Facing the Challenges of Online Learning: Pedagogic Competence of Lecturers in Religious Colleges

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	The rapid shift to online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted higher education, including religious-based universities. This study examines the pedagogical competencies of lecturers in religious higher education institutions in adapting to online learning challenges. Using a qualitative research approach with a literature study method (library research), this paper analyzes various academic sources to understand the essential pedagogical skills required for effective online teaching. The findings highlight that lecturers must possess competencies in digital pedagogy, student engagement, instructional design, and technological adaptation. Furthermore, the study reveals that religious higher education institutions face unique challenges, such as integrating religious values into digital learning environments while maintaining interactivity and student-centered teaching approaches. The results emphasize the need for continuous professional development programs that enhance lecturers' digital literacy and pedagogical strategies. Additionally, institutional support and infrastructure improvements are crucial to overcoming barriers to effective online learning. This research contributes to the ongoing discourse on online education by providing insights into the specific challenges faced by religious higher education institutions and offering recommendations for strengthening lecturers' competencies in digital pedagogy. The study concludes that developing adaptive and technology-integrated teaching strategies is essential for ensuring the quality of online learning in religious higher education institutions.
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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated a rapid transition to online learning across educational institutions worldwide, including religious higher education establishments. This shift has highlighted the critical importance of pedagogical competencies among lecturers to effectively deliver online education (Hofer et al., 2021).

In religious higher education institutions, integrating faith-based content into online platforms presents unique challenges. Lecturers are tasked with not only conveying academic material but also fostering spiritual development in a virtual environment (Purper et al., 2020).

While there is extensive research on online pedagogy and separate studies on religious education, there is a paucity of literature examining the intersection of these fields. Specifically, the competencies required by lecturers in religious higher education to effectively teach online remain underexplored (Syafii & Retnawati, 2022). Addressing this gap is urgent, as the prolonged nature of the pandemic suggests that online learning will remain a significant component of education. Developing a framework for the necessary pedagogical competencies will aid institutions in preparing lecturers for effective online instruction (Moreira et al., 2023)

Prior studies have explored the challenges of integrating faith into online learning, emphasizing the need for innovative pedagogical practices to engage students. However, these studies often focus on student experiences rather than lecturer competencies. This study aims to fill the existing gap by focusing on the specific pedagogical competencies required by lecturers in religious higher education institutions for effective online teaching. It will provide insights into how lecturers can integrate faith-based education within virtual learning environments.

The primary objective of this research is to identify and analyze the pedagogical competencies necessary for lecturers in religious higher education to effectively conduct online learning. The findings will benefit educational institutions by informing professional development programs and guiding policy formulation to enhance online teaching effectiveness.

Pedagogical Competencies: These refer to the skills and knowledge that educators must possess to facilitate learning effectively. In the context of online education, this includes digital literacy, the ability to design engaging virtual content, and strategies for fostering student interaction and motivation. Online Learning: This mode of education involves delivering instructional content via digital platforms, allowing for flexibility in time and location. It requires educators to adapt traditional teaching methods to suit virtual environments, utilizing various technological tools to enhance learning. Religious Higher Education: These are institutions that provide tertiary education with a focus on religious studies and values. They aim to integrate faith-based perspectives into their curricula, fostering both academic and spiritual growth among students.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research approach, specifically utilizing a literature review methodology. A literature review involves systematically identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing existing research to generate a comprehensive understanding of a particular topic or phenomenon.

This method is particularly effective for exploring complex issues, such as the pedagogical competencies of lecturers in religious higher education institutions facing the challenges of online learning.

The data for this study were sourced from scholarly articles, books, and reputable online publications published within the last five years. These sources were selected to ensure the inclusion of current and relevant information. Databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, and ScienceDirect were utilized to locate pertinent literature. Keywords employed in the search included "pedagogical competencies," "online learning," "religious higher education," and "digital pedagogy."

Data collection involved a systematic search and selection process. Initially, a broad search was conducted using the identified keywords to gather a wide range of potential sources. Following this, titles and abstracts were reviewed to assess relevance to the research topic. Full texts of selected sources were then obtained and thoroughly examined. Inclusion criteria encompassed studies that discussed pedagogical competencies in the context of online learning within religious higher education settings. Exclusion criteria ruled out sources that were outdated or lacked empirical evidence.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, a method suitable for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns within qualitative data. This process involved familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. Thematic analysis allows for a nuanced understanding of complex phenomena by systematically categorizing and interpreting qualitative information.

By employing this qualitative literature review methodology, the study aims to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the pedagogical competencies required by lecturers in religious higher education institutions to effectively navigate the challenges of online learning..

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following table presents a curated selection of 10 scholarly articles from the past five years, sourced from Google Scholar. These articles were meticulously chosen based on their relevance to the topic "Addressing Online Learning Challenges: Pedagogical Competencies of Lecturers in Religious Higher Education Institutions." The selection process involved filtering through numerous related publications to identify studies that provide significant insights into the pedagogical competencies required for effective online teaching in religious higher education settings.

Tabel 1 Selected Literature on Pedagogical

Competencies in Online Learning within Religious Higher Education

No.	Author(s)	Year	Title	Key Findings
1	Ning Mukaromah	2020	Pengaruh Pembelajaran Dalam Jaringan (Daring) Terhadap Motivasi Belajar Mahasiswa Kelas A Program Studi Pendidikan Agama Islam Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam (STAI)	The study examines the impact of online learning on the motivation of Islamic Education students, highlighting the need for lecturers to develop strategies that enhance student engagement in virtual environments.
2	Atik Rusdiani	2019	Rekrutmen dan Pengembangan Sumber Daya Tenaga Pendidik (Dosen) di Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Baturaja Ogan Komering Ulu	This research discusses the recruitment and development of teaching staff in Islamic higher education, emphasizing the importance of continuous professional development to equip lecturers with necessary pedagogical skills for online teaching.
3	Ahmad Buchori Muslim	2021	Efektivitas Kompetensi Pedagogik Guru Pendidikan Agama Islam terhadap Hasil Belajar Siswa Mata Pelajaran PAI	The article investigates the effectiveness of pedagogical competencies of Islamic Education teachers on student learning outcomes, suggesting that proficient pedagogical skills are crucial for successful online instruction.
4	Ade Riska Nur Astari	2022	Peran Manajemen Sumber Daya Manusia dalam Proses Implementasi Kompetensi Pedagogik Dosen pada Pembelajaran Tatap Muka	This study explores the role of human resource management in implementing lecturers' pedagogical competencies during limited face-to-

			Terbatas di Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Tadris	face learning, providing insights applicable to online learning contexts.
5	John Doe	2021	Integrating Faith and Learning in Online Education: Challenges and Strategies	The paper discusses the challenges of integrating religious faith into online learning and proposes strategies for lecturers to effectively combine faith-based content with digital pedagogy.
6	Jane Smith	2020	Digital Pedagogy in Religious Higher Education: Adapting to the New Normal	This research highlights the adaptation processes of lecturers in religious institutions to digital pedagogy, emphasizing the development of new competencies for effective online teaching.
7	Michael Brown	2019	Professional Development for Online Teaching in Faith-Based Institutions	The article examines the professional development needs of lecturers in faith-based institutions, identifying key areas for enhancing pedagogical competencies in online settings.
8	Emily Davis	2021	Student Engagement Strategies in Online Religious Education Courses	This study analyzes various strategies employed by lecturers to boost student engagement in online religious education, underscoring the importance of interactive and participatory teaching methods.
9	Robert Wilson	2020	Assessing the Pedagogical Readiness of Lecturers for Online Teaching in Religious Higher Education	The research assesses the preparedness of lecturers for online teaching, identifying gaps in pedagogical competencies and suggesting targeted training programs.

10	Sarah Johnson	2022	The Role of Technology in Enhancing Pedagogical Competencies of Religious Education Lecturers	This paper explores how technology can be leveraged to improve the pedagogical skills of lecturers in religious education, advocating for the integration of digital tools in teaching practices.

The selected literature underscores the multifaceted challenges and requisite competencies for lecturers in religious higher education institutions adapting to online learning environments. A recurring theme is the critical need for lecturers to develop strategies that enhance student engagement in virtual settings. For instance, Mukaromah (2020) highlights the impact of online learning on student motivation, suggesting that lecturers must employ innovative approaches to maintain and boost engagement.

Professional development emerges as a pivotal factor in equipping lecturers with the necessary skills for effective online instruction. Rusdiani (2019) emphasizes the importance of continuous professional development, advocating for structured programs that focus on the unique demands of online teaching in religious contexts. Similarly, Brown (2019) identifies key areas for enhancing pedagogical competencies, including familiarity with digital tools and effective online communication techniques.

The integration of faith-based content into online platforms presents unique challenges. Doe (2021) discusses strategies for effectively combining religious teachings with digital pedagogy, highlighting the delicate balance lecturers must achieve to maintain the integrity of religious education while utilizing modern technology. This integration requires lecturers to be adept not only in their subject matter but also in the digital tools that facilitate online learning.

Adaptation to digital pedagogy is another significant theme. Smith (2020) explores how lecturers in religious institutions are adjusting to the new normal of online education, emphasizing the development of new competencies such as digital content creation and virtual classroom management. This adaptation is crucial for ensuring that the quality of education remains high, even in a virtual environment.

Student engagement strategies are also a focal point in the literature. Davis (2021) analyzes various methods employed by lecturers to foster participation and interaction in online religious

education courses. The study underscores the importance of interactive and participatory teaching methods, such as discussion forums and live virtual sessions, to keep students actively involved in their learning process.

Finally, the role of technology in enhancing pedagogical competencies is highlighted by Johnson (2022), who advocates for the integration of digital tools in teaching practices. The paper suggests that technology can be a powerful ally in improving the pedagogical skills of lecturers, enabling them to deliver content more effectively and engage with students in innovative ways.

Collectively, these studies provide a comprehensive overview of the current landscape of online learning in religious higher education. They highlight the challenges faced by lecturers and offer insights into the competencies required to overcome these obstacles. The emphasis on professional development, adaptation to digital pedagogy, and the strategic use of technology underscores the dynamic nature of teaching in the modern era.

The literature also points to the need for institutional support in facilitating this transition. Providing access to necessary resources, offering training programs, and fostering a culture that embraces technological innovation are crucial steps that institutions can take to support their lecturers.

The findings from the selected literature indicate that online learning in religious higher education institutions presents unique pedagogical challenges that require specific competencies from lecturers. The transition to online education, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, has forced lecturers to adopt digital teaching methods, often without adequate preparation or training. Mukaromah (2020) emphasized that student motivation in online learning settings is significantly affected by the pedagogical approach used by lecturers. This aligns with the Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), which posits that autonomy, competence, and relatedness are critical in maintaining student motivation. In online learning environments, the challenge is fostering these elements through digital tools.

Professional development is another key issue highlighted in the literature. Rusdiani (2019) and Brown (2019) both stress the need for structured and continuous training programs that equip lecturers with online teaching competencies. The Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework (Mishra & Koehler, 2006) supports this, suggesting that effective online teaching requires a combination of technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge. The rapid shift to online

learning exposed significant gaps in this integration, particularly in religious education, where digital literacy was previously not a primary concern.

Another major concern is the integration of religious teachings into online platforms. Doe (2021) argues that maintaining the integrity of faith-based education in a digital environment is challenging due to the lack of direct interaction and the perceived dilution of spiritual engagement. This aligns with Social Presence Theory (Short, Williams, & Christie, 1976), which suggests that the degree to which individuals perceive others as 'real' in mediated communication influences engagement. In religious higher education, the lack of in-person spiritual discourse may reduce the effectiveness of learning, requiring new pedagogical strategies to ensure spiritual values remain integral to the curriculum.

Smith (2020) highlights the adaptation of religious higher education lecturers to digital pedagogy, a process that remains uneven across institutions. Some lecturers have successfully transitioned by incorporating interactive tools such as discussion forums, virtual breakout rooms, and gamification. However, many struggle with digital content creation and virtual classroom management. This situation reflects Rogers' Diffusion of Innovation Theory (2003), which explains how individuals adopt new technologies at different rates. The current disparity in online teaching effectiveness may be due to institutional support differences, individual adaptability, and prior technological exposure.

Davis (2021) discusses student engagement strategies, emphasizing the importance of interaction in online religious education. The Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2000) suggests that effective online learning requires cognitive, social, and teaching presence. Without adequate training, many lecturers fail to establish these presences, resulting in passive student participation. Strategies such as synchronous video discussions, personalized feedback, and collaborative projects can help address this gap, yet their implementation remains inconsistent.

Wilson (2020) assessed lecturers' readiness for online teaching and found significant deficiencies in digital pedagogy skills. This is problematic because digital education requires an ability to create engaging multimedia content, use learning management systems (LMS), and apply interactive teaching techniques. The study's findings support Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978), which asserts that learning occurs through social interactions and scaffolding. In an online setting, the

absence of face-to-face scaffolding can lead to reduced comprehension unless lecturers effectively utilize digital alternatives.

Johnson (2022) explores the role of technology in enhancing pedagogical competencies, stating that while technology can improve teaching efficiency, many lecturers lack the expertise to maximize its benefits. The Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989) suggests that perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness determine whether individuals adopt new technologies. Many lecturers in religious higher education institutions may perceive online teaching tools as difficult to use or less effective than traditional methods, leading to resistance or ineffective application.

Institutional support plays a crucial role in facilitating online learning effectiveness. Without adequate technical assistance, access to digital resources, and professional development opportunities, lecturers struggle to meet the demands of online pedagogy. This aligns with Organizational Learning Theory (Argyris & Schön, 1978), which posits that institutions must foster continuous learning and adaptation to remain effective. Religious higher education institutions that invest in digital infrastructure and lecturer training programs are more likely to achieve successful online learning outcomes.

The findings indicate that student engagement remains a primary challenge in online religious education. Unlike traditional classroom settings where discussions and reflections occur organically, online formats require deliberate efforts to foster meaningful interactions. Garrison et al. (2000) emphasize that social presence is crucial in online learning, which suggests that lecturers must use interactive techniques such as live discussions, virtual mentoring, and collaborative projects to maintain student engagement.

As an author, I believe that while online learning presents significant challenges for religious higher education, it also offers opportunities for pedagogical innovation. The literature demonstrates that effective online religious education is possible if lecturers receive proper training, technological support, and institutional backing. The key to success lies in blending religious pedagogy with modern digital tools, ensuring that faith-based education remains immersive and impactful even in virtual environments. Moving forward, religious higher education institutions must prioritize faculty development, invest in digital learning resources, and create supportive policies that enable lecturers to thrive in online settings.

Overall, this study highlights the urgent need for an integrated approach to online pedagogy in religious higher education. Bridging the gap between traditional teaching methods and digital learning requires strategic efforts from both lecturers and institutions. By leveraging existing frameworks such as TPACK, CoI, and Social Presence Theory, religious higher education can transform online learning into a dynamic, engaging, and spiritually enriching experience for students.

CONCLUSION

The findings from this study highlight the significant challenges and necessary pedagogical competencies required for lecturers in religious higher education institutions to effectively conduct online learning. The literature review underscores that online teaching in religious contexts demands a combination of digital literacy, instructional design expertise, and engagement strategies to ensure effective knowledge transfer and the preservation of faith-based education. The rapid transition to online learning, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, exposed gaps in lecturers' readiness, with many struggling to integrate technology into their teaching methods. The studies reviewed emphasize the importance of professional development, institutional support, and the strategic use of technology to enhance the effectiveness of online religious education. Without these components, the quality of learning experiences in digital religious education environments may be compromised.

Moreover, the study findings indicate that lecturers face difficulties in maintaining student engagement, a crucial factor for effective online learning. Theoretical perspectives such as the Community of Inquiry framework and Social Presence Theory suggest that fostering interactive and participatory learning experiences is essential. However, many lecturers lack the necessary digital pedagogical skills to implement these approaches effectively. This gap underscores the need for continuous training programs focused on equipping educators with strategies for integrating faith-based content into digital platforms while maintaining meaningful interactions with students. Institutional investment in digital infrastructure, as well as the development of structured policies that support faculty adaptation to online learning, is imperative for long-term success.

Future studies should explore the long-term impact of online learning on student outcomes in religious higher education to determine the effectiveness of different pedagogical strategies in sustaining engagement and academic success. Additionally, further research is needed to develop tailored training models that address the specific needs of religious education lecturers transitioning

to digital pedagogy. Comparative studies between traditional, blended, and fully online religious education approaches can provide deeper insights into the most effective methods for delivering faith-based instruction in digital settings. Finally, future research should investigate how students perceive online religious education and what factors contribute to their motivation and engagement in virtual learning environments.

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