

Humanistic Learning In The Digital Era: Balancing Technological Advancement And Educational Values

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ABSTRACT

The rapid advancement of digital technology has fundamentally transformed the landscape of education at various levels, including primary education based on Islamic elementary schools (Madrasah Ibtidaiyah). While technology offers easier access to information, diverse learning media, and greater efficiency, its unregulated use risks eroding the human dimension of education, such as personal interaction, empathy, and the cultivation of values. This study aims to comprehensively examine how the principles of humanistic learning can be preserved and balanced with the use of digital technology, particularly within the context of learning in Madrasah Ibtidaiyah and the competency development of prospective teachers in the Elementary Madrasah Teacher Education (PGMI) study program. This research employs a qualitative approach through library research, analyzing, comparing, and synthesizing more than seventeen literature sources consisting of national scholarly journal articles, reference books, and prior relevant studies. The findings indicate that humanistic learning in the digital era can be realized through four main pillars: positioning technology as a supporting tool rather than a replacement for the teacher's role; designing technology-based learning that remains student-centered; integrating religious and character values into every use of digital media; and strengthening teachers' digital literacy in balance with value-based literacy. This study recommends that the PGMI study program design a curriculum that equips prospective elementary madrasah teachers with integrated technological and humanistic-pedagogical competencies, so that technology does not replace the human touch in primary education.

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Introduction

Education is essentially not simply a process of transferring knowledge from teacher to student, but rather an effort to humanize human beings. This view is at the heart of humanistic learning theory, which positions students as whole individuals with potential, feelings, psychological needs, and free will that must be respected in every learning process. Figures such as Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow emphasize the importance of freedom of expression, self-actualization, and a warm relationship between educator and student as the foundation for successful learning (Rogers, 1969; Maslow, 1954). In the humanistic view, educational success is measured not only by cognitive achievement, but also by the extent to which students are able to grow into individuals who are self-confident, empathetic, and responsible for their own learning process.

Over the past two decades, the world of education has experienced an unprecedented acceleration in digital transformation. The advent of smart devices, interactive learning apps, online learning platforms, and generative artificial intelligence has transformed the way students acquire, process, and communicate knowledge. This acceleration has become even more evident following the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced nearly all educational institutions, including elementary schools, to adapt to technology-based learning quickly. The current generation of students, who have grown up as digital natives, have different interaction patterns, attention spans, and learning styles than previous generations, necessitating more adaptive learning strategies (Naufal, 2021; Widodo, Indraswati, & Erfan, 2020).

In Indonesia, educational policy trends are driving the acceleration of digitalization, evident in the strengthening of 21st-century competencies in the Independent Curriculum and various digital literacy programs for elementary school teachers. Several studies have shown that ongoing digital literacy training plays a crucial role in improving teachers' pedagogical competencies and fostering student creativity (Rachman et al., 2025), while mastery of digital literacy is also a fundamental competency determining the effectiveness of 21st-century learning (Saerang, Lembong, Sumual, & Tuerah, 2023). However, the rapid flow of digitalization does not automatically guarantee better education quality if it is not balanced by strengthening human values and relationships in the learning process.

This issue becomes even more crucial in the context of Madrasah Ibtidaiyah (MI), a basic Islamic education level with a dual mission: to educate students academically while simultaneously developing morals, character, and personality based on Islamic values. Madrasahs are required to adapt to digital developments, both in the learning process and in administrative management, while simultaneously maintaining their strategic role in shaping students' perspectives that are moderate, virtuous, and have strong character. If technology is used without a clear values framework, there is a risk of a shift in the role of teachers as value facilitators, a reduction in social-emotional interactions between students, and a weakening of the instillation of character and spiritual values that have long been the hallmark of madrasah education.

To date, studies on technology in elementary education have largely focused on its impact on students' cognitive achievement or literacy-numeracy skills, such as the influence of digital media on reading and writing skills (Intaniasari & Utami, 2022), or on strengthening the digital literacy of prospective elementary school teachers in general (Cintang & Fajriyah, 2018; Widodo et al., 2020). Meanwhile, studies specifically synthesizing the relationship between humanistic learning theory and the challenges of digitalization in the context of Islamic elementary schools and the PGMI study program are still relatively limited. This gap underlies the importance of this research: to formulate a conceptual framework and practical strategies for prospective elementary school teachers in maintaining a balance between the use of technology and the preservation of humanistic educational values.

Based on the background description, this research is formulated in three main questions: (1) what is the basic concept of humanistic learning and its relevance to education in Islamic Elementary Schools; (2) what are the opportunities and challenges of implementing digital technology in learning in Islamic Elementary Schools; and (3) what is the strategy for

maintaining a balance between the use of technology and humanistic educational values in Islamic Elementary Schools, especially in the context of preparing the competencies of Islamic Elementary School students. The purpose of this research is to describe and analyze the concept of humanistic learning in the digital era and to formulate a strategy for balancing technology and educational values in learning in Islamic Elementary Schools. Theoretically, this research is expected to enrich the study of humanistic education in the context of digitalization of Islamic elementary school education; practically, the results of this research are expected to be a reference for lecturers, Islamic Elementary School students, and Islamic Elementary School teachers in designing innovative learning without sacrificing humanitarian and Islamic values.

Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with library research. This method was chosen because the study focuses on conceptual analysis, comparison of findings, and synthesis of various literature sources to answer the problem formulation, rather than primary data collection in the field. The data sources in this study consist of two types. Primary sources are articles in accredited and indexed national scientific journals that discuss humanistic learning theory, education in the digital era, teacher digital literacy, and values/character education in elementary schools and Islamic elementary schools, published between 2017 and 2025. Secondary sources are reference books by humanistic education figures (Rogers, Maslow) and relevant education policy documents, such as the Independent Curriculum framework and the Pancasila Student Profile. Data collection techniques are carried out through documentation studies, namely literature searches in academic databases such as Google Scholar and online journal repositories (Online Journal System) using the keywords "humanistic learning," "digital era," "teacher digital literacy," and "madrasah educational values."

The inclusion criteria used included: (a) articles published in national or international scientific journals that can be accessed online; (b) having direct thematic relevance to humanistic learning, educational digitalization, or values education at the elementary education level; and (c) published within the last ten years, except for references to classical theories that serve as the philosophical foundation of the research. Data analysis was conducted using content analysis techniques through three stages: data reduction (sorting information relevant to the research focus), data presentation (grouping findings into major themes such as humanistic concepts, technological opportunities, challenges, and balance strategies), and drawing conclusions and verifying them through cross-source comparisons. To maintain data validity, this study implemented source triangulation, namely comparing findings from various articles and books that discuss similar themes to ensure the consistency and credibility of the synthesis results.

Results & Discussion

1. The Nature of Humanistic Learning and Its Relevance to Education in MI

The study's findings indicate that humanistic values align with the educational goals of Islamic elementary schools (Madrasah Ibtidaiyah), which prioritize not only academic achievement but also the development of students' morals and character. Humanistic principles, which emphasize respect for individual uniqueness, align with the spirit of Islamic education, which views each child as an individual with inherent qualities and potential that need to be nurtured and developed, not molded uniformly. In practice, elementary school teachers who apply humanistic principles will serve more as mentors and role models, providing space for dialogue, and respecting students' thought processes, rather than simply demanding memorization or passive obedience.

In addition to focusing on developing individual potential, humanistic learning also positions students as the primary subject in the educational process. In the context of Islamic Elementary Schools (Madrasah Ibtidaiyah), this approach is highly relevant because students are in a phase of cognitive, affective, and social development that requires comprehensive

support. Teachers function not only as conveyors of material but also as mentors who help students recognize their own abilities, build self-confidence, and develop critical and creative thinking skills. This approach creates a safe, comfortable, and enjoyable learning environment, thus motivating students to actively participate in the learning process. This condition aligns with the research findings of Rosidin et al. (2024), which states that educational transformation in the digital era must remain grounded in humanistic values so that technology can support the holistic development of students, not just improve their academic abilities.

This relevance is further strengthened when linked to the finding that fulfilling students' basic psychological needs for safety, acceptance, and appreciation is a prerequisite for optimal achievement of cognitive learning goals (Rahmadani et al., 2025). For MI students in the early stages of development, the need for safety and social-emotional acceptance is even more crucial to learning success than the availability of technology alone.

2. Opportunities for Digital Transformation in Learning at MI

The presence of digital technology opens up a number of opportunities for learning at MI. First, a variety of learning media that are more interesting and interactive, such as animated videos, gamification quiz applications, and digital books which have been proven to be able to increase student involvement in literacy activities and reduce boredom in learning. Second, easy access to learning resources which allows teachers to adapt teaching materials to students' abilities and interests in a more varied way. Third, strengthening students' digital skills from an early age, which is an important provision to face the demands of the 21st century. Fourth, digitalization also makes it easier to evaluate learning outcomes through more measurable and systematic data (Hakim, 2024).

Digital transformation not only brings innovation to learning media but also opens up opportunities for teachers to implement learning that is more adaptive to the needs and characteristics of students. Through various digital learning platforms, teachers can present material in the form of interactive videos, simulations, educational games, and artificial intelligence-based media. This variety of media can increase learning motivation, strengthen student engagement during the learning process, and provide a more meaningful learning experience than learning that relies solely on lectures. As stated by Bond et al. (2024),

In addition to facilitating the delivery of materials, digital transformation also expands access to a variety of quality learning resources. Teachers and students are no longer limited to textbooks, but can utilize e-journals, digital libraries, instructional videos, and widely available open educational resources. This allows students to gain a more contextual learning experience that aligns with scientific developments. According to UNESCO (2023),

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3. Challenges and Risks of Dehumanization of Learning in the Digital Era

On the other hand, dependence on technology presents a number of challenges that cannot be ignored. First, there is the gap in technology access between students and between educational units, which has the potential to widen the gap in educational quality. Second, there is the potential for exposure to negative or age-inappropriate content for MI students who lack the digital literacy skills to filter information independently. Third, there is the risk of reduced face-to-face interaction, which is crucial for instilling values, empathy, and character development in elementary school-aged children. Fourth, the still-low digital literacy skills among some elementary school teachers mean that technology tends to be used only as a means of conveying information, rather than as a meaningful and student-centered learning tool (Rachman et al., 2025).

Besides the issue of disparity in access to devices and internet networks, another

challenge faced in digital transformation is the emergence of a gap in the quality of technology utilization (digital use divide). Not all students and teachers have adequate digital literacy skills to utilize technology as an effective learning tool. As a result, technology is often used only as a medium for delivering material without being able to create interactive, reflective, and student-centered learning. This situation shows that the success of digital transformation is determined not only by the availability of infrastructure, but also by the digital competence of educators and the ability of students to use technology critically and responsibly (Christanti et al., 2024).

The most fundamental risk is the tendency to dehumanize learning, namely a shift in focus from "educating humans" to "operating systems." When technology is used without a clear value framework, learning has the potential to be reduced to information transactions, which are ultimately lacking in a humanistic approach. For MI, this risk is even more serious because it could undermine the function of madrasahs as institutions for shaping character and Islamic values in the younger generation. Strategy for Maintaining Balance between Technology and Educational Values Based on a synthesis of various literature, this study formulates four main strategies that MI teachers and prospective teachers can apply to maintain a balance between technology and humanistic values in learning, as summarized in Table 1.

Strategy	Description	Basis / reference
Technology as a tool, not a substitute for teachers	Teachers remain the center of emotional and moral relationships; digital media enriches the delivery of material, while value guidance is provided directly by teachers.	Putri, Husna, & N.S.A. (2023)
Digital learning that remains student-centered	Technology is designed to provide space for expression, collaboration, and creativity, not just passive content consumption.	Qodir (2017); Kholilullah & Bakar (2025)
Integration of religious values and character in digital media	Every use of technology is accompanied by strengthening the values of honesty, online politeness, and wisdom in selecting content.	Perni (2018); nilai Profil Pelajar Pancasila
Strengthening teachers' digital literacy is balanced with value literacy	Teachers are equipped with technical competence as well as pedagogical-value sensitivity through ongoing training.	Rachman et al. (2025); Saerang et al. (2023)

Table 1. Strategy for Balancing Technology and Humanistic Educational Values

The first strategy emphasizes that no matter how sophisticated the technology used, the teacher's role as a facilitator and moral role model is irreplaceable. Digital media such as learning videos, interactive quiz apps, or collaborative platforms serve to enrich the delivery of material, while the teacher continues to reinforce values, provide empathy, and provide personal guidance directly (Putri et al., 2023).

The second strategy emphasizes that technology utilization should be designed to provide space for students to express themselves, collaborate, and develop their creativity, rather than simply passively consume content. This approach is consistent with humanistic principles that reject one-way learning and emphasize meaningful learning experiences for students (Qodir, 2017; Kholilullah & Bakar, 2025).

The third strategy emphasizes that every use of technology in MI must be accompanied by the reinforcement of Islamic values, such as honesty in accessing information, politeness in online interactions, and wisdom in selecting content. In this way, students' digital literacy develops alongside value literacy, ensuring that technology becomes a tool for strengthening character rather than a threat.

The fourth strategy focuses on strengthening the capacity of teachers themselves. Continuous digital literacy training has been shown to play a crucial role in improving teachers' pedagogical competence while encouraging creativity in designing learning (Rachman et al., 2025). However, this training needs to be balanced with strengthening awareness of digital values and ethics, so that teachers are not only technically proficient but also able to serve as role models in the wise and responsible use of technology (Saerang et al., 2023).

The successful implementation of technology in learning depends not only on mastery of digital devices, but also on teachers' ability to integrate technology with learning strategies that are appropriate to student characteristics. Teachers need to ensure that technology use continues to support active, interactive, and student-centered learning so that learning objectives can be optimally achieved (Koehler & Mishra, 2009).

The Role and Readiness of PGMI Teachers in Realizing Digital Humanist Learning

As prospective elementary school teachers, students of the PGMI Study Program hold a strategic position in realizing humanistic learning in the digital era. This readiness is not solely built through mastery of technological applications or devices, but also requires a deep understanding of the philosophy of humanistic education and the Islamic values that characterize madrasahs. The digital literacy profile of qualified prospective elementary school teachers needs to be directed not only at technical skills in operating devices, but also at the ability to design technology-based learning that still supports the psychological and spiritual development of students (Widodo et al., 2020).

Therefore, the PGMI Study Program curriculum ideally integrates three competencies in a balanced manner: digital-technology competency, humanistic-pedagogical competency, and Islamic-values competency. This integration will produce PGMI graduates who are not only proficient in using learning technology but also able to utilize technology as a means to strengthen, rather than weaken, the madrasah's mission of developing a generation that is intelligent, character-driven, and virtuous.

The readiness of PGMI students as prospective teachers is measured not only by their ability to master technology, but also by their ability to integrate technology with a humanistic pedagogical approach. Prospective teachers need to be competent in designing digital learning that develops students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects in a balanced manner. Thus, technology is utilized as a means to improve the quality of learning without compromising student interaction, caring, and character development (Redecker, 2017).

Conclusion

balance between technology and educational values can be achieved through four main strategies, namely positioning technology as a tool, not a substitute for the role of teachers, designing digital learning that remains student-centered, integrating religious and character values in every use of digital media, and strengthening teachers' digital literacy that is balanced with value literacy. Based on these conclusions, this study proposes several recommendations. For the PGMI Study Program, the curriculum needs to be designed to integrate technological, pedagogical-humanistic, and Islamic values competencies in an integrated manner, for example through courses that combine digital learning media with character education studies. For MI teachers and prospective teachers, it is important to continue developing their ability to design technology-based learning that still supports students' psychological and spiritual needs. For future researchers, it is recommended to conduct field research to empirically test the effectiveness of the strategy of balancing technology and humanistic values formulated in this library research, for example through a case study in a specific Madrasah Ibtidaiyah.

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