Leveraging AI Tools for Islamic Scholarship: Podcast and eBook Innovations in Teaching the Sunni Intellectual Tradition

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ABSTRACT

This project integrates the use Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools to transform undergraduate's student engagement and learning outcomes in the Sunni Studies. The course requires students to apply digital skills in analysing the principles of Ahl al-Sunnah wa'l-Jamāʿah (ASWJ) in comparison with divergent theological schools such as the Muʿtazilah, Qadariyyah, and Jabariyyah assisted using AI tools in the process. The learning activities emphasize collaborative research in preparing two interconnected outputs: a podcast as an oral presentation medium and a mini e-book as a structured, supportive reading source. Over 10 weeks, students in groups of 3 to 5 created podcasts (10–15 minutes) and mini eBooks on theological topics, using AI tools like ChatGPT, Canva, Perplexity, and CapCut for content generation, design, and editing. By integrating theology with digital innovation, the project not only strengthens students' analytical understanding of ASWJ thought but also equips them with transferable digital competencies, preparing them for leadership and knowledge dissemination in the digital era. A post-test survey (n=39) revealed 97.4% of students found the process highly engaging, 94.9% used AI tools, and 87.2% reported easier task completion. The findings indicate that integrating podcasts and e-books into the course not only enhances digital readiness and engagement but also demonstrates measurable pedagogical impact. This innovation bridges traditional Islamic studies with contemporary digital tools, providing a scalable model for modernizing religious education. This project demonstrates how AI-supported multimodal outputs can modernise Islamic theological education while building transferable digital skills.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, ASWJ, Sunni, 21st Century Digital Skills, OBE

INTRODUCTION

The integration of AI-driven technologies into higher education has become essential, as these tools not only advance students' academic outcomes but also influence their recreational choices and broader lifestyle practices (Chaudhary et al., 2024; Kamalov et al., 2023). Integrating AI into education offers innovative solutions for engaging digital-native students, particularly in Islamic Studies, where theological accuracy and cultural sensitivity are critical. This project, implemented in the Sunni Studies course require students with producing podcasts and eBooks on topics Ahl al-Sunnah wa'l-Jamāʿah (ASWJ) in comparison with divergent theological schools such as the Muʿtazilah, Qadariyyah, and Jabariyyah assisted with the use of Artificial Intelligences tools. AI tools is utilised in content creation, design, and editing, enabling students to focus on critical analysis and creativity. This approach therefore supported personalized learning method in which mitigates individualized pacing and targeted guidance, ultimately fostering higher academic performance alongside improved emotional resilience (Makhambetova et al., 2021). An exit survey provided empirical evidence of high engagement and skill development. This extended abstract outlines the project's objectives, methodology, findings, commercial prospects, and novelty, showcasing its potential for broader educational impact

Problem Statement

Traditional teaching methods in Islamic Studies, particularly for complex theological topics like Sunni studies, often struggle to engage digital-native students, leading to limited interaction and surface understanding. Commonly, educators often rely on traditional rote learning techniques, which may not engage students deeply or connect learning with life application (Wan Mamat & Baharuddin, 2025). As a results, conventional approaches rely heavily on lectures and text-based materials, which may not cater to diverse learning styles or foster 21st-century skills like digital literacy and creativity. Additionally, creating high-quality, culturally sensitive educational content is time-intensive and requires technical expertise, posing challenges for both students and educators. Furthermore, the lack of accessible, engaging tools adapted to Islamic Studies intensifies these issues, hindering deep comprehension and practical application of theological concepts. These challenges have stimulated academic discourse urging reforms that incorporate critical, ethical, and applied perspectives into the traditional Islamic sciences, thereby strengthening the contemporary relevance and vitality of Islamic studies (Hashim, 2007; Harun Baharuddin & Wan Mamat, 2025; Prima, Julhadi, & Mursal, 2025). These problems have led to calls for reform and integration of more critical, ethical, and applied approaches to make Islamic studies more relevant and dynamic in the modern context. In this sense, the integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in higher education is crucial in reshaping learning and teaching process. With AI, institutions are not only enhancing personalized learning but also improving operational efficiency and student success rates (Moola, 2024). This project addresses these challenges by leveraging AI tools to empower students to create podcasts and eBooks, enhancing engagement, simplifying content production, and ensuring theological accuracy.

Objectives

1. To Integrate Ai Tools In Content Creation, Editing, And Publishing To Equip Students With Transferable 21st-Century Digital Literacy.
2. To Produce Creative And Interactive Learning Resources That Merge Theological Depth With Digital Innovation.

PRODUCT DESCRIPTION & METHODOLOGY

This innovation employed a practice-based teaching and learning design embedded in the continuous assessment framework of the Kajian Ahli Sunnah wal Jamaah course. The method integrates digital media production namely podcast creation and mini e-book development as both learning activities and evaluative instruments. The design reflects principles of personalized and collaborative learning, in which students are encouraged to explore topics within time framed with digital tools to produce creative yet academically rigorous outputs.

Planning and Preparation (Weeks 1–4)

In the Planning and Preparation phase, students were first oriented to the objectives, rubrics, and assessment expectations of the project, ensuring a clear understanding of its academic scope and evaluation standards. They were then organized into groups of three to five members, with each group selecting a topic within Sunni theological discourse. Each group conducted a structured literature review by referring to authoritative sources including classical Islamic texts, contemporary academic publications, journals, fatwas, and recorded scholarly lectures. To complement this process, students utilised AI-powered research assistants such as ChatGPT and Perplexity for idea generation, refinement of arguments, and preliminary synthesis of references. However, they were also required to critically evaluate AI outputs for factual accuracy and ensure all claims were supported by authenticated scholarly sources. Specific roles were distributed within each group as moderator, panelist, researcher, and editor to personalized engagement. Importantly, from this stage onwards, students were informed that their research and discussions would later be transformed into two interconnected outputs; a podcast as an oral presentation medium and a mini e-book as a structured, supportive reading source.This deliberate combination of traditional scholarship and AI-enhanced tools ensured both academic rigor and digital fluency in the preparatory stage.

Podcast Production (Weeks 5–6)

The second phase focused on the transformation of research findings into an audio-based output. Students drafted scripts or discussion outlines, with AI-assisted drafting tools used to refine language and generate guiding prompts. Trial recordings were conducted to ensure clarity and flow, with AI transcription services used for reviewing coherence. Final podcast recordings were produced using Anchor, Audacity, or GarageBand, CapCut, Audio Cleaner AI, supported by AI-enhanced features such as noise reduction and auto-levelling. The podcast served as the primary oral dissemination tool, translating theological content into an engaging conversational format suitable for peer learning. By combining AI support with human collaboration, students developed communication strategies that were academically rigorous yet accessible to a wider audience.

Editing and Digital Publishing (Weeks 7–9)

In the Editing and Publishing phase, students worked on refining both their podcast and mini e-book outputs. Audio editing was carried out using Audacity, GarageBand, or CapCut, where AI-assisted tools enabled automatic background noise removal, sound balancing, and trimming of redundant sections. Simultaneously, groups developed their mini e-books to complement the podcast, expanding on theological arguments with structured academic writing. Drafting and revising were supported by ChatGPT, Gemini Ai, for language polishing and idea restructuring, while referencing tools ensured proper citation of sources. Design platforms such as Canva Ai and Slidesgo, were supplemented with AI-generated visual aids, including infographics and conceptual diagrams, which enhanced clarity and reader engagement without compromising scholarly accuracy. Final outputs were formatted into MP3 and PDF files, uploaded to platforms such as Issuu, FlipHTML5, or Notion, and linked with QR codes for interactive access. The integration of AI at this stage facilitated efficiency in editing, improved visual communication, and allowed students to experience academic publishing within a digitally enriched environment.

Presentation and Evaluation (Week 10)

During the Presentation and Evaluation phase, each group prepared a poster that integrated both the visual and digital components of their project. The poster displayed the custom cover design of the group's audio podcast, which was produced using AI-assisted design platforms such as Canva and Adobe Firefly to ensure professional quality and thematic coherence with the course content. To enable interactive access to the complementary written resource, a Quick Response (QR) code was embedded within the same poster. Scanning the QR code directed viewers to the group's mini e-book, thereby linking the auditory and textual outputs and allowing peers and instructors to engage with both formats in a single presentation medium. Assessment was carried out through structured rubrics focusing on content accuracy, clarity of communication, creativity, digital literacy, and proper academic referencing. Students also provided peer reflections, thereby cultivating critical and collaborative feedback practices. Importantly, the use of AI throughout the process did not replace scholarly rigor but instead functioned as a supplementary mechanism, enabling students to refine their ideas, reduce performance anxiety, and present with greater confidence. This holistic integration of AI technologies into both production and assessment reinforced the personalized learning approach by allowing flexible pacing, targeted support, and enriched academic outcomes.

POTENTIAL FINDINGS AND COMMERCIALISATION

Findings

The findings from both the pre-course and exit surveys provide strong evidence that the dual-output innovation (podcast and e-book) successfully enhanced student learning in the course. In the pre-survey, students expressed moderate to strong confidence in using podcasts and e-books as learning tools, though a notable proportion indicated a need for further training or guidance. This reflects an initial readiness coupled with uncertainty, which is consistent with earlier studies suggesting that students are generally open to adopting educational technologies but may lack confidence in their effective application (cf. Makhambetova et al., 2021).

Following the implementation, end-of-course results demonstrate that this readiness translated into active engagement and positive outcomes. Nearly all students (97.4%) reported using the podcast and e-book for examination preparation, and an equal percentage indicated that these tools made learning theological course more interesting. These findings suggest that the innovation not only met students' expectations but also exceeded them by increasing engagement, relevance, and enjoyment in a subject often perceived as abstract or highly theoretical.

Table 1 Student Readiness and Engagement (Pre and Exit Survey, N=39)

Dimension	**Pre-Survey**	**Exit Survey**
Confidence with podcasts	82% expressed moderate to strong agreement	97.4% reported actual use for exam preparation
Confidence with e-books	85% expressed moderate to strong agreement	97.4% reported actual use for exam preparation
Excitement to use podcasts & e-books	80% expressed moderate to strong agreement	97.4% found learning very interesting
Belief in engaging learning	75% agreed it would enhance engagement	97.4% affirmed podcasts/e-books enhanced engagement

Table 2 Student Perceptions of AI Tool Integration (Exit Survey, N = 39)

Dimension	**Yes**	**No**	**Maybe**
Used AI tools (ChatGPT, Perplexity, Canva, Grammarly)	38 (97.4%)	–	1 (2.6%)
AI helped project completion	34 (87.2%)	1 (2.6%)	4 (10.3%)
AI enhanced creativity	35 (89.7%)	2 (5.1%)	2 (5.1%)

A key dimension of this innovation lies in its integration of AI tools into the learning process. Survey data revealed that almost all students (97.4%) used AI platforms such as ChatGPT, Perplexity, Canva, and Grammarly during the project. Of these, 87.2% affirmed that AI made the task easier, while 89.7% reported that it enhanced their creativity. This indicates that AI did not function merely as a convenience tool but as a supportive mechanism that facilitated idea generation, language refinement, and design enhancement. Importantly, students were required to evaluate AI-generated content by comparing it with authentic Islamic scholarly sources, ensuring that the use of AI upheld the accuracy and trustworthiness expected in theological studies. This aligns with the broader discourse on AI literacy, which emphasizes equipping students not only with technical skills but also with critical evaluative competencies in the use of digital tools.

Commercialisation

Beyond the classroom, this innovation has real potential to be shared and sustained more widely. The podcasts and e-books created by students can be collected into a digital library for future cohorts, serving as a lasting learning resource. With further development, these outputs could also be shared as open-access materials, making Islamic studies more accessible to the community. It is supported by the study conducted by Parmar (2025) found that digital library use among students is frequent and positively linked to academic performance due to the convenience of accessing the resources. Students are gradually shifting away from traditional physical libraries toward digital platforms, which they perceive easier for information retrieval. In terms of frequency, the most common usage pattern is weekly access (45%), followed by daily use (30%), while monthly and rare usage are least reported. This indicates a strong reliance on digital resources for both

continuous study and specific assignments. Regarding resource preference, e-books (70%) and online journals (65%) emerge as the most widely used, whereas databases and research portals are accessed less frequently, likely due to their specialized nature. Importantly, the study also found a positive correlation between frequent digital library usage and improved academic performance, including higher GPA scores and enhanced skill development.

Apart from that, at the institutional level, the method can be expanded into a training program for lecturers, showing practical ways to integrate AI into teaching and assessment. The dual-output model is also flexible enough to be applied in other fields, such as language, history, and social sciences, making it highly adaptable.

From a broader perspective, the project could be developed into a teaching toolkit that includes templates, guides, and examples for universities interested in modernising their assessment practices. This ensures sustainability and creates opportunities for collaboration, while also preparing educators and students for a future where AI is part of everyday learning

NOVELTY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The novelty of this innovation lies in its ability to merge multimodal learning with AI integration in the context of Sunni Studies, a combination that has rarely been explored in theological education. By transforming the same research material into two complementary outputs; a podcast and a mini e-book therefore introduces fresh approach to assessment that goes beyond conventional written assignments. The podcast highlighted oral communication, collaboration, and creativity, while the e-book fostered academic writing, referencing, and digital publishing skills. Together, these dual modalities created a distinctive framework that reinforced comprehension and retention while supporting diverse learning preferences.

Unlike traditional models, this approach also embodies the principles of personalized learning. Students were able to progress at their own pace, adopt differentiated roles, and contribute according to their individual strengths and interests, making the learning process more inclusive and empowering. A further element of novelty is the incorporation of AI tools (such as ChatGPT, Perplexity, Canva, and Grammarly) into the creative process. AI was not treated as a shortcut but as a learning partner, helping students generate ideas, enhance creativity, and refine their work while requiring them to critically cross-check outputs against authentic Islamic and academic sources. This balance of technological innovation with scholarly integrity represents an original contribution to the field. (Chaudhary et al., 2024; Kamalov et al., 2023)

Finally, the project expands the scope of theological learning by aligning it with 21st-century skills and the aspirations of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education). Aligning the 4 Cs (Critical Thinking, Creativity, Collaboration, Communication) with course learning outcomes involves clearly defining what students should be able to do related to each skill by the end of the course. Hence, AI technologies are emerging as powerful drivers of SDG 4 (Quality Education) in higher education institutions by fostering student-centered, personalized, and higher-quality learning environments (Kalnina et al., 2024). Remote learning platforms powered by AI also expand access and flexibility, allowing students from diverse backgrounds to participate in higher education (Chomiak-Orsa & Smolag, 2024). In conclusion, this review demonstrates that AI tools have significant potential to advance SDG 4 higher education institution by supporting personalized learning, institutional efficiency, and inclusive access (Apata et al., 2025).

The Model Demonstrates That Abstract Theological Concepts Can Be Translated into Engaging, Student Orientation Concept That Cultivate Digital Literacy, Critical Thinking, And Collaborative Skills. This Integration of Pedagogy, Ai, And Theology Marks A Novel Direction for Islamic Higher Education and Positions the Dual-Output Model as A Replicable Framework Across Other Disciplines.

While The Data Collected Are Perception Based Rather Than Experimental, The Comparison Between Pre-Course Readiness and End-Of-Course Outcomes Provides Clear Evidence That the Innovation Achieved Its Intended Impact. Students Not Only Expressed Confidence and Enthusiasm Prior To Implementation but Also Reported High Levels of Actual Usage, Engagement, And Creativity Afterward, Demonstrating the Educational Value of Ai-Supported Multimodal Learning.

Nevertheless, Artificial Intelligence (AI) integration in higher education demonstrates significant potential for reshaping learning, teaching, and administrative processes. By enabling personalized learning, improving operational efficiency, and increasing student success rates (Moola, 2024), However, this potential emphasises the need for explicit policies to ensure that AI functions strictly as a supportive tool rather than as a replacement for human roles. As highlighted by the U.S. Department of Education (2023), policies should prioritize keeping students, educators, and parents at the center of decision-making so that technological innovation enhances rather than displaces human roles.

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