



The Role of Religious Reference Frameworks in the Upbringing of Arab Child in the Context of Digital Transformation: Toward an Educational Approach Balancing Authenticity and modernity

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Abstract: Digital transformation is one of the most significant contemporary challenges facing educational systems, given the profound changes it has introduced to sources of knowledge, modes of learning and patterns of cultural and social interaction. This challenge is particularly acute in Arab educational contexts, where religious and value-based reference frameworks are deeply rooted and form the foundation for shaping children’s identity and moral development. This reality necessitates an in-depth examination of the role of these frameworks in the context of accelerating digital transformation.

In light of this, the study examines the impact of religious and value-based reference frameworks on the educational identity of Arab children, particularly in the context of their extensive exposure to digital media and the cognitive and behavioural influences associated with it. The study is guided by the following central research question: To what extent can religious reference frameworks contribute to adapting Arab education to the requirements of the digital age without compromising its authentic values and principles?

The study’s adoption of a descriptive-analytical approach is for the purpose of addressing this question. This approach is based on a critical review of educational literature, an analysis of the Arab educational landscape, and an examination of the impact of digital transformation on educational realities. The findings emphasise the importance of using religious reference frameworks to shape the value system of Arab children, despite the challenges posed by the open digital environment.

The findings further highlight the need to restructure educational practices to allow for the effective integration of technology while remaining consistent with cultural and value-based particularities. Accordingly, the study recommends developing digital educational policies based on religious reference frameworks, strengthening family and educational awareness, and producing purposeful digital content that supports the formation of identity and moral values within an interactive educational environment.

Keywords: Arab education; authenticity and modernity; religious reference; Arab child; digital transformation; upbringing; educational values; digital environment.

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1. INTRODUCTION

As Arab societies become increasingly digitised, digital transformation is affecting the very structure of cultural and social life, extending into the most detailed aspects of children’s everyday experience. Interacting with digital media has become a familiar part of Arab children’s lives. Through this interaction, their cognitive awareness is shaped, and their patterns of behaviour and communication are formed. While the digital environment offers extensive learning opportunities, it also poses significant educational and cultural risks, such as the erosion of identity and the disruption of authentic value systems, particularly in the absence of adequate supervision and meaningful educational alternatives. The pressing educational

challenge, therefore, lies in achieving a balance between the requirements of contemporaneity. This means openness and interaction with modern technologies. Also, it means religious authenticity as a cornerstone of Arab-Islamic socialization. The solution is not to reject or withdraw from digital media, but rather to integrate religious guidance into digital educational practice, ensuring that Arab children receive a balanced education combining roots and values with a conscious and constructive openness to new developments.

The importance of this research paper lies in the rapid expansion of digital content aimed at children, much of which is entertainment-oriented and consumerist, alongside the declining role of traditional reference frameworks—family, religious, and educational institutions—in regulating socialisation and guidance. This situation demands a thorough reappraisal of modern educational methods and a reinvigoration of the religious reference framework's pivotal role in shaping Arab children's character through modern media, instilling firm foundations of faith, values, and awareness. The central question that arises from this perspective is how religious reference frameworks can contribute to preserving the authenticity of Arab education while socialising children within the realities of the digital age, without detaching them from values or closing them off to modernity.

On the basis of this problem statement, the following hypotheses may be formulated:

Religious reference frameworks can be effectively integrated into the digital education project without eroding their authenticity or losing their specificity.

Weak religious grounding in modern methods of socialization may play a direct role in weakening the educational identity of Arab children.

Modernity does not necessarily conflict with authenticity ; rather, digital-age tools can be employed to serve and reinforce educational and religious values.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

In light of the educational challenges posed by the digital age and the need to restore balance between inherited values and technological development, the subject must be addressed from a perspective that combines theoretical analysis with practical insight. The study therefore seeks to achieve the following objectives :

Clarify the concepts of authenticity and contemporaneity in Arab education.

Examine the impact of digital transformation on the traditional system of socialization.

Highlight the role of religious reference in bridging the gap between authenticity and modern transformations.

Propose practical alternatives for integrating religious values into digital socialization.

To meet these research requirements, the study employs the descriptive-analytical approach to describe and analyze Arab educational realities and to interpret the effects of digital transformation on those realities. It also employs the comparative approach to compare traditional methods of socialization with digital development mechanisms and their effects on educational identity, as well as a prospective approach to envision future solutions and formulate practical concepts that contribute to integrating religious educational values into the digital environment.

SECTION ONE: THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Subsection One: The Concept of Arab Education and Its Dimensions (Religious, Linguistic, and Value-Based)

From linguistic and terminological perspectives, Arab education can be defined as the transmission of knowledge and values from one generation to the next within a cultural and social framework. Through this process, individuals interact with their cultural and social environment via an educational system integrating religious, linguistic and value-based knowledge. Arab education is firmly rooted in Arab history and identity, making it an integral part of the Arab nation's collective culture. The aim is to develop

individuals in a balanced manner, enabling them to participate effectively in society while preserving their authenticity and cultural identity (Ibn Manzur, 2003).

The religious dimension of Arab education highlights the significant role that Islam plays in shaping individuals' values and ethics, as it is the predominant religion in Arab countries. It serves as a central element in defining educational frameworks through the teaching of its principles, interpretations, and teachings, especially since religious education is not limited to aspects of worship alone but extends to include the application of moral values in daily interactions, thereby contributing to the formation of individuals' personalities from both moral and religious perspectives (Yalcin, 1986).

The linguistic dimension is also fundamental to Arab education. The Arabic language plays an essential role in supporting cultural identity. It also supports communication among members of society. This is because Arabic is not only a means of expressing thoughts and feelings, but also a vital means of preserving Arab heritage and cultural history. Learning Arabic also enables individuals to understand the religious, literary and historical texts that form the basis of Arab culture, thereby enhancing their ability to participate effectively in society and preserve the nation's linguistic identity. (Suleiman, 2011).

The values dimension of Arab education reinforces a set of human and social values that encourage individuals to uphold mutual respect, justice, social responsibility and cooperation. These values are derived from Arab heritage and the Islamic religion, but they also interact with modern social changes. The objective of values-based education is to cultivate a personality that can tackle modern challenges while upholding the cultural and social principles that foster social cohesion and strengthen unity among Arab society.

SUBSECTION TWO : AUTHENTICITY AND CONTEMPORANEITY IN THE MODERNITY CONTEXT

First : The Concept of Authenticity

Authenticity can be seen as the core of civilisation through which the Islamic ummah recognises itself : its creed, normative systems, value structures, intellectual traditions and patterns of collective belonging. It is neither a nostalgic return to the past nor a closed attitude towards the present. Rather, it provides a stable frame of reference that enables society to engage with contemporary reality, benefit from civilisational achievements and interact with new experiences, all while maintaining its distinctiveness and avoiding dissolution into external models. As authenticity is rooted in the Qur'an and the Sunnah, these two sources serve as lasting benchmarks for evaluating ideas, educational theories, and social practices. Their guidance is not limited to a particular time or place; it extends to belief, thought, behaviour and the moral regulation of life across eras. In this sense, authenticity provides a disciplined foundation for acceptance and rejection, establishing a secure civilisational boundary for engaging with reality. (Al-Bayanuni, 1409 AH ; Hasna, 1405 AH).

In Islamic thought, the concept of authenticity is defined by a set of interconnected principles. First, it is important to understand the culture of the ummah through its original and reliable sources rather than through marginal, distorted or externally imposed interpretations. This also involves using the methodological tools developed within that culture itself, rather than relying on interpretive frameworks that are foreign to it (Al-Qaradawi, 1414 AH).

The second requirement is an awareness of and pride in Arab-Islamic identity. As Islam is the primary influence on Muslim culture, this pride is not merely emotional or rhetorical. It frees the Muslim mind from feelings of cultural inferiority, allowing it to interact with other civilisations confidently, rather than through imitation or dependence.

The third requirement is to recover doctrinal, intellectual and ethical roots in practical terms. Admiring inherited principles in theory is not enough ; they only become meaningful when translated into conduct, choices, institutions and educational practices.

The fourth requirement is to benefit from the methods used by earlier generations to understand, practise and serve religion, while at the same time exercising *ijtihad* in the contemporary context, just as they did

in their own time. This involves considering the present environment's circumstances, customs, needs, and challenges, and adopting what serves the community, just as earlier generations adopted what served theirs.

The fifth requirement is selective and conscious engagement with heritage. Heritage should be explored in terms of its religious, intellectual, literary and social dimensions, not merely for preservation, but for productive use in the present and future. This approach differs from passive imitation or emotional glorification in that it requires analysis and evaluation to extract elements capable of contributing to contemporary life, moving beyond those that have lost their suitability or effectiveness.

Second : The Concept of Modernity

Modernity is a central term in modern educational discourse. It refers to an active awareness of the present and a constructive engagement with its intellectual, technological, cultural, and social developments. It does not mean simply living within the same chronological period as others ; rather, it means understanding the present critically and participating in its formation in a manner that maintains equilibrium between renewal and identity.

The concept of modernity is closely linked to how a society positions itself in relation to the ideas circulating in its age. A society may accept some ideas, reject others, reformulate certain concepts, or add its own contribution according to criteria derived from its creed, values, and cultural structure. Consequently, modernity should not be reduced to the automatic adoption of every new intellectual or technological development. A thorough examination, understanding, and critical assessment are prerequisites for formulating a position. An idea becomes truly modernity not because it is new, but because it is capable of addressing living reality, offering viable solutions to present problems, and contributing positively to the balanced development of society. This also means that modernity is relative : what one society may consider compatible with its renewal may be rejected by another society because it conflicts with its moral or cultural system. In this context, Al-Bashri (1405 AH) maintains that Muslim society can benefit from other societies in terms of thought and organisation in order to advance and confront challenges. However, he believes that this does not require equating the modern European experience with the modern Islamic experience under a single abstract banner of modernity.

Therefore, modernity should not be viewed as a mechanical pursuit of modernisation. It is a project of critical awareness that equips human beings with the tools of understanding, creativity, and purposeful action within a comprehensive vision that reconciles universality with cultural specificity. In the field of education, modernity is a key component of educational effectiveness. It equips learners with the skills to navigate and contribute to a dynamic global environment while maintaining a stable sense of self, belonging, and value orientation.

SUBSECTION THREE : RELIGIOUS REFERENCE AS A FUNDAMENTAL PILLAR OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The term 'marji'iyah' is a relatively modern expression. It was not widely used by earlier scholars in the technical sense that later became common among scholars of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah. In modernity usage, the term generally refers to two meanings. Firstly, it refers to the reference framework of an idea, which includes jurisprudential, doctrinal, or behavioural choices. Secondly, it refers to the reference framework of persons, meaning recourse to qualified scholars who hold authority in fatwa, guidance, and scholarly grounding (Al-Jaziri, 2009). In this sense, the phrase 'the religious reference framework of the Algerian state' points to the doctrinal and legal structure that regulates Islamic religious practice in Algeria according to the Sunni tradition and under the supervision of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. It is therefore important to understand that it denotes reliance on a recognised school, scholar, or body of jurisprudential authority as a valid source of understanding and deduction. It is important to note that religious reference frameworks are the established foundations through which Islam is understood, interpreted and applied within a particular society.

The significance of a religious reference framework lies in the doctrinal and moral constants it offers to the educational process. These constants contribute to forming a balanced personality and to strengthening the learner's sense of identity, responsibility and value stability. A framework of this kind fulfils an orienting role by ensuring that education remains connected to its authentic cultural and civilizational environment. It safeguards the educational process against the uncritical adoption of imported models that may not align with the religious and cultural particularities of society. A curriculum that is firmly rooted in a solid religious reference framework therefore does more than simply transmit information ; it seeks to form individuals who are capable of positive participation in their environment and of harmonising the spiritual and material dimensions of personality without isolation or hostility towards others.

Islam represents the foundational reference and the principal source for shaping the value system in Arab-Islamic societies. It determines the moral and normative horizon within which the behavior of the Muslim individual is understood and evaluated. Consequently, values such as freedom, equality, human dignity, and rights cannot be interpreted apart from this reference system; rather, they are understood in harmony with the Islamic civilizational context. The sacred sources - the Qur'an, the Prophetic Sunnah, and the Prophet's exemplary life - remain the highest authority in judging matters of acceptance and rejection, right and wrong, and permissibility and prohibition. This is reflected in the aims of educational curricula in the Islamic world, particularly in their concern with establishing tawhid and reinforcing Islamic values in learners' consciousness. Education, when viewed as holistic human development, requires a reference framework that clarifies its objectives, content, methods, and ethical limits.

SECTION TWO : DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR THE UPBRINGING OF YOUNG GENERATION

Digital transformation has become one of the most significant structural shifts affecting modern education, particularly in relation to children's socialisation and the development of their values, language, and culture. The advent of digital technology, interactive media, social networking platforms and smart applications has resulted in a complex and interconnected digital environment in which Arab children are growing up. This environment exerts a significant influence on their thinking, communication, behaviour and self-perception, as well as on their understanding of society. Digital media are no longer limited to entertainment or communication ; they have become active educational forces that compete with traditional authorities such as the family, the school, and religious institutions, and in some contexts they may even outweigh them.

Subsection One : Manifestations of Digital Transformation in the Life of Arab Child

One of the clearest manifestations of digital transformation in the lives of children, including Arab child, is the widespread presence of digital devices. Smartphones, tablets, and computers have become common in both domestic and educational spaces. Studies indicate that many children in the Arab world use these devices daily for learning, entertainment, communication, and play (UNICEF, 2019). This early and frequent exposure has created new cognitive and behavioral patterns. Digital media have become a major source of knowledge and interaction, and in some cases they replace direct family and social communication.

Social media platforms and child-oriented digital applications constitute another important manifestation of this transformation. Children interact with a variety of platforms, including YouTube Kids, TikTok, and interactive video games. Such platforms do not only provide visual and auditory content ; they also enable communication with users from different cultural backgrounds and contribute to the formation of digital communities. Although these environments may develop early digital skills, they also expose children to risks related to privacy, cyberbullying, inappropriate influence, and ethically problematic content (Livingstone et al., 2020).

The transformation is also visible in changes to learning and play. Digital content now shapes a significant part of children's everyday experiences. Self-learning through educational applications, exposure to virtual reality, and interaction with artificial intelligence environments have changed children's relationship with knowledge. Learning has become more individualized, faster, and more accessible, yet it may also become

less deep and less connected to human interaction if it is not guided by a balanced educational framework. Without such guidance, critical thinking and social skills may weaken (Aboomar, 2020).

Subsection Two : The Impact of Digital Content on Values, Behavior, and Language

Under digital transformation, the sources of moral orientation available to Arab child are no longer limited to family and school. Applications, platforms, films, cartoons, games, and short videos now participate directly in shaping value perceptions. Much of the digital content encountered by children carries cultural and behavioral patterns that may differ from, and sometimes conflict with, the value systems of Arab-Islamic societies. When this exposure occurs without effective guidance, supervision, and interpretation, it may lead to moral confusion and weaken the child's value stability.

At the behavioral level, intensive interaction with digital content can produce visible changes in how children express themselves, relate to others, organize their time, and regulate their emotions. Research has associated excessive engagement with video games with manifestations such as aggression, reduced concentration, and social withdrawal (Anderson et al., 2017). The digital habit of immediate response and instant reward can also reduce patience and endurance, encouraging a pattern of immediate gratification that negatively affects children's life skills, organization, and emotional discipline.

Language is also affected. Heavy exposure to dialectal forms, uncontrolled foreign-language input, and unsupervised digital content may weaken children's use of standard Arabic and promote code-switching, colloquial expression, and digital vocabulary in contexts that require more formal linguistic competence. This does not affect pronunciation only; it also shapes patterns of thinking, reasoning, and communication associated with the mother tongue. The weakening of standard Arabic therefore has implications for both linguistic identity and cognitive formation (Al-Hashimi, 2021).

Digital content further reshapes children's understanding of role models. Parents, teachers, scholars, and cultural figures no longer necessarily occupy the central place in children's consciousness. They are frequently replaced by digital celebrities and virtual influencers who present attractive lifestyles that may lack educational depth or moral responsibility. This shift can disturb the child's criteria of judgment, because admiration may be based on visibility, fame, or digital reach rather than on ethical distinction. Consequently, families, schools, and religious institutions need to renew the ways in which they present role models, linking them to realistic and morally meaningful contexts that are close to the contemporary child. The central challenge is to balance the technical attractiveness of digital media with educational mechanisms rooted in an authentic religious reference framework.

Subsection Three : Manifestation of The Decline and Marginalization of Traditional Educational Reference Frameworks

Traditional educational frameworks, such as the family, the school, and religious institutions, are experiencing a noticeable reduction in their formative and guiding influence on Arab children in the context of rapidly expanding digital media. Children are increasingly reliant on open digital sources of knowledge that are not adequately regulated. This has led to a shift in the traditional educational discourse, which once transmitted values through direct contact, continuity, and long-term guidance (Al-Rabie, 2020). This change is occurring in a digital environment characterised by speed, visual appeal and constant innovation, making it challenging for traditional institutions to compete in terms of form and appeal.

A key indicator of this decline is the diminution of the family as the primary source of value education. In many Arab contexts, the family no longer has full control over behavioural boundaries or over the child's interests and sources of influence. Digital platforms now play a powerful role in shaping children's modes of interaction and thought. Research indicates that this transition has resulted in a widening of the generational gap, thereby complicating the provision of parental guidance, particularly in instances where parents lack sufficient digital literacy skills or are unaware of the potential risks associated with certain applications and forms of content (Al-Hammadi, 2019).

The school has also been affected. Its guiding role has diminished for two main reasons. Firstly, knowledge sources have increased significantly. Secondly, the authority of teachers has decreased in comparison to search engines, online lessons, educational applications, and digital communities. Learners may increasingly treat these sources as substitutes for the teacher's interpretive and formative function. This can create confusion in the educational relationship and reduce value-based interaction in the classroom. Religious institutions face a related challenge. Their message is not weak in content, but their means of communication are often less adapted to the digital environment. In the context of religious education, traditional formats for mosques, sermons and religious curricula directed at children are often not able to compete with visually appealing and entertainment-based digital content (Thabit, 1405 AH). For this reason, religious education and outreach must develop their media tools and make purposeful use of digital channels rather than leaving the field open to unregulated messages. If traditional frameworks continue to be marginalized, children may construct cognitive and value models outside authentic reference systems, leading to 'value dissonance' between what their society seeks to instill and what digital platforms actually transmit.

SECTION THREE : THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS REFERENCE IN MODERN UPBRINGING

Religious reference frameworks are among the essential components of the educational structure of Arab-Islamic societies. They provide the value-based and cognitive framework through which young people's behaviour is guided, their consciousness is formed, and their relationship with themselves, others, and the world is regulated. In an age of rapid technological transformation, it is essential to re-evaluate these frameworks within educational approaches that respond to modern realities without compromising fundamental principles. The process of socialisation is no longer limited to family and school; it has become a complex process shaped by cultural, technological and transnational factors. In this context, religious reference frameworks are important for protecting identity, strengthening moral immunity, integrating values into curricula, renewing educational discourse, and adapting religious guidance to contemporary media through creative and purposeful methods.

Subsection One : The Functions of Religious Reference (Behavioral Regulation, Value Reinforcement and Identity Formation)

Religious reference frameworks perform significant functions at both individual and collective levels. Beyond clarifying Islamic legal rulings and interpreting religious texts, they contribute to regulating social behavior, reinforcing moral values, and shaping the identity of individuals and communities (Al-Shahri, 2010).

First - behavioral regulation: religious reference guide individual and collective behavior by directing people toward practices consistent with Islamic principles and by warning against behaviors that are prohibited or inconsistent with the moral structure of society. This function appears clearly in fatwas, sermons, public guidance, and legal positions on emerging issues. Through such channels, the reference offers models of proper conduct and helps reduce behavioral deviations, particularly during periods of crisis, uncertainty, or social disruption.

Second - value reinforcement : Religious reference frameworks play a central role in strengthening moral and social values. This is achieved through educational and awareness-raising discourse rooted in the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and the broader Islamic legal tradition. Values such as justice, mercy, honesty, solidarity, responsibility and compassion are continually promoted through sermons, publications, public statements and educational initiatives. In view of the moral and cultural pressures produced by globalisation and media openness, this function becomes especially important because it provides individuals with a coherent value system that protects them from fragmentation and reinforces their connection with their moral and religious identity.

Third - identity formation : the religious reference also helps shape both individual and collective identity. It offers a cognitive and spiritual structure through which individuals understand themselves, define their place within their religious and cultural context, and build a comprehensive worldview

grounded in the sources of Islamic law. By orienting thought, behavior, and positions on major issues, it strengthens belonging to the Islamic ummah, reinforces internal cohesion, and protects identity from distortion, dissolution, or cultural assimilation. The need for this function becomes more urgent whenever societies encounter external pressures that threaten their cultural and religious stability.

These functions show that the religious reference is not limited to its conventional roles. It is a pillar in the construction and stability of society. By regulating behavior, promoting values, and forming identity, it contributes to the cultural and social fabric and guides the community toward moral balance and cohesion. Given the speed of contemporary change, there is a growing need to understand these functions more deeply and to activate them in ways compatible with the requirements of the age while preserving fundamental principles.

Subsection Two : Activating Religious Reference in Light of Digital Developments

The religious reference contributes to the value education of younger generations by offering an educational model that combines moral constants with awareness of changing realities (Al-Shahri, 2010). Its role is not limited to presenting abstract values. It aims to integrate these values into modern contexts, considering the cultural, psychological and technological environments in which children are growing up.

First, educational discourse grounded in Islamic texts should avoid rigidity and detachment from reality. A flexible and functional interpretation is required that takes into account the psychological, social and digital circumstances surrounding the child. The re-presentation of values derived from Islamic sources in light of contemporary specificities is not an abandonment of principles. Rather, it is a translation of said principles into meaningful practices that can operate effectively in the child's changing environment.

For instance, honesty should not be introduced only as a traditional virtue or a conventional moral obligation. In the digital age, it is also a life skill that involves resisting misinformation, avoiding fabricated news, and distinguishing truth from manipulation. Trustworthiness can similarly be presented in relation to responsible internet use, respect for privacy, and avoidance of copying, sharing, or circulating information without permission or awareness. This is in line with the modern understanding of digital ethics. Similarly, the concept of honoring parents should be interpreted within the context of family structures that may be influenced by evolving roles, time constraints, geographical distance, and emerging forms of communication. This necessitates a flexible understanding of filial responsibility in contemporary settings.

Second, religious value education must keep pace with modern educational methods by employing digital media and educational technologies. In the modern business environment, it is no longer sufficient to rely exclusively on traditional techniques for transmitting religious values to children. Digital media have changed the patterns of reception, attention, and interaction among new generations. This necessitates the renewal of value-based educational discourse through a conscious openness to digital tools, while preserving the essence of the religious reference framework.

Interactive digital stories are especially useful in this regard because they use image, sound, movement, and narrative to communicate values in forms that correspond to children's interests. Interactive theater can also involve children emotionally and behaviorally, allowing them to experience values rather than merely memorize them. Multimedia resources - including videos, applications, simulations, and educational games - can reinforce moral meanings dynamically and in accordance with modern learning styles. In this perspective, the religious reference framework is not simply a provider of content ; it becomes a partner in redesigning the educational experience so that values become more deeply rooted and more influential.

Third, values should be instilled without isolating children from their time. The purpose of value education based on religious reference frameworks is not to separate children from modern reality or deprive them of its tools. Its aim is to provide them with a moral system that enables conscious and responsible engagement with reality and helps them build a balanced personality capable of distinguishing benefit from

harm. Religious reference should therefore cultivate an internal moral conscience rather than depend only on external restrictions.

This approach teaches children that intellectual and behavioral independence does not contradict adherence to principles. On the contrary, mature independence can be an outcome of sound value education. It also helps them understand that religious identity is not opposed to modernity, but can serve as a flexible moral framework through which they understand the age and navigate it ethically. By integrating tradition and modernity, children can live consciously in an open world without losing their moral compass or disconnecting from their cultural and religious roots. This is a preventive educational model based on wisdom and responsible openness rather than withdrawal.

This indicates that the educational project of the religious reference rests on the conviction that values are not imposed mechanically ; they are gradually built through dialogue, trust, and meaningful practice. Through this process, it contributes to forming a generation that is religiously conscious, intellectually open, and capable of engaging with modern challenges without sacrificing its foundational principles.

Subsection Three : Challenges Facing Religious Reference in Upbringing the Youth in an Open Digital Environment

The digital revolution has radically transformed the structures of communication and knowledge. It has generated new patterns in the reception, production, and circulation of information, and this has affected the relationship between religious references and their audiences, especially the younger generation. The unprecedented openness of the digital environment has created a complex communicative reality in which religious institutions face increasing challenges related to credibility, effectiveness, language, and media adaptation. Religious upbringing is now affected by the availability of countless knowledge sources, some of which contain content that contradicts authentic religious frameworks. The most important challenges may be summarized as follows :

1. The Unregulated Proliferation and Diversity of Knowledge Sources

The abundance of digital content and the ease of access to it expose children to enormous amounts of information through the internet, social media, and mobile applications, often without adequate mechanisms for filtering, verification, or authentication. This creates cognitive fragmentation and moral confusion, particularly when children encounter information that conflicts with the religious environment provided by the family, school, or religious institutions. The result may be described as a state of knowledge disorder, in which the child finds it difficult to distinguish between fact, opinion, entertainment, rumor, and ideological influence. This widens the gap between children and their traditional religious references and may weaken the credibility of those references in their eyes.

Because knowledge sources have multiplied, religious references can no longer preserve their guiding authority through traditional means alone. Digital content often presents religious or cultural ideas in brief, visually attractive, and simplified forms. As a result, some children may construct their first religious concepts from short clips, comments, or fragmented online discussions rather than from gradual, systematic, and well-grounded learning.

2. The Lack of Visual Appeal and Interactivity in Traditional Religious Content

In the digital age, children and youth increasingly receive information through interactive media such as games, short videos, animations, comics, and visual platforms that combine image, sound, motion, and participation. These media are effective in attracting attention and creating a stimulating learning environment that corresponds to the psychological and cognitive development of younger age groups. By contrast, much of the religious content directed at children remains didactic, text-heavy, and abstract, with limited attention to the aesthetic and interactive aspects of presentation. This produces a clear gap between the experience children encounter in digital spaces and the format through which religious content is often delivered.

The insufficient use of modern technological tools - such as animation, digital games, interactive programs, and immersive media - has contributed to the decline of religious institutions' influence on children's emotional development and value formation. Therefore, religious content needs to be renewed in both form and substance through digital pedagogical approaches that combine the authenticity of the message with innovation in the medium. Such renewal can help restore influence, expand reach, and increase acceptance among younger audiences.

3. The Difficulty of Family and Institutional Oversight of Digital Content

This challenge is among the most serious obstacles facing religious reference in performing their educational function. Modern technologies and open digital environments allow children and adolescents to access huge quantities of content, including material that may conflict with religious and moral values. The digital environment has created a new communicative space marked by openness and weak regulation, making family and institutional supervision difficult and often ineffective (Abdulwahid, 2020). The problem is intensified by 'digital individualism', whereby the child enjoys broad freedom to choose content without direct oversight from the family, school, or religious institution. Studies also indicate that young people's online time now exceeds the time they spend with family or in educational institutions (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2024). This reduces the influence of educators and increases the influence of digital figures who may promote values inconsistent with religious and moral orientations. Recommendation algorithms also create filter bubbles that isolate children within targeted streams of content beyond meaningful educational supervision.

The lack of digital literacy among many parents and teachers further weakens supervision. While young people often possess advanced practical skills in using digital tools, many adults remain affected by a digital divide that prevents them from exercising effective guidance. This reality requires religious reference frameworks to develop their approach to digital education by raising awareness among parents and educators, providing safe alternatives, and producing attractive content that communicates religious values in modernity forms.

4. The Dominance of the Global Cultural Model (Secular or Materialistic)

Digital globalization has exceeded the limits of economy and technology and has extended into the cultural and value domains. It has produced a global cultural model that often emphasizes individualism, utility, consumption, and the weakening of religious constraints on behavior. This model may clash with local and religious value systems. Al-Zoubi (2020) notes that global digital platforms such as Netflix, TikTok, and YouTube frequently present entertainment and cultural content dominated by materialistic and secular tendencies, which may normalize such values among young people without their awareness of the impact on consciousness and belonging. This influence is reflected in the portrayal of success as material accumulation, freedom as liberation from moral limits, and happiness as consumption - concepts that contradict Islamic educational frameworks centered on meaning, commitment, and the ethical purpose of life.

The danger increases when this global model operates through soft power, namely indirect influence through media, art, technology, and lifestyle representation. In this situation, the religious reference framework faces cultural models that are modern, accessible, attractive, and technically sophisticated, yet often lack a spiritual horizon or moral purpose. If strong digital alternatives inspired by religious reference frameworks are absent, young people may gradually assimilate into this model. This creates a gap between the values they receive from family and school and the values they encounter daily on digital platforms. Over time, this may weaken the authority of religious reference frameworks unless it is countered by digital educational and media initiatives capable of engaging modernity while preserving core principles.

5. The Psychological and Educational Impact of Non-Value-Based Content

Repeated exposure to non-value-based digital content can gradually influence the child's psychological structure. It may generate emotional and behavioral responses that become embedded in personality, especially when such content is associated with attractive models, rewards, games, or repeated visual

stimulation. Psychological and educational studies indicate that children and young people learn significantly through repetition and unconscious modeling, which makes them vulnerable to acquiring negative values without deliberate awareness (Educational Center for Research and Development, 2015). The digital environment may also create value dissonance : a child receives family or religious discourse based on moral discipline, while simultaneously participating in entertainment environments saturated with permissive values or with content that mocks moral and religious references. This can produce internal confusion, identity tension, and uncertainty about value systems. Some games and videos may even contain direct or indirect denial of the unseen, mockery of belief, or reduction of religion to fantasy. Such material may plant early seeds of doubt, indifference, or religious disengagement. In this context, the role of the religious reference framework becomes both protective and reconstructive : it must protect the child psychologically and educationally, and it must also restore the credibility of moral and religious discourse.

SECTION FOUR : STRATEGIES FOR BALANCING AUTHENTICITY AND MODERNITY IN DIGITAL EDUCATION

Protecting young people from being absorbed by content lacking educational value, while preserving their relationship with religious identity, requires activating the role of religious reference frameworks in a modernity language. It also requires using technological tools to transmit moral values in attractive, interactive, and pedagogically effective forms without compromising religious principles. This balance depends on integrating religious educational content into applications, games, platforms, and digital media used by the younger generation, so that values become part of daily digital experience rather than external preaching. The success of such strategies requires cooperation among family, religious, educational, and technological institutions to build a competitive digital environment that unites the spirit of authenticity with the requirements of contemporaneity.

Subsection One : Developing Flexible Educational Curricula that Combine Religion and Technology

In light of the rapid pace of global change, traditional curricula that are primarily based on memorisation and repetition are no longer sufficient to meet the needs of the digital age. Conversely, an exclusive focus on technical skills without attention to religious and cultural values may lead to the marginalisation of identity and the erosion of its constants. This necessitates an integrative educational methodology that combines authenticity and renewal, restructuring educational content in a manner that preserves religious and cultural foundations while incorporating the digital and technological competencies required in modern life.

Such development demands intellectual and structural flexibility that allows modern technologies - including artificial intelligence, e-learning, multimedia environments, and virtual reality - to be introduced into educational contexts that deepen learners' understanding of Islamic values. Educational studies indicate that technology can enrich religious education by increasing interaction, facilitating access to texts, and connecting religious concepts with modern issues (Ruqayya, S.A.2023). It can also promote critical thinking and prepare learners to confront modern challenges within an ethical and morally disciplined framework.

From a practical perspective, the development of flexible curricula necessitates collaboration between educational specialists, Islamic scholars and technology developers. The objective is to produce content that is both accurate and pedagogically effective. These curricula should be built upon modern educational approaches such as project-based learning, self-directed learning, and participatory learning. This enables them to combine sound religious knowledge with digital creativity, problem-solving and critical thinking skills. Such values as honesty, charity, respect, responsibility and cooperation can be taught through digital stories, educational videos, simulations and guided applications that combine entertainment with moral direction. Given that children in digital environments respond strongly to narrative, images, sound, movement and interactive characters, integrating values into such media has the potential to strengthen religious and ethical awareness from an early age, in ways suited to the nature of the digital generation.

Subsection Two : Equipping Families and Schools with Educational Digital Tools

Maintaining a positive educational influence on young people in a digital environment requires equipping families and schools with tools built on Arab and Islamic educational principles. These tools may include value-based learning platforms, family guidance applications, digital follow-up systems for behavior and academic achievement, and communication channels between parents and schools. They can help improve cooperation between school and family and enable parents to monitor their children's cognitive and behavioral development with greater flexibility. Some smart applications, for example, allow parents to follow daily behavioral indicators, access age-appropriate educational content, and receive guidance suited to the child's characteristics. Similar tools can support teachers in planning lessons aligned with Islamic educational goals and in integrating values into everyday learning situations (Al-Dhuhli et al., 2023).

For these initiatives to succeed, they require a sound digital infrastructure, specialized training for teachers and parents, and educational supervision over the content provided. The development of these tools should be based on partnerships involving educational institutions, religious bodies, and technology companies, so that the content maintains a balance between the technical and value-based dimensions. Effective use of digital technology in education also requires careful understanding of the child's cultural and social environment. The presence of a clear Arab-Islamic framework in the design of educational digital tools makes them a strategic means of protecting the identity of future generations and strengthening their religious and moral awareness in the digital age.

Subsection Three : Building Partnerships between Religious and Technological Institutions to Produce Meaningful Content

Effective partnerships between religious and technological institutions represent a strategic pathway for producing meaningful digital content that combines Islamic authenticity with technological creativity. Religious institutions possess the scholarly and normative authority needed to ensure doctrinal and ethical soundness, while technological institutions possess the technical capacity to transform content into interactive products that correspond to the needs of users in the digital age. Through such partnerships, educational programs, applications, games, online platforms, and multimedia resources can be designed to present Islamic knowledge through innovative methods attractive to different age groups, especially children and youth.

Successful cooperation requires a clear institutional framework defining roles, responsibilities, quality standards, and mechanisms of review. It also requires instructional design methods based on an understanding of the psychology of the digital learner and on the integration of Islamic content with real-life situations. Some promising models show that collaboration between educators, scholars, designers, and user-experience specialists can produce accurate, flexible, and attractive educational materials based on visual and auditory interaction and realistic scenarios. Shared working environments would allow continuous content development in response to audience needs and technological change. Such partnerships can open new horizons for digital educational and religious media, enabling the production of content that addresses new generations in a modern language without weakening values. Their scope may also be expanded to include universities and research centers in order to evaluate content and ensure compliance with academic and cultural quality standards. This represents a shift from individual production to a participatory knowledge model that increases the social and educational impact of digital content.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the development of flexible and integrated educational curricula combining religious authenticity with modern technology is no longer a secondary option ; it has become an educational necessity imposed by the challenges of the digital age. Integrating religious values into digital content directed at children, designing educational applications inspired by Islamic educational principles, and equipping families and schools with specialised digital tools are all practical steps toward a comprehensive intellectual and moral formation that responds to the needs of the digital generation while preserving foundational principles.

The study also shows that partnerships among religious institutions, educational bodies, and technology specialists are essential for producing meaningful and influential content capable of addressing both reason and conscience. Such content can effectively renew religious awareness through forms of presentation compatible with modern modes of reception. Therefore, it is essential for religious educational discourse to evolve beyond conventional preaching, adopting interactive educational models based on understanding, analysis, participation, and practical application through digital media. These models must be designed to attract young people and resonate with them within their familiar cultural and psychological contexts.

Educational and religious decision-makers are therefore tasked with designing an integrated educational model that is authentic in its foundations and rooted in Islamic and Arab identity, while being contemporary in its methods through the use of modern technologies and digital learning approaches. This model should not be confined to the transmission of knowledge ; it should also contribute to the formation of individuals who understand their religion, interact intelligently with their age, and build their future within a balanced system of values and knowledge. .

Recommendations

The study proposes the following recommendations to support an educational system that combines Islamic principles with modern digital tools :

1. Launch joint national initiatives among ministries of education, religious affairs bodies, and technology institutions to develop integrated digital curricula that incorporate Islamic values through interactive language and modern pedagogical methods, in a way that responds to the needs of digital learners and keeps pace with technological transformation.
2. Develop specialised training programmes for teachers and parents to enable them to use digital tools grounded in religious educational principles and to guide children and youth towards safe, meaningful, and purposeful digital content.
3. Encourage the private sector and technological innovation institutions to invest in designing educational applications and games that combine Islamic values with life skills, creativity, and critical thinking within a framework approved by competent scientific and religious authorities.
4. Support for applied educational research on the use of technology in the service of religious education, and the provision of practical models for integrating values into digital learning environments, is essential. This will allow educational institutions to rely on clear and evidence-based guidelines.
5. Adopt an integrated educational model rooted in sound Islamic principles and implemented through advanced modern methods, while renewing the discourse on religious education so that it can communicate more effectively with modern transformations and with the language of the new generation.

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