


# Challenges of Islamic education in the new era of information and communication technologies



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Various consequences of social networks in virtual space are expanding as a new phenomenon in Islamic societies in line with other societies. Social science thinkers point to the two-sided role of the Internet and virtual space in economic, cultural and religious development. Humans need to communicate collectively based on their inherent nature. The media and means of mass communication, which had a slow growth in the past, have faced significant changes in the present era, in such a way that the present age is called the age of information and communication. At such a time when virtual space and social networks have turned the world into a small village and people with different cultures and beliefs are connected with each other, the issues of children's education (especially in Islamic societies where the focus is on Islamic education) has faced the challenge, what is important for parents in this age is to get familiar with the basics of education and to pay attention to the educational challenges of social networks in the virtual space. One of the necessities of the era of information and communication in Islamic societies is the need for education in accordance with religious teachings that prepares people to face the changing and unpredictable challenges of life. New media are accused of creating new challenges in life from two perspectives. On the one hand, the media are competitors of educational activities in the field of education, and on the other hand, they are considered to be the foundation of many new challenges. In addition, it is worth mentioning that the religious teachings that form the basis of Islamic governments are the answer to all the problems of the human society and its requirements in every age.

**Contribution:** This research presents the effectiveness of religious teachings (Qur'an, Sunnah and Hadiths) as the best sources of Islamic education, which can be used in the cultural policy of virtual space and raise the level of awareness of families and individuals in knowing the points of threat and opportunity in the virtual space.

**Keywords:** Islam; religion; Quran; virtual space; education and training; information and communication technology.

## Introduction

At the start of the second half of the 20th century, the system of distant education was created. The development of technology can be seen as one of the elements that led to the formation of this sort of education. Distance learning is now widely used in developed nations. This technique may make use of video, computer, e-mail and Internet-related technology (Bhutoria 2022). Today's cultures are witnessing a spectacular and unexpected growth of science in the fields of communication and information technology, to the point that it has led to the birth of global media and means of mass communication on a worldwide scale. As a result of this development, men now have a new perspective on the world and are part of a new ecosystem known as the information society, global village, network society, etc. Digital tools in the hardware and software fields have thus become an essential component of the life programme of human society (Arifeen 2022). A new area in the realm of life was established with the rise and development of industry, concurrent with communication and the Internet, and is sometimes referred to as 'virtual space'. Also, the global disruption caused by COVID-19 has presented significant difficulties for all societal structures. From culture, economy and industry to sports and tourism and all other areas

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have been affected by this virus. The field of education has not been an exception to this rule (Mo et al. 2021).

Discussion of virtual space, due to its universality, is one of the strategic issues of the world today, which is considered the most challenging and up-to-date issue in the world. The emergence of large communication networks like the Internet, along with cutting-edge educational tools and facilities, has led to a revolution in educational methods and created a space where a variety of science seekers can be covered by the educational network in different locations and from far and near distances without having to attend face-to-face classes. This new method, which is rudimentary but effective, is called distance learning (Kim & Gurvitch 2020). The globe now faces new problems in addition to the benefits that virtual space has provided. The media of today has a significant impact on the topic of child-raising (Tarhini et al. 2016) and has raised several issues for Islamic society's families. Without culturalisation and mental preparation, the growth of digital media and virtual spaces has had some influence on Islamic society, and it is now one of the main worries of loving families and cultural communities. Virtual social networks have significantly altered modern teenagers' lifestyles in a number of ways. In reality, using these networks involves simultaneously consuming time, space and symbolic content – all three of which are regarded as the pillars of modern existence. Teenagers' everyday exposure to virtual production and consumption will therefore result in considerable changes to their way of life (Abdullah et al. 2022).

Currently, children, teenagers and young adults are fully engaged in the vibrant market of the virtual world as if there are no games and social gatherings for them. For children, teenagers and young adults in today's society, virtual space is a haven full of trouble that, although putting on a good front, disguises many dangers. Virtual spaces are also a source of information and a method for gathering it. Major portions of human knowledge are constantly being moved to the online space, and children and teenagers who seek out information use the Internet to absorb these large portions of knowledge and modify their behaviour accordingly (Clark et al. 2010). A person's style of life, how they interact with others, and their personality traits are all impacted by virtual space and its many potentials. It also plays a significant role in the informal training of individuals in all cognitive, social and other disciplines. A variety of visible and formal activities based on values, norms, beliefs and moral principles are included in education, which has a broad reach and is connected to all aspects of human existence. Television, newspapers, magazines, friend gatherings and other tools can also contribute to the informal education of people, but because of the development of communication and the potential of social networks, virtual space can be regarded as one of the most successful tools for this purpose in today's society. It plays an obvious role in educating the next generation, alongside colleges and other formal educational institutions (Kenwright 2018).

Although relative prosperity is achieved now with the aid of information and communication technologies in daily material life, what mankind genuinely gains is disidentification and estrangement from oneself. When Westerners are raised in a culture where rejecting religion and spirituality is valued above all else, the outcome is an identity crisis and social harm that, of course, is not unique to the West but is present in the majority of modern societies. The use of the Internet and the virtual world is one of the new phenomena that has taken hold in society. This space is a crucial aspect of human life nowadays; therefore, life without it will be a problem. Virtual space has benefited economies, but it has also caused suffering and disasters that, if ignored, may cause communities to degenerate. Thus, it is appropriate to discuss the problems of virtual space in numerous domains and the version of Islamic teachings to rectify these damages. Taking into account the importance of this issue, especially in Islamic societies, the purpose of this research is to examine the challenges of Islamic education in the new age of information and communication technology.

## Methodology

A review article is a type of article that reviews the theoretical and empirical foundations of a scientific topic. In review articles, the results presented in scientific writings about a specific topic are summarised and evaluated. Review articles have a clear narrative, are usually critical, and provide theoretical and emerging interpretations. The important role of review articles is to guide original scientific writings. For this reason, the accuracy and completeness of the citations provided are essential. Although most or all of the information provided in a review article is already available, a review article explains a specific topic and is therefore important. In this research, in order to identify the challenges of Islamic education in the age of communication and information, the relevant backgrounds have been reviewed and the results of the research have been presented.

## Virtual space addiction

If the amount of time spent in the virtual world is unregulated, young people and teenagers will become accustomed to wasting their spare time without purpose and develop the notion that life is nothing more than a game and an amusement (Kaimara, Oikonomou & Deliyannis 2022). Additionally, they spend their free time on websites that support deviant and immoral behaviour, undermining a person's sense of national identity as well as his social personality and psychological makeup.

Teenagers are addicted to web browsing and spend the majority of their time doing it. Although the word 'addiction' is not used in Islamic teachings, the word 'extravagance' serves as a near counterpart. Perhaps at first glance, the term 'extravagance' is only associated with materialistic things and affairs; yet, this practice also applies to human behaviours and deeds. God Almighty has also commanded everyone to be reasonable in all situations because the definition of

extravagance is surpassing the bounds of moderation in anything, and in religious teachings, this behaviour is regarded as one of the main sins. And these are people who do not spend extravagantly and are not stingy when donating (to the impoverished), but rather their charity should be modest (Surah Al-Furqan, Verse 67). Although the verse's main message is to avoid being wasteful and frugal, its overall message can be summed up by saying that Muslims should strive for moderation in all aspects of their lives. Be moderate in your livelihood, be moderate in your worship, and may you continue to work as much as you are able, Imam Ali advised his son Imam Hassan in regard to matters of religion and employment (Nahj al-Balagheh, letter 31).

### **Mental injuries caused by virtual space**

Humans have two dimensions, physical and spiritual, and they are not only limited to the physical and material dimensions but also have a reality called 'spirit'. Damage to the human soul and mind has far-reaching impacts on thoughts, behaviour and feelings because the soul is what shapes a person's reality; therefore, harming it has more regrettable implications than harming their body (Larestani 2009). The word 'depression' is not used specifically in religious texts like the Holy Quran or imams' hadiths. But in many cases, the mental and psychological difficulties of humans and their causes have been discussed, and according to the components and results that psychologists have put out concerning depression, it can be argued that many years ago, the Qur'an referred to it as mental damage in humans (Mirhosseini 2004). Excessive grief or uncontrollable and unusual euphoria are two of the most crucial indicators of depression, which are recognized and objectified most frequently in those who are suffering from the illness. Of course, feelings of happiness and melancholy are inherent to human existence and are institutionalised. It is typical for someone to have a brief period of mild depression after experiencing unfavourable life events and emotions. And while sadness is normal for everyone, it will have detrimental repercussions if it persists and grows. On the other hand, if someone receives a really happy development in life, he must control it or it will have a negative impact on him in the subsequent stage (Rahmati 2018). The Holy Quran, which is the most comprehensive book ever written, inspires people to live joyfully and contentedly by focusing on all facets of human existence, especially the soul and spirit. The Supreme Being expresses stable, right bliss as follows: 'Say that they should only be content with God's love and mercy [as well as the Qur'anic revelation] since this is better and more beneficial than the money they accumulate' (Surah Yunus, Verse 58). God, on the other hand, forbids excessive happiness and views it as a precursor to disappointment. According to the Holy Qur'an, every time we provide people with mercy, they are joyful; nevertheless, if they experience pain and misfortune due to their own faults, they become despondent and give up on God (Surah Ar-Rum, Verse 36). In another verse, it is stated in the parable of Qarun in the rebuke of excessive happiness: 'Verily, Qarun was one of the (wealthy) people of Musa's people', who oppressed them, and we gave

him so much treasure and wealth that you tired those who were strong enough to carry the keys to those treasures when his people said to him: 'Do not be so proud and happy' [about your wealth] (Surah Al-Qasas, Verse 76). And everyone, regardless of age, should remember this.

In psychology, excessive joy and euphoria are viewed as an illness that occasionally leads to hopelessness. A person who is disappointed has actually lost faith in God, and the thread of his belief has been severed by a supernatural force. The person also feels helpless and powerless, as well feeling he has lost his goal and always thinks he has arrived at the finish line. Disappointment is one of the major sins according to Islamic teachings. He still feels wanting, even despite the benefits that God has provided him right now. In numerous chapters in the Holy Quran, Almighty God describes those who lose hope in His mercy as being misguided: 'Who, besides the ignorant, loses hope in the grace of their God?', said Abraham (Surah Al-Hijr, Verse 56).

### **Sexual deviations caused by virtual space**

The Internet has spawned the ominous phenomenon known as pornography and its astounding ubiquity as a result of its main owners' (the West, mainly America) free-thinking approach to sexual relations and the commercial approach to concerns. This phenomenon threatens cultures, especially religious cultures like Islamic culture, by blurring moral lines. Pornography is essentially the portrayal of sexual acts in words or images with the intention of gratifying the appetites of others. When people are exposed to such materials and images after others have been sexually stimulated, it frequently results in an unnatural level of sexual enjoyment. Another argument is that using the Internet to access offensive material is not just done by undesirable people; ordinary people also use it in big numbers. Young children, adolescents and children face the most risk in this field. It's likely that exposure to pornographic content and images will lead to sexual behaviour in kids or teenagers. Online pornography can cause inappropriate sexual behaviour or even sexual addiction in adults. In essence, the Internet has fueled a culture that, as a result of its unique characteristics, gradually encourages the development of sexual disorders in its users (Khalajabadi Farahani 2018). These actions are described as being very ugly and repulsive in the Qur'an, which has the effect of saying: 'And never approach the deed of adultery, which is a very ugly act and a very repulsive way' (Surah Al-Isra', Verse 32). The verses relating to the story of Lut's people in various surahs, all of which were severely punished by God, indicate the prohibition of homosexuality and the abhorrence of this act: 'You leave women and drive passion with males! In terms of corruption and criminality, you are wasteful people' (Surah Al-A'raf, Verse 81). The punishment for this behaviour is also described in other verses: 'And We will rain down on them stones of destruction, and the rain of that wicked people is extremely awful' (Surah An-Naml, Verse 58). So, in accordance with the aforementioned verses, anyone who chooses homosexuality over the traditional means of satiety and does

so by altering the laws of creation and the route of marriage really prevents the conception of children and incurs divine retribution.

### Weakening of family relationships

The family is among the most significant institutions that virtual space has impacted. The relationship between family members has changed as a result of easy access to the Internet, the emergence of social networks and advancements in hardware tools. Each member of the family now spends long hours in the virtual world due to how appealing its contents are, which ultimately shortens the amount of time they spend together and weakens and loses their love and affection for one another. Even the very least number of Internet users arguably use the Internet for social and family interactions. It goes without saying that we will spend less time with our partners, families and friends the more time we spend online. The significance of this issue is such that harm to crucial relationships is the most significant harm the Internet can cause. The individuals who have been present in his life gradually lose importance to the Internet addict in favour of his online pals, playmates and group members. Also, as the relationship deteriorates further, the offender begins to conceal other details; this behaviour undermines the partnership's ability to be trusted (Shujaii Jeshughani et al. 2016). No institution is more cherished by God Almighty, according to Islamic teachings, than the family. The family, the smallest unit of society, is responsible for constructing the individual within itself since it is a structure founded on love and affection that extends beyond legal commitment. The Qur'an describes the family as a way to unwind and a remedy for people's mental and psychological needs:

[A]nd God created pairs for you from your own species, and from those pairs he will create sons and daughters, sons-in-law and descendants for you, and he will provide sustenance from pure and delicious blessings; Will people turn to falsehood and disbelieve in God's blessings? (Surah An-Nahl, Verse 72).

If a human being violates the relationship of formation that God has given him, and if this connection is broken, he will not be able to fill the void left by this relationship of formation, and his or her destruction will be inevitable with the dissolution of the human community and the dispersion of its unity. The Prophet gave Imam Ali the following advice regarding the significance of familial love and service:

'O Ali! Servicing the family atones for grave sins, quenches God's wrath, serves as a dowry for the Holy One, fosters virtuous deeds, and elevates one's standing in the eyes of God' (Al-Naraqī 1209 – 1128 AH).

The current relationship between parents and children has become chilly as a result of the introduction of new technologies into the family context. Due to social differences and varying life experiences, generations now view the world from their own perspective and interpret it in accordance with their own worldview. Children of today react against today's developments because they wish to adapt to them, but because the previous generation (parents)

feels informed and experienced, the current generation (children) turns to stubbornness. The smallest unit of society, the family, is where the most significant harm is observed, and one of the negative effects is a decline in the emotional ties among family members. Due to everyone's involvement in virtual environments – especially the younger generation – families now frequently spend hours sitting next to one another without speaking. In this instance, a solid relationship between parents and children can substantially help to compensate for these challenges. For children to readily discuss their issues, opinions and thoughts with parents, kind parents should set out a dedicated time to communicate and ask their children's perspectives (Khanjani, Ghanbari & Naimi 2018); The conversation of Abraham, Ismail and Jacob with their children is an example of these conversations from Quran. 'God has given you pure faith, so adhere to it and refuse to depart from it until you pass away' (Surah Al-Baqarah, Verse 132). In light of this verse, one should not be content with simply the things of this world and instead, consider the health of his generation as well as his children's religion and belief. Another illustration can be found in Surah Yusuf verses 97 and 98: 'At that time, Yusuf's brothers begged their father to petition God for forgiveness because they had made a serious mistake'. The father said, 'I will pray God's forgiveness for you shortly, for He is exceedingly forgiving and merciful' (Surah Yusuf, Verses 97–98).

Children are more exposed to various moral deviations in today's world, which is the age of information and communication technology, which forms the ground for eroding their faith. Because today's youth have adjusted their words and deeds to the global society of virtual space and the digital world, other children today find it difficult to build relationships with their parents, who belong to the generation before them. Because kids are raised in a world where their parents' words and advice seem obsolete and unapplicable in today's society, it is likely that even in some households, children will mock their parents' conversations and advice (Khanjani et al. 2018).

### Illegitimate communication

The relationship between the genders is very significant in every society in the world and has evolved significantly over time. Virtual space and messaging platforms are some of the factors that, in the modern day, have led to a growth in these connections and the breaking down of conventional barriers in the sphere of friendship. These networks have enhanced the propensity of young people and even teenagers to be friends with the opposite sex in these situations due to simple access, convenient communication and unrestricted interaction. It's also possible that these discussions will spill over into reality, leading to deviations and shady relationships (Pournaqdi 2017). Without a doubt, we live in a religious society where the majority of people respect and are inspired by religious and moral beliefs. Even though in the early years of life not everyone may have had access to detailed knowledge about some religious groups, they gradually and unconsciously come to understand many of the moral and social norms of the religious society. With a little attention to religious texts and

the words of religious leaders, it becomes clear that the relationship with the opposite sex has a specific framework and rules. Expressing love and making friends with the opposite sex is one of the behaviours that the religious and valued society does not like and criticize (Eghdampour & Haseli 2018). The majority of young people who use this approach quickly regain their composure and reflect on their background. They assess their actions in light of moral and religious standards, repent, and compare them. If they are unable to adequately exit this mental realm, they feel guilty, and this guilt serves as the root of many mental and spiritual misfortunes (Afshari & Sufi 2016). One of the consequences of friendship with persons of the opposite sex is the repulsive act of 'adultery', which God banned and further commanded people not to even approach:

'And stay far away from "adultery", which is an awful act and an unseemly manner' (Surah Al-Isra, Verse 32).

If we are optimistic about these friendships, it means that these relationships will result in marriage. However, these spouses only experience happiness with each other for a brief period of time, and in most cases, their happiness does not last very long. Over time, pessimism and doubt about their lives cast a shadow and may eventually result in divorce.

### Cultural anomalies

One threat posed by the virtual world is aimed at countries with cultures that are dissimilar from and occasionally at odds with the culture that rules the virtual world. Particularly the Muslim users, who, despite having a vibrant culture, are frequently denied access to powerful cultural products relevant to their way of life. One of these is the proliferation of unusual goods including cosmetics, accessories and medications for sexually related problems. This is stated in verse 141 of Surah An-Nisa, where Allah (SWT) declares that He would never permit unbelievers to govern over believers (Surah An-Nisa, Verse 141).

Muslims are forbidden by this passage from subjecting themselves to the sway and rule of unbelievers. This verse includes all topics and is not restricted to any one axis. One of the most effective ways for enemies to change the cultural fabric of a nation is to promote vulgar Western culture. This is because culture, belief, religious identity and lifestyle are issues that affect the entire population of a society, and any harm done to this component will have a significant negative impact on the independence of the national and religious cultures of that society.

We might highlight the difference in how people dress in various societies as one of the numerous examples of cultural anomalies. The biggest harm is done to Muslims in this area when manufacturing or advertising firms promote immorality in society, alter the *hijab's* image and promote Western fashion throughout the world in order to sell their products. This work is much easier to complete in a virtual environment in the modern era, which is the age of

information and communication technology. Some businesses promote and publish clothing with appealing designs and symbols that are based on Western cultures, such as clothes that expose the body and defy convention. They also broadcast unusual advertising clips in the target community's virtual environment, which encourages young people in particular to wear this kind of clothing. Celebrities, athletes and artists will be used for this goal, and in this way, it will gradually change society. In this approach, they influence the culture of those covering themselves by encouraging luxury, negative marketing against the *hijab*, expanding unrestricted freedom in all fields and destigmatising immorality (Rahimi et al. 2018). Islamic beliefs place a great deal of emphasis on the *hijab*: 'And instruct the believing women to conceal their bodies to avoid unsightly behaviour, their eyes to avoid prying eyes and their jewelry and makeup to only what is visible' (to strangers). Moreover, women must wear a veil over their neck and chest and refrain from showing off their beauty to anybody outside their spouses, fathers, et cetera. Also, they must avoid stepping on the ground in a way that exposes their foot ornaments and hidden anklets. And, 'O people of faith, turn to God and pray for salvation' (Surah An-Nur, Verse 31). Another verse also makes reference to it:

O Prophet, command your wives, daughters, and the women of the believers to cover themselves with veils so that they will be known (for their chastity) and so that they will not be harmed by the audacity and violence of the irrational people. God is Most Forgiving and Compassionate (to mankind) (Surah Al-Ahzab, Verse 59).

It is important to note that wearing the *hijab* is not just for women; men must also adhere to Islamic society's tradition of modest dress. Both sexes are advised to dress simply and maintain a pleasant appearance. Men's clothing has also been the target of anti-cultural attacks, just as the invasion of foreign culture into the culture of the national and religious dress was not restricted to women's *hijabs*.

### Discussion

In addition to its undeniable and beneficial achievements and uses in economic domains, virtual space also has negative effects that parents, teachers, and all other educational officials and cultural planners of the society should consider. When used properly, virtual space and the Internet are regarded as useful tools for the advancement of human concepts and ideas. In order to enter the virtual world, people should have enough information to prevent moral, social and cultural concerns. Priorities include encouraging healthy communication in virtual space and ensuring that children and families are informed of potential dangers there. Parents' attention to their children's behaviour is crucial to preventing moral and social harm, and in order to keep families together, they must be at least somewhat familiar with today's technologies and understand that a change in their children's behaviour also means a change in their own behaviour. Their mindset is what opens the door for con artists to invade people's privacy, the secure setting of the family, and the true Islamic

culture. This happens when their intellectual foundation and personality are built incorrectly. Families will therefore avoid a lot of harm if they have the essential and sufficient self-awareness and understanding about the new ways of communication with their children.

It is a neutral tool in the Internet itself and the way people utilize it now, it is crucial. The advancement of civilisation will occur if Internet usage is appropriate and beneficial. In other words, the World Wide Web is a quick information network with a ton of resources, but some individuals use it incorrectly and excessively, drowning in the virtual world and severing ties to the real world, which turns its advantages into disadvantages. The misuse of this tool has become so widespread among users in developed societies that it is often referred to as a disease in virtual space. All individuals must adhere to religious teachings in order to overcome this contemporary disease and deal with the physical and mental suffering that virtual space causes. Given that the Qur'an is the most comprehensive work of divine revelation, doing so can elevate humanity.

## Conclusion

In this research, in order to identify the challenges of Islamic education in the age of communication and information, the relevant backgrounds have been reviewed and the results of the research have been presented. By reviewing the theoretical foundations of the research, these challenges are divided into several categories and each of them has been discussed in detail as follows: virtual space addiction, mental injuries caused by virtual space, sexual deviations caused by virtual space, weakening of family relationships, illegitimate communication and cultural anomalies.

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The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

### Authors' contributions

M.A.D., was involved in writing the original draft. H.P., and N.A.P., contributed in the conceptualisation of the research. I.M., helped with writing reviews and editing. D.D.M., and M.E.M., were involved in the investigation. A.H.S. and N.S. contributed to visualisation.

### Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

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Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

## Disclaimer

The results are based in author's findings.

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