

---

## ONLINE *TAHSIN* AND AFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT: EXPLORING EMOTIONAL AND SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION STUDENTS

---

IMAM SYAFE'I AND SARIYANI

Universitas Terbuka, Indonesia

Corresponding author: [imam.syaifi@ecampus.ut.ac.id](mailto:imam.syaifi@ecampus.ut.ac.id)

### Abstract

This study explores how students experience emotional and spiritual engagement in Universitas Terbuka's (UT) online *tahsin al-Qur'an* (Qur'anic recitation) course. Using a mixed-methods design with a qualitative emphasis, data were collected from 30 undergraduate students of the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) program through a 20-item survey and reflective writing prompts. Quantitative data were analyzed descriptively, while qualitative data underwent six-step thematic analysis. Findings reveal three major themes: (1) enhanced motivation to improve *tajwid* and correct recitation errors through compassionate feedback; (2) strengthened spiritual engagement resulting from tutor presence, reflective practices, and communal rituals; and (3) deepened daily interaction with the Qur'an, evidenced by consistent *muroja'ah*, mindful prayer, and increased voluntary worship. These outcomes indicate that online *tahsin* can cultivate both technical proficiency and spiritual intimacy when designed with empathy, reflection, and structured mentorship. Theoretically, the study extends Reeve's affective engagement framework into the domain of digital Islamic pedagogy, while practically offering design principles for spiritually-enriched distance learning. It concludes that online Qur'anic education, when humanized and reflective, can serve not only as a medium of instruction but as a transformative spiritual journey.

**Keywords:** Affective engagement, distance islamic pedagogy; emotional motivation; online *tahsin*; open and distance learning; qur'anic education; spiritual learning

### Introduction

The rapid advancement of information and communication technology has profoundly transformed the landscape of Islamic education, especially through the development of distance and online learning (Nasir et al., 2024; Syafi'i, 2025). Universitas Terbuka (UT), as Indonesia's leading open and distance learning institution, has pioneered various online Islamic Religious Education (*Pendidikan Agama Islam* or PAI) courses, including *tahsin al-Qur'an* (Qur'anic recitation) (Darajat & Kosasih, 2025). These initiatives have widened access to religious learning, enabling students from diverse regions to study the Qur'an through flexible, technology-based systems.

However, one of the persistent challenges in digital Islamic education lies in maintaining affective engagement, the learner's emotional connection, motivation, and spiritual intimacy throughout the learning process. Affective engagement, according to Reeve (2024), reflects the internal states that drive persistence and meaning-making, while Hyland (2011) stresses that the affective domain in religious learning is inseparable from mindfulness and moral awareness. In Islamic

contexts, this engagement goes beyond academic interest; it embodies the spiritual dialogue between the learner and the sacred text, where emotion and devotion play an essential role.

In *tahsin* learning, affective engagement involves more than mastering pronunciation and *tajwid* rules. It entails cultivating humility, reverence, and a sense of closeness to Allah SWT. Therefore, online *tahsin* must not only deliver cognitive outcomes but also nurture emotional and spiritual growth. Mansour (2022) and Aryanti et al. (2021) emphasize that spiritual experience in digital religious education emerges when technology is humanized used as a medium for reflection, empathy, and community building. This aligns with Lappo et al. (2022), who argue that digital learning should integrate affective dimensions to support holistic development, not just information delivery.

Empirical studies show that Qur'anic recitation contributes to emotional stability and mental well-being (Priyono, 2021; Moulaei et al., 2023). Listening to and engaging deeply with the Qur'an enhances inner peace and spiritual resilience (Giunchi & Melis, 2024; Yuskaev, 2024). Yet, despite these insights, limited attention has been given to how online *tahsin* courses specifically shape affective experiences among distance learners. Most prior research in Islamic education still concentrates on cognitive or technological aspects (Yahya et al., 2021; Syukri et al., 2024), leaving the emotional and spiritual dimensions relatively underexplored.

Previous works by Syafi'i (2024) and Sariyani (2024) have explored broader themes such as digital transformation in Islamic pedagogy and the resilience of *pesantren* values in the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. However, no existing study has specifically examined how students at Universitas Terbuka experience emotional and spiritual engagement in online *tahsin*. This constitutes a notable research gap in the intersection of affective learning, spirituality, and distance education.

Therefore, this study aims to explore how students of the PAI program at UT experience emotional and spiritual engagement during online *tahsin al-Qur'an* learning. It focuses on three central themes: (1) enhancing motivation in online *tahsin*, (2) strengthening spiritual connection, and (3) deepening daily interaction with the Qur'an. Each aspect is analyzed through quantitative and qualitative data to reveal how affective and spiritual engagement can be sustained in an open and distance learning model.

By addressing this gap, the research contributes to both theoretical and practical discussions on Islamic online pedagogy. Theoretically, it extends the framework of affective engagement (Reeve, 2024) into the realm of digital Qur'anic education. Practically, it offers insights into how structured online *tahsin* courses can nurture spiritual intimacy and character formation in distance learners—demonstrating that, when thoughtfully designed, online Qur'anic education can be not only informative but also transformative.

## Literature Review

This review covers three interrelated themes: (1) the transformation of Islamic education in the digital era, (2) affective engagement in online *tahsin* learning, and (3) pedagogical innovations to sustain students' emotional and spiritual involvement. These themes are important because they demonstrate both the opportunities and challenges of integrating Qur'anic pedagogy into online platforms, while also highlighting the gap in research on students' affective experiences in distance *tahsin* settings.

---

***Transformation of islamic education in the digital era***

The rapid growth of digital technology has reshaped Islamic education by enabling new pathways for access, interaction, and inclusivity. Distance learning has emerged as a strategic model for democratizing Islamic knowledge, reaching students who might otherwise be limited by geography or institutional constraints. Nasir et al. (2024) emphasize that the integration of technology into Islamic education has transformed traditional learning methods in *dayah* and *pesantren* systems into more adaptive, learner-centered models.

*Universitas Terbuka* (UT), Indonesia's foremost institution for open and distance learning, exemplifies this transformation. UT's online Islamic Religious Education (*Pendidikan Agama Islam* or PAI) program includes *tahsin al-Qur'an* courses designed to combine pedagogical discipline with technological flexibility (Darojat & Kosasih, 2025; Syafi'i, 2025). However, the digitalization of religious learning also introduces challenges—particularly in maintaining the affective and spiritual essence of learning. Hyland (2011) asserts that mindfulness and affective awareness are crucial to prevent technology-mediated learning from becoming mechanical and detached from human emotion.

In the *tahsin* context, the recitation of the Qur'an is more than technical mastery; it embodies a sacred dialogue between learner and revelation. Translating this depth of interaction into an online format requires sensitivity to students' emotional, social, and spiritual needs (Aryanti et al., 2021). The digital classroom must therefore evolve into a "spiritual learning space" that not only transmits knowledge but also cultivates reverence and devotion.

***Affective engagement in online tahsin learning***

Affective engagement represents the emotional, motivational, and spiritual dimensions of learning that determine how deeply students connect to the process (Reeve, 2024). It is particularly significant in Islamic contexts, where learning is inseparable from the cultivation of sincerity (*ikhlas*) and self-reflection (*muhasabah*). Daher, Sabbah, and Abuzant (2021) describe affective engagement as an outcome of meaningful interaction between learners, instructors, and the learning content.

In *tahsin* learning, affective engagement manifests when students not only focus on correct pronunciation but also experience humility, tranquility, and closeness to Allah. Chanifah et al. (2021) found that when Qur'anic education is rooted in spirituality and mutual empathy, it fosters both moral character and emotional balance. Similarly, Alkandari (2024) shows that online Islamic discussions can enhance students' emotional and social bonding if learning environments encourage open dialogue and shared reflection.

Beyond spiritual enrichment, affective engagement contributes to psychological well-being. Moulai et al. (2023) demonstrate that listening to and reciting the Qur'an can reduce anxiety and stress, enhancing inner peace. Yuskaev (2024) adds that mindful Qur'anic recitation nurtures a sense of connection and meaning in everyday life. These findings affirm that *tahsin* can be a powerful medium for both emotional regulation and spiritual growth even within digital learning environments.

Despite this, few studies explicitly examine how online Qur'anic courses cultivate affective engagement. Most research still focuses on cognitive achievement or teaching methodology (Yahya et al., 2021; Syukri et al., 2024). Therefore, the affective dimension, how learners *feel* and *connect* to the Qur'an through virtual settings remains a critical yet underexplored domain.

### *Pedagogical innovations to strengthen engagement*

Maximizing affective engagement in online *tahsin* requires innovative pedagogical design that integrates reflective spirituality with technological interaction. Bruhn-Zass (2022) and Shahzad et al. (2024) highlight that technology, when used purposefully, can support emotional connection and social presence through hybrid and interactive models.

At Universitas Terbuka, the combination of synchronous mentoring (real-time sessions via Zoom) and asynchronous practice (self-paced learning) reflects what Çalikoğlu et al. (2025) describe as “balanced flexibility”, a model that maintains immediacy and accountability without compromising accessibility. Malay et al. (2024) further note that guided reflection and motivational scaffolding foster sustained engagement and personal transformation.

Spiritual mentoring also plays a crucial role. Jarkasih and Nurhayati (2023) show that integrating Qur’anic reflection and character formation into virtual instruction can strengthen students’ inner peace and moral awareness. Likewise, Suwardi et al. (2024) emphasize that understanding learners’ emotional and spiritual experiences allows educators to design adaptive strategies that balance cognitive, affective, and spiritual domains.

Collectively, these studies indicate that effective online *tahsin* must be designed not merely as an instructional system but as a transformative experience that connects knowledge, emotion, and faith. This aligns with Reeve’s (2024) framework of emotional scaffolding, where tutors act as both pedagogical and spiritual mentors guiding students toward self-regulated, meaningful learning.

Although digitalization has been widely studied in Islamic education, little research directly explores affective and spiritual engagement in online *tahsin* within an open university context. Prior works have examined online learning effectiveness and *pesantren* resilience in the digital age (Syafi’i, 2024; Sariyani, 2024), but the emotional and spiritual transformations of distance learners remain insufficiently documented.

This study addresses that gap by analyzing how students in Universitas Terbuka’s online *tahsin* course experience emotional motivation, spiritual connection, and behavioral transformation in their daily Qur’anic practices. It contributes to the growing discourse on Islamic digital pedagogy by offering empirical evidence that technology-mediated *tahsin* can sustain affective engagement comparable to traditional settings. The findings aim to inform both theoretical discussions on affective learning and practical strategies for designing spiritually enriching distance education.

## **Methodology**

### *Research design and approach of the study*

This study employed a mixed-methods design with a qualitative orientation, integrating quantitative and qualitative strands to capture both measurable patterns and rich experiential data. The approach follows Creswell (2015) and Johnson & Onwuegbuzie (2004), who emphasize that mixed methods enable a comprehensive understanding of educational phenomena by combining general trends with contextual insights.

The qualitative strand was prioritized because affective and spiritual engagement are inherently personal, experiential, and interpretive (Eksili, 2023). Quantitative data provided descriptive support for the qualitative findings, enhancing validity through triangulation. This design aligns with the study’s

goal of understanding *how* and *why* students experience emotional and spiritual engagement in online *tahsin* learning.

### ***Research site and participants***

The study was conducted at *Universitas Terbuka* (UT), Indonesia's leading institution for open and distance learning, during May–June 2025. Participants were 30 undergraduate students enrolled in the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) program who had completed the *tahsin al-Qur'an* course.

The sample was drawn using purposive sampling, based on three criteria:

- 1) active enrollment in the 2024/2025 academic year,
- 2) completion of at least one full online *tahsin* cycle, and
- 3) willingness to provide informed consent.

This strategy was appropriate because it targeted learners with lived experience of the online *tahsin* program. Participants represented both male and female students, aged 18–34, from various Indonesian provinces reflecting UT's geographically distributed learning community.

### ***Data collection***

In collecting the data of this study, two instruments were used:

- Online survey (Quantitative)

A 20-item Likert-scale questionnaire was adapted from validated measures of affective engagement (Fredricks, 2011; Reeve, 2024). The instrument covered three sub-constructs: motivation (e.g., “I feel inspired to improve my recitation”), emotional connection (“I feel calm and focused during recitation”), and spiritual reflection (“I feel closer to Allah after completing a session”). Content validity was reviewed by two experts in Islamic pedagogy and instructional design. A pilot test (n=10) produced a Cronbach's alpha of 0.87, indicating strong internal consistency (Taber, 2018).

- Reflective writing prompts (Qualitative)

Students responded to three open-ended questions on their emotional, spiritual, and behavioral changes during online *tahsin*. For instance: “Describe how online *tahsin* influenced your feelings about reading the Qur'an.” and “What challenges or moments felt spiritually meaningful to you?” Reflective writing was chosen because it allows participants to articulate affective and spiritual experiences authentically (Boud & Solomon, 2001).

Data collection proceeded in two sequential stages:

- The online survey was distributed through UT's Learning Management System (LMS).
- After survey completion, participants submitted reflective responses through a secure Google Form.

The researchers, a faculty member in the PAI program, maintained reflexivity throughout the process (Creswell, 2015) by keeping field notes and avoiding direct influence on participants' responses. Ethical approval was granted by the UT Research Ethics Committee, and anonymity was ensured via pseudonyms.



### *Data analysis*

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean, percentage, frequency) via SPSS 26 to identify general patterns of motivation and engagement. Qualitative data were analyzed through Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis, involving:

1. Familiarization with the data,
2. Generating initial codes,
3. Searching for themes,
4. Reviewing themes,
5. Defining and naming themes, and
6. Producing the final report.

For example, codes such as “*self-correction*,” “*calmness in recitation*,” and “*connection through reflection*” were clustered into themes representing motivation, spirituality, and daily engagement.

Triangulation between survey and reflective data was used to strengthen credibility, ensuring that numerical findings aligned with narrative evidence.

### **Findings**

The findings respond directly to the research questions by integrating quantitative and qualitative data from 30 students who completed Universitas Terbuka's online *tahsin al-Qur'an* course. Descriptive statistics illustrate the general level of affective engagement, while reflective narratives reveal students' emotional and spiritual experiences. Three major themes consistently emerged from the analysis:

- 1) Enhanced motivation in online tahsin learning,
- 2) Strengthened spiritual engagement, and
- 3) Deepened daily interaction with the Qur'an.

Each theme is presented with supporting data, illustrative quotations, and interpretive discussion aligned with prior literature.

### *Enhancing motivation in online tahsin learning*

Quantitative results showed that online *tahsin* significantly improved students' motivation to refine their Qur'anic recitation. A total of 73.7% of respondents *strongly agreed* and \*26.3% *agreed* that the course increased their desire to correct mistakes and improve *tajwid* accuracy. This aligns with Reeve's (2024) framework of intrinsic motivation, which emphasizes that learning becomes meaningful when learners internalize its spiritual and personal value. One participant expressed this transformation: “*Although I studied in a pesantren, I was surprised to find my mistakes in recitation. I felt embarrassed at first, but that feeling became a turning point to practice more sincerely.*”

Such emotional realization, described by Malay et al. (2024) as *productive discomfort*, can generate renewed commitment to improvement. Feedback from tutors also proved crucial, students consistently mentioned that constructive comments reduced anxiety and strengthened determination. This confirms Daher, Sabbah, and Abuzant's (2021) view that emotional reinforcement fosters engagement in online religious learning.

The hybrid format, combining real-time mentoring and self-paced practice, helped sustain motivation. Students appreciated how synchronous sessions offered immediate correction, while

asynchronous practice allowed reflection and repetition. Çalikoglu et al. (2025) similarly found that blended approaches in religious distance education foster long-term consistency and reduce disengagement.

### ***Strengthening spiritual engagement through online tahsin***

The second theme highlights the deep spiritual resonance students experienced during online *tahsin*. Survey results indicate that 63.2% strongly agreed and 36.8% agreed that the sessions enhanced their sense of closeness to Allah SWT and spiritual awareness during recitation. Reflective responses reveal that this connection was often triggered during correction or repetition moments: “Every time my tutor corrected me, I realized that reciting the Qur’an is not just about sound, but about sincerity in worship.” This statement exemplifies what Tisdell (2003) calls *transformative spirituality*, a process where intellectual activity becomes a means of inner awakening. Students frequently mentioned feelings of tranquility, tears during practice, and gratitude for being guided in humility. Tutor presence was instrumental in nurturing these emotions. Simple reminders like “Knowledge is provision for the hereafter” were cited as spiritually uplifting. Group recitation and shared prayers also fostered a sense of *ukhuwah* (brotherhood), echoing Chanifah et al. (2021), who argue that communal religious learning deepens both faith and belonging. Overall, online *tahsin* functioned not merely as an instructional space but as a virtual sanctuary, a setting where knowledge and devotion intertwined, and where technology became a medium of remembrance (*dzikir*).

### ***deepening interaction with the qur’an in daily life***

The third theme concerns the continuity of *tahsin* practice beyond formal sessions. Quantitative results showed that 63.2% strongly agreed and 26.3% agreed that interaction with tutors boosted their confidence and encouraged consistent engagement with the Qur’an. Students described how their learning extended into daily life: they performed *muroja’ah* regularly, paid more attention to *tajwid* during prayer, and incorporated voluntary worship such as *tabajud* and *dhuba*. One participant wrote: “Now I no longer rush my recitation. I pause, reflect on the meaning, and feel as if the Qur’an speaks directly to my heart.”

This narrative resonates with Yuskaev’s (2024) observation that mindful recitation fosters deeper personal transformation. Tutors often reminded students that precision in *tajwid* is not technical perfection but a form of *adab* (reverence), reinforcing the spiritual significance of each recitation. The findings confirm that online *tahsin* not only improved technical fluency but also inspired behavioral change, transforming Qur’anic reading from a routine obligation into a conscious act of worship and reflection.

The findings clearly respond to the study’s objectives by showing that online *tahsin* at Universitas Terbuka:

- Enhances motivation through emotional awareness, tutor support, and hybrid design.
- Strengthens spiritual engagement by fostering reflective and communal learning.
- Deepens interaction with the Qur’an in daily life by transforming recitation into mindful practice.

Collectively, these outcomes highlight the potential of well-designed online Qur’anic instruction to integrate cognitive, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of Islamic education.

## Discussion

This study demonstrates that online *tahsin al-Qur'an*, when designed with pedagogical and spiritual sensitivity, can effectively foster affective engagement among students in distance Islamic education. Three interrelated outcomes were identified: increased motivation to improve *tajwid* accuracy, strengthened spiritual intimacy with the Qur'an, and deeper integration of recitation into daily worship. These findings confirm that online religious learning can transcend technical skill-building. When learning environments are built around reflection, feedback, and tutor empathy, students develop emotional attachment and spiritual self-awareness, dimensions often overlooked in digital education. Such experiences reflect Reeve's (2024) affective engagement model, where motivation and emotion drive sustained participation, and Tisdell's (2003) notion of *transformative spirituality*, in which cognitive learning and spiritual awakening converge.

The results align with earlier findings that meaningful interaction between learners, instructors, and sacred content strengthens motivation and belonging (Daher, Sabbah, & Abuzant, 2021). Students' reflections show that correction and repetition were not sources of frustration but catalysts for humility and renewed intention, supporting Malay et al. (2024), who argue that emotional discomfort can lead to deeper commitment in faith-based learning. Furthermore, the emergence of tranquility and gratitude mirrors Moulai et al. (2023) and Yuskaev (2024), who link Qur'anic engagement to emotional regulation and inner peace. Unlike earlier assumptions that online learning diminishes spiritual depth (Hyland, 2011; Aryanti et al., 2021), this study reveals that digital platforms can amplify spiritual resonance when designed to promote reflection and social presence. However, the study diverges from purely cognitive or technological perspectives in previous research (Yahya et al., 2021; Syukri et al., 2024). It shows that affective and spiritual engagement are not incidental outcomes but essential pedagogical goals in online Islamic education. Thus, technology does not replace sacred intimacy. It *mediates* it.

Theoretically, this research extends the framework of affective engagement into Qur'anic digital pedagogy. It demonstrates that the emotional and spiritual dimensions of learning can be intentionally cultivated through pedagogical design. Reeve's (2024) concept of emotional scaffolding is particularly relevant: tutors act as mentors who provide both corrective and compassionate guidance, enabling learners to internalize feedback as spiritual growth rather than failure.

The findings also enrich Tisdell's (2003) theory of transformative spirituality by illustrating how online contexts can facilitate sacred experiences once believed to require physical proximity. The students' reflections show that *virtual sanctuaries*, spaces of guided recitation, shared prayer, and reflection can generate comparable affective resonance to traditional *halaqah*. Moreover, the study supports the view of Lappo et al. (2022) that digital learning environments, when infused with value-based pedagogy, can nurture holistic human development by connecting intellect, emotion, and faith. This integration of *'ilm* (knowledge) and *qalb* (heart) represents a distinctive contribution to the theory of Islamic distance education.

Practically, the findings suggest several design principles for sustaining affective engagement in online *tahsin*:

- Hybrid learning structure: combining synchronous mentoring and asynchronous practice maintains flexibility while preserving immediacy and accountability (Çalıkoğlu et al., 2025).



- Compassionate feedback: timely, criterion-referenced corrections reduce anxiety and foster confidence, turning mistakes into learning opportunities (Daher et al., 2021).
- Structured reflection: incorporating short reflective prompts or journals encourages mindfulness and links recitation to personal meaning (Astin et al., 2007).
- Communal rituals: integrating group *muroja'ah*, shared *du'a*, or motivational reminders builds *ukhuwah* and reinforces the spiritual purpose of study (Chanifah et al., 2021).

For institutions like Universitas Terbuka, these strategies can strengthen students' emotional resilience and spiritual well-being while maintaining academic rigor. Instructors should be trained not only in technology use but also in *spiritual-emotional pedagogy*—an emerging competence essential for Islamic educators in digital settings.

Despite promising outcomes, the study's scope was limited to 30 participants within a single institution and a short observation period. Future research should include longitudinal studies tracking how affective engagement evolves over multiple semesters, and comparative designs across pesantren-based, hybrid, and fully online systems. Quantitative modeling using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) could also explore relationships between motivation, feedback, and spiritual growth. Further investigation into gender dynamics, regional access, and tutor styles could refine understanding of how online *tahsin* influences different learner groups. Expanding to international open universities would also test the generalizability of the model in varied socio-cultural contexts.

Overall, the discussion underscores that technology and spirituality are not contradictory forces in Islamic education. When approached reflectively, online *tahsin* becomes a bridge between the sacred and the digital where emotional connection, spiritual mindfulness, and lifelong learning coexist. This study offers evidence that affective engagement is both a pedagogical tool and a spiritual journey, reaffirming that distance education, grounded in compassion and reflection, can indeed nurture hearts as well as minds.

### Conclusion and Recommendations/Implications

This study concludes that online *tahsin al-Qur'an* at Universitas Terbuka effectively nurtures both technical proficiency and affective engagement, demonstrating that distance learning can sustain the emotional and spiritual dimensions of religious education. The combination of structured mentoring, reflective activities, and compassionate tutor presence enabled students not only to improve *tajwid* accuracy but also to experience deeper motivation, emotional connection, and spiritual intimacy with the Qur'an. Three key insights emerge: 1) Motivational transformation, emotional awareness and feedback encouraged learners to persist in refining recitation, 2) Spiritual resonance: online interactions evolved into spaces of reflection and devotion, cultivating tranquility and humility, 3) Behavioral integration: *tahsin* practice extended beyond class sessions, shaping daily worship habits and ethical self-discipline.

These outcomes collectively affirm that well-designed online *tahsin* can balance cognitive mastery, emotional growth, and spiritual transformation, validating Reeve's (2024) theory of affective engagement and Tisdell's (2003) framework of transformative spirituality.

Theoretically, this research advances the discourse on Islamic digital pedagogy by integrating *affective engagement* and *spiritual reflection* within online religious learning. It demonstrates that distance education is not confined to knowledge transmission but can also serve as a spiritual formation platform. By adapting the affective engagement model to Qur'anic education, the study bridges

cognitive and emotional learning theories with Islamic epistemology—where *‘ilm* (knowledge) and *qalb* (heart) function synergistically. This contributes to the emerging field of *spiritual-technical integration* in Islamic distance education, underscoring that emotional scaffolding and compassionate mentoring can mediate transformative faith experiences even in virtual spaces. From a pedagogical standpoint, the study highlights several actionable insights:

- Humanized Digital Design: Online Qur’anic courses should blend synchronous mentoring with self-paced practice to sustain presence and accountability.
- Spiritual Scaffolding: Tutors must integrate reflective exercises, motivational reminders, and collective rituals (*muroja’ah*, *du’a*, reflection notes\*) to evoke emotional and spiritual depth.
- Professional Development: Training for online Qur’an educators should emphasize *emotional literacy*, *spiritual guidance*, and *constructive feedback* in digital environments.
- Institutional Strategy: Open universities can embed affective learning outcomes within assessment rubrics, recognizing emotional and spiritual engagement as indicators of holistic achievement.

Such practices transform online Qur’anic courses from mechanical recitation drills into *living pedagogies of the heart*, aligning faith-based learning with the humanistic goals of open and distance education.

Further research could expand this inquiry through:

- Longitudinal studies to examine the lasting impact of online *tahsin* on spiritual resilience and identity formation,
- Cross-institutional comparisons between traditional and digital Qur’anic programs,
- Quantitative modeling (e.g., SEM or PLS) to explore predictors of affective engagement, and
- Qualitative meta-synthesis to understand cross-cultural variations in virtual religious learning.

By pursuing these directions, future scholarship can deepen understanding of how affective-spiritual integration reshapes the philosophy and practice of Islamic education in the digital age. Ultimately, this study reaffirms that online *tahsin* is not merely about transmitting pronunciation rules. It is about touching hearts through screens. When technology is guided by compassion and reflection, it becomes a vessel for *barakah* (divine blessing), connecting learners to the sacred word in ways both ancient and modern. Thus, Islamic distance education, grounded in empathy and spirituality, holds the transformative potential to nurture intellect (*‘aql*), heart (*qalb*), and soul (*ruh*) in harmony.

### Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

### References

- Alkandari, K. (2024). *Engagement, interaction, and socialization of Islamic education pre-service teachers through virtual discussions*. *SAGE Open*, 14(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440241255844>
- Aryanti, N., Ambas, J., & Razali, R. (2021). *Effective strategies for educators in implementing online learning*. Akademia Pustaka.
- Astin, A. W., Astin, H. S., & Lindholm, J. A. (2007). *A national study of spirituality in higher education: Students’ search for meaning and purpose*. Higher Education Research Institute, University of California–Los Angeles.

- Boud, D., & Solomon, N. (2001). *Work-based learning: A new higher education?* McGraw-Hill Education.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Bruhn-Zass, E. (2022). Virtual internationalization as a concept for campus-based and online and distance higher education. In O. Zawacki-Richter & I. Jung (Eds.), *Handbook of open, distance and digital education* (pp. 1–18). Springer Nature. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-0351-9\\_23-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-0351-9_23-1)
- Çalıkoğlu, A., Bulut-Sahin, B., & Aşık, A. (2025). Virtual exchange as a mode of internationalization at a distance: Experiences from Türkiye. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 56(2), 909–926. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjet.13546>
- Chanifah, N., Hanafi, Y., Mahfud, C., & Samsudin, A. (2021). Designing a spirituality-based Islamic education framework for young Muslim generations: A case study from two Indonesian universities. *Higher Education Pedagogies*, 6(1), 195–211. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23752696.2021.1960879>
- Choe, E. J. Y., Waldron, S., Hee An, C., & Sandage, S. J. (2024). Intellectual humility and religion/spirituality: A scoping review of research. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 19(4), 611–628. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2023.2239792>
- Creswell, J. W. (2015). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (5th ed.). Pearson.
- Daher, W., Sabbah, K., & Abuzant, M. (2021). Affective engagement of higher education students in an online course. *Emerging Science Journal*, 5(4), 545–558. <https://doi.org/10.28991/esj-2021-01289>
- Darojat, O., & Kosasih, F. R. (2025). Universitas Terbuka. In O. Zawacki-Richter & L. Qayyum (Eds.), *Handbook of open universities around the world* (pp. 455–466). Routledge.
- Eksili, L. (2023). *Lessons learned in social-emotional development after a pandemic: A qualitative transcendental phenomenological study* [Doctoral dissertation, Liberty University]. Liberty University.
- Fredricks, J. A. (2011). Engagement in school and out-of-school contexts: A multidimensional view of engagement. *Theory Into Practice*, 50(4), 327–335. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2011.607401>
- Fricticarani, A., Hayati, A., Ramdani, R., Hoirunisa, I., & Rosdalina, G. M. (2023). Educational strategies for success in the 5.0 technology era. *Jurnal Inovasi Pendidikan dan Teknologi Informasi (JIPIT)*, 4(1), 56–68. <https://doi.org/10.52060/pti.v4i1.1173>
- Giunchi, E., & Melis, N. (Eds.). (2024). *The abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate, 1924: Debates and implications*. Taylor & Francis. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781032613468>
- Gregory, G., & Kaufeldt, M. (2015). *The motivated brain: Improving student attention, engagement, and perseverance*. ASCD.
- Hakimi, M., Akrami, M., Ahrari, M., Akrami, K., & Akrami, F. (2024). The impact of mobile applications on Quran education: A survey of student performance and satisfaction. *Journal of Digital Learning and Distance Education*, 2(8), 722–736. <https://doi.org/10.56778/jdlde.v2i8.220>
- Hanafi, S. (2023). *Studying Islam in the Arab world: The rupture between religion and the social sciences*. Taylor & Francis. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003435372>
- Hyland, T. (2011). *Mindfulness and learning: Celebrating the affective dimension of education*. Springer.
- Jarkasih, A., & Nurhayati, S. (2023). Improving santri's noble characters through Qur'an-based learning management in Pesantren Jaobar. *Aksara: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan Nonformal*, 9(2), 1137–1150. <https://doi.org/10.37905/aksara.9.2.1137-1150.2023>

- Johnson, R. B., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2004). Mixed methods research: A research paradigm whose time has come. *Educational Researcher*, 33(7), 14–26. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X033007014>
- Lai, C., & Jin, T. (2021). Teacher professional identity and the nature of technology integration. *Computers & Education*, 175, 104314. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2021.104314>
- Lappo, V. V., Soichuk, R. L., & Akimova, L. M. (2022). Digital technologies of support for the spiritual development of students. *Information Technologies and Learning Tools*, 88(2), 103–114. <https://doi.org/10.33407/itlt.v88i2.3403>
- Malay, I., Sarah, M., Ramadhani, W., & Anggraini, R. (2024). The application of educational technology in distance learning: Teachers' and students' perspectives through a qualitative approach. *Edu Society: Journal of Education, Social Sciences, and Community Service*, 4(3), 1913–1921.
- Mansour, N. (2022). The holy light of cyberspace: Spiritual experience in a virtual church. *Religions*, 13(2), 121. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13020121>
- Marek, Z., & Walulik, A. (2022). Ignatian spirituality as inspiration for a pedagogical theory of accompaniment. *Journal of Religion and Health*, 61(6), 4481–4498. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-022-01628-z>
- Moulaei, K., Haghdoost, A., Bahaadinbeigy, K., & Dinari, F. (2023). The effect of the Holy Qur'an recitation and listening on anxiety, stress, and depression: A scoping review on outcomes. *Health Science Reports*, 6(12), e1751. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hsr2.1751>
- Nasir, M., Rizal, S., Basri, & Pabbajah, M. (2024). Revolutionizing *Teungku Dayah* learning model: Exploring the transformative impact of technological advancements on Islamic education in Aceh. *Cogent Education*, 11(1), 2335720. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2024.2335720>
- Patton, C., Sawicki, D., & Clark, J. (2015). *Basic methods of policy analysis and planning*. Routledge.
- Priyono, T. (2021). *The effectiveness of the talaqqi method in online Qur'an memorization learning for early childhood* [Undergraduate thesis, Universitas Islam Sultan Agung]. Universitas Islam Sultan Agung Repository. <https://repository.unissula.ac.id/>
- Reeve, J. (2024). *Understanding motivation and emotion*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Sariyani, S. (2025). Comparing synchronous and asynchronous learning in Qur'anic *tahsin* at Universitas Terbuka: A study on student learning outcomes and processes. *International Journal of Islamic Education, Research and Multiculturalism*, 7(2), 953–968. <https://doi.org/10.47006/ijierm.v7i2.542>
- Sariyani, S., & Prasetyo, N. T. (2024). The existence of a *salaf pesantren* in the Ki Ageng Tarub grave area in the Industrial Revolution 4.0 era. *Jurnal Progress: Wabana Kreativitas dan Intelektualitas*, 12(2), 217–236. <https://doi.org/10.31942/pgrs.v12i2.1216>
- Shahzad, M. F., Xu, S., Lim, W. M., Yang, X., & Khan, Q. R. (2024). Artificial intelligence and social media on academic performance and mental well-being: Student perceptions of positive impact in the age of smart learning. *Heliyon*, 10(8), e29523. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e29523>
- Suud, F. M., & Salsabillah, W. T. (2024). The impact of Islamic resilience on student spirituality while engaging in digital activities. In *Proceedings of the International Conference* (pp. 483–492). Springer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-97-3559-4\\_39](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-97-3559-4_39)
- Suwardi, S., Anif, S., Waston, W., & Owa-Onire Uthman, Y. O. (2024). *Tasmi' bil ghoib* assessment model of the Qur'an for children: A multicity case study. *Profetika: Jurnal Studi Islam*, 24(2), 343–353. <https://doi.org/10.23917/profetika.v24i02.1696>
- Syafi'i, I. (2025a). *Exploring multicultural values in interfaith lecturer cooperation: An ethnography*. *Edukasi: Jurnal*

- Pendidikan dan Pengajaran*, 12(1), 125–137. <https://doi.org/10.19109/wb8kds76>
- Syafi'i, I. (2025b). *Innovation of Islamic wasathiyah education methods: Transformation of da'wah in the contemporary era*. *Indonesian Research Journal in Education*, 9(2), 505–520. <https://doi.org/10.22437/irje.v9i02.42992>
- Syafi'i, I. (2025c). *Open learning space: Reinterpretation of inclusive education from a classical Islamic perspective in the digital era*. *Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Islam (Journal of Islamic Education Studies)*, 7(3), 221–240. <https://doi.org/10.19109/pairf.v7i3.30464>
- Syafi'i, I. (2025d). *The effectiveness of ghorib learning through Microsoft Teams e-learning platform in Indonesia*. *Journal of Education and Religious Studies*, 5(1), 38–47. <https://doi.org/10.57060/jers.rwzyv459>
- Syukri, S., Mukhlis, M., & Ismail, I. (2024). Revolutionizing education: Exploring the Qur'anic perspective on online learning and its impact on modern education. *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice*, 23(20), 6696. <https://doi.org/10.33423/jhetp.v23i20.6696>
- Taber, K. S. (2018). The use of Cronbach's alpha when developing and reporting research instruments in science education. *Research in Science Education*, 48(6), 1273–1296. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11165-016-9602-2>
- Tisdell, E. J. (2003). *Exploring spirituality and culture in adult and higher education*. Jossey-Bass.
- Yahya, M. W. B. H. M., Rahman, T., Siddiq, A. A., & Parihat, P. (2021). Online learning in the Qur'an reading class during COVID-19 pandemic. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 20(5), 142–158. <https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.20.5.8>
- Yuskaev, T. R. (2024). *The Qur'an heard: Sound poetics in three American sermons*. Taylor & Francis.