

Islamic values and digital assessment practices in writing evaluation: a phenomenological inquiry among madrasah language teachers

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Abstract: The rapid digitalization of education has transformed writing assessment practices in madrasahs, creating new pedagogical tensions between technological efficiency and the preservation of Islamic ethical values. This study aims to explore how madrasah Indonesian language teachers experience and negotiate Islamic values within digital writing assessment practices in contemporary Islamic education. Employing a qualitative phenomenological design, the study involved 13 participants consisting of nine Indonesian language teachers and four students from three madrasahs in Indonesia. Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis, and analyzed using interpretive phenomenological thematic analysis. The findings reveal that teachers positioned Islamic values such as justice (*'adl*), sincerity (*ikhlas*), honesty (*sidq*), and compassion (*rahmah*) as ethical foundations guiding digital writing evaluation. Teachers continuously negotiated between technological efficiency and pedagogical humanity by integrating reflective feedback, empathetic interaction, contextual fairness, and moral guidance into digital assessment practices. The study also found that digital assessment culture significantly reshaped teachers' professional identity, emotional engagement, and pedagogical authenticity within contemporary madrasah education. Although limited to selected madrasahs, this study contributes theoretically by reconceptualizing digital assessment as an ethical-spiritual pedagogical practice grounded in Islamic values and lived teacher experience. Practically, the findings offer important implications for developing humane, ethically grounded, and digitally responsive assessment models in Islamic education.

Keywords: Digital writing assessment, Islamic educational values, madrasah teachers, phenomenological inquiry, pedagogical authenticity

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Introduction

The rapid digital transformation of education has fundamentally reshaped assessment practices across contemporary learning environments, including Islamic educational institutions and madrasahs in Indonesia (Rahman et al., 2023; Malizal, 2025; Marta, 2026). Writing assessment, which traditionally relied on paper-based evaluation and teacher-centered judgment, is increasingly influenced by digital assessment systems, automated feedback platforms, and technology-mediated pedagogical practices designed to improve efficiency, transparency, and student engagement (Berlian et al., 2025; Tamami, 2025; Purwoko et al., 2026). Within this transformation, Indonesian language teachers in madrasahs are required not only to master digital assessment literacy but also to preserve Islamic ethical values embedded within educational evaluation processes (Sukenti & Tambak, 2023; Huda et al., 2022; Rahman et al.,

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2023). Consequently, writing evaluation in madrasahs has become a complex pedagogical arena where technological adaptation, religious morality, teacher identity, and educational authenticity intersect simultaneously.

The urgency of this study emerges from the increasing tension between digital assessment innovation and the preservation of Islamic educational values within contemporary madrasah learning environments (Malizal, 2025; Tamami, 2025; Purwoko et al., 2026). Contemporary assessment systems increasingly emphasize speed, automation, data analytics, and digital standardization, while Islamic educational philosophy prioritizes ethical formation, reflective judgment, fairness, sincerity (*ikhlaṣ*), and humane interaction between teachers and students (Sukenti & Tambak, 2023; Huda et al., 2022; Tan, 2022). Several recent studies indicate that digital assessment implementation in Islamic education frequently encounters challenges related to teacher readiness, ethical adaptation, technological literacy, and the alignment between digital practices and Islamic pedagogical principles (Tamami, 2025; Berlian et al., 2025; Marta, 2026). In writing evaluation specifically, teachers increasingly experience dilemmas regarding objectivity, authenticity, emotional engagement, and the ethical dimensions of evaluating students' written expression through digital platforms (Sukenti & Fauzan, 2024; Sukenti & Tambak, 2023; Purwoko et al., 2026). Therefore, investigating how madrasah language teachers negotiate Islamic values within digital writing assessment practices has become increasingly important for understanding the future direction of Islamic education in the digital era.

From the perspective of the state of the art, contemporary scholarship has increasingly explored digital transformation in Islamic education, teacher professional identity, ethical pedagogy, and technology-based assessment systems (Malizal, 2025; Marta, 2026; Tamami, 2025). Recent studies demonstrate that digital assessment practices can improve accessibility, efficiency, formative feedback, and student participation in learning processes (Berlian et al., 2025; Purwoko et al., 2026; Marta, 2026). Other scholars emphasize that Islamic education must adapt to technological developments while maintaining its ethical-spiritual orientation rooted in Islamic values and character formation (Huda et al., 2022; Rahman et al., 2023; Malizal, 2025). In addition, phenomenological studies have begun examining teachers' emotional experiences, ethical behavior, and professional identity within educational assessment contexts (Sukenti & Tambak, 2023; Sukenti & Fauzan, 2024; Tan, 2022). Nevertheless, existing research remains fragmented because studies on digital assessment largely focus on technological effectiveness, while studies on Islamic educational values tend to emphasize moral discourse without critically examining technology-mediated evaluation practices.

The Indonesian madrasah context provides a particularly significant setting for investigating this issue because madrasahs simultaneously function as institutions of academic learning, Islamic moral formation, and socio-religious identity development (Azra, 2021; Huda et al., 2022; Hefner, 2020). Indonesian madrasahs increasingly adopt digital educational systems in response to educational modernization, national curriculum reform, and post-pandemic pedagogical transformation (Malizal, 2025; Marta, 2026; Purwoko et al., 2026). However, despite technological expansion, madrasah teachers continue to emphasize Islamic ethical principles such as fairness (*ʿadl*), honesty (*ṣidq*), sincerity (*ikhlaṣ*), and compassion (*rahmah*) in evaluating student learning outcomes (Sukenti & Tambak, 2023; Huda et al., 2022; Tan, 2022). This condition creates a unique pedagogical dynamic in which teachers negotiate between digital standardization and Islamic-humanistic educational values during writing assessment processes. Furthermore, Indonesian language learning occupies a strategic role in madrasahs because writing evaluation is not merely linguistic assessment but also a medium for shaping students' literacy, moral reasoning, cultural identity, and ethical expression within contemporary Muslim society (Sukenti & Fauzan, 2024; Rahman et al., 2023; Purwoko et al., 2026).

Despite growing attention toward digital Islamic education and educational assessment, several important research gaps remain unresolved. First, previous studies predominantly examine digital assessment from technical and instrumental perspectives while paying insufficient attention to teachers' lived experiences, emotional negotiation, and ethical reflection during assessment practices (Berlian et al., 2025; Tamami, 2025; Marta, 2026). Second, limited research specifically explores how Islamic values shape teachers' digital writing evaluation practices within madrasah educational settings (Sukenti & Tambak, 2023; Huda et al., 2022;

Rahman et al., 2023). Third, existing studies on Islamic educational values frequently remain normative and conceptual, with limited empirical exploration of how these values are enacted, interpreted, and negotiated through contemporary technology-mediated pedagogical practices (Malizal, 2025; Tan, 2022; Purwoko et al., 2026). Fourth, phenomenological investigations concerning Indonesian language teachers' assessment experiences in madrasahs remain scarce, particularly regarding the interaction between digital assessment culture, Islamic ethics, and professional identity formation (Sukenti & Fauzan, 2024; Sukenti & Tambak, 2023; Tamami, 2025).

Based on these gaps, the novelty of this study lies in its integrative phenomenological exploration of Islamic values and digital assessment practices in writing evaluation among madrasah language teachers. Unlike previous studies emphasizing technological effectiveness or moral discourse separately, this research investigates how teachers experience, interpret, and negotiate Islamic ethical values within digitally mediated writing assessment environments. The study further contributes by positioning writing evaluation not merely as a technical assessment activity but as an ethical-spiritual pedagogical practice shaped by teachers' emotional engagement, professional identity, and Islamic worldview (Sukenti & Fauzan, 2024; Huda et al., 2022; Rahman et al., 2023). In addition, the study offers a context-sensitive understanding of how contemporary madrasah teachers reconstruct assessment authenticity, fairness, and humanity amid increasing educational digitalization. Therefore, this research contributes theoretically to Islamic educational assessment discourse and practically to the development of ethically grounded digital assessment models in contemporary Muslim education.

Accordingly, this study aims to explore how Indonesian language teachers in madrasahs understand, experience, and implement digital writing assessment practices within the framework of Islamic educational values. Specifically, the research focuses on: (1) teachers' perceptions of Islamic values in writing evaluation; (2) teachers' lived experiences in implementing digital assessment practices; (3) the negotiation between technological efficiency and Islamic ethical principles during assessment processes; and (4) the influence of digital assessment culture on teacher identity, emotional engagement, and pedagogical authenticity in contemporary madrasah education.

Literature review

Digital transformation in writing assessment practices

The rapid development of digital technology has transformed educational assessment practices globally, including writing evaluation in language education and Islamic schooling contexts (Berlian et al., 2025; Marta, 2026; Purwoko et al., 2026). Contemporary writing assessment increasingly incorporates digital platforms, automated scoring systems, online feedback mechanisms, and technology-assisted evaluation tools designed to improve assessment efficiency, accessibility, and pedagogical responsiveness (Tamami, 2025; Rahman et al., 2023; Berlian et al., 2025). Within this transformation, digital assessment is no longer understood merely as a technological substitution for paper-based evaluation, but as a broader pedagogical shift influencing teacher judgment, student engagement, classroom interaction, and assessment culture itself (Marta, 2026; Purwoko et al., 2026; Tan, 2022). Researchers argue that digital writing assessment has the potential to enhance formative learning through immediate feedback, collaborative writing interaction, and data-driven pedagogical reflection (Berlian et al., 2025; Rahman et al., 2023; Tamami, 2025). However, despite these advantages, contemporary scholarship increasingly highlights that digital assessment also creates challenges concerning authenticity, fairness, ethical judgment, and teacher autonomy in evaluating students' written expression (Sukenti & Tambak, 2023; Sukenti & Fauzan, 2024; Tan, 2022).

Recent studies further indicate that teachers' adaptation to digital writing assessment is strongly influenced by technological literacy, emotional readiness, pedagogical identity, and institutional culture (Purwoko et al., 2026; Marta, 2026; Berlian et al., 2025). Teachers frequently experience tensions between technological efficiency and the preservation of meaningful human interaction during assessment processes (Tamami, 2025; Sukenti & Tambak, 2023; Rahman et al., 2023). In writing evaluation specifically, digital platforms may simplify scoring procedures while simultaneously reducing teachers' emotional sensitivity toward students' expressive and

contextual writing abilities (Sukenti & Fauzan, 2024; Tan, 2022; Marta, 2026). Consequently, scholars increasingly argue that digital assessment practices should not be viewed solely from technical perspectives, but also from ethical, cultural, and pedagogical dimensions shaping teacher experience and student development (Huda et al., 2022; Rahman et al., 2023; Tamami, 2025). This perspective becomes particularly important within Islamic educational contexts where assessment practices are closely connected to moral formation, humane interaction, and spiritual responsibility.

Islamic values in educational assessment

Islamic educational philosophy conceptualizes assessment not merely as measurement of academic achievement but as a holistic ethical process integrating intellectual, moral, spiritual, and social development (Al-Ghazali, n.d.; Al-Shatibi, n.d.; Huda et al., 2022). Classical Islamic scholars emphasized that educational evaluation should reflect principles of justice (*'adl*), honesty (*ṣidq*), sincerity (*ikhlas*), compassion (*rahmah*), and accountability before God and society (Al-Mawardi, n.d.; Al-Farabi, n.d.; Al-Ghazali, n.d.). Within Islamic pedagogy, teachers are expected to evaluate students fairly, humanely, and contextually while recognizing students' dignity, emotional condition, and ethical growth (Huda et al., 2022; Tan, 2022; Rahman et al., 2023). Therefore, assessment in Islamic education is inseparable from character formation, spiritual cultivation, and ethical responsibility.

Contemporary scholarship increasingly discusses the relevance of Islamic educational values in responding to technological modernization and digital educational transformation (Malizal, 2025; Huda et al., 2022; Rahman et al., 2023). Researchers argue that digitalization in Islamic education should remain grounded in Islamic ethics to prevent the dehumanization of learning and the reduction of education into purely technical performance indicators (Tan, 2022; Tamami, 2025; Sukenti & Tambak, 2023). Several studies demonstrate that teachers in Islamic schools attempt to integrate ethical sensitivity, emotional empathy, and moral guidance into digital learning and assessment processes despite increasing institutional pressure toward efficiency and standardization (Sukenti & Fauzan, 2024; Purwoko et al., 2026; Huda et al., 2022). Nevertheless, empirical investigations concerning how Islamic values specifically shape digital writing evaluation practices remain limited. Existing literature largely emphasizes curriculum discourse and Islamic character education while paying insufficient attention to teachers' lived experiences in negotiating ethical values within technology-mediated assessment environments.

Phenomenology and teachers' lived experiences in assessment

Phenomenological inquiry emphasizes the exploration of lived experience, subjective meaning, and human consciousness within social and educational contexts (Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Within educational research, phenomenology has increasingly been used to investigate teachers' emotional experiences, professional identity formation, ethical dilemmas, and pedagogical interpretation in contemporary classrooms (Maxwell, 2021; Tan, 2022; Sukenti & Tambak, 2023). Phenomenological perspectives are particularly relevant for understanding writing assessment because evaluation practices involve not only technical procedures but also emotional judgment, relational interaction, ethical reflection, and contextual interpretation (Sukenti & Fauzan, 2024; Tamami, 2025; Rahman et al., 2023). Through phenomenological inquiry, researchers can examine how teachers experience tensions between institutional expectations, technological systems, Islamic ethical values, and professional identity during writing evaluation practices.

Recent phenomenological studies within Islamic educational settings indicate that teachers often negotiate complex emotional and ethical dimensions while implementing assessment practices in digitally mediated environments (Sukenti & Tambak, 2023; Sukenti & Fauzan, 2024; Huda et al., 2022). Teachers are required to balance objectivity with compassion, technological efficiency with humane interaction, and institutional standardization with contextual fairness (Tan, 2022; Rahman et al., 2023; Purwoko et al., 2026). Such findings suggest that assessment practices in Islamic education cannot be adequately understood through positivistic or technical frameworks alone because they involve deeply personal and ethical dimensions shaping teacher behavior and pedagogical authenticity. Therefore, phenomenology offers an important theoretical

and methodological lens for investigating how madrasah language teachers interpret and enact Islamic values within contemporary digital writing assessment practices.

Madrasah education and contemporary Indonesian context

Madrasahs in Indonesia occupy a distinctive position within the national educational system because they integrate religious instruction, moral education, and general academic learning simultaneously (Azra, 2021; Hefner, 2020; Huda et al., 2022). Historically, Indonesian madrasahs have functioned not only as institutions of knowledge transmission but also as spaces for cultivating Islamic ethics, communal identity, and social responsibility (Azra, 2021; Rahman et al., 2023; Tan, 2022). In recent years, Indonesian madrasahs have increasingly adopted digital educational systems as part of broader educational modernization, curriculum reform, and post-pandemic transformation (Malizal, 2025; Marta, 2026; Purwoko et al., 2026). This transformation has significantly influenced how teachers conduct learning, assessment, communication, and pedagogical interaction within classroom environments.

Within Indonesian language education specifically, writing assessment occupies a strategic role because writing is closely associated with literacy development, critical thinking, identity formation, and ethical expression among students (Sukenti & Fauzan, 2024; Rahman et al., 2023; Berlian et al., 2025). Madrasah language teachers are therefore required not only to evaluate linguistic competence but also to guide students' moral awareness, cultural sensitivity, and Islamic communication ethics through writing activities (Sukenti & Tambak, 2023; Huda et al., 2022; Tan, 2022). However, the increasing integration of digital assessment technologies creates new pedagogical tensions regarding fairness, authenticity, emotional connection, and teacher authority in evaluating students' written work (Tamami, 2025; Marta, 2026; Purwoko et al., 2026). Despite the growing importance of this issue, limited studies have critically examined how Indonesian madrasah language teachers negotiate Islamic educational values within contemporary digital writing assessment culture. Consequently, this study seeks to contribute to current scholarship by exploring the lived experiences, ethical negotiation, and pedagogical interpretation of madrasah teachers within digital writing evaluation practices.

Method

Research design

This study employed a qualitative approach using a phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of madrasah Indonesian language teachers in integrating Islamic values into digital writing assessment practices Indonesia (Moustakas, 1994; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Van Manen, 2016). Phenomenology was selected because this study seeks to understand how teachers subjectively experience, interpret, and negotiate the intersection between Islamic ethics, professional identity, and technology-mediated assessment within contemporary madrasah education (Sukenti & Tambak, 2023; Tan, 2022; Rahman et al., 2023). Unlike positivistic approaches emphasizing measurement and generalization, phenomenology focuses on participants' consciousness, lived meanings, emotional reflection, and interpretive understanding of particular social realities (Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 2016; Maxwell, 2021). Therefore, this approach enabled the researcher to investigate deeply how digital writing evaluation practices are experienced ethically, emotionally, and pedagogically by madrasah teachers within contemporary Islamic educational contexts.

The phenomenological orientation of this study was grounded in interpretive phenomenology because the research not only described participants' experiences but also interpreted the meanings underlying their pedagogical practices, ethical dilemmas, and spiritual reflections during digital assessment processes (Van Manen, 2016; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Maxwell, 2021). Through this approach, the study aimed to uncover how teachers construct meaning regarding fairness, authenticity, Islamic morality, and humane interaction within increasingly digitalized educational environments (Huda et al., 2022; Sukenti & Fauzan, 2024; Tan, 2022). This interpretive process was particularly important because writing assessment in madrasahs involves not merely technical evaluation but also religious values, emotional engagement, and ethical responsibility toward students' intellectual and moral development (Rahman et al., 2023; Sukenti & Tambak, 2023; Tamami, 2025).

Research setting and participants

The study was conducted in three madrasahs representing different socio-educational contexts in Indonesia, including urban, semi-urban, and Islamic-integrated educational environments (Azra, 2021; Hefner, 2020; Huda et al., 2022). These research sites were purposively selected because they had actively implemented digital learning and digital assessment systems within Indonesian language instruction. In addition, the selected madrasahs emphasized Islamic character education and ethical-based learning, making them relevant contexts for exploring the interaction between Islamic values and digital writing evaluation practices (Malizal, 2025; Marta, 2026; Rahman et al., 2023). The diversity of institutional contexts enabled the researcher to capture broader variations in teachers' lived experiences, pedagogical strategies, and ethical negotiations within digital assessment culture.

The participants consisted of 13 informants selected purposively according to their relevance and experience related to the research phenomenon (Patton, 2015; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Maxwell, 2021). The participants included nine Indonesian language teachers and four madrasah students actively involved in digital writing assessment activities. Teachers were selected based on criteria including: (1) experience implementing digital writing evaluation; (2) active involvement in Islamic educational activities; and (3) willingness to reflect critically on their pedagogical experiences. Meanwhile, student participants were selected to provide complementary perspectives regarding how teachers' assessment practices reflected Islamic ethical values, emotional interaction, and digital learning experiences (Sukenti & Fauzan, 2024; Rahman et al., 2023; Tan, 2022). The inclusion of both teachers and students strengthened the richness and depth of phenomenological interpretation regarding writing evaluation practices in madrasahs.

Data collection techniques

Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis conducted over approximately four months (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2018). In-depth interviews served as the primary method because phenomenological research prioritizes participants' narratives, lived experiences, emotional reflection, and subjective interpretation concerning the studied phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 2016; Maxwell, 2021). Interview questions explored teachers' experiences in implementing digital writing assessment, their understanding of Islamic ethical values during evaluation processes, emotional challenges in digital assessment, perceptions of fairness and authenticity, and the influence of digital technology on teacher identity and pedagogical relationships (Sukenti & Tambak, 2023; Tamami, 2025; Rahman et al., 2023).

Participant observation was conducted during Indonesian language learning activities, digital writing evaluation sessions, online classroom interaction, and school literacy activities to examine how Islamic values were enacted within everyday assessment practices (Spradley, 2016; Yin, 2018; Huda et al., 2022). Observations focused on teacher-student communication, assessment feedback practices, ethical interaction patterns, digital platform utilization, and students' responses toward digital evaluation systems (Purwoko et al., 2026; Marta, 2026; Sukenti & Fauzan, 2024). Additionally, document analysis was carried out on lesson plans, digital rubrics, assessment guidelines, online feedback records, and institutional documents related to writing evaluation and Islamic character education (Bowen, 2009; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Tamami, 2025). These multiple data sources enabled methodological triangulation and strengthened interpretive depth within the phenomenological analysis.

Data analysis

The data were analyzed using phenomenological thematic analysis adapted from Moustakas and Van Manen's interpretive phenomenological framework (Moustakas, 1994; Van Manen, 2016; Braun & Clarke, 2021). The analysis process began with data transcription, repeated reading, and phenomenological reduction to identify significant statements reflecting participants' lived experiences regarding Islamic values and digital writing assessment practices (Moustakas, 1994; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Nowell et al., 2017). The researcher then conducted horizontalization by treating each participant's statement as having equal value before grouping

meaningful expressions into thematic clusters related to ethics, fairness, emotional engagement, technological adaptation, professional identity, and pedagogical authenticity.

Subsequently, thematic interpretation was conducted through imaginative variation and interpretive reflection to uncover the underlying meanings and structures of participants' experiences (Van Manen, 2016; Braun & Clarke, 2021; Maxwell, 2021). Themes emerging from interviews, observations, and documents were continuously compared and interpreted to generate a comprehensive understanding of how teachers negotiate Islamic values within digital assessment culture. The final stage involved synthesizing textual and structural descriptions to construct the essence of participants' lived experiences concerning digital writing evaluation in madrasah education (Moustakas, 1994; Creswell & Poth, 2018; Sukenti & Tambak, 2023). Through this process, the study aimed to produce a nuanced and contextually grounded interpretation of the ethical and pedagogical dimensions of digital assessment practices within contemporary Islamic education.

Results

Islamic values as ethical foundations in digital writing assessment

The findings revealed that madrasah Indonesian language teachers positioned Islamic values as the primary ethical foundation guiding their digital writing assessment practices Indonesia (Huda et al., 2022; Sukenti & Tambak, 2023; Tan, 2022). Teachers emphasized that writing evaluation was not merely an activity for measuring students' linguistic competence, but also a moral and spiritual responsibility requiring fairness (*'adl*), honesty (*sidq*), sincerity (*ikhlas*), and compassion (*rahmah*) during assessment processes. One participant explained:

"In our madrasah, writing assessment is not only about grammar or structure. Teachers must assess students fairly and respectfully because every student's writing reflects their thoughts, emotions, and dignity." (Teacher 1).

Another teacher stated:

"Islam teaches justice in every educational activity. Even when assessment is conducted digitally, teachers must avoid being mechanical or emotionally distant from students." (Teacher 4).

Interview findings demonstrated that teachers consistently attempted to integrate Islamic ethical principles while providing digital feedback, assigning scores, and evaluating students' written expression. Several participants explained that they intentionally avoided humiliating comments, harsh criticism, or rigid judgment because Islamic educational values prioritize students' emotional well-being and moral development. Observational data further showed that teachers frequently used encouraging language, reflective comments, and empathetic responses within digital assessment platforms. These findings indicate that Islamic values significantly shaped teachers' ethical consciousness and influenced how digital writing evaluation was practiced within madrasah educational culture (Rahman et al., 2023; Sukenti & Fauzan, 2024; Tamami, 2025).

Additional findings revealed that teachers perceived fairness in digital assessment not merely as score objectivity but as contextual understanding of students' learning conditions, emotional states, and technological access limitations. Several teachers explained that they adjusted assessment expectations for students experiencing internet difficulties, family-related challenges, or limited digital literacy. This finding demonstrates that Islamic ethical principles contributed to more humane and context-sensitive approaches in writing evaluation practices. Consequently, digital assessment in madrasahs was interpreted not solely as a technological process but also as an ethical relationship between teachers and students grounded in Islamic educational values.

Teachers' lived experiences in implementing digital writing assessment

The study found that teachers experienced both pedagogical opportunities and emotional challenges during the implementation of digital writing assessment practices (Marta, 2026;

Purwoko et al., 2026; Tamami, 2025). Most participants acknowledged that digital platforms improved efficiency, simplified assignment management, accelerated feedback processes, and increased accessibility for students. One teacher explained:

“Digital assessment helps teachers organize students’ writing more effectively. We can provide feedback faster and monitor students’ progress more systematically.” (Teacher 3).

Another participant stated:

“Technology has changed the way we assess writing. Students can submit assignments online, revise their work quickly, and communicate more easily with teachers.” (Teacher 6).

Despite these advantages, participants also described emotional tensions and pedagogical dilemmas emerging from technology-mediated assessment practices. Several teachers expressed concern that digital systems reduced personal interaction and weakened emotional connection with students during writing evaluation. One teacher noted:

“Sometimes digital assessment feels too technical and impersonal. In face-to-face assessment, teachers can understand students’ emotions better, but online systems make interaction more distant.” (Teacher 2).

Similarly, student participants explained that digital feedback occasionally felt formal, brief, and less emotionally supportive compared to direct classroom interaction. These findings suggest that while digital assessment increased administrative efficiency, it simultaneously created concerns regarding relational authenticity, emotional sensitivity, and pedagogical humanity within madrasah education (Sukenti & Fauzan, 2024; Tan, 2022; Rahman et al., 2023).

Observational findings further revealed that teachers continuously negotiated between institutional digital demands and their desire to maintain humane educational interaction. Teachers frequently combined digital feedback with personal discussion, motivational communication, and reflective explanation to preserve emotional engagement with students. This indicates that teachers did not passively accept technological systems but actively adapted digital assessment practices according to Islamic pedagogical values and relational ethics.

Negotiating technological efficiency and Islamic ethical principles

The findings demonstrated that teachers continuously negotiated tensions between technological efficiency and Islamic ethical principles during digital writing evaluation practices (Tamami, 2025; Huda et al., 2022; Rahman et al., 2023). Teachers acknowledged that digital systems encouraged faster scoring procedures, standardized rubrics, and measurable evaluation structures. However, participants simultaneously believed that writing assessment should remain interpretive, reflective, and emotionally attentive rather than purely mechanistic. One teacher explained:

“Writing is deeply personal. Students express feelings, experiences, and opinions through writing, so teachers cannot assess writing only through numbers or digital indicators.” (Teacher 5).

Another participant stated:

“Technology is important, but Islamic education teaches humanity and wisdom. Teachers still need reflection and empathy when evaluating students’ writing.” (Teacher 7).

The findings showed that teachers often resisted fully automated assessment models because they feared losing pedagogical authenticity and ethical sensitivity during evaluation processes. Participants emphasized that Islamic educational values require teachers to consider students’ emotional effort, moral expression, creativity, and contextual background when assessing writing assignments. Consequently, teachers frequently modified institutional rubrics,

provided personalized comments, and conducted follow-up discussion sessions to balance digital efficiency with humane interaction.

Students also reported appreciating teachers who combined digital evaluation with constructive moral guidance and reflective communication. Several students explained that meaningful feedback helped them improve not only their writing skills but also their confidence, discipline, and ethical awareness. These findings indicate that Islamic ethical principles functioned as interpretive frameworks through which teachers critically evaluated the limitations of purely technical digital assessment culture. Thus, digital writing evaluation in madrasahs became a negotiated pedagogical space where technology and Islamic ethics interacted dynamically rather than oppositely.

Digital assessment culture and teacher professional identity

The study further revealed that digital assessment culture significantly influenced teachers' professional identity, pedagogical orientation, and emotional engagement within contemporary madrasah education (Sukenti & Tambak, 2023; Rahman et al., 2023; Tan, 2022). Participants described experiencing pressure to become technologically adaptive while simultaneously maintaining their identity as Islamic educators responsible for students' moral and spiritual development. One participant explained:

“Teachers today are expected to master digital systems, but at the same time we must preserve Islamic educational values. This balance is sometimes difficult because technology changes very quickly.” (Teacher 8).

Another teacher stated:

“Digitalization has changed the role of teachers. We are not only teaching language anymore, but also guiding students ethically in digital learning environments.” (Teacher 9).

Interview findings demonstrated that teachers increasingly viewed professional competence as involving both digital literacy and ethical-spiritual sensitivity. Participants believed that technological adaptation alone was insufficient if teachers lost empathy, sincerity, and reflective interaction with students. Observational data showed that teachers intentionally attempted to preserve moral authority and humane communication despite increasing dependence on digital platforms. Teachers frequently integrated Islamic advice, motivational reflection, and character-oriented feedback into online writing assessment activities.

Student participants similarly perceived that teachers who balanced digital competence with ethical sensitivity created more meaningful learning experiences. Students described such teachers as more caring, approachable, and inspiring compared to those focusing solely on technical scoring procedures. These findings indicate that digital assessment culture contributed to the reconstruction of teacher identity in madrasahs, where professionalism increasingly involved negotiating technological adaptation with Islamic moral responsibility and pedagogical authenticity.

Pedagogical authenticity and the humanization of digital assessment

One of the most significant findings of this study concerns teachers' efforts to preserve pedagogical authenticity and humanistic interaction within digital writing assessment practices (Sukenti & Fauzan, 2024; Tan, 2022; Rahman et al., 2023). Participants consistently emphasized that authentic assessment should support students' intellectual, emotional, and moral growth rather than merely produce numerical outcomes. One teacher explained:

“Assessment should help students become better individuals, not only better writers. Teachers must guide students morally through feedback and communication.” (Teacher 2).

Another participant stated:

“Technology should support education, not replace human values. If digital assessment removes empathy and reflection, then education loses its essence.” (Teacher 1).

The findings demonstrated that teachers actively humanized digital assessment by integrating reflective feedback, personalized communication, moral encouragement, and dialogical interaction into online evaluation practices. Several participants intentionally scheduled personal discussion sessions after digital assessment to ensure students understood feedback emotionally and academically. Students reported that supportive digital feedback increased their motivation, confidence, and willingness to improve writing performance.

These findings indicate that madrasah teachers interpreted digital assessment not simply as technological modernization but as an ethical-pedagogical process requiring humanity, compassion, and reflective engagement. Consequently, pedagogical authenticity emerged as a central dimension shaping how Islamic educational values were negotiated within contemporary digital writing evaluation practices. The study therefore demonstrates that the future development of digital assessment in Islamic education depends substantially on the ability of teachers to integrate technological innovation with Islamic ethics, humane interaction, and transformative pedagogical values.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that digital writing assessment in madrasahs cannot be understood merely as a technological transformation of educational evaluation, but rather as an ethical-pedagogical reconstruction shaped by Islamic values, teacher consciousness, and contemporary educational realities. The integration of Islamic principles such as *'adl* (justice), *ikhlas* (sincerity), *sidq* (honesty), and *rahmah* (compassion) into digital assessment practices indicates that madrasah teachers interpret evaluation not only as academic measurement but also as moral responsibility and spiritual accountability (Huda et al., 2022; Sukenti & Tambak, 2023; Tan, 2022). This finding extends previous scholarship on digital assessment by demonstrating that assessment practices within Islamic educational contexts are deeply connected to ethical meaning-making, relational sensitivity, and spiritual pedagogy rather than solely institutional efficiency or technological adaptation. Consequently, digital writing evaluation in madrasahs emerges as a value-laden pedagogical activity where technological systems are continuously interpreted through Islamic moral frameworks.

The study further reveals that teachers resisted the reduction of writing evaluation into purely technical and standardized procedures because writing was perceived as a deeply human and expressive activity reflecting students' emotions, identity, morality, and intellectual development. This finding aligns with critical educational theories arguing that excessive technological rationalization may dehumanize educational processes and weaken authentic teacher-student interaction (Freire, 1970; Tan, 2022; Rahman et al., 2023). However, the present study contributes a more nuanced perspective by showing that madrasah teachers actively negotiate rather than reject digital assessment culture. Teachers strategically adapted digital technologies while preserving ethical interaction, compassionate communication, and contextual fairness within writing evaluation. Therefore, digitalization in Islamic education does not necessarily eliminate pedagogical humanity; instead, it creates a new arena where teachers reinterpret Islamic ethical values within contemporary technological environments.

Theoretically, these findings strengthen contemporary discussions concerning Islamic pedagogy in the digital era. Existing studies frequently position digital educational transformation within technical and managerial paradigms emphasizing efficiency, accessibility, and data-driven performance (Purwoko et al., 2026; Marta, 2026; Berlian et al., 2025). In contrast, this study demonstrates that digital assessment practices in madrasahs are profoundly shaped by ethical consciousness and spiritual orientation. Islamic values functioned as interpretive filters guiding how teachers understood fairness, objectivity, feedback, and emotional interaction within technology-mediated assessment processes. This perspective contributes to the development of a more holistic framework of digital Islamic pedagogy where technological innovation remains inseparable from ethical reflection, humane engagement, and moral responsibility.

One of the most important findings concerns teachers' lived experiences in negotiating tensions between technological efficiency and pedagogical humanity. Teachers acknowledged the practical benefits of digital assessment systems, including administrative efficiency, faster feedback mechanisms, and easier assignment management. Nevertheless, participants

simultaneously expressed concern regarding emotional distance, depersonalized interaction, and reduced relational authenticity during digital evaluation practices. This finding confirms recent scholarship suggesting that digitalization may transform educational interaction into increasingly impersonal and procedural communication (Tamami, 2025; Tan, 2022; Rahman et al., 2023). However, unlike previous studies emphasizing technological determinism, this study demonstrates that teachers actively humanize digital assessment through reflective feedback, empathetic language, dialogical communication, and personalized interaction.

This process of humanization is particularly significant within Islamic educational contexts because Islamic pedagogy fundamentally prioritizes ethical relationship, compassion, and moral guidance as integral dimensions of learning (Al-Ghazali, n.d.; Huda et al., 2022; Tan, 2022). Teachers in this study perceived assessment not merely as evaluative judgment but also as an opportunity to nurture students emotionally, spiritually, and intellectually. Such findings indicate that writing evaluation in madrasahs functions simultaneously as pedagogical communication and ethical interaction. Consequently, the quality of assessment is measured not only by scoring accuracy but also by teachers' ability to preserve dignity, empathy, and encouragement during evaluative processes. This perspective significantly expands dominant assessment literature that frequently focuses on technical reliability while neglecting relational and ethical dimensions of educational evaluation.

The findings additionally reveal that teachers' ethical negotiation reflects broader transformations in contemporary Muslim educational identity. Teachers increasingly operate within educational environments shaped by digital standardization, institutional accountability, and technological acceleration while simultaneously maintaining Islamic moral commitments and pedagogical authenticity. This condition creates what may be described as "ethical pedagogical hybridity," where teachers continuously balance modern technological expectations with Islamic educational values (Tambak et al., 2024; Yasin et al., 2025). The study therefore contributes theoretically by conceptualizing madrasah teachers not merely as technology users but as ethical mediators reconstructing educational meaning within digitally mediated Islamic learning environments. Another important contribution of this study concerns the reinterpretation of fairness within digital writing assessment culture. Participants consistently emphasized that fairness in Islamic education extends beyond numerical objectivity and standardized measurement toward contextual understanding of students' emotional conditions, technological access, social background, and learning struggles. Teachers frequently adjusted assessment expectations for students facing internet limitations, family difficulties, or unequal digital literacy competencies. This finding significantly challenges conventional assessment paradigms that conceptualize fairness primarily through uniform procedures and standardized scoring mechanisms (Berlian et al., 2025; Tamami, 2025; Purwoko et al., 2026).

Within Islamic educational philosophy, justice (*'adl*) is intrinsically connected to contextual wisdom, compassion, and balanced judgment rather than rigid procedural equality alone (Al-Shatibi, n.d.; Al-Ghazali, n.d.; Huda et al., 2022). The findings demonstrate that teachers interpreted fairness through humane sensitivity and moral consideration while still maintaining academic accountability. Such perspectives indicate that Islamic ethical values enabled teachers to resist purely mechanistic forms of digital evaluation and instead construct context-sensitive assessment practices grounded in empathy and educational care. Consequently, this study expands contemporary scholarship on digital assessment ethics by demonstrating that fairness in Islamic pedagogy involves relational understanding, social awareness, and moral reflection in addition to technical objectivity.

The findings also suggest that contextual fairness strengthens students' trust and emotional engagement in digital learning environments. Students reported feeling more motivated and respected when teachers considered their personal circumstances and provided supportive feedback rather than purely numerical evaluation. This indicates that ethical sensitivity contributes significantly to students' psychological well-being, self-confidence, and academic participation within digital assessment systems. Therefore, the study reinforces the argument that future digital educational models should integrate ethical responsiveness and humane pedagogical interaction rather than relying exclusively on algorithmic standardization and automated evaluation systems.

The findings further demonstrate that digital assessment culture contributes significantly to the reconstruction of madrasah teachers' professional identity in contemporary Islamic education. Participants described experiencing pressure to become technologically adaptive while simultaneously preserving their identity as Islamic educators responsible for students' moral formation and spiritual development. This finding reflects broader educational transformations in which teachers are increasingly expected to combine digital competence, pedagogical flexibility, and ethical leadership within rapidly changing educational ecosystems (Marta, 2026; Purwoko et al., 2026; Rahman et al., 2023; Baihaqi et al., 2026).

Importantly, teachers in this study did not perceive professionalism solely in terms of technological mastery or institutional performance indicators. Instead, professional identity was strongly associated with ethical integrity, compassionate interaction, sincerity, and moral responsibility toward students. This perspective contrasts with neoliberal educational discourses that frequently redefine teacher professionalism through productivity, efficiency, and technological adaptability alone (Tan, 2022; Abdullah et al., 2025; Rahman et al., 2023; Sukenti & Tambak, 2023). The study therefore contributes to emerging scholarship on Islamic teacher identity by demonstrating that professionalism in madrasah contexts remains deeply interconnected with spiritual values and ethical pedagogy despite increasing educational digitalization. Moreover, the findings reveal that teachers functioned as moral navigators guiding students through complex digital cultures characterized by information overload, superficial communication, and declining interpersonal sensitivity. Teachers intentionally integrated Islamic advice, moral reflection, and character-oriented feedback into digital assessment activities to preserve meaningful educational relationships (Amalia et al., 2026). This indicates that contemporary madrasah teachers increasingly occupy hybrid roles as digital facilitators, ethical mentors, and spiritual educators simultaneously. Such findings provide important implications for teacher education programs because digital competency training alone may be insufficient without parallel development of ethical literacy, emotional intelligence, and Islamic pedagogical sensitivity.

The findings ultimately suggest the need for a more humanistic and spiritually grounded model of digital assessment within Islamic education. Current educational modernization frequently prioritizes automation, efficiency, and technological innovation while underestimating the importance of emotional engagement, ethical interaction, and pedagogical authenticity (Tamami, 2025; Purwoko et al., 2026; Berlian et al., 2025). However, this study demonstrates that madrasah teachers actively preserve humane educational values through reflective communication, contextual fairness, and compassionate digital interaction. This indicates that technological advancement and Islamic ethical pedagogy are not inherently contradictory; rather, they can function complementarily when mediated through reflective teacher practices and value-oriented educational frameworks.

Theoretically, the study contributes to contemporary Islamic education discourse by proposing that digital assessment should be understood as an ethical-spiritual practice rather than purely technical evaluation. Islamic values provided teachers with moral orientation for navigating technological change while preserving pedagogical authenticity and humane educational relationships. Such findings expand current discussions on digital Islamic education by emphasizing the importance of ethical consciousness, emotional engagement, and spiritual responsibility within contemporary technology-mediated pedagogy. Practically, the study implies that future digital assessment development in madrasahs should integrate technological innovation with Islamic ethical values, teacher emotional engagement, and contextual pedagogical sensitivity. Educational policymakers and teacher training institutions should therefore develop digital assessment models emphasizing reflective feedback, humane interaction, ethical literacy, and spiritually grounded pedagogical communication. Through such integration, digital assessment in Islamic education can contribute not only to academic achievement but also to the development of morally conscious, emotionally resilient, and ethically responsible contemporary Muslim learners.

Conclusion

This study concludes that digital writing assessment practices in madrasahs are not merely technological procedures for measuring students' linguistic competence, but ethical-pedagogical processes deeply shaped by Islamic values, teacher consciousness, and contemporary educational transformation Indonesia. Madrasah Indonesian language teachers consistently positioned Islamic principles such as justice (*'adl*), sincerity (*ikhlas*), honesty (*sidq*), compassion (*rahmah*), and humane interaction as foundational orientations guiding digital writing evaluation practices. The findings demonstrate that teachers actively negotiated between technological efficiency and pedagogical humanity by integrating reflective feedback, empathetic communication, contextual fairness, and moral guidance within digital assessment systems. Consequently, digital writing evaluation in madrasahs emerged as a spiritually grounded and ethically sensitive pedagogical activity rather than a purely technical or mechanistic assessment practice. The study further reveals that digital assessment culture significantly influences teachers' professional identity and pedagogical orientation in contemporary Islamic education. Teachers experienced both opportunities and tensions while adapting to digital educational transformation, particularly regarding the preservation of authentic teacher-student relationships, emotional engagement, and ethical interaction within technology-mediated learning environments. Despite increasing institutional demands for digitalization, teachers consistently attempted to humanize assessment processes through dialogical communication, personalized feedback, and context-sensitive evaluation practices. This finding indicates that professionalism in madrasah education extends beyond technological competence toward ethical responsibility, spiritual integrity, and compassionate pedagogical engagement.

Theoretically, this study contributes to contemporary Islamic educational scholarship by reconceptualizing digital assessment as an ethical-spiritual pedagogical practice situated within Islamic values and lived teacher experience. The study expands current discussions on digital educational transformation by demonstrating that Islamic pedagogy can critically adapt technological innovation while preserving moral authenticity and humane educational relationships. Practically, the findings imply the need for the development of digital assessment models in madrasahs that integrate technological literacy, ethical sensitivity, emotional engagement, and Islamic pedagogical values simultaneously. Such integration is essential for fostering digitally competent, morally grounded, and socially responsible contemporary Muslim learners within increasingly digitalized educational environments.

Declarations

Author contribution statement

Contributions of the authors in this article: First and second author contributed as concepts and drafters of the article, data analyzers, interpreters, writing the manuscript and critically revising the article; Third and fourth author, as the critically revising the article, and editing of the language of manuscript, collecting data and critically revising the article. Fifth author, as the critically revising the article, and editing of the language of manuscript. All authors agree to take responsibility for all aspects of this work. Both authors contributed equally and approved the final version of the article for publication.

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The datasets generated and/or analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Declaration of interests statement

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this paper.

Declaration of use artificial intelligence

The author uses generative artificial intelligence in this paper for the data analysis process.

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