

## BETWEEN ADAB AND DIGITAL LEARNING: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY IN INDONESIAN PESANTREN-BASED MADRASAH

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### Abstract

*This study examines how Islamic ethical values (adab) are negotiated within digital learning practices at a pesantren-based madrasah. While prior studies on digital Islamic education have predominantly focused on technological adoption and normative ethical integration, limited attention has been given to how adab is experienced and negotiated in everyday digital learning practices. This research aims to explore how these values are interpreted, adapted, and enacted by educational actors in situated contexts. Using a qualitative case study design, data were collected through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and document analysis conducted between January and February 2026 at Madrasah Aliyah Roudlotut Tholibin, Banjarnegara, Indonesia. The findings reveal that adab is not diminished in digital contexts but transformed through situational negotiation involving students, teachers, and institutional authorities. This negotiation is reflected in digital communication practices, technology use, and shifting sources of knowledge. While institutional regulations seek to maintain ethical boundaries, students' practical learning needs often lead to adaptive and context-dependent behaviors. Theoretically, this study reconceptualizes adab as a dynamic and negotiated social practice rather than a fixed normative construct. This contributes to the development of digital pedagogy in Islamic education by emphasizing the integration of ethical values within the fluid and participatory nature of digital learning environments.*

**Keywords:** *Islamic Ethics; Digital Learning; Pesantren-Based Madrasah; Value Negotiation; Qualitative Case Study*

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### A. Introduction

The rapid development of digital technology over the past two decades has significantly transformed educational practices worldwide, including within Islamic education. The integration of technologies such as Learning Management Systems (LMS), social media, and artificial intelligence has reshaped not only the delivery of learning materials but also pedagogical relationships, knowledge authority, and the value systems underpinning education (Ahmad & Ali, 2025; Selwyn, 2021; Williamson et al., 2020). From the perspective of digital pedagogy, technology is not merely a neutral tool but a socio-technical system that restructures how knowledge is produced, accessed, and legitimized within educational settings (Amin & Aman, 2025; Zawacki-Richter et al., 2020). In Islamic education, this transformation becomes more complex, as learning is not solely oriented toward knowledge transmission but also toward the internalization of ethical values (adab),

which form the foundation of students' moral and spiritual development (Al-Attas, 2018; Halstead, 2020; Selwyn, 2021).

In this study, *digital culture* is understood not simply as the presence of digital tools, but as a set of socio-cultural practices characterized by immediacy, openness, participatory interaction, and reduced hierarchical boundaries in communication and knowledge exchange (Knox, 2020; Selwyn, 2021). These characteristics often contrast with the epistemological and ethical structure of Islamic education, which emphasizes hierarchy, authority, and disciplined transmission of knowledge. Within the classical Islamic tradition, *adab* is conceptualized not only as etiquette but as a comprehensive ethical framework that governs proper conduct in seeking and transmitting knowledge, positioning individuals appropriately within the order of knowledge and authority (Al-Attas, 2018; Al-Ghazali, 1993). This indicates that the encounter between *adab* and digital culture is not merely technical, but deeply epistemological and ethical.

In Indonesia, *pesantren*-based madrasahs represent a distinctive model of Islamic education that integrates classical scholarly traditions with contemporary educational demands. Historically, *pesantren* have placed *adab* at the core of educational practice, reflected in hierarchical relationships between *kyai*, teachers, and students, as well as in text-based learning rooted in *sanad* (chains of knowledge transmission) ((Dhofier, 2021; Lukens-Bull, 2021). However, the increasing incorporation of digital technology into *pesantren*-based learning environments introduces new challenges, particularly in maintaining these ethical structures within a digital culture that tends to be egalitarian, fast-paced, and open-access (Bali & Ramadani, 2025; Murniasih, 2025).

Previous studies on the digitalization of Islamic education in Indonesia have primarily focused on technical and instrumental aspects, such as the adoption of digital learning media, enhancement of teachers' technological competencies, and the effectiveness of online learning (Saad, 2024; Sari, 2025). While these studies contribute to understanding institutional readiness, they remain limited in addressing how digital transformation reshapes ethical values and everyday pedagogical practices. Other studies have begun to highlight the importance of integrating Islamic ethics into digital learning environments (Gani et al., 2025; Ridlo, 2026; Rifai, 2025), yet these approaches tend to be normative and prescriptive, lacking empirical exploration of how such values are enacted in practice.

At the international level, discussions on digital education increasingly emphasize issues such as artificial intelligence, data ethics, and shifting pedagogical relations ((Holmes et al., 2020; Knox, 2020; Redecker, 2020; Williamson et al., 2020). However, these frameworks are largely grounded in secular perspectives and rarely engage with religious ethical systems. Moreover, they often overlook how values are negotiated in specific cultural and institutional contexts. From an Islamic intellectual perspective, classical scholars such as Al-Attas (2018) and Al-Ghazali (1993) emphasize that ethical formation in education is inseparable from lived practice and disciplined interaction, suggesting that the integration

of digital technology cannot be understood without examining its impact on everyday ethical conduct.

These limitations become more evident when viewed in light of empirical realities in pesantren-based madrasahs. Initial observations conducted at Madrasah Aliyah Roudlotut Tholibin in Banjarnegara reveal that digital devices such as smartphones and educational applications have become integral to students' daily learning practices. Teachers utilize digital platforms for instruction and communication, while institutional authorities impose regulations to control technology use. At the same time, students independently access digital resources, sometimes bypassing traditional knowledge hierarchies. This situation reflects not a simple shift, but an ongoing process of negotiation between established adab values and the emergent practices of digital culture.

The main limitation of existing research lies in its insufficient attention to the experiential, interpretive, and processual dimensions of this interaction. Few studies have explored how teachers, students, and pesantren authorities actively interpret, negotiate, and reconstruct ethical values in their everyday practices. Furthermore, the process of value negotiation has rarely been examined as a dynamic and multi-layered social phenomenon involving adaptation, resistance, and transformation within Islamic educational contexts.

Based on this identified gap, the study is guided by three interrelated research questions focusing on the dynamics of digital learning and ethical values in pesantren-based madrasahs. Specifically, it seeks to explore how digital learning practices are enacted within these institutional contexts, how Islamic ethical values (*adab*) are interpreted and practiced by educational actors, and how these values are continuously negotiated in everyday interactions within digital learning environments. This study employs a qualitative case study approach to capture the complexity of these processes within a specific institutional context. By focusing on lived experiences and social interactions, the study seeks to move beyond normative assumptions and provide an empirically grounded understanding of how ethical values are enacted in digital learning environments.

Academically, this study contributes by reconceptualizing adab not as a static norm transmitted unidirectionally, but as a contextual and negotiated social practice shaped through interactions between actors, technologies, and institutional structures. At the same time, it provides empirical insights into digital pedagogy within pesantren-based madrasahs, offering a perspective that bridges Islamic educational theory and contemporary debates on digital education. By doing so, this study advances a more nuanced understanding of how ethical values can be meaningfully integrated into digital learning practices.

## **B. Method**

This study employs a qualitative approach using a case study design aimed at gaining an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of negotiating Islamic ethical values (*adab*) in digital learning practices at pesantren-based madrasahs. A qualitative approach

was selected as the study focuses on exploring meanings, lived experiences, and social processes that cannot be reduced to causal relationships. The case study design enables an intensive examination of a single bounded system, namely digital-based Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning practices at Madrasah Aliyah Roudlotut Tholibin, Banjarnegara, situated within the institutional context of a pesantren. The scope of this case includes pedagogical interactions, the use of digital technology in learning, and the social practices through which *adab* values are enacted and negotiated. This design allows for a holistic understanding of the relationships among actors, practices, and institutional structures (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2018).

The research was conducted over a two-month period from January to February 2026. Although relatively limited in duration, the fieldwork was designed with intensive engagement and prolonged interaction within the research setting to ensure depth and richness of data. The researcher conducted continuous observations, repeated interviews, and iterative data verification, allowing for sufficient contextual immersion and the identification of recurring patterns. This approach aligns with qualitative case study principles, where depth of engagement and data saturation are prioritized over duration alone.

The research process consisted of several structured phases. The initial orientation phase (January 6-12, 2026) involved preliminary observations and informal engagement with institutional actors to map the research context. The main data collection phase (January 13-February 5, 2026) included in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. Interviews were conducted with key informants at different institutional levels, including a PAI teacher (January 20, 2026), students from grades 11, 12, and 10 (January 24, 27, and 30, 2026), the madrasah principal (February 3, 2026), and the pesantren supervisor (February 5, 2026). Observations were carried out in both offline and digital learning environments, including classroom interactions (January 22, 2026), student activities in the pesantren environment (January 29, 2026), WhatsApp-based learning communication (February 2, 2026), and institutional monitoring of technology use (February 4, 2026). Subsequent phases involved data transcription, coding, triangulation (February 6-15, 2026), and thematic interpretation (February 16-25, 2026).

The research site was selected purposively, as Madrasah Aliyah Roudlotut Tholibin represents a pesantren-based educational institution actively engaging with digital learning practices. Participants were selected using purposive and snowball sampling techniques based on their direct involvement in digital learning and their ability to articulate reflective experiences. The study involved six participants representing diverse roles: one teacher, three students from different grade levels, one madrasah principal, and one pesantren authority figure. While the number of participants is relatively small, data adequacy was ensured through data saturation, as no substantially new themes emerged from additional data collection. The variation of participant roles also enabled triangulation across pedagogical, structural, and cultural perspectives.

Data were collected through three primary techniques: semi-structured interviews, participatory observation, and document analysis. Interviews explored participants' understandings of *adab*, their experiences with digital technology, and their perceptions of changing learning practices. Observations focused on naturally occurring interactions, both in physical classrooms and digital platforms. Particular attention was given to digital interactions, especially WhatsApp communication, which were systematically documented, archived, and analyzed as textual data. These digital exchanges were treated as naturally occurring discourse and analyzed using thematic coding to identify patterns of language use, forms of politeness, and shifts in communication norms.

Document analysis included institutional regulations, lesson plans, student guidelines, and digital communication records, providing insight into the formal and normative frameworks governing technology use and ethical conduct.

Data analysis followed the six-phase thematic analysis framework proposed by Braun & Clarke (2021), including familiarization, coding, theme development, review, definition, and reporting. The analysis was conducted iteratively, integrating data from interviews, observations, and digital interactions. In analyzing digital communication data, particular emphasis was placed on linguistic patterns, interactional tone, and contextual cues that reflect the negotiation of *adab* in mediated environments.

To ensure trustworthiness, the study applied triangulation, member checking, and audit trail strategies. Triangulation was achieved by comparing multiple data sources and methods. Member checking was conducted by sharing preliminary interpretations with participants to ensure accuracy and credibility. An audit trail was maintained to document all research decisions and analytical steps.

The study also acknowledges the importance of researcher positionality. The researcher acted as a non-participant observer while maintaining reflexive awareness of their background, assumptions, and potential influence on data interpretation. Reflexive notes were maintained throughout the research process to critically examine how the researcher's presence and perspectives may shape the findings.

Ethical considerations were strictly observed. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection, with clear explanations of the research purpose, procedures, and their rights, including the right to withdraw. Participants' identities were anonymized to ensure confidentiality, and all data were securely stored. The study adhered to institutional ethical research standards to ensure the protection of participants and the integrity of the research process.

With this methodological design, the study provides a rigorous and contextually grounded analysis of how *adab* values are negotiated within digital learning practices, capturing the complexity of interactions among actors, technologies, and institutional norms.

## C. Finding and Discussion

### Finding

#### The Transformation of Adab Practices in Digital Learning: Between Embodiment and Mediation

The findings demonstrate that the transformation of *adab* practices in digital learning environments is not merely a behavioral shift but reflects a deeper reconfiguration of ethical expression shaped by technological mediation. Based on classroom observations in Grade 11 on January 22, 2026, teacher–student interactions were conducted in a highly structured and formal manner. Students sat orderly, listened attentively, and used respectful language when addressing the teacher. The lesson began with Islamic greetings, reciprocated collectively by students, reflecting not only social norms but also an embodied form of *adab* grounded in discipline, respect, and moral awareness.

However, this pattern shifts when interaction moves into digital space. Observations of the class WhatsApp group on February 2, 2026, show that students often used shorter and more informal expressions, sometimes omitting greetings entirely. Messages such as “Sir, what does this mean?” illustrate a simplification of communicative form. This finding is reinforced by an interview with a teacher (January 20, 2026), who noted that “when communicating via chat, the language is sometimes more casual; some students even use language that is less polite without realizing it.”

Rather than indicating a decline of *adab*, this shift reflects the affordances of WhatsApp as a digital platform, which prioritizes immediacy, brevity, and efficiency over formality. The absence of physical presence and non-verbal cues reduces the visibility of respect, thereby transforming *adab* from an embodied and observable practice into a more implicit and context-dependent one.

Importantly, interviews with students (January 24, 2026) reveal that some consciously attempt to maintain etiquette, stating that “in class, we’re still respectful, but online it sometimes feels more relaxed.” This indicates that *adab* continues to operate at the level of internal awareness. From an Islamic perspective, this suggests that the spiritual dimension of *adab*, as intentionality (*niyyah*) and self-conscious ethical conduct, remains present, even when its external expressions are modified. Thus, digital mediation does not eliminate *adab*, but repositions it between visible performance and internal moral regulation.

#### a. Negotiating Institutional Regulation and Digital Learning Needs

The findings reveal a dynamic tension between institutional regulations and students’ practical learning needs, which manifests as a process of ongoing negotiation rather than simple compliance. According to the 2025 document “Regulations on the Use of Electronic Devices by Students,” smartphone use is restricted to specific times and purposes. This policy is confirmed by the madrasah principal (February 3, 2026), who stated that “use is permitted in the context of learning and at specific times, under supervision.”

Nevertheless, student experiences indicate that these regulations do not always align with the demands of digital learning. Interviews conducted on January 24, 2026, reveal that

students face constraints when needing immediate access to information, as one student explained: “for example, when we need to look up materials or submit assignments, but we’re not allowed to use our phones during class.” Another student (January 27, 2026) admitted using devices beyond permitted times “when really needed.”

Observations conducted on January 29 and February 4, 2026, further show that technology use is highly situational. Under strict supervision, students comply with rules; however, in less monitored contexts, usage becomes more flexible. Some students were even observed switching quickly from non-academic to academic applications when supervision occurred. These practices highlight how the affordances of smartphones, portability, privacy, and rapid application switching, enable adaptive and sometimes covert forms of engagement.

Analytically, this reflects a process in which *adab* is not simply imposed through institutional discipline but negotiated through practical reasoning and moral consideration. While institutional rules emphasize external conformity (*zahir*), students’ actions often involve internal justification (*batin*), particularly when oriented toward learning. This suggests that *adab* in digital contexts operates as a situated ethical practice, shaped by the interaction between normative structures, technological possibilities, and individual agency.

### **The Reconfiguration of Knowledge Authority in the Digital Age**

The findings indicate a significant shift in the structure of knowledge authority within digital learning environments. During classroom observations on January 22, 2026, students were seen immediately accessing digital devices to search for answers when prompted by the teacher. This behavior reflects an increasing reliance on digital sources as primary references. This is supported by interviews with students (January 24 and 27, 2026), who stated that “sometimes it’s easier to understand from videos on the internet” and “I look up a lot of the material myself online.” These responses indicate a transition from teacher-centered learning toward a more resource-based model facilitated by digital access.

However, this shift does not fully displace the authority of the teacher. A teacher (January 20, 2026) emphasized that “not all sources are trustworthy,” while the madrasah principal (February 3, 2026) reaffirmed that “teachers remain the primary reference.” This suggests that authority is not replaced but reconfigured into a hybrid epistemological model, where digital sources provide information, while teachers function as validators and guides.

From the perspective of *adab*, this transformation is significant. Traditionally, *adab* in knowledge acquisition involves recognizing legitimate authority and maintaining proper intellectual humility. In the digital context, this principle is renegotiated, as students must navigate multiple sources while maintaining ethical discernment. Furthermore, the affordances of digital media, such as accessibility, multimodality, and algorithmic recommendations, reshape how knowledge is encountered and valued, potentially reducing depth in favor of immediacy.

This raises an important spiritual concern: knowledge in Islamic tradition is not merely informational but transformative. The ease of digital access risks detaching knowledge from its ethical and spiritual purpose. Therefore, the negotiation of *adab* in this domain involves not only selecting credible sources but also preserving the ethical intention underlying the pursuit of knowledge.

### **Institutional Efforts and the Pedagogical Translation of Adab into Digital Contexts**

The findings show that both madrasah and pesantren institutions actively attempt to integrate digital technology with *adab* values through structured and intentional efforts. The 2026 lesson plan documents indicate that digital tools such as WhatsApp and educational videos have been formally incorporated into instructional design, alongside explicit emphasis on ethical behavior.

Classroom observations (January 22 and February 2, 2026) reveal that teachers play a crucial role in this integration process. In addition to delivering content, they remind students to maintain proper digital etiquette, including the use of greetings and polite language. Some students were observed adjusting their communication accordingly, indicating that ethical learning occurs through direct practice.

At the institutional level, pesantren authorities also emphasize controlled adaptation. As stated in an interview on February 5, 2026, "we do not reject technology, but we limit and guide its use." The 2025 student activity schedule further shows that technology use is allocated within restricted timeframes, reflecting an attempt to balance openness and control. However, a gap remains between normative expectations and actual practices. This gap can be partly explained by the inherent characteristics of digital platforms. For instance, WhatsApp encourages informal and rapid communication, which may conflict with the structured and ritualized forms of *adab*. This indicates that the challenge is not only regulatory but also pedagogical: institutions must reinterpret and translate *adab* into forms that are compatible with digital environments, rather than merely enforcing traditional norms.

### **Synthesis: Adab as a Negotiated, Multi-Layered Practice**

Overall, the findings of this study demonstrate that digital learning in pesantren-based madrasahs constitutes a complex and multi-layered social space in which the value of *adab* is continuously negotiated rather than merely preserved or diminished. Although *adab* remains a strong normative foundation, embedded in institutional regulations, classroom practices, and moral expectations upheld by pesantren authorities, its practical enactment varies across contexts, particularly within digitally mediated environments that introduce flexibility, immediacy, and informality in communication and knowledge practices. This negotiation unfolds across interconnected levels. At the micro level, students actively reinterpret and adapt institutional rules in response to practical learning needs, especially when engaging with digital resources or participating in online communication. At the pedagogical level, teachers function as mediators who not only deliver knowledge but also interpret and reinforce ethical boundaries within digital interactions. At the

institutional level, pesantren and madrasah authorities attempt to regulate and guide these practices through formal policies, supervision, and curriculum design. However, these processes are not linear or fully controlled; rather, they are characterized by ongoing tensions, situational adaptations, and context-dependent variations shaped by the encounter between traditional values and digital culture.

Importantly, the findings also reveal that *adab* is not limited to observable social behavior but encompasses a deeper moral-spiritual dimension. While digital communication, particularly through platforms such as WhatsApp, tends to encourage brevity, informality, and reduced hierarchical cues, the internal dimensions of *adab*, including intentionality (*niyyah*), ethical awareness, and self-regulation, remain central in shaping how students and teachers interpret and evaluate their actions. This indicates that the transformation of *adab* in digital contexts occurs primarily at the level of expression rather than essence, where outward practices may shift while inward ethical orientations persist.

To synthesize these dynamics, this study proposes a conceptual model illustrating that the negotiation of *adab* in digital learning emerges from the interaction of three interrelated dimensions: technological affordances, institutional structures, and moral-spiritual agency. Technological affordances, such as immediacy, accessibility, and communicative informality, shape how interactions occur and how knowledge is accessed. Institutional structures provide normative frameworks through rules, authority relations, and pedagogical expectations. Meanwhile, moral-spiritual agency reflects the capacity of individuals to internalize, interpret, and enact ethical values through intention, awareness, and reflective practice.

These relationships are illustrated in Figure 1, which presents the dynamic interplay between actors (students, teachers, and pesantren authorities), digital platforms (e.g., WhatsApp), and institutional norms in shaping the situated practice of *adab*.



Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Adab Negotiation in Digital Learning

As shown in the figure, *adab* emerges not as a fixed and static norm, but as a contextual, adaptive, and continuously negotiated practice. It is produced through the ongoing interaction between technological mediation, institutional regulation, and individual ethical consciousness. This model underscores that the sustainability of *adab* in contemporary Islamic education depends not solely on the preservation of tradition or the control of technology, but on the capacity of educational actors to actively negotiate and internalize ethical values within evolving digital environments.

## Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that digital learning practices in pesantren-based madrasahs do not merely introduce technological adjustments but fundamentally reshape the ethical landscape of learning through ongoing negotiations of *adab*. These dynamics can be theoretically understood by positioning *adab* not as a fixed normative code but as a contextual and lived ethical practice that is continuously interpreted within specific socio-technological settings. This perspective aligns with Al-Attas (2018) conception of *adab* as the proper recognition of one's position within the hierarchy of knowledge and being, which in the digital context becomes subject to reconfiguration rather than erosion.

Within contemporary digital pedagogy discourse, scholars such as Selwyn (2021) and Knox (2020) emphasize that digital technologies are not neutral tools but socio-technical systems that shape patterns of interaction, authority, and knowledge production. This study extends this argument by demonstrating how specific technological affordances, particularly those of platforms such as WhatsApp, including immediacy, brevity, and reduced social cues, reshape communication practices in ways that influence the enactment of *adab*. The observed shift toward more informal and concise communication reflects what Baym (2015) describes as the "flattening of social hierarchies" in digital environments. However, the findings indicate that this transformation is neither total nor uniform; instead, it is partial, situational, and mediated by ethical awareness, thereby reinforcing the idea that digital culture operates through negotiated hybridity rather than replacement of traditional norms.

Importantly, these communicative shifts cannot be separated from students' levels of digital literacy. As argued by Ng (2012) and Redecker (2020), digital literacy encompasses not only technical skills but also cognitive and socio-ethical competencies in navigating digital environments. The findings suggest that variations in students' ability to maintain *adab* in digital interactions are closely linked to their level of critical digital literacy, particularly their awareness of context, audience, and ethical implications of communication. Thus, the negotiation of *adab* in digital learning is not only a moral issue but also a literacy issue, where ethical conduct depends on students' capacity to critically engage with the norms of digital communication.

The tension identified between institutional regulations and students' learning needs further illustrates the process of what Wenger (1998) conceptualizes as the "negotiation of meaning" within communities of practice. In this study, students do not passively comply

with pesantren regulations but actively interpret and adapt them in response to situational demands. This finding resonates with prior research on Islamic education and technology integration (Haq & Mu'shoda, 2026; Warisno et al., 2025), yet contributes a more fine-grained, micro-level analysis showing how negotiation unfolds in everyday practices such as device usage and access to online resources. The result is a dynamic interplay between compliance and agency, where *adab* is enacted through context-sensitive decision-making rather than rigid adherence.

The transformation of knowledge authority observed in this study also reflects broader epistemological shifts associated with digital education (Selwyn, 2021; Williamson et al., 2020). While students increasingly rely on digital sources for learning, the authority of teachers and by extension, kyai as central figures in pesantren, does not disappear but is reconfigured. In classical Islamic educational philosophy, as articulated by Al-Ghazali (1993) and Ibn Jama'ah (2013), the teacher is not merely a transmitter of knowledge but a moral and spiritual guide whose authority is rooted in ethical exemplarity (*uswah hasanah*). The findings suggest that this moral authority remains significant but must now coexist with distributed digital knowledge systems. In this context, teachers and kyai function as epistemic filters and ethical anchors, guiding students in evaluating the credibility and appropriateness of digital knowledge. This indicates that digital transformation does not diminish religious authority but challenges it to adapt to new modes of mediation.

Furthermore, the findings highlight that *adab* cannot be fully understood without considering its spiritual dimension. Classical scholars such as Az-Zarnuji (Ta'lim al-Muta'allim) emphasize that *adab* is deeply tied to intention (*niyyah*), humility, and inner discipline. While digital environments may alter the external expressions of etiquette, the internal dimension of *adab*, including moral awareness, self-regulation, and spiritual intentionality, remains central. This study shows that students who consciously reflect on their behavior in digital spaces are more likely to maintain ethical conduct, suggesting that the preservation of *adab* depends not only on external control but on internalized values.

From a pedagogical perspective, these findings provide a basis for developing a more concrete model of *adab*-based digital pedagogy. Such a model should integrate three key dimensions. First, at the instructional level, teachers need to explicitly teach digital communication ethics, including the use of respectful language, appropriate timing, and awareness of audience in online interactions. Second, at the curricular level, digital literacy should be integrated with Islamic ethical frameworks, enabling students to critically navigate digital content while maintaining moral responsibility. Third, at the institutional level, pesantren policies should move beyond restrictive regulation toward guided engagement, where technology use is supervised, contextualized, and aligned with educational objectives. These strategies reflect a shift from control-based to cultivation-based approaches in managing digital learning environments.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the field by proposing a conceptual framework in which *adab* in digital learning is understood as a negotiated, multi-layered practice

emerging from the interaction between technological affordances, institutional structures, and moral-spiritual agency. Based on the findings, three propositions can be formulated. First, technological affordances shape but do not determine the expression of *adab*, as ethical practices remain mediated by human agency. Second, institutional structures regulate but cannot fully control ethical behavior, which is continuously negotiated in practice. Third, the sustainability of *adab* in digital environments depends on the integration of external regulation and internal moral consciousness. These propositions extend existing theories of Islamic education by shifting the focus from normative preservation toward dynamic adaptation.

In sum, this study demonstrates that the encounter between pesantren tradition and digital modernity produces not a crisis of values but a space of ethical negotiation. *Adab* persists not as a static inheritance but as a living practice that is continuously reinterpreted in response to changing technological and social conditions. This perspective offers a more nuanced understanding of Islamic education in the digital age, emphasizing the importance of balancing tradition, technology, and human agency in shaping ethical learning environments.

#### **D. Conclusion**

This study concludes that digital learning practices in pesantren-based madrasahs constitute a dynamic socio-educational space in which *adab* is continuously negotiated rather than passively transmitted. The findings demonstrate that the integration of digital technology does not lead to the erosion of ethical values, but instead reshapes their expression across communication practices, technology use, and knowledge engagement. In this context, *adab* emerges as a context-dependent practice, shaped through the interaction between technological affordances, institutional structures, and the moral agency of educational actors.

This study offers three key contributions to the field of Islamic education and digital pedagogy. First, it reconceptualizes *adab* as a negotiated and multi-layered practice, extending classical Islamic educational thought into contemporary digital contexts without dismissing its normative foundations. Second, it introduces an integrative analytical framework that explains how ethical practices in digital learning are shaped through the interplay of technology, institutional regulation, and internal moral awareness. Third, it provides empirical evidence from a pesantren-based madrasah, a context that remains underrepresented in global discussions on digital education, thereby contributing to a more diverse and context-sensitive understanding of educational transformation.

From a practical perspective, this study highlights the need for more concrete and technology-oriented strategies in developing *adab*-based digital pedagogy. At the instructional level, teachers should incorporate structured digital communication guidelines into classroom practice, such as requiring the use of respectful language formats in platforms like WhatsApp or Learning Management Systems (LMS), and modeling ethical

online interaction. At the curricular level, digital literacy should be integrated with Islamic ethical principles, enabling students to critically evaluate online content while maintaining responsibility in its use and dissemination. At the technological level, educational institutions can adopt monitored digital platforms (e.g., moderated WhatsApp groups, LMS discussion forums, or school-based digital ecosystems) that embed ethical norms within their usage protocols. Additionally, the use of reflective digital activities, such as guided discussion prompts, ethical case analysis, or digital journaling, can support the internalization of *adab* in online learning environments.

Despite these contributions, this study has several limitations. The single-case design limits the generalizability of findings across diverse Islamic educational settings. The relatively short research duration also constrains the ability to capture long-term transformations in ethical practices. Furthermore, while this study identifies the importance of internal moral awareness, it does not deeply explore the psychological or spiritual processes underlying the internalization of *adab* in digital contexts.

Future research is therefore recommended to pursue comparative studies across different types of Islamic educational institutions and to employ longitudinal designs in order to better understand the evolving nature of ethical negotiation over time. Further studies could also develop and empirically test specific models of *adab*-based digital pedagogy, particularly those that integrate digital literacy, ethical reflection, and technological design.

In conclusion, this study affirms that the future of Islamic education in the digital age lies not in choosing between tradition and technology, but in the capacity to integrate both through reflective, adaptive, and ethically grounded educational practices.

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