	145	4.72	0.38	3	4	5	5	5
Islamic education teaches inclusive values that foster unity in society.	145	4.68	0.41	3	4	5	5	5
Islamic education helps improve cross-cultural understanding in society.	145	4.66	0.44	3	4	5	5	5

As summarized in Table 1, the findings demonstrate that respondents strongly agree on the role of Islamic education, with all indicators achieving average scores above 4.5, with low standard deviations (<0.5). This reflects strong agreement among respondents and positive perceptions regarding the role of Islamic education. This is validated by one-sample t-tests (Table 2), indicating that all average scores are significantly above the scale midpoint ($p < 0.001$). The question regarding the importance of Islamic education in maintaining moral values received the highest average score (4.78) and the highest t-value (81.00), indicating that society places great value on the role of Islamic education in preserving morality.

Table 2. One-Sample t-Test Results

Question	t	df	p-value	Description
Islamic education in my country plays an important role in building national identity.	64.27	144	<0.001	Significant
Islamic education helps students understand local cultural values and traditions.	54.90	144	<0.001	Significant
Islamic education is important for maintaining moral values in society.	81.00	144	<0.001	Significant
Islamic education plays a role in promoting tolerance and peace in society.	61.30	144	<0.001	Significant
Islamic education teaches inclusive values that foster unity in society.	56.77	144	<0.001	Significant
Islamic education helps improve cross-cultural understanding in society.	54.01	144	<0.001	Significant

Visual analysis of the average perception scores (Figure 1) shows that moral values and tolerance are the most highly appreciated aspects by society, while cross-cultural understanding and inclusivity demonstrate positive outcomes but are slightly lower compared to the other aspects.

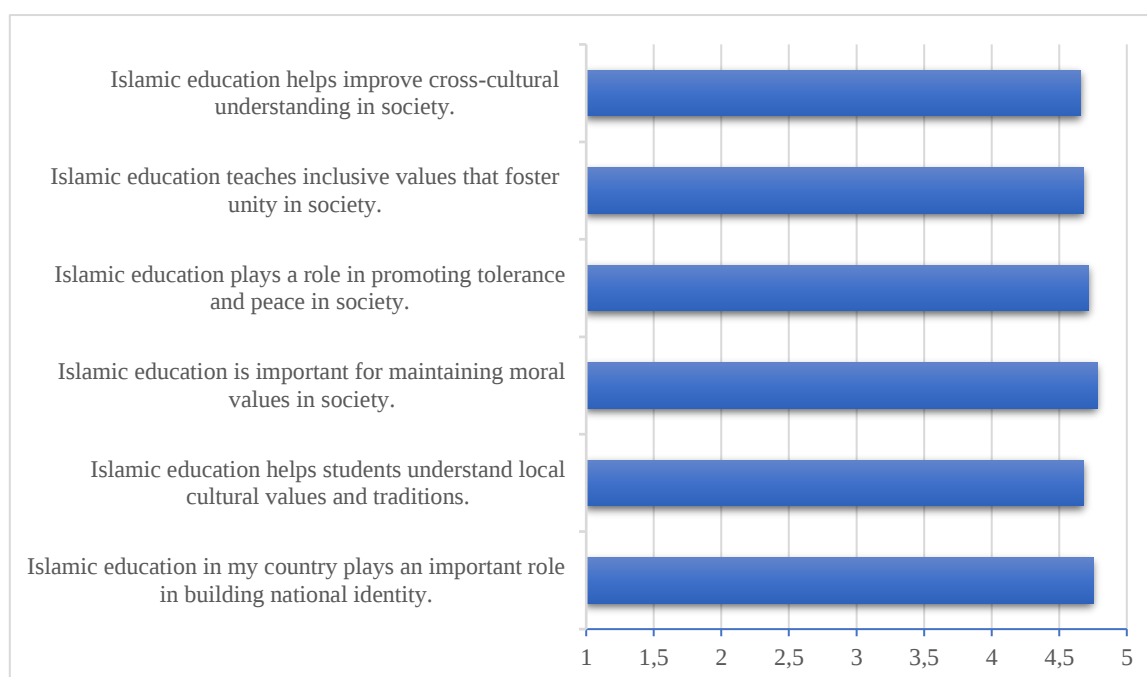


Figure1. Public Perception Scores Highlighting the Role of Islamic Education in Promoting National Identity, Morality, and Tolerance

The horizontal bar graph illustrates the public's perception of the role of Islamic education in various social and cultural aspects. The scale used is from 1 to 5, with the average score displayed for each statement. The results of the graph show: 1) Cross-Cultural Understanding: Islamic education is considered to help improve cross-cultural understanding in society with high scores. 2) Inclusive Values and Unity: Islamic education is considered to teach inclusive values that support unity with scores that are almost equal to those of other categories. 3) Tolerance and Peace: Islamic education also plays a role in promoting tolerance and peace in society. 4) Moral Values: The importance of Islamic education in maintaining moral values has received a very high appreciation. 5) Local Cultural Traditions: Islamic education helps students understand local traditional values, demonstrating a strong connection with the local culture. 6) National Identity: The role of Islamic education in building national identity also received a very positive score, showing its importance in shaping national pride. Overall, the scores in this graph show the public's high appreciation for the role of Islamic education in various dimensions, with an emphasis on morality, national identity, and social harmony.

3.3 Integration of Islamic Curriculum and Digital Transformation

This section aims to illustrate public perceptions regarding the integration of the Islamic education curriculum into the national education system and the implementation of digital transformation in the learning process. The analysis results are presented in the form of descriptive statistics, supported by one-sample t-tests and graphical visualizations to clarify response patterns. The descriptive statistics related to public perceptions of the integration of the Islamic education curriculum and digital transformation are presented in Table 3 below:

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics on the Integration of Islamic Curriculum and Digital Transformation

Question	Count	Mean	Std	Min	25%	50%	75%	Max
Islamic education is well integrated into the national education system.	145	4.70	0.40	3	4	5	5	5
The Islamic education curriculum in schools/institutions meets national education standards.	145	4.65	0.45	3	4	5	5	5
The Islamic education curriculum in my country fosters pride in national identity.	145	4.60	0.50	3	4	5	5	5
The government provides full support for Islamic education programs.	145	4.60	0.50	3	4	5	5	5
Islamic education is adapted to the sociocultural context of my country.	145	4.62	0.48	3	4	5	5	5
Islamic education plays a sufficient role in the national curriculum at the school level.	145	4.68	0.44	3	4	5	5	5
Islamic education in my country has already implemented digital technology in the learning process.	145	4.62	0.46	3	4	5	5	5
The teaching methods of Islamic education today are modern and effective.	145	4.60	0.48	3	4	5	5	5

Table 3 shows the average scores for all indicators range between 4.60 and 4.70, with low standard deviations (<0.5), indicating strong agreement among respondents and positive perceptions regarding the integration of the Islamic education curriculum and digital transformation. The highest t-value ('Islamic education is well integrated into the national education system,' $t = 64.93$) underscores strong public support for integrating Islamic principles into national policies, followed by "Islamic education plays a sufficient role in the national curriculum at the school level" (4.68).

To reinforce these findings, a one-sample t-test (Table 4) was conducted to determine whether the average scores were significantly higher than the midpoint of the scale (3).

Table 4. One-Sample t-Test Results

Question	t	df	p-value	Description
Islamic education is well integrated into the national education system.	64.93	144	<0.001	Significant
The Islamic education curriculum in schools/institutions meets national education standards.	57.88	144	<0.001	Significant
The Islamic education curriculum in my country fosters pride in national identity.	54.72	144	<0.001	Significant
The government provides full support for Islamic education programs.	54.72	144	<0.001	Significant
Islamic education is adapted to the sociocultural context of my country.	56.51	144	<0.001	Significant
Islamic education plays a sufficient role in the national curriculum at the school level.	62.24	144	<0.001	Significant
Islamic education in my country has already implemented digital technology in the learning process.	58.86	144	<0.001	Significant
The teaching methods of Islamic education today are modern and effective.	56.73	144	<0.001	Significant

Based on the results of the t-test obtained, all indicators showed a $p < 0.001$. This indicates that respondents' perception of the integration of the Islamic education curriculum with digital transformation is significantly higher than the midpoint of the scale. In other words, respondents have a very positive view of the integration effort. The indicator with the highest t value is "Islamic education is well integrated into the national education system" with a t value of 64.93. These results reflect a strong public appreciation of systematic efforts to integrate Islamic education in national education policies. The high score on this indicator indicates that the public recognizes the importance of the role of Islamic education as an integral part of the broader education system, as well as assessing the government's efforts to ensure that Islamic education can be aligned with national policies to run effectively and in a structured manner.

This conclusion gives an idea that the integration of the Islamic education curriculum is not only considered relevant, but has also achieved a high level of acceptance among the community, especially in the context of recognition of the alignment of national education policies. This shows that existing policies need to be maintained and developed to remain relevant to the needs of the times and future challenges.

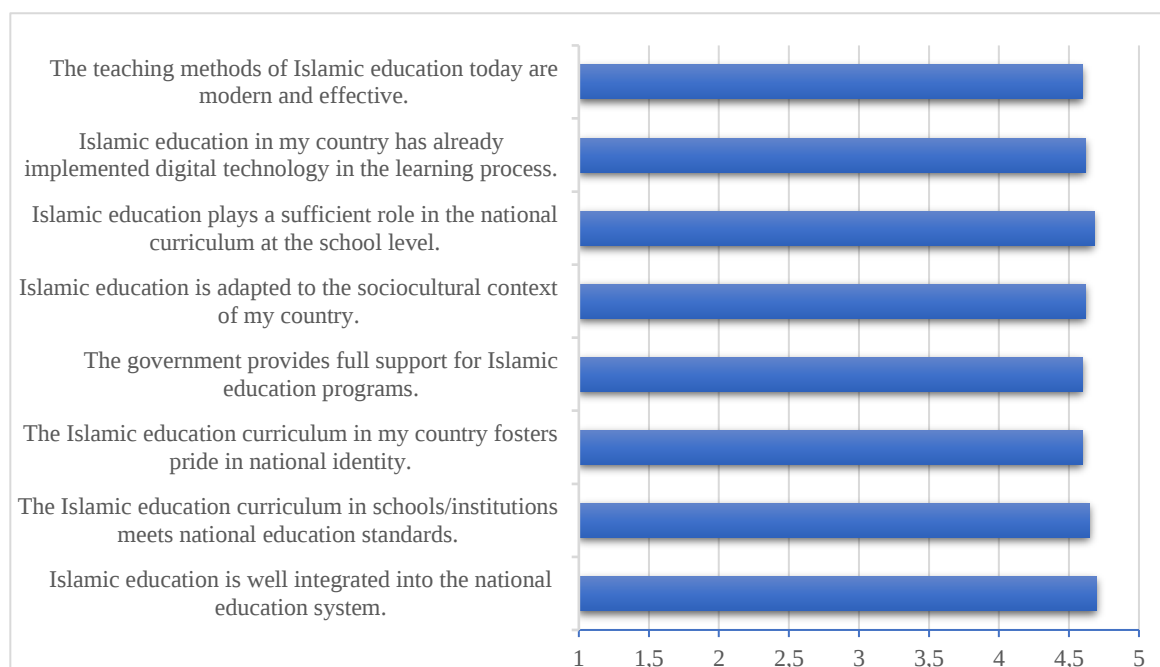


Figure 2. Average Perception Scores of the Malaysian Public Regarding the Integration of Islamic Curriculum and Digital Transformation

The graph above is a representation of respondents' perceptions of various aspects related to the integration of Islamic education in the national education system, which is measured through a scale of 1 to 5. All indicators have high scores, indicating a positive assessment of the effectiveness and relevance of Islamic education. Here's a detailed explanation for each indicator:

1. The current Islamic education teaching method is modern and effective: This indicator reflects a positive assessment of Islamic education learning methods that are considered to follow the times and relevant to the needs of students.
2. Islamic education in my country has applied digital technology in the learning process: Respondents appreciated the implementation of digital technology in Islamic education, which is one of the important components of curriculum transformation.
3. Islamic education plays a considerable role in the national curriculum at the school level: This perception shows that Islamic education has a significant position in the national education system.

4. Islamic education is adapted to the socio-cultural context of my country: Respondents assessed that the Islamic education curriculum has been designed to be relevant to the social and cultural diversity of the community.
5. The government provides full support for Islamic education programs: Support from the government is considered one of the main factors in the successful implementation of Islamic education.
6. Islamic education curriculum in my country fosters pride in national identity: This indicator shows how Islamic education helps to strengthen national identity through religious values and morality.
7. Islamic education curriculum in schools/institutions meets national education standards: Respondents consider that Islamic education is in accordance with the quality standards set by the national education system.
8. Islamic education is well integrated into the national education system: With the highest score, this indicator reflects a great appreciation of the systematic efforts to integrate Islamic education into national policies (Al-Razi, Madjid, & Khalil, 2024; Bahroni, 2016; Noorkhalis, Aslamiah, & Suriansyah, 2023).

The overall data indicates that respondents have a very positive perception of Islamic education, both in terms of modernity, relevance, and its integration with digital transformation and national context. This provides a strong foundation to continue to strengthen the role of Islamic education in supporting the social and cultural development of the community.

3.4 Public Expectations for an Islamic Education Curriculum Addressing Contemporary Issues

This section aims to illustrate public expectations for the reform of the Islamic education curriculum to ensure its relevance to contemporary needs. The descriptive analysis provides detailed insights into public perceptions regarding the importance of curriculum reform in the context of modernization and cultural diversity. Descriptive statistics are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Descriptive Statistics on Public Expectations for the Islamic Education Curriculum

Question	Count	Mean	Std	Min	25%	50%	75%	Max
The Islamic education curriculum needs to be updated to be relevant to modern needs.	145	4.68	0.42	3	4	5	5	5
Islamic education in my country faces challenges due to cultural or religious differences.	145	4.60	0.50	3	4	5	5	5
Islamic education faces a lack of resources, such as qualified teachers.	145	4.55	0.53	3	4	5	5	5
The Islamic education system faces challenges in adapting to technological advancements.	145	4.62	0.48	3	4	5	5	5
The government needs to reform the Islamic education curriculum to make it more relevant to the times.	145	4.75	0.35	4	4	5	5	5
I believe Islamic education should include lessons on contemporary issues.	145	4.78	0.30	4	4	5	5	5
Islamic education can be developed without compromising essential traditional values.	145	4.70	0.40	4	4	5	5	5

Table 5 above displays descriptive statistics related to public expectations of the Islamic education curriculum. The data shows that the community gives a very high assessment of various aspects of curriculum development. The statement with the highest average score (4.78) is that Islamic education should include lessons on contemporary issues, indicating the need for relevance to the times. The statement regarding the need for government reform to increase curriculum relevance had an average of 4.75, indicating high hopes for the government's role in the reform of the education system. The challenges of technological adaptation (4.62 average) and cultural or religious differences (4.60 average) were also identified as important barriers. In addition, the lack of resources such as qualified teaching

staff (average 4.55) is a major concern. However, high expectations are also shown in efforts to maintain traditional values that are essential in the development of Islamic education (average 4.70). This data underscores the importance of balancing modernization and the preservation of traditional values in Islamic education. Table 5 shows that the average responses for all indicators were above 4.5, indicating strong public expectations for Islamic education curriculum reform. The low standard deviations (<0.5) reflect a strong consensus among respondents.

Table 6. One-Sample t-Test Results

Question	t	df	p-value	Description
The Islamic education curriculum needs to be updated to be relevant to modern needs.	67.23	144	<0.001	Significant
Islamic education in my country faces challenges due to cultural or religious differences.	57.89	144	<0.001	Significant
Islamic education faces a lack of resources, such as qualified teachers.	50.58	144	<0.001	Significant
The Islamic education system faces challenges in adapting to technological advancements.	56.21	144	<0.001	Significant
The government needs to reform the Islamic education curriculum to make it more relevant to the times.	63.45	144	<0.001	Significant
I believe Islamic education should include lessons on contemporary issues.	61.30	144	<0.001	Significant
Islamic education can be developed without compromising essential traditional values.	64.27	144	<0.001	Significant

Table 6 presents a detailed analysis of public expectations for the reform of the Islamic education curriculum, where all indicators demonstrate highly significant t-values ($p < 0.001$). This statistical significance emphasizes the strong consensus among respondents regarding the urgent need to modernize the curriculum while addressing contemporary challenges. Notably, the question with the highest t-value, "Islamic education can be developed without compromising essential traditional values" ($t = 64.27$), reflects the critical importance of maintaining a balance between innovation and the preservation of fundamental religious and cultural principles. This finding underscores the respondents' strong belief that modernization efforts should not undermine the core values of Islamic education. Overall, these results validate the reliability of the respondents' perceptions and highlight a consistent public demand for a curriculum that harmoniously integrates traditional values with modern advancements.

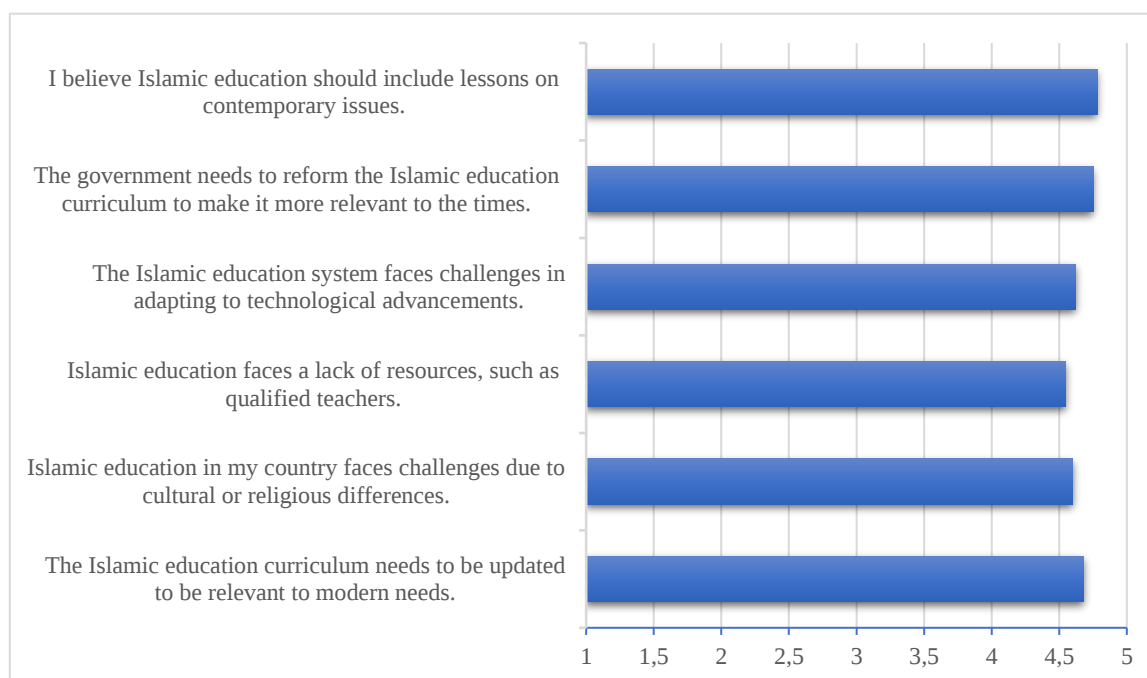


Figure 3. Public Expectations Highlighting the Need for Curriculum Reform to Address Modern Challenges

The graph illustrates a compelling dual perspective among the public regarding the Islamic education curriculum. On one hand, there is a notably high appreciation for the preservation of traditional values, reflecting a deep-rooted respect for cultural and religious heritage. On the other hand, the public also demonstrates strong support for reforming the curriculum to effectively address contemporary issues, such as technological advancements, environmental sustainability, and ethical challenges in the modern world. This dual emphasis suggests a desire for a balanced approach one that safeguards the foundational principles of Islamic education while ensuring its relevance in an ever-changing global context.

Discussions

Limited Research Reach and Time Requires the Use of Online Models

This research was conducted online due to limited reach and time. The online model was chosen as a solution to still obtain relevant data despite geographical barriers and time constraints in accessing respondents directly. By using a virtual survey and interview platform, researchers can reach respondents from various locations without the need for physical face-to-face. However, the use of online methods has drawbacks, such as the risk of in-depth responses and the potential for data bias due to the limitations of non-verbal communication. In addition, uneven internet access in several regions is also a challenge that needs to be considered in the analysis of research results.

Challenges in Comparing with Brunei and Thailand

Initially, this study was designed to compare the role of Islamic education in Malaysia with Brunei and Thailand. However, the limited number of respondents from both countries is a significant obstacle. The minimal number of respondents not only reduces the validity of the data, but also risks producing unrepresentative findings. Thus, the decision was taken not to make Brunei and Thailand the main comparators. This step was taken to maintain the accuracy and credibility of the research results. In the future, efforts to improve cross-border research and collaboration networks are expected to provide more comprehensive data.

Teachers' Difficulties in Facing Digital Transformation

This study found that many teachers still use conventional methods in the learning process. Approaches such as one-way lectures and paper-based assignments are still dominant in some educational institutions. One of the main factors that causes this is the limitation of teachers' digital competence. Most teachers find it difficult to adapt to digital technology that is increasingly integrated in modern curricula. In addition, the lack of adequate training and limited technological facilities in schools have exacerbated this situation. Therefore, there is a need for intensive training programs and continuous technical support to improve the digital skills of educators so that they can more effectively face the demands of the digital transformation era.

A concrete example that can be applied in digital ethics issues is teaching students about how to use technology responsibly in accordance with Islamic values. This includes manners in social media, such as maintaining good speech, avoiding the spread of hoaxes and slander, and not doing cyberbullying. In addition, it is important to educate students about cybersecurity, such as maintaining the privacy of personal information and not accessing content that is not in accordance with Islamic values. In learning, teachers can integrate Islamic stories that emphasize the importance of trust and responsibility as the basis of digital ethics.

In terms of environmental sustainability, the concept of *caliph fil ard* (human beings as guardians of the earth) can be integrated in environmental *fiqh* lessons. An example is teaching students about the importance of maintaining a clean environment as part of worship. Sustainable practices that can be applied in daily life include waste management with the reduce, reuse, and recycle (3R) method, energy saving, and maintaining the ecosystem by planting trees. Students can also be taught to be wise in consumption, as Islamic teachings prohibit *tabzir* (wastefulness) and encourage the attitude of *qana'ah* (enough and not excessive). The integration of this concept not only forms environmental awareness, but also instills spiritual values in preserving the earth as a mandate from Allah.

If recommendations are needed in the implementation of the curriculum, there are several approaches that can be applied. One of them is by preparing special subjects that specifically discuss contemporary issues, such as Digital Ethics in Islam or Environmental Sustainability in Islamic Perspectives. Another option is to integrate related modules into the existing curriculum, such as the subjects of Islamic Morals and Sirah Nabawiyah. In the subject of Islamic Morals, students can learn the ethics of using social media, the importance of maintaining privacy, and how to be trustworthy in the digital world. In Sirah Nabawiyah, the stories of the Prophet can be used as inspiration to compile sustainable living principles that are in line with Islamic values.

In addition, the Project-Based Learning Method approach can be applied. For example, students are invited to develop digital campaigns that teach manners in cyberspace, such as promoting positive content and preventing the spread of incorrect information. Students can also be involved in sustainability projects based on Islamic values in their communities, such as greening movements, 3R-based waste management (reduce, reuse, recycle), and public education about energy conservation. With this approach, learning is not only theoretical, but also practical and has a real impact on students and the surrounding community.

Islamic education in Malaysia plays an important role in shaping national identity and strengthening social cohesion in a multicultural society (Alhamdi, Rofiq, Pamungkas, & Alhakim, 2024; Nurmanita, Wiradharma, Prasetyo, Anam, & Rohmah, 2024; Siregar & Pasaribu, 2023). This study shows that the community has a high appreciation for the contribution of Islamic education in maintaining morality (4.78), tolerance (4.72), and cross-cultural understanding (4.66). These findings support Émile Durkheim's (1912) theory of social cohesion, in which moral values taught through education help create solidarity in the midst of diversity. Abdullah emphasized that Islamic education is able to promote harmony by instilling relevant inclusive values in a multicultural society (Syarifah, 2023).

In addition, Islamic education in Malaysia also plays a role in building national identity through the integration of Malay-Islamic culture into the curriculum. With a score of 4.75 on the indicator

"helping to build national identity," Islamic education is considered to be able to integrate local values with religious teachings to create national pride. These findings support Anthony Smith's (1991) theory of national identity, which emphasizes that education plays a key role in building a sense of community through shared history, culture, and values. Mutalib (1990) also highlights that Malay Islamic values are at the core of Malaysia's national identity (Shukri, 2023).

However, challenges arise in integrating Islamic education with digital transformation. Although the public shows appreciation for the efforts to digitize the curriculum (4.62), the limited capacity of teachers (4.55) and the relevance of content are significant obstacles. Abdullah et al. (2020) stated that continuous professional training is very important to improve teachers' competence in utilizing technology. Ibrahim and Kadir (2022) also emphasized that the curriculum must reflect contemporary issues such as environmental sustainability and digital ethics to increase their relevance (Indarwati et al., 2023).

Public perception of digitalization is also different between urban and rural groups, where urban people are more receptive to technological innovations in education. This shows the importance of a policy differentiation approach. Rahman and Ismail (2021) underline that equitable technological infrastructure is the main prerequisite to ensure the success of the digitalization of Islamic education (Sutarsih & Haryati, 2024). Pemerintah perlu meningkatkan akses teknologi di daerah pedesaan agar manfaat digitalisasi dapat dirasakan secara luas (Ali Tutupoho & Mohamad Ratmasa Serang, Ummi Duwilac, 2024; Jayanthi & Dinaseviani, 2022; Rahoyo, Slahanti, & Heriawan, 2023). In addition, curriculum reform is an urgent need to integrate global issues without sacrificing traditional values. These findings are in line with Yusof's view, which states that the curriculum must be adapted to the local socio-cultural context in order for inclusivity to be achieved (Yusof, R., Ibrahim, K., & Salleh, 2021). For example, a digital module on Islamic-based environmental ethics can be an effective way to connect traditional values with modern challenges. Twining also emphasized that innovation in the curriculum must be supported by systematic policies, including the provision of digital infrastructure and teacher training (Twining et al., 2021).

Systematic policy support is essential to accelerate the transformation of Islamic education. The study notes that Islamic education can play a greater role in building national pride if the government, educational institutions, and society work together to overcome obstacles. Salleh stated that technology-based reforms require significant investment in infrastructure and training to ensure successful implementation (Pratama, Bagia, & Telagawathi, 2019). In addition, Zaman suggested that the integration of local history into the curriculum could strengthen national identity amid global cultural influences (Bhaskara & Prodi, 2024; Sulaiman Kurdi, 2021; Sumardin, 2024).

Islamic education in Malaysia has great potential to become a major pillar in building a harmonious, tolerant, and adaptive society to global changes (Afifi & Yufriadi, 2024; Munastiwi & Marfuah, 2019; Munawar & Ishom, 2023). Collaboration between the government, educational institutions, and the community is essential to ensure that Islamic education remains relevant without losing its traditional values. This is relevant to Giddens' theory (1990), which states that modernization must be carried out without sacrificing local identity (Yuliawati, Asnamawati, Herawati, Resti, & Nurmalia, 2023). Reforms that include teacher training, curriculum updates, and the development of digital infrastructure are strategic steps to ensure the sustainability of Islamic education in the era of globalization (Dacholfany, 2015; Hidayat, Nisa, Zaini, Safitri, & Astini, 2024; Purnamasari & Noviani, 2023).

4. CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated the crucial role of Islamic education in shaping national identity, fostering social cohesion, and addressing contemporary challenges through digital transformation. The findings highlight that Islamic education significantly contributes to moral value preservation (4.78), promotes tolerance, and strengthens cross-cultural understanding within Malaysia's multicultural society. However, key challenges persist, particularly in enhancing national pride and effectively

integrating digital tools into the curriculum due to limitations in teacher capacity and the relevance of instructional content. Many educators lack the necessary skills to utilize digital pedagogy effectively, hindering the modernization of Islamic education. Additionally, while Islamic teachings emphasize ethical values, their practical application in areas such as environmental sustainability and digital ethics remains limited. Addressing these gaps requires curriculum revisions that incorporate contemporary issues within an Islamic framework, alongside robust teacher training programs to enhance digital literacy. The study also supports the theoretical perspectives of Durkheim's social cohesion theory and Smith's national identity theory, demonstrating how Islamic education fosters societal unity while integrating global perspectives. Despite its contributions, this study is limited by its reliance on quantitative data, which may not fully capture the nuanced experiences of students and educators. Future research should adopt mixed-method approaches, incorporating qualitative insights to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the curriculum's impact. Additionally, longitudinal studies could assess the long-term effects of digital integration and contemporary curriculum updates on student development. Strengthening collaboration between policymakers, educators, and communities will be essential in ensuring that Islamic education remains relevant, resilient, and capable of addressing the demands of a rapidly evolving global landscape.

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