

Integrating Islamic values into digital learning: A framework for ethical information literacy in higher education

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Abstract

The rapid expansion of digital learning in higher education underscores the need for information literacy competencies that integrate both technical proficiency and ethical judgment. Within Islamic higher education, the incorporation of Islamic moral principles provides a distinct ethical foundation for guiding students interactions with digital information. This study develops a comprehensive framework for ethical information literacy by aligning internationally recognized information-literacy standards with core Islamic values, including honesty (*ṣiḍq*), trustworthiness (*amanah*), justice (*‘adl*), and proper conduct (*adab*). Employing a qualitative systematic literature review, the research synthesizes scholarship on digital learning, global information-literacy models, and Islamic ethical thought. Thematic content analysis reveals clear points of convergence between information-literacy competencies and Islamic ethical constructs, demonstrating that integrating Islamic values enhances students' ethical awareness in evaluating source credibility, upholding academic integrity, and exercising responsible digital citizenship. The proposed framework offers conceptual and practical guidance for embedding Islamic ethical principles into digital pedagogy, instructional design, and assessment strategies. The study's implications suggest that value-based information-literacy frameworks can strengthen character formation, inform curriculum development, and support institutional policies that promote ethical digital engagement. This framework also provides a foundation for future empirical research on ethical digital-learning practices within Islamic higher education.

Keywords

Digital learning, Ethical information literacy, Higher education, Islamic values

Introduction

The rapid development of digital learning in higher education has fundamentally changed the way knowledge is accessed, produced, and disseminated. This has transformed access to knowledge, production, and dissemination [1]. This

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transformation not only brings pedagogical opportunities, but also poses serious challenges related to student information literacy, particularly in assessing the credibility of digital sources, maintaining academic integrity, and behaving ethically in an online learning environment. This shift fosters open knowledge, promotes flexibility and collaboration [2]. As a result, digital learning not only improves student performance and innovation but also contributes to the sustainability of educational institutions, ensuring they remain competitive in a rapidly evolving technological landscape. The shift to online learning promotes open knowledge and enhances collaboration between students and educators [3].

The widespread use of artificial intelligence, algorithmic systems, and user-generated digital content is increasingly blurring the line between valid information and misinformation [4]. This situation confirms that information literacy should no longer be understood as merely a technical skill, but must also include ethical dimensions and moral considerations in the use of digital information. Libraries are encouraged to develop tools and programs that promote transparency, understanding, and accountability in algorithmic decision-making, thereby encouraging critical thinking and responsible digital participation among users [5]. Various efforts have been made to respond to these issues through the development of a global information literacy framework to strengthen media literacy and fact-checking through smart technology to combat disinformation [6]. Influential models such as the Framework for Information Literacy for Higher Education from the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), UNESCO's Media and Information Literacy (MIL) initiative, and the concept of digital citizenship emphasize the importance of critical thinking, source evaluation, responsible information production, and ethical participation in the digital space [7].

A number of recent studies also highlight that information literacy is closely related to issues of academic ethics, data protection, and social responsibility in the use of digital technology [8]. Systematic review articles show a paradigm shift from a skills-based approach to one that emphasizes dispositions, values, and ethical awareness in information literacy practices in higher education. However, most existing information literacy frameworks are still dominated by secular and universalistic perspectives, with normative conceptualizations of ethics and general policies [9]. This approach leaves relatively little room for the integration of value systems rooted in specific moral, cultural, or religious traditions. In the context of Islamic higher education, ethical issues in the pursuit and use of knowledge have long been discussed in Islamic thought [10]. Values such as honesty (*ṣidq*), trustworthiness (*amanah*), justice (*ʿadl*), and proper conduct (*adab*) are directly relevant to the practice of information literacy, including academic honesty, intellectual responsibility, and the ethics of interacting with digital information [11]. However, these values are rarely positioned systematically within the framework of contemporary information literacy.

This limitation indicates a conceptual gap in the study of information literacy and digital learning in Islamic higher education. Previous studies discussing digital learning in

Islamic education generally focus on pedagogical aspects, technology integration, or character education in general, without explicitly mapping Islamic ethical values into internationally recognized information literacy competencies [12]. As a result, educators and Islamic higher education institutions still lack comprehensive conceptual guidelines for coherently and academically integrating digital information literacy with Islamic ethical foundations [13].

The purpose of this study is to develop a conceptual framework for ethical information literacy based on Islamic values in the context of higher education. This study uses a qualitative systematic literature review method by analyzing major studies on digital learning, international information literacy models, and classical and contemporary Islamic ethical thinking. Through thematic synthesis, this article is expected to provide conceptual contributions to curriculum development, digital learning design, and institutional policies that encourage ethical digital engagement in Islamic higher education environments, while also opening space for further empirical research in this field.

Method

This research uses the SLR (Systematic Literature Review) method, which involves identifying, reviewing, evaluating, and interpreting all relevant research. Researchers follow the steps established in each process to systematically review and identify journals [14].

The first step is to identify research topics related to ethical information literacy based on Islamic values in the context of higher education. The collection of literature sources was carried out through a thorough search of online databases, libraries, and trusted scientific journals. Various sources such as journal articles, books, theses, and conferences that discuss the topic of ethical information literacy based on Islamic values in the context of higher education were identified and collected. After collecting the literature sources, the next step is selection and analysis. The literature sources were selected based on their relevance and quality, then the data taken from the literature was analyzed comprehensively to identify the main findings, approaches used, and ethical information literacy based on Islamic values in the context of higher education. The article selection process according to the PRISMA procedure can be seen in the [Figure 1](#).

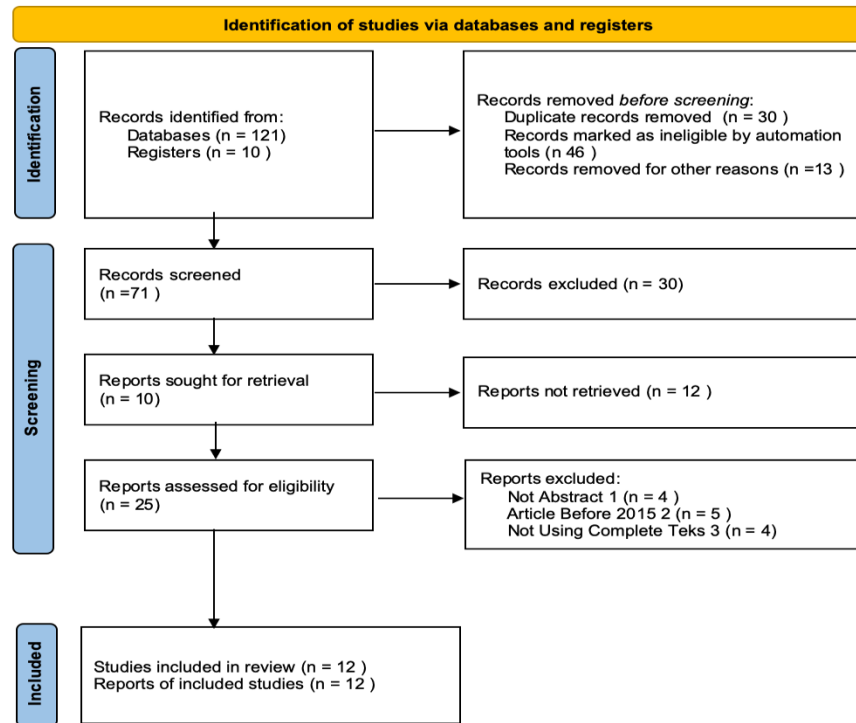


Figure 1. Flow of article selection with prisma

From the results of the review of 12 journal articles that discuss the ethical information literacy based on Islamic values in the context of higher education, the classification based on the year of publication is as follows: one article was published in 2019, three article in 2021, and one article in 2024. Furthermore, there are four articles published in 2023, which shows increased attention to the issue of ethical information literacy based on Islamic values in that year. The most recent article is from 2024, indicating that this topic is still evolving and relevant in the current context of higher education. This distribution pattern indicates that in the last five years, the information literacy based on Islamic values in the context of higher education has become a focus that continues to receive attention from academics and education practitioners. The recapitulation of the reviewed research articles is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Recapitulation of research article

No	Author, Year	Publisher	Method
1.	Silvhiany, 2021	Indonesian Journal of EFL and Linguistics	Qualitative
2.	Blau, 2021	Journal of Computing in Higher Education	Qualitative
3.	Wykes,2019	Curr Treat Options Psych	Qualitative
4.	Blancke,2022	Synthese	R & D
5.	Margitay, 2021	Synthese	Qualitative
6.	J. Zhang and Z. ming Zhang, 2023	BMC Medical Informatics and Decision Making	R & D
7.	Zenker et al, 2024	Argumentation	Qualitative
8.	Miron et al, 2022	International Journal for Educational Integrity	Quantitative
9.	Alfahmi, 2022	BMC Medical Ethics	Qualitative
10.	Belhaj, 2023	Religions	Qualitative
11.	Piragauta, 2023	Journal of Academic Ethics	Quantitative
12.	Pallathadka et al, 2023	HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies	Qualitative

The results of the literature analysis are then synthesized to summarize the main information regarding information literacy. This synthesis is useful for understanding the concept of information literacy based on Islamic values in the context of higher education. Furthermore, this literature synthesis will be the basis for writing a research report that includes an abstract, introduction, theoretical framework, main findings from the literature review, discussion, conclusion, and bibliography that lists the sources of literature used. With this literature review approach, it is hoped that this study will provide in-depth insight into the information literacy based on Islamic values in the context of higher education.

Results

The literature search process yielded a number of publications relevant to the research focus. After screening the titles, abstracts, and full texts based on inclusion and exclusion criteria, a collection of articles was obtained that substantially discussed information literacy in higher education, ethics in digital learning, and ethical values in Islamic education. In general, the analyzed literature can be grouped into three main categories: *first*, studies on the framework and competencies of global information literacy. *second*, research on ethics and digital citizenship in higher education. And *third*, conceptual and pedagogical studies on Islamic ethical values in education. This distribution shows that studies on information literacy and digital ethics are developing rapidly, while the explicit integration of Islamic values into information literacy is still relatively limited.

Key Themes of Information Literacy in Digital Learning

A thematic analysis of the literature on information literacy and digital learning revealed several dominant themes. The first theme relates to critical evaluation skills for digital information sources, including assessing the credibility, authority, and relevance of sources [15]. The second theme emphasizes academic integrity, particularly in the context of digital resource usage, citation, and plagiarism prevention [16]. The third theme relates to ethical responsibility and participation in the digital space, which includes awareness of the social impact of information use, data protection, and professional behavior in the online environment [17]. These three themes consistently appear in various information literacy frameworks and form the core of information literacy competencies in higher education. However, these themes are generally presented in terms of technical and cognitive competencies, with ethical dimensions that are implicit or normative in nature.

Ethical Themes from an Islamic Perspective

An analysis of Islamic ethical literature shows a strong emphasis on moral values relevant to the practice of seeking and using knowledge [18]. The value of honesty (*ṣidq*) emerges as the main principle in the accurate delivery and use of information [19]. Trustworthiness (*amanah*) emphasizes the moral responsibility of individuals in maintaining trust, including in managing and disseminating information [20]. Justice

(*ʿadl*) relates to being objective, unbiased, and proportional in assessing and using information [21]. Meanwhile, proper conduct (*adab*) emphasize ethical behavior in the learning process, academic interactions, and the use of knowledge [22].

These values are not only understood as personal norms, but also as the foundation of social and intellectual ethics in the Islamic scientific tradition. These findings show that Islamic ethics has a systematic value structure that is relevant for addressing ethical issues in digital learning.

Intersection between Information Literacy and Islamic Values

Thematic synthesis between the two groups of literature shows a clear convergence between information literacy competencies and Islamic ethical values. The ability to evaluate information sources correlates with the values of *ṣidq* and *ʿadl*, which demand honesty and fairness in assessing the truthfulness of information [23]. Academic integrity practices, such as proper citation and avoidance of plagiarism, are in line with the principle of trustworthiness. Meanwhile, digital responsibility and online participation ethics are closely related to the concept of manners in Islamic tradition [24].

These results indicate that Islamic values are not outside the framework of modern information literacy, but can serve as an ethical foundation that strengthens and clarifies the normative objectives of information literacy competencies.

Conceptual Framework of Ethical Information Literacy Based on Islamic Values

Based on the results of thematic synthesis, this study produced a conceptual framework for ethical information literacy in higher education. This framework maps information literacy competencies into four main ethical dimensions: honesty (*ṣidq*), trustworthiness, justice (*ʿadl*), and proper conduct (*adab*). Each ethical dimension is linked to concrete practices in digital learning, such as source evaluation, responsible use of information, knowledge production, and online academic interaction [25]. This framework shows that the integration of Islamic values provides an explicit and contextual ethical structure for information literacy, without compromising compliance with global academic standards [26]. Overall, the results of this study confirm that Islamic value-based ethical information literacy has the potential to strengthen students' ethical awareness in digital learning and provide clearer normative direction for information literacy practices in Islamic higher education.

Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that information literacy competencies in digital learning have a strong conceptual relationship with Islamic ethical values, particularly honesty (*ṣidq*), trustworthiness (*amanah*), justice (*ʿadl*), and proper conduct (*adab*) [27]. This finding clarifies that information literacy does not only operate in the cognitive and technical realms, but also contains a normative dimension that can be enriched through an established value system [28]. Thus, the results of this study provide a conceptual

explanation to the research question of how Islamic values can serve as an ethical foundation in information literacy in higher education, as illustrated in Figure 2.

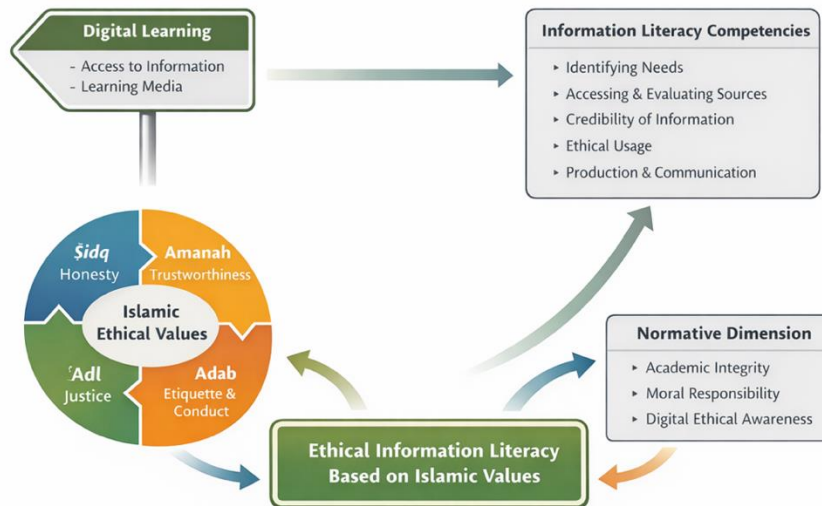


Figure 2. Conceptual framework

In the context of higher education, information literacy is generally understood as a set of skills that includes identifying information needs, accessing digital sources, evaluating the credibility of information, and using information responsibly [29]. However, the practice of information literacy is not fundamentally value-neutral, but rather influenced by ethical principles that guide how individuals select, interpret, and utilize information [30]. The conceptual framework developed in this study places digital learning as the main context for information literacy practices. The digital environment provides broad access to various sources of information, but at the same time presents ethical challenges, such as misinformation, plagiarism, and data misuse [31]. This situation highlights the limitations of an information literacy approach that emphasizes only technical aspects, and reinforces the need for a foundation of values that can guide ethical decision-making in academic activities.

To address these needs, this framework integrates Islamic ethical values as the normative foundation of information literacy. The values of honesty (*ṣidq*), trustworthiness (*amanah*), justice (*ʿadl*), and proper conduct (*adab*) are positioned as ethical principles that shape and guide information literacy practices. The value of *ṣidq* emphasizes honesty in the use and presentation of information, including a commitment to academic integrity and the rejection of plagiarism. The value of trustworthiness represents the responsibility to manage and disseminate information accurately and responsibly. Meanwhile, *ʿadl* directs individuals to be objective and fair in evaluating various sources of information, and *adab* serves as an ethical guideline in communication and academic interaction in the digital space. In this framework, Islamic ethical values are not understood as separate normative additions to information literacy competencies, but rather as an inherently integrated ethical foundation [32].

This integration results in the conceptualization of Islamic-based ethical information literacy as a holistic construct that combines technical skills, critical thinking abilities, and moral responsibility. Thus, students are not only able to access and evaluate information effectively, but also use it ethically and meaningfully [33]. Overall, this conceptual framework provides a theoretical explanation of how Islamic values can serve as an ethical foundation for information literacy in higher education. The main contribution of this framework lies in its attempt to bridge the study of information literacy and Islamic educational ethics, as well as offering a value based perspective that is relevant for strengthening digital learning in culturally and religiously diverse academic contexts.

The synthesis results that combine source evaluation competencies with the values of *sidq* and *'adl* are in line with contemporary information literacy views that emphasize the importance of critical thinking and evidence-based assessment [34]. However, this study goes further by showing that the principles of honesty and justice in Islamic tradition are not only instructional in nature, but also moral and spiritual [35]. This reinforces the argument in the information literacy literature that ethics cannot be reduced to mere compliance with academic rules, but must be understood as an internal disposition that guides students' academic behavior on an ongoing basis [36].

Findings regarding the relationship between academic integrity and trustworthiness also clarify and deepen previous research findings on academic ethics in digital learning. Previous studies generally positioned plagiarism and misuse of information as issues of compliance with institutional regulations [37]. Conversely, the framework developed in this study shows that trustworthiness provides a more profound ethical basis, as it views the use of information as a form of moral responsibility to God, the academic community, and science itself [38]. This perspective does not contradict the global information literacy approach, but rather enriches its ethical dimension with a more contextual value foundation for Islamic higher education.

In addition, findings linking digital responsibility to the concept of manners make an important contribution to the discourse on digital citizenship [39]. In many digital literacy frameworks, online participation ethics are often discussed in neutral and universal terms, such as digital etiquette or professional behavior [40]. This study shows that etiquette in Islamic tradition has a broader scope, covering communication ethics, humility in learning, and awareness of the social impact of information production and dissemination [41]. Thus, etiquette can be understood as an integrative concept that bridges information literacy, digital literacy, and character building [42]. Compared to previous studies discussing the integration of Islamic values in digital education, the findings of this study provide a more systematic conceptual clarification. Some previous studies tended to discuss Islamic values normatively without clearly mapping them to specific academic competencies. This study explicitly shows how Islamic ethical values can be aligned with internationally recognized dimensions of information literacy. This

confirms that the integration of values is not symbolic or additional, but has direct relevance to learning practices and academic assessment [43].

However, this study also has limitations that must be acknowledged honestly. The framework produced is conceptual and has not been empirically tested in the context of specific classes or institutions. Therefore, the effectiveness of this framework in improving students' ethical information literacy still requires further proof through field research, such as case studies, pedagogical experiments, or design-based research approaches [44]. Furthermore, the interpretation of Islamic values in this study is normative and may vary according to different cultural and institutional contexts [45].

The implications of these findings suggest that Islamic values-based ethical information literacy has the potential to become a relevant alternative approach for Islamic higher education amid the challenges of digitalization [12]. The framework offered can help educators design digital learning that is not only oriented towards cognitive achievement, but also towards character building and ethical responsibility [46]. In addition, the results of this study open up opportunities for the development of institutional policies that are more sensitive to the value dimension in information literacy management and academic integrity. Overall, the novelty of this study lies in the systematic alignment between global information literacy standards and Islamic ethics as a single conceptual framework. Without claiming to be the only approach, this research offers an alternative perspective that can complement the discourse on information literacy and digital learning. Further research is expected to test, refine, and adapt this framework in various higher education contexts to enrich the understanding of ethical and sustainable information literacy practices.

Conclusion

The conceptual findings of this study indicate that Islamic values of honesty (*ṣīdq*), trustworthiness (*amanah*), justice (*ʿadl*), and proper conduct (*adab*) are structurally compatible with internationally recognized information literacy competencies. The integration of these values provides a more explicit and contextual ethical foundation for the practice of source evaluation, academic integrity, digital responsibility, and scientific interaction in online learning. Thus, this study clarifies that ethics in information literacy is not only normative or procedural, but also rooted in a value system that shapes the disposition and academic character of students.

The main contribution of this study lies in the development of a conceptual framework that systematically and coherently bridges global information literacy standards with Islamic ethical traditions. This framework enriches the discourse on information literacy with a contextual value perspective, while demonstrating that the integration of religion-based ethics can go hand in hand with universal academic principles. Thus, this research provides conceptual progress for the study of digital learning, information literacy, and Islamic higher education.

As a conceptual study, this research has limitations in that there has been no empirical testing of the proposed framework. Therefore, further research is recommended to implement and test this framework through field studies, pedagogical experiments, or design-based research approaches to assess its impact on ethical information literacy, academic integrity, and student digital behavior. In addition, the adaptation of this framework in different institutional and cultural contexts also needs to be examined to expand its relevance and sustainability.

Overall, this study confirms that Islamic value-based ethical information literacy is a relevant approach that has the potential to strengthen the quality of digital learning in higher education, while contributing to the development of scholarship that is more oriented towards moral responsibility and academic sustainability.

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