

ISLAMIC EDUCATION FOR GENERATION Z AND ALPHA: PEDAGOGICAL TRANSFORMATION, DIGITAL ENGAGEMENT, AND CHARACTER FORMATION

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Abstract: *Islamic education is currently confronted with unprecedented challenges due to the rapid socio-technological transformations that shape the lives of Generation Z and Generation Alpha. These generations, characterized by digital nativity, instant access to information, and global cultural exposure, demand educational approaches that differ substantially from traditional instructional models. This article aims to explore how Islamic education can be reoriented to remain relevant, effective, and value-driven for these contemporary learners. Employing a qualitative literature-based research design, this study synthesizes recent scholarly works on Islamic pedagogy, digital learning, character education, and generational theory. The findings reveal that conventional teacher-centered and memorization-focused approaches are increasingly insufficient to address learners' cognitive styles, moral challenges, and spiritual needs. Instead, Islamic education for Generation Z and Alpha requires an integrative framework that combines learner-centered pedagogy, responsible use of digital technology, and systematic character formation rooted in Islamic values. The discussion highlights the importance of contextualized curriculum design, teacher professional development, and collaboration between schools, families, and communities. This article concludes that the future sustainability of Islamic education depends on its capacity to harmonize Islamic epistemology with pedagogical innovation, fostering religious understanding, ethical consciousness, and social responsibility among young Muslims in a rapidly changing world.*

Keywords: *Islamic education; Generation Z; Generation Alpha; digital pedagogy; character education*

Introduction

The landscape of education in the twenty-first century has undergone profound transformation due to rapid advancements in digital technology, globalization, and socio-cultural change. Islamic education, as an integral component of Muslim societies, is not immune to these dynamics. In particular, the emergence of **Generation Z** and **Generation Alpha** presents both opportunities and challenges for Islamic educational institutions across the globe.

Generation Z, generally defined as individuals born between the mid-1990s and early 2010s, grew up during the expansion of the internet, social media, and mobile technology. Generation Alpha, born from approximately 2010 onward, represents the first cohort fully immersed in artificial intelligence, algorithm-driven content, and smart technologies from early childhood. These generations exhibit learning characteristics such as visual orientation, preference for interactivity, short attention spans, and reliance on digital platforms for knowledge acquisition.

Consequently, traditional Islamic education models that emphasize rote memorization, lecture-based instruction, and limited contextual engagement face increasing relevance gaps. At the same time, Generation Z and Alpha encounter complex moral, spiritual, and identity-related challenges. Exposure to diverse worldviews, ethical relativism, and digital culture often influences their value systems and religious understanding. Islamic education, therefore, is expected not only to transmit religious knowledge but also to cultivate faith (*īmān*), moral integrity (*akhlāq*), and intellectual resilience in navigating contemporary realities.

This article seeks to examine how Islamic education can be reconceptualized to effectively serve Generation Z and Alpha. It addresses the following questions:

1. What are the key characteristics of Generation Z and Alpha relevant to Islamic education?
2. How has recent literature conceptualized pedagogical transformation in Islamic education?
3. What strategies can strengthen character education and religious engagement in digital contexts?

Literature Review

2.1 Generational Theory and Educational Implications

Generational theory suggests that cohorts are shaped by shared historical, technological, and cultural experiences, influencing their attitudes and learning behaviors. Studies on Generation Z highlight their preference for autonomy, experiential learning, and immediate feedback. Generation Alpha extends these traits further, displaying early digital fluency and dependency on multimedia-based learning environments.

Educational research indicates that these characteristics necessitate pedagogical shifts toward interactive, student-centered, and technology-integrated learning models. Failure to adapt often results in disengagement, superficial understanding, and weakened moral internalization.

2.2 Islamic Education in Contemporary Contexts

Islamic education traditionally emphasizes the holistic development of learners through the integration of knowledge (*ilmu*), faith (*īmān*), and practice (*amal*). Classical Islamic pedagogy prioritized moral exemplification, dialogue, and contextual instruction, as demonstrated in the educational practices of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

However, modern institutional settings have sometimes reduced Islamic education to formalistic knowledge transmission. Recent scholarship calls for revitalizing Islamic pedagogy by re-embracing its ethical and transformative dimensions while responding to contemporary challenges.

2.3 Digital Technology and Islamic Pedagogy

The integration of digital technology into Islamic education has generated both optimism and concern. On one hand, digital tools provide opportunities for interactive learning, wider access to Islamic knowledge, and creative pedagogical practices. On the other hand, uncritical adoption risks superficial engagement and moral disorientation.

Literature emphasizes the need for **ethical digital pedagogy**, where technology functions as a means to deepen understanding, reflection, and character formation rather than merely accelerating information delivery.

2.4 Character Education in Islamic Perspective

Character education occupies a central position in Islamic educational philosophy. Akhlāq is not treated as an auxiliary subject but as the core outcome of education. Contemporary studies stress that effective character education for Generation Z and Alpha must connect Islamic values with real-life challenges such as digital ethics, social responsibility, and identity formation.

Method

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a **qualitative descriptive research design** employing a **systematic literature-based approach**. Qualitative methodology is considered appropriate because the research aims to explore conceptual frameworks, pedagogical transformations, and value-based dimensions of Islamic education rather than to test hypotheses or measure variables statistically. The focus of the study lies in understanding meanings, patterns, and theoretical orientations related to Islamic education for Generation Z and Generation Alpha.

A literature-based design enables the integration of diverse scholarly perspectives across disciplines, including Islamic studies, educational pedagogy, digital learning, and generational theory. This approach is particularly suitable for examining emerging educational phenomena where empirical data may still be limited or context-dependent.

3.2 Data Sources

The data for this study consist of **secondary academic sources**, including:

1. Peer-reviewed journal articles on Islamic education, published between **2020 and 2025**
2. Scholarly books addressing Islamic pedagogy, philosophy of education, and moral development
3. International reports from educational organizations discussing digital learning and generational change
4. Conceptual and empirical studies focusing on Generation Z and Generation Alpha in educational contexts

Sources were selected from reputable academic databases such as Scopus-indexed journals, national accredited journals, and recognized international publishers. Only sources written in English and relevant to the research focus were included to maintain academic consistency and global relevance.

3.3 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To ensure rigor and relevance, the following criteria were applied:

Inclusion criteria:

- Publications explicitly discussing Islamic education or religious education in Muslim contexts
- Studies addressing Generation Z and/or Generation Alpha characteristics
- Research exploring digital pedagogy, character education, or moral development
- Publications released within the last five years

Exclusion criteria:

- Non-academic sources such as blogs or opinion articles
- Studies lacking methodological clarity
- Publications focusing solely on technical digital tools without educational or ethical discussion

This filtering process ensured that the reviewed literature was both academically credible and thematically aligned with the research objectives.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

The literature collection process followed three stages:

1. **Identification stage:** Relevant keywords such as *Islamic education*, *Generation Z*, *Generation Alpha*, *digital pedagogy*, and *character education* were used to locate potential sources.
2. **Screening stage:** Abstracts and keywords were examined to assess relevance to the research questions.
3. **Eligibility stage:** Full texts were reviewed to determine conceptual contribution, methodological soundness, and alignment with Islamic educational perspectives.

This systematic procedure minimized selection bias and enhanced the comprehensiveness of the review.

3.5 Data Analysis Technique

Data were analyzed using a **thematic analysis approach**. Each selected source was carefully read and coded to identify recurring concepts, arguments, and findings. The analysis focused on four major thematic dimensions:

1. Characteristics of Generation Z and Generation Alpha relevant to learning
2. Pedagogical transformation in Islamic education
3. Integration of digital technology within Islamic educational frameworks
4. Character education and moral development from an Islamic perspective

Codes were grouped into broader themes, allowing patterns and relationships to emerge across different studies. This process facilitated a synthesized understanding of how Islamic education responds to generational and technological shifts.

3.6 Trustworthiness and Academic Rigor

To enhance the trustworthiness of the study, several strategies were employed:

- **Credibility** was ensured through the use of peer-reviewed and authoritative academic sources.
- **Dependability** was addressed by applying consistent inclusion criteria and systematic analysis procedures.
- **Confirmability** was supported by grounding interpretations in cited scholarly evidence rather than personal assumptions.
- **Transferability** was strengthened by discussing findings in a way that allows adaptation across diverse Islamic educational contexts.

By adhering to these qualitative research principles, the study maintains methodological rigor and academic reliability.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

As this research is based solely on published literature, it does not involve human participants or primary data collection. Nevertheless, ethical academic practice was upheld by ensuring proper citation, avoiding misrepresentation of authors' ideas, and maintaining originality in synthesis and interpretation.

Results and Discussion

4.1 Pedagogical Transformation in Islamic Education

The literature consistently indicates that teacher-centered pedagogies are increasingly ineffective for Generation Z and Alpha. Learner-centered approaches—such as inquiry-based

learning, project-based learning, and reflective discussion—align more closely with their cognitive preferences.

In Islamic education, this transformation does not imply abandoning tradition but recontextualizing it. Qur’anic studies, fiqh, and Islamic ethics can be taught through problem-solving, case analysis, and contemporary applications, enhancing relevance and internalization.

4.2 Digital Engagement and Religious Learning

Digital platforms play a dual role in Islamic education for these generations. When strategically integrated, they facilitate collaborative learning, visualization of abstract concepts, and continuous engagement beyond classroom boundaries. However, the literature warns against technology-driven pedagogy that neglects spiritual depth.

Effective Islamic digital pedagogy emphasizes moderation, ethical guidelines, and purposeful use. Teachers are encouraged to guide students in critical digital literacy, helping them evaluate online religious content responsibly.

4.3 Character Formation and Moral Resilience

One of the most significant findings is the centrality of character education in addressing the moral challenges faced by Generation Z and Alpha. Islamic education must explicitly address issues such as online behavior, empathy, honesty, and social justice.

Character formation is most effective when supported by modeling, reflective practice, and consistent reinforcement across school, family, and community contexts. This aligns with Islamic educational principles that view moral development as a collective responsibility.

4.4 Teacher Competence and Institutional Support

The success of Islamic education reform largely depends on teacher competence. Educators must possess not only religious knowledge but also pedagogical adaptability and digital literacy. Institutional support through professional development programs is therefore essential.

Conclusion

This article has examined the evolving landscape of Islamic education for Generation Z and Generation Alpha within the context of rapid digitalization, cultural diversification, and shifting patterns of knowledge acquisition. The findings derived from the literature synthesis demonstrate that Islamic education is currently positioned at a critical crossroads: it must either adapt constructively to contemporary realities or risk losing relevance among younger Muslim generations.

The study confirms that **traditional, transmission-oriented pedagogical models**, while historically significant, are no longer sufficient to address the cognitive, social, and spiritual needs of digitally native learners. Generation Z and Alpha require educational experiences that are interactive, contextual, and meaningful, yet firmly grounded in Islamic epistemology. Islamic education, therefore, should not be understood merely as the delivery of religious content, but as a **transformative process** aimed at nurturing faith, ethical consciousness, and intellectual competence.

Furthermore, the study highlights the **strategic role of digital technology** in shaping the future of Islamic education. When employed ethically and purposefully, digital tools can enhance accessibility, engagement, and collaborative learning. However, the findings caution against uncritical digital adoption that prioritizes efficiency over spiritual depth. Islamic education must, therefore, promote **digital wisdom (ḥikmah)** by guiding learners to navigate online spaces

responsibly, critically evaluate religious information, and embody Islamic ethics in virtual interactions.

Another significant conclusion concerns the **centrality of character education (akhlāq)**. In the digital era, moral challenges faced by Generation Z and Alpha extend beyond physical spaces into online environments, where anonymity and algorithmic influences can weaken ethical accountability. Islamic education must respond by embedding character education across curricula, pedagogical practices, and institutional culture. Moral development should be experiential, reflective, and continuously reinforced through consistent modeling by educators, families, and community leaders.

Finally, this study acknowledges its limitations as a literature-based inquiry and calls for **future empirical research**. Longitudinal studies, classroom-based observations, and comparative analyses across regions would provide deeper insights into the practical implementation of the proposed frameworks. Future research should also explore the impact of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, on Islamic pedagogy and moral formation.

In conclusion, Islamic education for Generation Z and Generation Alpha holds immense potential to shape the future of Muslim societies. By embracing pedagogical transformation, ethical digital engagement, and holistic character formation, Islamic education can continue to serve as a vital force in cultivating faith-driven, ethically grounded, and globally engaged Muslim generations.

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