

## Integrating Islamic Values into Virtual Reality-Based Islamic Religious Education: A Qualitative Literature Review

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### ABSTRACT

**Background.** Although Virtual Reality (VR) has increasingly been applied to religious and Islamic education, existing studies remain fragmented across specific applications, technological affordances, and individual learning outcomes, without integrating pedagogical, spiritual, ethical, epistemological, teacher-guidance, and content-validation dimensions into a coherent framework for Islamic Religious Education.

**Purpose.** This study aims to analyze the integration of Islamic values into VR-based education and develop an integrative conceptual framework for Islamic Religious Education, focusing on its pedagogical potential, forms of value internalization, and implementation challenges.

**Methods.** This study used a qualitative literature review of 24 academic sources related to Islamic Religious Education, digital pedagogy, immersive learning, and VR in religious education. Literature selection followed a PRISMA-informed process of identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion, analyzed thematically to identify codes concerning experiential learning, value internalization, ethical and epistemological representation, teacher orchestration, and implementation conditions.

**Results.** Findings show that VR can support the internalization of Islamic values when immersive experiences are deliberately connected to religiously valid content, pedagogical guidance, and reflective learning. Thematic synthesis generated a five-component framework: Islamic value orientation, religious content validation, immersive experience design, teacher orchestration, and reflective evaluation. VR enables students to observe, analyze, reflect on, and connect Islamic concepts with real-life contexts, though its value depends on theological integrity, ethical representation, accessibility, technological readiness, teacher competence, and institutional support.

**Conclusions.** VR should be understood not merely as technological innovation but as a pedagogical medium aligned with Islamic epistemology, ethics, and spiritual goals. The review positions value orientation, content validation, immersive design, teacher mediation, and reflective evaluation as interconnected conditions for responsible VR integration in Islamic Religious Education.

### KEYWORDS

Immersive Learning, Islamic Religious Education, Islamic Values, Virtual Reality

### INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has expanded the range of learning environments available to Islamic Religious Education (IRE), particularly those that support interactive, contextual, and experience-oriented learning. When pedagogically and ethically guided, digital technologies can reshape learning

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experiences and cognition rather than merely change the technical delivery of instruction (Tangkish et al., 2024). In Islamic study classrooms, classroom response systems, digital textbooks, mobile Virtual Reality (VR), and virtual communication tools have supported learning when accessibility, affordability, and user acceptance are adequately considered (Jannah et al., 2023). Among these technologies, VR is particularly relevant because it enables learners to experience three-dimensional simulated environments characterized by presence, interaction, and active participation. Studies in Islamic and religion-related learning suggest that immersive VR can make learning experiences more concrete and engaging and can strengthen creativity and active participation (Asril et al., 2023; Astatke et al., 2025).

Islamic Religious Education is an important subject in the Indonesian education system because it contributes to the formation of students' spiritual and moral character. The central challenge is therefore not simply whether digital technology should be introduced, but how it can enhance engagement and understanding without weakening the religious values and formative purposes of IRE (Alahmadi et al., 2024). Islamic Religious Education teachers are not only expected to deliver religious materials normatively but also to adjust their teaching strategies to contemporary educational changes, including the use of information technology. Evidence indicates that this integration depends on pedagogical competence, professional training, and institutional support (Murhayati et al., 2025), while meaningfully designed interactive media can strengthen concentration, comprehension, and emotional connection in Islamic learning contexts (Rekan et al., 2025). Thus, technological innovation in IRE must remain subordinate to its educational and value-formative purposes.

Within this pedagogical challenge, VR is distinctive because its educational value depends on the interaction among technological affordances, instructional design, religious content, teacher mediation, and learner experience. Research on VR in religious education therefore increasingly treats immersive technology not as an isolated instructional device but as part of a broader pedagogical system in which design choices and classroom implementation shape learning outcomes (Jeglič, 2024; Serour et al., 2025; Wolf et al., 2024).

Islamic values include the dimensions of faith, worship, morality, and social relations, which are internalized through a continuous educational process. Islamic education does not only aim to develop intellectual ability but also to shape students' spiritual and moral character. This formative orientation is particularly important in evaluating immersive technologies because engagement or presence alone cannot be equated with religious understanding or value internalization. Existing studies indicate that virtual environments can influence engagement with faith, worship, morality, emotional experience, and spiritual formation, but these outcomes depend on how religious content, sensory experiences, and processes of interpretation are designed (De Cesaris & Sadeghi habibabad, 2023; Göküş et al., 2026; Yu & Tian, 2025). Accordingly, VR should not be understood merely as a tool for displaying information, but as a medium that can present meaning, experience, and spiritual awareness when it is designed according to Islamic educational principles.

The pedagogical potential of VR in IRE is most evident in learning content that is spatial, procedural, historical, or scenario based. Simulations can provide learners with structured exposure to pilgrimage rituals, Islamic historical settings, and situations requiring ethical interpretation that may be difficult to reproduce through conventional classroom methods (Asril et al., 2023; Popova, 2023). Evidence from virtual religious tours also suggests that immersive environments can connect theoretical knowledge with situated and interpretive experiences rather than merely provide visual exposure (Andersland et al., 2025). However, these affordances indicate pedagogical possibilities

rather than automatic learning effects; their educational significance depends on how learners are guided to interpret and reflect on the simulated experience.

Nevertheless, integrating Islamic values into Virtual Reality also presents important challenges. One major challenge concerns the representation of sensitive religious symbols, including the visualization of sacred places, ritual interactions, and historical narratives. Studies of VR in religious contexts caution that immersive representations have theological and didactic limits because digitally reproducing sacred spaces or practices may alter how sacredness, authority, and religious experience are perceived (Pirker, 2024; Sebayang et al., 2026). Consequently, greater visual realism cannot be assumed to produce greater theological understanding. If VR content is not designed through an appropriate Islamic epistemological approach, it may simplify religious meanings, reduce theological depth, or produce inaccurate representations. In addition, responsible implementation must address accessibility, cultural sensitivity, privacy, iconographic guidance, and institutional readiness rather than concentrating exclusively on immersion and engagement (Osman et al., 2025; Papakostas, 2026).

The literature therefore presents a conditional rather than uniformly positive account of technology integration. Digital tools can expand access, learning effectiveness, and active participation when their affordances are aligned with learners' needs and educational contexts (Jennah et al., 2023; Tangkish et al., 2024). At the same time, unequal technological access, differences in digital competence, teacher readiness, professional training, and institutional support may constrain their educational value (Murhayati et al., 2025). These tensions are especially consequential for VR because immersive learning generally requires greater technical, pedagogical, and institutional preparation than conventional digital media.

These findings indicate that advanced technology can support Islamic education when it is directed toward meaningful pedagogical purposes. In the context of Islamic Religious Education, VR may not only assist the integration of Islamic values but also develop students' critical and reflective thinking about the meaning of religious learning. Across the religious-education literature, reflexivity, critical thinking, emotional engagement, and affective experience are associated not with technological exposure alone but with interpretation, mediation, and post-experience reflection (Kvia & Cochrane, 2023; Papakostas, 2026; Riegel & Zimmermann, 2026). This suggests that the relevant analytical question is not simply whether VR increases engagement, but how an immersive experience is transformed into religious understanding and value-oriented reflection. Therefore, the effectiveness of VR should not be measured only through academic achievement, but also through students' emotional engagement, reflective understanding, and spiritual awareness.

Evidence specifically concerning VR in Islamic Religious Education remains emergent and concentrated in discrete applications rather than integrated pedagogical models. Existing studies have examined Hajj simulation and Qur'anic comprehension, while related research has addressed immersive Islamic teaching in the metaverse and the acceptance of metaverse technology for teaching Hadith and the Prophetic Biography (Alahmadi et al., 2024; Asril et al., 2023; Popova, 2023; Zekhnini & Alnakawab, 2026). Collectively, these studies establish the feasibility and educational promise of immersive environments, but they address different technologies, religious contents, and outcomes and therefore provide limited guidance on how Islamic values should be systematically embedded throughout VR-based learning. These findings suggest that VR has practical potential for religious learning, but they also show that implementation remains contingent on technological access, teacher readiness, institutional support, and appropriate instructional design (Murhayati et al., 2025).

This fragmented evidence also highlights the importance of pedagogical mediation. As technology becomes more sophisticated, Islamic Religious Education needs to respond critically and constructively so that religious learning does not become disconnected from students' digital experiences. Virtual environments increasingly mediate the acquisition and discussion of religious knowledge, while virtual discussions and immersive experiences can facilitate engagement, social interaction, and empathy when participation is appropriately guided (Alkandari, 2024; Rashidujjaman et al., 2024). However, these outcomes also reinforce the continuing importance of teachers in framing the experience, regulating interaction, correcting misconceptions, and connecting virtual activities with religious meaning. Therefore, the integration of VR into Islamic Religious Education should be guided by the educational purpose of helping students live according to Islamic teachings in a changing technological environment.

aken together, prior studies can be grouped into three broad strands: application-oriented studies examining Hajj, Qur'anic learning, and other immersive religious experiences; pedagogical studies emphasizing engagement, reflexivity, and experiential learning; and critical studies addressing religious representation, mediation, and implementation conditions (Alahmadi et al., 2024; Andersland et al., 2025; Asril et al., 2023; Astatke et al., 2025; Kvia & Cochrane, 2023; Papakostas, 2026; Wolf et al., 2024; Zekhnini & Alnakawab, 2026). Although these strands establish important possibilities and constraints, they remain conceptually fragmented across specific applications, technological affordances, and individual outcomes. In particular, the literature has not sufficiently explained how spiritual, cognitive, affective, ethical, and epistemological considerations can be connected with religious-content validation, teacher guidance, immersive design, and reflective evaluation within a coherent framework for IRE. This unresolved integration constitutes the central gap addressed by the present review. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the integration of Islamic values in the use of VR for Islamic Religious Education learning. Specifically, it seeks to identify the pedagogical potential of VR, explain forms of Islamic value internalization through simulation-based learning experiences, and analyze implementation challenges in the Indonesian educational context. Beyond summarizing existing applications, the review seeks to synthesize these dispersed dimensions into an integrative conceptual framework for value-oriented VR-based IRE. This study also emphasizes the importance of VR content design that is consistent with Islamic epistemology so that the representation of values, symbols, rituals, and Islamic history does not result in simplification or distortion of meaning.

This study is important because the integration of Islamic values into VR-based education requires not only technological readiness but also ethical, pedagogical, and theological considerations. In practice, schools may face obstacles such as limited facilities, unequal access to devices, insufficient teacher training, and the need for culturally sensitive, religiously appropriate, and ethically governed immersive content (Murhayati et al., 2025; Osman et al., 2025; Papakostas, 2026; Serour et al., 2025). These challenges require attention from educational institutions and policymakers through institutional and infrastructure support, teacher professional development, accessibility planning, religious-content validation, and quality assurance for digital religious learning resources. Accordingly, the contribution of this review is not to argue that VR is inherently superior to other learning media, but to clarify the conditions under which immersive technology can be pedagogically meaningful, theologically responsible, and ethically appropriate for Islamic Religious Education. The resulting synthesis is intended to provide a conceptual basis for research, instructional design, teacher preparation, and future empirical evaluation of value-oriented VR learning in IRE.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Review Design

This study used a structured qualitative literature review with thematic synthesis to analyze the integration of Islamic values into Virtual Reality-based Islamic Religious Education learning. This approach was selected to develop a conceptual and pedagogical understanding of how Virtual Reality can function not only as a digital learning medium but also as an experiential learning environment that supports the internalization of Islamic values, including faith, worship, morality, and muamalah, as well as the learning of Islamic jurisprudence and Islamic Cultural History. A literature review is appropriate when a study seeks to synthesize dispersed scholarly discussions and develop them into a more systematic understanding of an emerging field of inquiry. The study was not designed as a systematic review or meta-analysis; rather, it used a transparent and structured process of literature identification, eligibility assessment, coding, and thematic interpretation to develop an integrative conceptual synthesis. In this context, the review focused on literature discussing digital learning, Virtual Reality in education, Islamic Religious Education, technology-based religious learning, and the ethical representation of Islamic symbols and practices in immersive media.

### Search Strategy and Study Selection

The data sources consisted of scholarly journal articles, academic books, proceedings, undergraduate theses, and academic reports relevant to Islamic education, educational technology, digital pedagogy, and Virtual Reality-based learning. Searches were conducted through Google Scholar, Crossref, ScienceDirect, and national academic journal repositories. Search terms were organized around combinations of the core concepts “Virtual Reality,” “immersive learning,” “Islamic Religious Education,” “Islamic education,” “Islamic values,” “religious education,” “digital pedagogy,” and “technology-based religious learning.” Where supported by the database, these concepts were combined using Boolean operators such as AND and OR to connect technology-related and Islamic-education-related terms. The authors should report the exact database-specific search strings and search dates from the original search records in the final manuscript to ensure full reproducibility. The literature was selected based on its relevance to four main themes: the use of Virtual Reality as an educational medium, the internalization of Islamic values in learning, the application of immersive technology in Islamic Religious Education, and the challenges of implementing Virtual Reality in the Indonesian educational context. Eligibility was assessed by examining titles, abstracts, and, where necessary, full texts for direct conceptual or empirical relevance to these areas. Sources were retained when they contributed evidence or conceptual explanation relevant to the review questions and provided sufficient academic information to permit interpretation. The review covered sources published between 2006 and 2025, and the final corpus consisted of 24 academic sources. Additional methodological references cited to justify the review procedure were not treated as part of the analytical corpus. The selection process was organized through identification, relevance screening, eligibility assessment, and final inclusion; this staged procedure was used to improve transparency but is not presented as a fully PRISMA-compliant systematic review.

**Table 1.** Data Sources, Selection Criteria, and Focus of Literature Analysis

| Methodological Component | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Type of Research         | Structured qualitative literature review with thematic synthesis                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Object of Study          | Integration of Islamic values into Virtual Reality-based Islamic Religious Education learning                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Main Data Sources        | Scholarly journal articles, academic books, proceedings, undergraduate theses, research reports, and scientific publications related to Islamic education and learning technology. Peer-reviewed journal articles and scholarly publications were prioritized; non-journal academic sources were retained only when they provided directly relevant conceptual, contextual, or empirical information unavailable or insufficiently addressed in journal literature. |
| Search Databases         | Google Scholar, Crossref, ScienceDirect, and national academic journal repositories                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Publication Range        | Sources published between 2006 and 2025 for the stated analytical corpus; this range should be verified against the final list of included studies before submission.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Final Corpus             | 24 academic sources that met the relevance and eligibility criteria. Methodological references used to explain the review procedure were not counted as part of the analytical corpus.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Inclusion Criteria       | Literature discussing Virtual Reality in education, Islamic values, Islamic Religious Education, digital learning, and immersive technology in religious learning; academic sources presenting empirical evidence, conceptual analysis, or theoretically relevant discussion directly related to one or more review questions; and sources containing sufficient scholarly information for thematic interpretation.                                                 |
| Exclusion Criteria       | Non-academic sources, sources unrelated to Islamic Religious Education or Virtual Reality, duplicate records, and publications that did not provide sufficient conceptual or methodological relevance; sources whose focus was too remote from the review questions to contribute to thematic synthesis.                                                                                                                                                            |
| Focus of Analysis        | The function of VR in learning experiences, internalization of Islamic values, ethical representation of religious symbols, teacher competence, infrastructure readiness, and implementation challenges, together with the relationships among value orientation, content validation, immersive design, teacher guidance, and reflective evaluation.                                                                                                                |

### Document Analysis and Data Extraction

Data were collected through documentation techniques and systematic reading of the selected sources. For each included source, the analysis recorded information relevant to the research objectives, including the study context, technological application, educational purpose, principal findings or arguments, treatment of Islamic or religious values, pedagogical implications,

implementation conditions, and reported limitations. Each document was analyzed to identify its main concepts, arguments, findings, and limitations. The analysis focused on how previous studies explain the function of Virtual Reality in enhancing learning experiences, how Islamic values can be integrated into digital learning environments, and what challenges may arise when religious content is represented through simulation. This structured extraction helped establish a traceable connection between individual studies, recurring analytical categories, and the themes reported in the Results and Discussion. Document analysis was used because this study relied on written academic sources as the primary data. This method enables researchers to interpret documents systematically by identifying meanings, categories, and patterns relevant to the research focus (Bowen, 2009).

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The first stage involved repeated reading of the selected literature to obtain a comprehensive understanding of each source. The second stage involved coding important statements related to Virtual Reality, Islamic values, learning experiences, pedagogical transformation, ethical representation, teacher competence, infrastructure readiness, and student engagement. Initial codes included recurring ideas such as presence and experiential learning, simulation of worship, moral decision-making, religious-content accuracy, theological limits of representation, teacher facilitation, reflective debriefing, accessibility, privacy, infrastructure, and institutional support. Codes were compared across studies to identify convergence, divergence, and conditions affecting the reported educational value of VR. The third stage involved grouping these codes into broader themes. The main themes developed in this study included Virtual Reality as an experiential learning medium, the internalization of Islamic values through simulation, ethical and epistemological challenges in representing Islamic teachings, and practical barriers to implementing Virtual Reality in schools. During theme review, overlapping categories were refined and relationships among themes were examined. This process subsequently informed the author-developed conceptual framework linking Islamic value orientation, religious-content validation, immersive experience design, teacher orchestration, and reflective evaluation. The framework was therefore derived from the thematic synthesis of the reviewed literature rather than adapted from a single existing model. Thematic analysis was selected because it helps researchers identify, organize, and interpret patterns of meaning in qualitative data. Braun and Clarke (2006) explain that thematic analysis includes data familiarization, coding, theme development, theme review, theme definition, and report writing.

**Table 2. Data Analysis Procedure in the Literature Review**

| Stage of Analysis         | Research Activity                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Expected Output                                                          |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Literature Identification | Searching academic sources using combinations of predefined concepts related to Virtual Reality, immersive learning, Islamic Religious Education, Islamic values, religious education, digital pedagogy, and technology-based religious learning | An initial list of literature relevant to the research focus             |
| Source Selection          | Screening literature based on inclusion and exclusion criteria, publication range, relevance to VR and Islamic Religious Education, and                                                                                                          | Relevant, academic, and accountable sources included in the final corpus |

|                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                      | academic credibility through title, abstract, and full-text assessment where required                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| In-depth Reading and Data Extraction | Reading and recording concepts, arguments, findings, methods, and limitations of previous studies, together with study context, technological application, educational purpose, value-related content, and implementation conditions                                                                                                          | Structured analytical notes on VR, Islamic Religious Education, Islamic values, and immersive learning                                                                           |
| Coding                               | Marking important statements related to VR functions, Islamic value internalization, ethical representation, teacher competence, infrastructure readiness, and student engagement, including codes such as presence, ritual simulation, reflection, content validity, teacher facilitation, accessibility, privacy, and institutional support | Initial codes that represent recurring ideas across the literature                                                                                                               |
| Theme Development and Review         | Grouping codes into broader themes aligned with the research objectives and comparing them across studies to identify convergence, divergence, and conceptual relationships                                                                                                                                                                   | Main themes, including VR as an experiential medium, Islamic value internalization, ethical representation, and implementation challenges                                        |
| Synthesis of Findings                | Connecting themes to build a conceptual argument about the integration of Islamic values into VR-based learning and examining relationships among value orientation, content validation, immersive design, teacher guidance, and reflection                                                                                                   | A systematic explanation of how Islamic values can be integrated into Virtual Reality education and an author-developed conceptual framework derived from the thematic synthesis |
| Validation of Interpretation         | Comparing findings across international literature, Indonesian educational studies, Islamic education references, and immersive learning research to identify whether interpretations were supported across different types and contexts of evidence and to note contradictory or qualifying findings                                         | Stronger, more consistent, and academically accountable interpretations                                                                                                          |

### Trustworthiness, Source Triangulation, and Scope

To strengthen the trustworthiness of the interpretation, this study used source triangulation by comparing findings from international literature, Indonesian educational studies, Islamic education references, and research on immersive learning. Triangulation was conducted by examining whether recurring claims such as the educational value of immersion, the importance of teacher mediation, the need for religious-content validation, and implementation barriers were supported, qualified, or contradicted across these different bodies of literature. Interpretations that appeared only in a single source or context were treated more cautiously than patterns recurring across multiple sources. The interpretation was also aligned with the conceptual framework of Islamic education so that Virtual

Reality was not understood merely as a technical tool but as a pedagogical medium that should correspond to Islamic epistemology and educational ethics. Analytical consistency was supported by applying the same relevance criteria, coding categories, and theme-development procedure across the included sources. This study did not use statistical testing because the data were qualitative and document-based. Its scope was limited to conceptual analysis based on literature; therefore, it did not measure students' learning outcomes through experiments or classroom trials. The review is also constrained by the relatively focused corpus and by the heterogeneity of the included literature in terms of technology, educational setting, religious content, and research design. Accordingly, the framework developed in this study should be understood as a conceptual synthesis requiring empirical validation rather than as evidence of causal effectiveness. Further research may extend this study through empirical investigation involving teachers, students, and Virtual Reality-based Islamic Religious Education modules in real classroom contexts. Such research should test the framework across different educational settings and examine outcomes such as conceptual understanding, moral reasoning, reflective engagement, cognitive load, spiritual experience, teacher mediation, accessibility, and implementation feasibility.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Experiential Learning and Islamic Value Internalization

The thematic synthesis generated four interrelated findings: (1) VR as an experiential environment for Islamic value internalization, (2) the importance of pedagogical mediation and reflective meaning-making, (3) ethical and epistemological challenges in representing religious content, and (4) technological and institutional conditions affecting implementation. Within the first theme, the literature synthesis shows that the integration of Islamic values into Virtual Reality-based education has important potential to strengthen the quality of Islamic Religious Education learning. The main finding of this review is that Virtual Reality should not be understood only as a visual medium or technological aid, but also as an experiential learning space that allows students to understand religious materials in more concrete, interactive, and reflective ways. In Islamic Religious Education, abstract, historical, symbolic, and ritual materials can be presented through simulations that are closer to real-life experiences. Across different applications, the evidence converges on the value of experiential participation but emphasizes different outcomes. Asril et al. (2023) reported positive student responses to a VR-based Hajj learning environment concerning comprehensibility, visual presentation, realism, enjoyment, and ease of use; Alahmadi et al. (2024) examined VR for Qur'anic comprehension; and Astatke et al. (2025) found stronger engagement and creativity through immersive VR than through desktop-based VR. Taken together, these studies suggest that VR's distinctive pedagogical contribution is not visualization alone, but the combination of situated experience, learner participation, and opportunities for subsequent interpretation. However, the studies address different religious content and outcomes, so they do not by themselves demonstrate that immersion automatically produces Islamic value internalization.

Another finding concerns the use of interactive media by Islamic Religious Education teachers as part of a more participatory learning strategy. Interactive media can be used at the opening stage to stimulate students' interest, during the main activity to deliver materials, quizzes, or simulations, and at the closing stage to support reflection. Although these studies do not examine identical technologies, they provide complementary evidence about the pedagogical conditions surrounding immersive learning. Technology-supported Islamic education shows that interactive multimedia can strengthen concentration, comprehension, emotional connection, and motivation when learning

activities are meaningfully organized (Rekan et al., 2025). Similarly, virtual discussions among Islamic education pre-service teachers have been shown to foster interaction, engagement, cooperation, and constructive feedback, while also demonstrating that instructor guidance remains necessary to regulate participation (Alkandari, 2024). The common implication is that interactivity has educational value when it is structured toward specific learning purposes rather than treated as an outcome in itself.

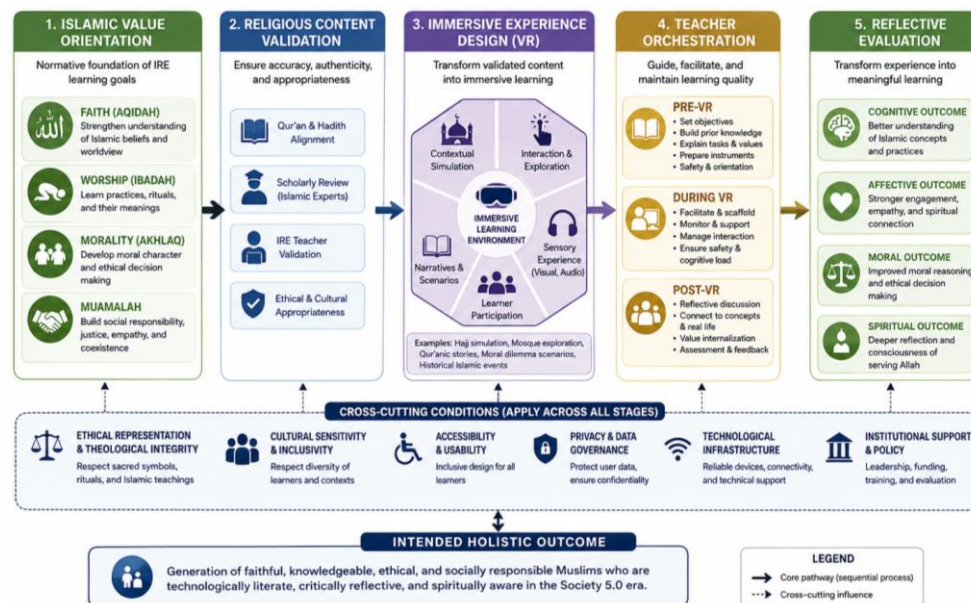
These findings address the main problem identified in the introduction, namely the need for Islamic Religious Education learning innovation that can respond to technological development without weakening the substance of Islamic values. Rather than assuming that conventional instruction is uniformly ineffective, the reviewed evidence indicates that digital and immersive media may add particular value when learning objectives require interaction, situated observation, practice, or reflection. Empirical research in Islamic study classrooms shows that digital textbooks, classroom response systems, mobile VR, and virtual communication technologies can be accepted by learners and support learning, although affordability and ease of access remain important conditions (Jennah et al., 2023). A recent critical review of VR-oriented Islamic learning similarly stresses that technological design must remain connected to instructional planning, pedagogical processes, and learning objectives (Serour et al., 2025). The two strands of evidence therefore converge on a conditional interpretation: technological acceptance and immersive capability are insufficient unless they are translated into pedagogically structured, reflective, and value-oriented learning activities.

**Table 3.** Main Findings on the Integration of Islamic Values into Virtual Reality-Based Islamic Religious Education Learning

| Aspect of Finding         | Form of Integration in Islamic Religious Education Learning                                                              | Implication                                                                                                       |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Faith Values              | Materials on faith, the greatness of Allah, and His creation are presented through reflective simulations.               | Teachers can use VR to strengthen spiritual awareness, not merely to visualize religious content.                 |
| Worship Values            | Simulations of hajj, umrah, the introduction of the Kaaba, and other religious practices are provided.                   | VR can become an alternative medium for practice-based learning when real facilities are limited.                 |
| Moral Values              | Virtual scenarios present moral situations that require students to choose attitudes consistent with Islamic teachings.  | Moral education can be developed through case-based interactive scenarios.                                        |
| Critical Thinking         | VR helps students analyze, evaluate, draw inferences, and assess arguments in Islamic Religious Education materials.     | VR can support twenty-first-century skills when integrated with guided inquiry and reflection.                    |
| Implementation Challenges | Device limitations, infrastructure problems, digital inequality, and teachers' digital competence affect implementation. | Teacher training, institutional support, curriculum development, and Islamic value-based VR content are required. |

Table 3 shows that Islamic values can be integrated through Virtual Reality in several main dimensions of Islamic Religious Education, including faith, worship, morality, and critical thinking. In the dimension of faith, VR may help students understand religious concepts through visual and reflective experiences. However, the use of VR for faith-related materials must be handled carefully because theological meanings cannot be reduced to visual representation alone. In the dimension of worship, VR has more practical benefits because students can observe the sequence, space, and procedures of worship in a simulated environment. This distinction is supported by research showing the potential of VR for Qur'anic comprehension and Hajj learning (Alahmadi et al., 2024; Asril et al., 2023). Evidence from a 360-degree VR representation of an Islamic mosque also indicates that combined visual and auditory conditions can influence users' reported spiritual experience, suggesting that sensory design may contribute to affective engagement but should not be equated automatically with theological understanding (De Cesaris & Sadeghi habibabad, 2023). Comparing these findings reveals an important distinction between procedural-spatial learning and spiritual-theological learning: VR can represent sequences, settings, and sensory conditions relatively directly, whereas faith, moral meaning, and spiritual formation require interpretation that extends beyond the simulated environment.

Across the reviewed literature, recurring codes related to value orientation, content accuracy, immersive experience, teacher guidance, and post-experience reflection were repeatedly connected to conditions such as theological integrity, accessibility, privacy, and institutional support. Integrating these recurring relationships produced the conceptual framework shown in Figure 1. The framework is an author-developed synthesis derived from the thematic analysis of the reviewed literature; it is not adapted from a single prior model. Its purpose is to explain how the thematic findings can be connected into a coherent pathway for designing and evaluating VR-based IRE.



**Figure 1.** Conceptual Framework for Integrating Islamic Values into Virtual Reality-Based Islamic Religious Education Core pathway

The framework organizes the synthesis into five interconnected components: Islamic value orientation, religious-content validation, immersive experience design, teacher orchestration, and reflective evaluation. Islamic value orientation establishes the religious and educational purposes of the activity; content validation protects theological and representational accuracy; immersive design translates these purposes into situated experiences; teacher orchestration guides interpretation before,

during, and after VR use; and reflective evaluation examines whether the experience contributes to cognitive, affective, moral, and spiritual learning. The framework therefore conceptualizes value internalization as a mediated process rather than a direct consequence of technological immersion.

### **Immersion, Pedagogical Mediation, and Reflective Meaning-Making**

Nevertheless, the effectiveness of Virtual Reality in Islamic Religious Education should not be overstated. VR is not a substitute for teachers and is not the only solution to the challenges of religious education. It will be meaningful only when it is designed with clear pedagogical objectives, valid religious content, and teacher guidance that combines religious understanding with technological competence. Without appropriate instructional design, VR may become visual entertainment rather than a medium for deep value internalization. This limitation is especially important because immersion can increase attention and sensory involvement without necessarily increasing interpretive depth. In addition, the representation of symbols, rituals, sacred places, and Islamic historical narratives in VR must follow religious ethics. If these representations are not developed according to Islamic educational principles, the content may simplify meaning, produce misunderstanding, or distort religious symbols. This caution is consistent with Pirker (2024), who emphasizes the theological and didactic limits of VR in religious education. It is further supported by Riegel and Zimmermann (2026), whose comparison of virtual and physical religious spaces indicates that virtual environments do not necessarily reproduce the same affective or auratic experience as physical environments. Thus, technological immersion should not be interpreted automatically as deeper religious or spiritual understanding. Rather, the reviewed evidence indicates that immersion is best understood as an experiential affordance whose educational value depends on mediation, interpretation, and reflection.

In a broader digital-education context, technological advancement should remain human-centered and value-oriented rather than allowing technological affordances to determine educational purposes. Digital integration can enrich interactive, creative, and personalized learning, but it can also introduce risks related to misinformation, weakened critical analysis, unequal access, and insufficient ethical governance (Tangkish et al., 2024). For Islamic Religious Education, this means that technological literacy must develop together with critical thinking, character formation, religious discernment, and awareness of the ethical consequences of digital participation. This broader evidence reinforces the review's central argument that technological capability should be evaluated against educational purpose and Islamic ethical commitments, rather than treated as an independent indicator of instructional quality.

Immersive experience in VR can support learning transformation when it is intentionally designed and integrated with Islamic educational values. Immersive learning occurs when students feel deeply involved in a learning environment so that their attention, emotions, cognition, and interaction are focused on the learning experience. This concept is not limited to the use of VR devices; it also concerns psychological engagement and the feeling of being present in a learning environment (Astatke et al., 2025; Yu & Tian, 2025). Recent religious-education studies further suggest that immersive media become more educationally meaningful when learners actively interpret religious spaces, narratives, and experiences instead of merely observing them (Andersland et al., 2025). Taken together, these studies distinguish technological immersion from educational meaning-making: the former creates conditions for presence and participation, whereas the latter requires learners to interpret what they encounter in relation to religious concepts and values.

Three aspects need to be considered in immersive experience: presence, engagement, and sensory immersion. Presence refers to the feeling of being located within a virtual learning environment. Engagement refers to students' emotional and cognitive participation during the learning process. Sensory immersion refers to visual and audio simulations that create a realistic learning experience. The stronger the sensory stimulation, the greater the possibility of student involvement; however, sensory richness alone does not guarantee meaningful learning unless it is connected to guided reflection and clear learning objectives. Research on immersive religious environments supports this distinction: sensory conditions can influence spiritual or affective responses (De Cesaris & Sadeghi habibabad, 2023), whereas emotional design can influence engagement and satisfaction without eliminating the need for theological and pedagogical interpretation (Yu & Tian, 2025). Accordingly, immersive design should balance sensory richness with instructional focus; excessive or irrelevant stimulation may compete with the concepts and values students are expected to process. Cognitive load management should therefore be treated as part of pedagogical design rather than as a purely technical concern.

Immersive learning literature emphasizes that a sense of presence can increase learning engagement, but this engagement must be directed by pedagogical purposes. If a VR experience focuses too strongly on visual sensation, students may become fascinated spectators rather than reflective learners. Therefore, teachers need to prepare guiding questions before VR use, observation sheets during the experience, and reflective discussions after the activity. These stages make VR part of a learning cycle rather than a stand-alone activity separated from the Islamic Religious Education curriculum. Recent religious-education literature similarly cautions that technological immersion itself does not guarantee meaningful learning. Pedagogical mediation, reflexivity, cultural awareness, and alignment between digital design and educational objectives remain necessary (Kvia & Cochrane, 2023; Papakostas, 2026; Pirker, 2024). Moreover, evidence comparing virtual and physical religious environments demonstrates that stronger technological immersion should not automatically be equated with stronger affective or spiritual outcomes (Riegel & Zimmermann, 2026). The convergence of these findings supports a mediated-learning interpretation of VR: presence may initiate engagement, but teacher guidance and reflective activity are required to transform that engagement into conceptual, moral, or spiritual understanding.

The role of Islamic Religious Education teachers is central because VR does not automatically produce meaningful and value-oriented learning. This technology can provide environments, objects, narratives, and interactions, but teachers remain responsible for guiding meaning. In Islamic Religious Education, teachers do not only operate devices; they also interpret experiences, correct misunderstandings, connect materials with Islamic sources and real-life contexts, and maintain proper learning manners. Therefore, teacher competence in using VR should include technical competence in operating devices, pedagogical competence in designing activities, and Islamic-substantive competence to ensure that learning remains consistent with the principles of faith, worship, morality, and muamalah. This multidimensional role is consistent with evidence that technology integration in Islamic Religious Education depends on teacher readiness, professional development, and institutional support (Murhayati et al., 2025), while virtual learning environments continue to require instructor guidance to regulate interaction and achieve learning objectives (Alkandari, 2024). Synthesizing these findings, teacher orchestration emerged as the mechanism connecting technological experience with religious interpretation and reflective learning. Table 4 summarizes the teacher's role in orchestrating VR-based learning.

**Table 4.** Teacher Roles in Orchestrating Virtual Reality-Based Learning

| Stage     | Teacher Role              | Main Focus                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-----------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Pre-VR    | Learning designer         | Learning objectives, curriculum alignment, assessment, VR scenario design, and safety preparation. Analytical basis: instructional planning, teacher readiness, and curriculum alignment (Murhayati et al., 2025; Serour et al., 2025). |
| During VR | Facilitator and regulator | Scaffolding, monitoring, collaboration, safety, and cognitive load management. Analytical basis: instructor guidance and regulation of virtual participation (Alkandari, 2024).                                                         |
| Post-VR   | Reflection leader         | Debriefing, concept reinforcement, feedback, and learning transfer. Analytical basis: reflexive pedagogical design and post-experience interpretation (Kvia & Cochrane, 2023).                                                          |

These stages show that the success of VR-based learning depends strongly on teachers' pedagogical readiness, not merely on the sophistication of technology. In the pre-VR stage, teachers need to determine learning objectives, align the activity with the curriculum, prepare assessment forms, design VR scenarios, and address safety issues. Teachers must ensure that VR use supports learning outcomes rather than functioning only as an attractive activity. Careful planning helps students understand the learning sequence, know what they need to observe, and reduce confusion while they are in the virtual environment. This interpretation is reinforced by Serour et al. (2025), who emphasize the connection between immersive technological design, instructional planning, and teaching practice, and by Murhayati et al. (2025), who identify teacher readiness, professional training, and institutional support as central conditions for successful technological integration in Islamic Religious Education. Together, these studies indicate that pre-VR preparation is not an administrative step but a pedagogical safeguard that aligns technological affordances with curriculum, learner readiness, and intended value outcomes.

During the VR stage, teachers act as facilitators and regulators. They do not need to become the center of information delivery; instead, they guide students while the activity takes place. The main focus is to provide scaffolding, monitor students, organize collaboration, maintain safety, and manage cognitive load. In the post-VR stage, teachers act as reflection leaders by guiding students in reflective discussion so that their virtual experiences can be connected to the academic and religious concepts being studied. This emphasis on facilitation is supported by Alkandari (2024), whose findings show that virtual interaction benefits from instructor guidance, and by Kvia and Cochrane (2023), who emphasize reflexive pedagogical design in technology-supported religious education. The studies therefore support complementary functions: real-time regulation during virtual participation and deliberate meaning-making after the immersive experience. This distinction helps explain why teacher mediation remains necessary even when VR enables relatively autonomous learner exploration.

verall, teacher orchestration is necessary because VR may become entertainment if it is not pedagogically guided. Students may remember attractive visuals without understanding the relationship between virtual experience and the religious message being learned. Teachers need to explain the distinction between simulation and actual worship. In hajj and umrah simulations, for example, students should understand that VR can help them recognize space, sequence, and manners,

but it does not replace the real experience of worship. This clarification is important so that students do not regard digital representation as a full substitute for religious practice. This distinction is especially important because scholarship on immersive Islamic environments raises practical and theological questions about translating Islamic orthopraxies from physical to virtual settings (Popova, 2023). Similar debates concerning virtual pilgrimage emphasize issues of religious legitimacy, traditional authority, and the relationship between digital simulation and embodied practice (Pham, 2025). These debates qualify the educational promise identified in application-oriented studies: VR can support procedural familiarization and preparation, but claims about equivalence with embodied religious practice are neither pedagogically nor theologically warranted by the reviewed evidence.

Based on the thematic synthesis of the reviewed literature, this study organizes teacher guidance into three structured stages. In the pre-VR stage, teachers build prior knowledge by explaining the concepts, objectives, and values that students need to observe. During the VR experience, students are given focused tasks, such as recording the sequence of worship, identifying attitudes that should be maintained, or finding moral messages from an event. In the post-VR stage, teachers facilitate reflection and clarification. This final stage is especially important in Islamic Religious Education because visual experience must be transformed into value understanding and spiritual awareness. This structure reflects recent arguments that immersive religious learning requires explicit instructional planning, learner participation, interpretation, and reflection rather than technological exposure alone (Kvia & Cochrane, 2023; Papakostas, 2026; Serour et al., 2025). Thus, the pre-, during-, and post-VR sequence represents an author-developed synthesis of recurring pedagogical functions identified across the literature, rather than a direct reproduction of one prior instructional model.

### **Ethical and Epistemological Representation of Religious Content**

Another critical issue in developing VR for Islamic Religious Education is the ethics of religious representation. Virtual environments can present realistic spaces, sounds, objects, and narratives, so inaccurate representation may lead to misunderstanding. Religious materials are more sensitive than general learning materials because they are related to belief, sacred symbols, manners, and scholarly traditions. Therefore, every VR content item for Islamic Religious Education should be validated by subject-matter experts, Islamic Religious Education teachers, and, when necessary, relevant religious authorities. This validation should not only examine the accuracy of information but also assess the appropriateness of visualization, language, gestures, background sounds, and forms of interaction. Such validation is consistent with research emphasizing theological limits in VR-based religious education (Pirker, 2024), ethical questions concerning virtual religious practices and pilgrimage (Pham, 2025), and the importance of culturally sensitive VR content aligned with Islamic practices (Osman et al., 2025). Synthesizing these studies suggests that religious-content validation has at least two dimensions: epistemic accuracy whether the content represents Islamic teachings appropriately and representational propriety whether sacred spaces, practices, symbols, sounds, and interactions are presented in ethically and culturally acceptable ways.

The ethics of VR use also involve data protection and student safety. VR devices may collect user data, activity records, and platform-based interaction data. Schools need to ensure that student data are not used outside learning purposes. In addition, implementation protocols should address accessibility, privacy, responsible data handling, and user comfort. Recent work on immersive digital environments identifies data security and digital-asset governance as significant concerns (Al Ajou & Sheehan, 2025), while emerging religious-learning applications highlight privacy, bias, cultural sensitivity, and iconographic guidelines as issues requiring explicit attention (Papakostas, 2026).

Research involving VR-supported Muslim spiritual practice likewise emphasizes accessibility and culturally sensitive design as conditions for responsible implementation (Osman et al., 2025). These concerns expand the meaning of “content quality” beyond theological correctness: responsible VR design must also consider who can access the experience, what data are generated, how users are represented, and whether the technological environment creates avoidable physical, cognitive, or cultural discomfort.

The safety of students and teachers should not be neglected even when technology offers innovation in Islamic Religious Education learning. Privacy protection and the secure use of technology also need attention. Adequate policies and procedures for managing students’ personal data, social media use, and network security are important aspects of responsible VR implementation. These considerations show that VR-based Islamic Religious Education requires not only pedagogical design but also institutional governance and ethical safeguards. This requirement is reinforced by evidence that digital religious environments can simultaneously facilitate religious learning and expose learners to unreliable, exploitative, or misleading content, creating a need for credible expert supervision and institutional oversight (Göküş et al., 2026). More broadly, ethical digital-learning research emphasizes that technological benefits should be accompanied by governance mechanisms that protect equitable access and critical digital literacy (Tangkish et al., 2024). Accordingly, institutional governance should be treated as part of the pedagogical ecology of VR rather than as an external administrative issue, because privacy, credibility, equity, and safety directly shape the conditions under which students can engage with digital religious content.

### **Implementation Conditions and Institutional Readiness**

To address the need for teacher training and professional development, educational institutions and the government need to provide relevant and continuous training programs. Teachers need adequate knowledge and skills in technology use, digital media management, and the implementation of innovation in Islamic Religious Education in the digital era (Murhayati et al., 2025). Evidence from Islamic Religious Education indicates that institutional support, professional training, and sustained investment are central to overcoming differences in technological readiness and adoption. Recent research on metaverse acceptance in Islamic sciences likewise shows that enabling institutional conditions, perceived usefulness, ease of use, and religiously responsive design influence implementation (Zekhnini & Alnakawab, 2026). Implementation feasibility therefore involves more than device availability. Schools must consider acquisition and maintenance costs, connectivity, technical support, equitable access, teacher preparation, curriculum integration, content validation, and governance capacity. These requirements may limit scalability, particularly in settings with uneven digital infrastructure or restricted institutional resources. This reinforces the argument that the integration of Islamic values into VR-based learning should be supported by teacher competence, validated content, ethical representation, infrastructure readiness, and reflective evaluation rather than by technological availability alone. Overall, the reviewed evidence supports a conditional model of effectiveness: VR becomes educationally meaningful for IRE when technological affordances are aligned with validated Islamic content, purposeful immersive design, active teacher mediation, reflective evaluation, and adequate institutional support.

## DECLARATION OF AI AND AI-ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

The authors used artificial intelligence tools only to support language translation and improve clarity in the preparation of this manuscript. The authors reviewed, edited, and take full responsibility for the content of the manuscript.

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## AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Author 1: Conceptualization, Investigation, Formal Analysis, and Writing Original Draft.

Author 2: Methodology, Validation, Resources, Data Curation, and Writing, Review & Editing.

Author 3: Supervision, Project Administration, Visualization, Writing – Review & Editing, and Final Approval of the Manuscript.

## DECLARATION OF THE COMPETING INTEREST

The authors report no conflicts of interest. No financial or personal relationships with other individuals or organizations could inappropriately influence or bias the content of this manuscript.

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