Research Article

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The Role of Islamic Education in Enhancing 21st Century Skills: Focusing on Critical Thinking, Creativity, and Collaboration in Digital Era

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Abstract: This article aims to explore how Islamic education can contribute to enhancing 21st-century skills through the principles of Islamic teachings. The objective of this research is to identify how the values contained in Islamic education can support the development of the skills needed by the youth of the 21st century in digital era, such as critical thinking in problem-solving, creativity in innovation, and collaboration in working with others. This research employs a qualitative approach with a literature study method to analyze various literatures related to Islamic education and 21st-century skills. Data sources are drawn from articles, books, and Islamic education curriculum documents that integrate 21st-century skills. In the data analysis, an inductive approach is used to explore the relationship between the principles of Islamic teachings and the skills required in the modern world. The findings of this research show that Islamic education can provide a strong foundation for the development of 21st-century skills by integrating the moral and ethical principles of Islam that support character development. For example, teachings on reflective and evaluative thinking can encourage the development of critical thinking skills, while collaboration in social and religious contexts strengthens teamwork skills. The implications of these findings highlight the importance of designing an Islamic education curriculum that can effectively integrate 21st-century skills. This approach is expected to enhance the quality of Islamic education, making it more relevant to the demands of the times and preparing students to face global challenges.

Keywords: Critical Thinking, Digital Era, Islamic Education, Skills.

Introduction

Islamic education, traditionally centered on imparting religious knowledge, is increasingly focusing on preparing students for the challenges of the 21st century. Today, education is not solely about academic learning, but also about developing essential life skills such as critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration. These skills are necessary for navigating the complexities of a rapidly evolving global landscape. Digital Storytelling (DST) offers a powerful way to integrate these 21st-century skills into Islamic education, combining religious values with practical learning strategies.

In the context of the digital age, critical thinking has become a crucial skill. Islamic education has the potential to foster critical thinking through methods that encourage analytical reflection on Islamic teachings. Purbarini (2019) emphasizes the importance of critical thinking in Islamic education, which teaches students to reflect on their beliefs and actions in light of ethical principles. DST, with its narrative-driven approach, can stimulate this reflection by immersing students in ethical dilemmas and moral questions that require careful thought and analysis (Creswell, 2009). For instance, DST can present Islamic moral stories that challenge students to evaluate the consequences of their actions, fostering deeper critical thinking and moral reasoning.

Moreover, creativity is essential for innovation and problem-solving in the 21st century. Islamic education encourages reflection

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and self-improvement, as noted by Sunarto et al. (2023), which can also spark creativity. DST enables students to create their own stories, thereby providing a platform for creative expression that aligns with Islamic moral teachings. By integrating multimedia elements like video, sound, and visuals, DST allows students to approach Islamic teachings from a new, creative angle, enhancing their engagement with moral concepts. This creative process not only reinforces Islamic values but also nurtures students' imaginative and innovative capabilities.

Collaboration is another critical skill in the digital age, where teamwork and cooperation are often required to address global challenges. Islamic education emphasizes the values of mutual respect, cooperation, and empathy qualities that are central to effective collaboration. Wahyu et al. (2021) found that collaboration skills are best developed through education that is rooted in moral and social values, which is where Islamic education excels. DST fosters collaboration by encouraging students to work together on projects, such as creating digital stories or engaging in discussions about moral dilemmas. This collaborative process promotes teamwork, helping students develop communication skills, empathy, and the ability to negotiate different perspectives skills that are crucial in the modern world.

The integration of technology in Islamic education, through tools like DST, further enhances collaboration. Mulyono and Ampo (2021) highlight how technology facilitates teamwork and communication, enabling students to collaborate more effectively, even in remote or digital settings. By using DST platforms, students can collaborate on projects, share ideas, and engage in discussions that promote collaborative learning while reinforcing Islamic values of cooperation and mutual support.

The need for Islamic education to adapt to the demands of the 21st century is clear. As noted by Nurika et al. (2023), educational models such as Project-Based Learning (PjBL) are effective in integrating critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration into the curriculum. By adopting PjBL in Islamic education, educators can facilitate the development of these skills in the context of Islamic values. Students can work on projects that address contemporary issues, using their critical thinking and creativity to propose solutions while drawing on Islamic teachings. The PjBL model also encourages teamwork, as students collaborate to complete tasks and solve problems, aligning with the collaborative nature emphasized in Islamic education.

Incorporating technology, such as digital platforms for collaboration and communication, further supports the development of 21st-century skills. Handayani and Wulandari (2021) argue that integrating technology in Islamic education allows students to engage with global issues, collaborate with peers across the world, and develop the skills needed to navigate a digitally connected society. By leveraging DST, Islamic education can enhance not only students' knowledge of Islamic principles but also their ability to work collaboratively, think critically, and express themselves creatively.

Digital Storytelling offers an innovative method for integrating 21st-century skills into Islamic education. By combining critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration with Islamic moral values, DST can provide students with the tools they need to succeed in the modern world. Islamic education, grounded in ethical teachings and religious values, can serve as a solid foundation for developing these essential skills, preparing students to navigate global challenges while remaining true to their faith. As educators continue to explore the potential of DST, it is clear that this approach can play a pivotal role in shaping students who are not only knowledgeable about their faith but also equipped with the practical skills necessary for success in today's interconnected world.

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Method

This research employs a qualitative approach with a literature study method to explore and analyze various relevant literatures related to the role of Islamic education in developing 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration (Creswell, 2009). This study aims to provide in-depth insights into the integration of Islamic education values with the skills needed in the global world. The literature study method is used to gather information from various academic sources, including books, scholarly articles, and journals, discussing topics such as Islamic education, 21st-century skills, and the development of critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration (Rahma et al., 2025; Purbarini, 2019).

By utilizing this approach, the research focuses on analyzing existing data sources to identify gaps and findings related to the application of 21st-century skills in Islamic education. According to Nurafiah et al. (2019), the qualitative approach is highly effective in exploring theoretical and practical perspectives related to the development of 21st-century skills in faith-based education contexts.

The data used in this research consists of secondary data obtained through literature review from various trusted academic sources. The primary data sources include books, scholarly journals, research articles, and reports relevant to the topics of Islamic education and 21st-century skills. These sources are drawn from previous studies that discuss critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration in Islamic education (Rahma et al., 2025; Sunarto et al., 2023). Previous research, such as that by Wahyu et al. (2021), shows that Islamic education holds significant potential for developing these skills by utilizing the fundamental principles of Islamic teachings. These sources provide a comprehensive picture of how Islamic education can equip students with the skills needed in the 21st century.

Data collection for this research was conducted through a literature review, where relevant sources were analyzed to identify findings that can support discussions about the role of Islamic education in developing 21st-century skills. This literature review aims to gain a broader theoretical understanding of the discussed topic, including value-based Islamic learning and 21st-century skills that are expected to be applied in daily learning (Mulyono & Ampo, 2021). Based on previous research, such as that conducted by Sunarto et al. (2023), the use of project-based learning (PjBL) models has proven effective in improving 21st-century skills, including creativity and collaboration among students. Therefore, data from various articles and journals are used to gain further understanding of how these methods can be applied in the context of Islamic education.

Data analysis is carried out by reading and deeply reviewing relevant references, then categorizing research findings that support discussions on the role of Islamic education in enhancing 21st-century skills. This analysis technique allows the researcher to draw conclusions based on existing findings and identify patterns and relationships between various concepts in the literature being analyzed. For example, the analysis conducted by Nurika et al. (2023) related to the development of critical thinking and creativity through Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in Islamic education provides insights into how this method can be applied to enhance 21st-century skills. This research also adopts an inductive approach, enabling the researcher to draw conclusions from the available data and provide practical recommendations regarding the implementation of 21st-century skills in Islamic education (Handayani & Wulandari, 2021).

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Results and Discussion
Critical Thinking in Islamic Education

The digital era has significantly reshaped many educational frameworks, including Islamic education, by introducing both new opportunities and challenges for developing critical thinking. In the context of Islamic education, the integration of digital tools and resources is transforming how critical thinking is taught, particularly in fields like Tafsir (Qur'anic exegesis) and Fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence).

Digital platforms provide students with access to a vast array of resources, which enhance their ability to analyze and evaluate religious texts, fostering deeper critical thinking. With online learning, students can explore various interpretations of Qur'anic verses and Hadiths, engage in discussions, and collaborate with peers and scholars worldwide. This approach encourages students to question, critique, and reflect on religious teachings in real-time, enabling them to link ancient texts with modern issues in social, political, and economic contexts.

For example, Tafsir-based learning, which traditionally required deep, individual study of religious texts, can now be enhanced with digital tools that facilitate collaborative discussions and offer access to multiple scholarly perspectives. This method aligns with the teaching of critical thinking in Islamic education, where students are encouraged to engage actively with texts rather than passively absorbing information. As Fahrurrozi (2021) notes, both the Qur'an and Hadith emphasize the use of reason and encourage Muslims to apply critical thinking to understand revelation and adapt it to contemporary issues. In today's digital age, students can access online forums, digital libraries, and expert-led webinars that encourage critical engagement with Islamic teachings (Fahrurrozi, 2021).

Moreover, as Putri et al. (2021) point out, the 21st century requires individuals to possess strong critical thinking skills to address global challenges. Digital tools in Islamic education provide platforms for students to explore global issues through an Islamic lens (Putri, 2021). For instance, students studying the Qur'anic teachings on social justice can now access case studies, videos, and interactive content to apply these teachings to current challenges like poverty, inequality, and environmental degradation. This helps students understand the relevance of religious teachings in solving contemporary issues, extending critical thinking beyond the classroom to real-life applications.

Additionally, digital tools allow for tracking and assessing students' progress in critical thinking. Online assessments, quizzes, and digital feedback systems enable educators to monitor students' engagement and identify areas where further support is needed in developing analytical and reflective skills. This feedback is crucial for refining their critical thinking abilities. Furthermore, the digital age provides an opportunity to combat misinformation and misunderstandings of religious teachings. As digital platforms facilitate the exchange of ideas, students can explore different interpretations of Islamic teachings, enabling them to assess diverse viewpoints critically. This helps prevent the spread of misinterpretations, ensuring Islamic education remains relevant in today's globalized world.

The digital era greatly enhances the integration of critical thinking into Islamic education. By leveraging digital tools and resources, students can develop a deeper, more reflective understanding of religious texts and apply Islamic principles to contemporary global challenges. As Islamic education continues to evolve with technological advancements, it can equip students with the critical thinking skills needed to navigate the complexities of the modern world while staying rooted in Islamic values. This approach fosters intellectual growth and prepares

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students to act responsibly and wisely in their communities and beyond.

Creativity in Islamic Education

Creativity is a key 21st-century skill that is increasingly emphasized in Islamic education, which not only teaches religious theory but also provides space for students to develop their intellectual creativity, both in religious disciplines and general knowledge. Islamic education offers an approach that actively engages students in learning, encouraging them to innovate in applying religious teachings in everyday life, including in fields like technology and the arts. This is evident in various teaching methodologies used, such as Islamic literature, art, and science. In the study of the Qur'an and Hadith, the development of various interpretations provides opportunities for students to explore creative ideas in responding to the challenges of the modern world. Islamic education lays a solid foundation for students not only to understand religious teachings but also to think creatively and innovatively. As stated by Herawati et al. (2019), Islamic education can encourage students to innovate, particularly in addressing challenges related to technological advancements and the arts in the context of dynamic social life.

A concrete example is the project-based learning (PjBL) approach in Islamic education, which allows students to connect religious teachings with developments in science and modern technology. With PjBL, students are given the freedom to explore creative ideas in solving real-life problems while staying grounded in Islamic principles. As explained by Nurika et al. (2023), PjBL provides students with opportunities to think critically and creatively, as well as to work in teams to develop innovative solutions that align with religious teachings. This approach introduces collaborative learning, where students can exchange ideas and enhance their understanding of materials that not only relate to

theoretical knowledge but also its application in daily life.

Furthermore, innovation in Islamic education can also be seen in the use of digital technology in learning. One study by Khoiriyati and Sufirmansyah (2024) shows how Islamic education teachers integrate digital technology, such as Canva and YouTube, in teaching the Qur'an and Hadith. This integration of technology makes teaching more interactive and encourages students to create their ideas, whether in the form of posters, presentations, or videos that combine Islamic concepts with the context of modern life. This approach not only enhances students' technical skills but also expands their creative space, allowing them to deepen their understanding of Islamic teachings through the technology they are familiar with (Khoiriyati & Sufirmansyah, 2024). It demonstrates that Islamic education does not just teach religion as a set of rules but also allows students to innovate and adapt religious teachings to face the challenges and changes of the times.

On the other hand, Islamic education also facilitates the development of creativity through student involvement in collaborative activities, such as discussions, group projects, and research-based assignments. In this regard, collaboration is a key aspect of developing creativity, as students are encouraged to work together, share ideas, and create better joint solutions. According to research by Firdaus (2025), learning that uses collaborative and project-based methods can increase students' creativity because they are given the opportunity to interact directly, both with classmates and through technology-based teaching (Firdaus & Satriawan, 2025). This gives students room to explore different ideas and perspectives, ultimately enriching their learning experience.

In addition, the importance of fostering a creative character in Islamic education is also key in developing students' potential. For instance, in Islamic teachings, it is important to balance knowledge with moral and social values that lead

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to the common good. This approach facilitates the development of creativity that is not only focused on intellectual innovation but also on making positive contributions to society (Samsudin, 2024). By building students' character based on religious teachings, Islamic education can produce individuals who not only possess technical and creative skills but also have a focus on the collective interest, social justice, and sustainability in society.

Islamic education offers opportunities for students to develop their creativity, both in religious knowledge and general sciences. Through contemporary Tafsir-based approaches, digital technology, and project-based learning, Islamic education allows students to think critically and creatively in responding to the challenges of the times. By encouraging students to connect religious teachings with everyday life, Islamic education not only equips them with religious knowledge but also with skills that are relevant to social, technological, and economic developments. In this regard, creativity becomes a crucial skill in facing an ever-changing world, and Islamic education holds great potential to develop this skill through various innovative approaches that align with religious values.

Collaboration in Islamic Education

Collaboration is a critical 21st-century skill that plays an essential role in modern education, and Islamic education instills this value deeply through the social teachings found in the Qur'an and Hadith. In Islamic education, collaboration is not only seen as working together in academic contexts but also as part of the character formation process that promotes mutual respect, support, and working together toward common goals. The values of gotong-royong (mutual assistance) and helping one another in Islam provide a strong foundation for developing collaboration skills among students. As explained by Sunarto et al. (2023), Islamic education utilizes the principles of collaboration found in the Qur'an and Hadith to

form attitudes of mutual respect and cooperation, which can then be applied in daily life and teamwork. The Qur'an itself, in several verses, teaches the importance of collaborating to achieve greater goals, especially in matters that are good and positive (QS. Al-Maidah: 2).

Furthermore, research by Wahyu et al. (2021) reveals that Islamic education provides students with opportunities to learn how to work together in groups through various social activities, collaborative projects, and discussions. This approach not only involves academic aspects but also moral and social character development. In Islamic education, collaboration involves respecting differences, developing tolerance, and working together to solve problems. This value is especially significant as today's globalized world prioritizes collaboration among individuals and groups, both in professional and social contexts. These principles provide a strong moral foundation for students to learn teamwork, respect different viewpoints, and contribute to the collective good.

Additionally, integrating Islamic teachings with modern approaches, such as project-based learning (PjBL), offers students the opportunity to develop collaboration skills relevant to the 21st century. Islamic education teaches collaboration values that are highly applicable in real-life situations, as described in the research by Irajpour, Ghaljaei, and Alavi (2015). They argue that the concept of collaboration in Islam is not just related to social activities but also involves work ethics that include responsibility, mutual assistance, and respecting others' rights. In the educational context, this encourages students to work together to complete projects that require communication, problem-solving, and effective decision-making skills. With this approach, Islamic education not only equips students with religious knowledge but also with skills crucial in the professional world, where teamwork is highly emphasized.

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The application of collaboration in Islamic education is also highly relevant to the concept of education management based on the Qur'an and Hadith, which stresses the importance of the principle of musyawarah (consultation) and mutual respect in decision-making. As reflected in QS. Asy-Syura: 38, Muslims are commanded to engage in mutual consultation on their affairs, showing that collaboration is an essential element in social and organizational life. Islamic education that integrates these principles not only helps students develop collaboration skills but also instills ethical values needed in social and professional interactions. A study by Siska Margareta et al. (2024) suggests that implementing the principle of syura in Islamic education not only enriches students' social skills but also helps them become just and wise leaders in collective decision-making.

Collaboration also plays a significant role in the development of social and communication skills. In many Islamic educational activities, students are encouraged to work together in social projects, such as fundraising for humanitarian activities, assisting those in need, and participating in initiatives that promote communal values and social responsibility. This aligns with the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith, which emphasize the importance of helping one another in goodness and piety (QS. Al-Maidah: 2). Therefore, Islamic education teaches that collaboration is not only related to academic or professional cooperation but also in building a caring society that works together for the common good.

Islamic education plays a crucial role in developing collaboration skills among students. By teaching the social values embedded in the Qur'an and Hadith, students learn to collaborate not only in academic contexts but also in their social lives. Islamic education equips students with the essential skills required in a world that increasingly demands collaboration and teamwork to solve common problems. As a result,

Islamic education provides a strong foundation for students to become individuals who are not only intellectually capable but also socially and morally responsible, ready to contribute to the collective good.

Implications and Relevance of Islamic Education in 21st Century Skills in Digital Era

In the digital age, integrating 21st-century skills with Islamic education has become increasingly vital, as these skills are essential for students to thrive in a fast-paced, interconnected world. The digital transformation of education presents new opportunities to enhance critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication within Islamic education. These skills, which are crucial for both personal and professional growth, can be nurtured through digital tools, online learning platforms, and innovative teaching methods.

Islamic education, deeply rooted in the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith, provides a solid foundation for developing moral values and character—key components of 21st-century skills. However, as Mulyono and Ampo (2021) suggest, it is important for Islamic education to evolve by integrating critical thinking and creativity into the curriculum to meet the challenges of the digital era. This can be achieved by using digital technologies that enable interactive learning, such as virtual classrooms, online collaborative projects, and multimedia-based content. These tools allow students to engage more deeply with religious texts while also fostering the analytical and creative skills necessary to navigate the complexities of the modern world.

Additionally, the values of collaboration and mutual assistance (gotong-royong) ingrained in Islamic teachings are highly relevant today. In the digital era, teamwork and cooperation are more important than ever. Digital platforms allow students to collaborate with peers from different

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regions and even countries, using technology to address real-world problems. Online group projects and discussion forums give students the opportunity to share diverse perspectives, engage in critical debates, and work together to find innovative solutions—all while adhering to Islamic principles of respect, responsibility, and cooperation.

Learning models like Project-Based Learning (PjBL) can be significantly enhanced by digital tools in Islamic education. PjBL, which encourages collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking, can benefit from digital platforms that support teamwork and provide real-time feedback and assessment. Students can use digital resources to research topics, create multimedia presentations, and collaborate virtually—all while learning how to apply Islamic values to real-world challenges. For example, a PjBL project could involve students using digital platforms to design solutions for social justice issues, inspired by Islamic teachings on fairness, equality, and compassion.

Moreover, educators play a crucial role in fostering these 21st-century skills in the digital age. With digital technologies, educators can create engaging, interactive, and collaborative learning environments. They can use digital tools to facilitate discussions, assess student progress, and provide personalized feedback that nurtures critical thinking and creativity. As Fijriyah (2018) points out, educators must act as facilitators, guiding students not only in religious knowledge but also in developing the skills required to navigate a rapidly changing world . By using digital resources effectively, educators can help students see the relevance of religious teachings in addressing contemporary challenges and equip them with the skills needed for success in the digital era.

In higher education, as Rahmi and Saefudin (2024) emphasize, integrating 21st-century skills like critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration into Islamic education helps prepare students for the demands of the professional world. Digital tools can enhance this integration by offering students access to global networks, online communities, and interactive platforms that encourage the exchange of ideas and collaboration. By preparing students to think critically, communicate effectively, and work collaboratively, Islamic education can play a key role in shaping a generation capable of tackling global challenges while staying true to Islamic values.

The digital era offers exciting opportunities to enhance Islamic education by integrating 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration. Through the use of digital tools, Islamic education can not only deepen students' understanding of religious teachings but also equip them with the practical skills needed to navigate the complexities of the modern world. By adapting to the digital age, Islamic education can continue to shape individuals who are intellectually sharp, morally grounded, and able to make positive contributions to both their communities and the global society.

Conclusion

Islamic education in the digital era offers a unique opportunity to integrate essential 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration. By incorporating digital tools and resources, students gain access to a wealth of materials, allowing them to engage with religious texts and teachings in ways that promote deeper reflection. This shift is especially noticeable in areas like Tafsir and Fiqh, where students can explore diverse interpretations and engage in real-time discussions, connecting religious concepts to modern global issues. Digital platforms also support project-based learning (PjBL), enabling students to create innovative solutions grounded in Islamic principles. By embracing technology, Islamic education cultivates an environment where students can both innovate and critically

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evaluate the teachings of the Qur'an and Hadith, tackling contemporary challenges such as social justice and environmental concerns. Additionally, collaboration a key value in Islam becomes even more significant in the digital age. Online platforms provide opportunities for students to collaborate with peers worldwide, enhancing their teamwork and communication skills. As educators incorporate digital tools, they not only guide students in deepening their religious understanding but also foster the development of critical 21st-century competencies. This evolving approach ensures that Islamic education stays relevant, equipping students with the intellectual, moral, and social skills needed to positively impact society.

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