

Cognitive Dissonance and Mental Resilience: A Case Study of Learning Saturation of PPTQ Al Imtiyaz Students in the Digital Era

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Received: 05-05-2026

Revised: 07-05-2026

Accepted: 08-05-2026

Abstract

This study examines the dynamics of digital disruption experienced by Generation Alpha tahfidz students (*santri*) at PPTQ Al Imtiyaz, focusing on the internal mechanism through which cognitive dissonance is formed due to smartphone exposure during home visits and its impact on mental resilience and academic burnout. Employing a qualitative approach with an intrinsic case study design, data were collected over three months through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, documentation analysis, and focus group discussions involving 13 informants comprising 10 students, 3 tahfidz instructors, 2 dormitory supervisors, and the head of the madrasah. The findings reveal three interrelated disruptive patterns: (1) the emergence of cognitive dissonance arising from value conflicts between secular digital content and pesantren norms, leading to an average 25% decline in Qur'anic memorization achievement following home visits; (2) mass academic burnout characterized by decreased memorization motivation, low attentiveness in 60% of students, and a drop in target achievement from 80% to 55%; and (3) weakened psychological resilience accompanied by maladaptive coping mechanisms in 80% of students. These findings align with Festinger's cognitive dissonance theory, Ogburn's cultural lag concept, and existing literature on internet addiction among Generation Alpha. This study contributes to the development of an "Islamic Transitional Resilience" framework as a holistic intervention integrating Islamic psychology-based cognitive management strategies, including pre-departure workshops, parental agreements on smartphone use limitation, and post-return *muhasabah* sessions to restore students' psychological foundation in the digital era.

Keywords: cognitive dissonance, mental resilience, academic burnout, tahfidz students, digital penetration, boarding school

Abtrack

This study examines the dynamics of digital disruption experienced by Alpha generation tahfidz students at PPTQ Al Imtiyaz, focusing on the internal mechanisms of the formation of cognitive dissonance due to mobile phone exposure when returning home and its impact on mental resilience and learning saturation. Using a qualitative approach with an intrinsic case study design, data were collected through in-depth interviews, three-month participatory observation, documentation studies, and focused discussions with 13 informants consisting of 10 students, 3 ustadz tahfidz, 2 dormitory caregivers, and madrasah heads. The results of the study revealed three interrelated disruptive patterns: (1) the emergence of cognitive dissonance due to value conflicts between secular digital content and pesantren norms that led to a decrease in average memorization achievement of 25% after going home; (2) mass academic saturation which is characterized by a decrease in memorization motivation, low attention in 60% of students, and a decrease in target achievement from 80% to 55%; and (3) weakening of psychological resilience with maladaptive coping mechanisms in 80% of students. These findings are in line with Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance, Ogburn's cultural lag, and the literature on internet addiction in the Alpha generation. This

research contributes to the development of the concept of "Islamic Transition Resilience" as a holistic intervention framework that integrates cognitive management based on Islamic psychology, including pre-home workshops, agreements on limiting mobile phone use with parents, and post-return deliberation sessions to restore the psychological foundation of students in the digital era.

Keywords: *cognitive dissonance, mental resilience, learning saturation, tahfidz students, digital penetration, pesantren*

I. Introduction

The success of education is greatly influenced by the ability of students to understand the context of the material studied. In fact, each student has a different background, thus triggering a gap in academic understanding in the same class. This gap is even more complex in the era of globalization, where students as digital natives bring secular identities into the sacred space of Islamic boarding schools. Social media access for students gives rise to new interests and talents that have the potential to disrupt the vision and mission of pesantren education; . (Gunawan et al., 2024 Aribowo & Bagaskara, 2025)

In today's digital era, pesantren face a major challenge in maintaining a balance between classical Islamic scientific traditions and the influence of information technology that permeates all aspects of life. Santri, who was born and grew up in the midst of a flood of digital information, is often exposed to secular content that is contrary to the values of Islamic boarding schools such as *zuhud* and *tawadhu'*. This phenomenon not only changes their study patterns, but also affects their mental health, where resilience is the key to surviving heavy academic loads, such as memorization of the Qur'an and intensive fiqh studies. Digital penetration has changed the landscape of pesantren education, where gadgets and online platforms have become an integral part of the daily routine of students, creating new dynamics that require rapid adaptation so that pesantren remain relevant). (Shofi & Hidayah, 2026) (Jannah & Halid, 2026)

When this happens, cognitive dissonance arises. This internal conflict is what causes boredom and low mental resilience of students in facing academic loads. This phenomenon is empirically seen in PPTQ Al Imtiyaz; The high access to digital information for students is in line with the decline in enthusiasm and the achievement of the targets set by the pesantren. At PPTQ Al Imtiyaz, this dynamic is evident through the interaction of students with digital devices and social media. Access to digital information often raises interest in trends outside the pesantren curriculum, which in practice clash with memorization obligations and strict academic standards. This clash is empirically seen from the decline in students' fighting power when facing learning difficulties, the ease with which they feel bored (burnout), to their ignorance of the achievement targets that have been set by the institution (; Octia, 2022 Fitriyadi, 2023)

These symptoms of mental fatigue and low resilience ultimately widen the gap in academic understanding between students in the classroom. Students who are trapped in cognitive dissonance tend to experience a decline in executive function in learning. This problem is increasingly complex because internet dependence causes isolation, anxiety, and frustration that hinders students' adaptation to the discipline of Islamic boarding schools;), while the digital divide worsens students' access and skills in

utilizing technology productively. (Friantini et al., 2024) (Bujuri et al., 2023
Congratulations, 2025 Quraini et al., 2024 (Isnaini et al., 2024)

Several previous studies on learning saturation and resilience in the pesantren environment generally focused on the factors of academic load, memorization intensity, and monotonous dormitory routines. On the other hand, the latest literature that examines the penetration of technology in Islamic boarding schools tends to only highlight social media as a distraction factor that reduces concentration and changes the behavior of students in general. Studies on internet addiction in Alpha generation students emphasize the role of social support, coping skills, and religiosity in building resilience (Tasalim & Cahyani in Religiosity, 2026). The integration of information technology in Islamic boarding schools is discussed as a learning support tool, although adaptation is influenced by digital literacy and institutional policies (Technology Integration, 2026; . Other research reveals digital gaps in Islamic boarding schools, including physical access, gadget skills, and cultural backwardness to digitalization). Meanwhile, the negotiation of students' digital identities shows moral ambivalence in spreading online da'wah while maintaining the value of pesantren . The use of social media is also associated with learning motivation through various qualitative descriptive approaches (Diana et al., 2024). Isnaini et al., 2024) (Signed, 2024) (Wine, 2025; Pangesti et al., 2023)

Although these two areas have been researched, there is a theoretical *gap* in explaining the internal mechanism of how digital disruption transforms into a psychological burden that damages the cognitive structure of students. The novelty of this research lies in the deep excavation of cognitive dissonance as a bridge between digital penetration and decreased resilience, which has not been specifically explained in the context of PPTQ Al Imtiyaz. The urgency arises from the need for Islamic boarding schools to develop cognitive management strategies based on Islamic psychology, in order to prevent mass burnout and reduce academic gaps in the era of digital literacy that is increasingly dominating). (Pramudya et al., 2026

Therefore, this study aims to investigate in depth the dynamics of the academic gap, as well as analyze the factors that trigger the boredom and low mental resilience of students at PPTQ Al Imtiyaz. The main focus is on the interaction between digital access, cognitive dissonance, and mental resilience of students, with empirical case studies to produce practical recommendations for pesantren managers. This article argues that digital penetration that is not balanced with cognitive management will trigger value dissonance, which directly weakens mental resilience and widens the gap in students' academic understanding in the pesantren environment.

II. Method

This study uses a qualitative approach with an intrinsic case study design to explore in depth the phenomenon of cognitive dissonance and its impact on mental resilience and learning boredom among students. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study focuses on understanding the meaning, subjective experiences, and complex psychological dynamics of students when facing the clash between traditional values of pesantren and secular information flows from digital media; The case study design allowed researchers to examine the phenomenon in a real-life context at PPTQ Al Imtiyaz, exploring how cognitive dissonance is formed,

managed, or even leads to a decline in executive function in learning. (Srifianti et al., 2023 Alisah et al., 2025)

This research was carried out at PPTQ Al Imtiyaz. The selection of this location is based on the empirical reality that the institution is experiencing significant transitional dynamics related to digital penetration (Information Technology Integration, 2026), which correlates with the emergence of symptoms of mass learning saturation and the widening academic gap of students. The research subjects were determined through purposive sampling techniques with specific inclusion criteria to ensure the richness and depth of the data. The main informant consisted of ten students identified by the pesantren management who had shown symptoms of cognitive dissonance, a drastic decrease in learning motivation, and low resilience levels for at least the past semester (). In addition to the main informants, this study involved supporting informants consisting of three tahfidz supervisors, two dormitory caregivers, and the head of the madrasah who provided a triangulative perspective on changes in behavior and student memorization achievements. Quraini et al., 2024 (Isnaini et al., 2024)

In this qualitative research, the main instrument is the researcher himself who acts directly in the process of observation, interview, and interpretation of meaning in the field. To maintain objectivity and systematization of data collection, researchers are assisted by several supporting instruments. First, a semi-structured interview guideline was prepared based on the construct of Festinger's cognitive dissonance theory and mental resilience framework. The questions are designed flexibly to provoke students' openness about the inner conflicts they experience when exposed to secular digital content in the midst of the obligation to memorize holy verses;. Second, participatory observation guidelines that focus on observation of gestures, peer interaction, and the level of focus of students during the learning process in the tahfidz class. Third, the initial screening instrument is in the form of an adaptation of an academic boredom questionnaire to confirm the subject's criteria before the in-depth interview session is carried out;. (Wine, 2025) Maarif & Muhid, 2022 Pangesti et al., 2023) (Oktia, 2022) Digit, 2022)

The data collection procedure was carried out in stages over three months through four main techniques. First, in-depth interviews conducted in a dialogical and empathetic manner with students to explore narratives about mental fatigue, social media distractions, and feelings of isolation due to the inability to balance digital identity and pesantren values. Second, participatory observation where researchers integrate into the daily routine of students. Third, a documentation study to analyze academic traces, memorization control books, and records of code violations; Social Media Influence, 2024). Fourth, a focused discussion with the dormitory caregiver board to formulate a pattern of thought disruption. (Scott, 2025) (Isnaini et al., 2024 (Scott, 2023)

The collected data were analyzed using an interactive model that included three simultaneous flow of activities: data condensation, presentation of data in the form of descriptive narratives and relational matrices, and conclusion drawing and verification. To ensure the validity of the data, the researcher applied source triangulation techniques and triangulation techniques; Given that this research touches on sensitive psychological aspects, ethical considerations are the main

foundation; All informants use pseudonyms to protect their identity, privacy, and maintain the reputation of Islamic boarding schools. (Srifianti et al., 2023) (Rahmah et al., 2023) Hijrah et al., 2024)

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Results

Based on in-depth data analysis through triangulation of sources and techniques, it was found that digital exposure when returning home was significantly correlated with increased cognitive dissonance and decreased psychological resilience in PPTQ Al Imtiyaz students. These findings are based on the narratives of the ten main students, the perspectives of supporting informants (ustadz tahfidz, dormitory caregivers, and madrasah heads), three-month participatory observation focused on the post-homecoming period, post-home visit academic footprint documentation study, and focused discussions. The results of the study are summarized in three main points that reflect the transitional dynamics of pesantren in the digital era, where mobile phone access when students return home, generally on weekends or short holidays, is the main trigger for psychological and academic disturbances when returning to the pesantren environment.

The Emergence of Cognitive Dissonance Due to the Conflict of Digital and Traditional Values

Students experience an intense inner conflict between the obligation to memorize the Qur'an and exposure to secular digital content when returning home that promises instant entertainment. From in-depth interviews, nine out of ten students reported symptoms of Festinger-style cognitive dissonance, where they feel guilty after scrolling social media such as TikTok and Instagram during time at home. A student (S1) stated, *'I memorized juz 15, but as soon as I returned home and opened my cellphone, my mind went straight to funny videos, it felt like verses disappeared from my head when I returned to the pesantren. This makes me stressed, ustadz.'* Participatory observations confirmed this pattern: during post-home memorization deposits, 70% of students showed restless gestures, with an average duration of cellphone use while at home; . (Aribowo & Bagaskara, 2025) Gunawan et al., 2024)

A documentation study from the memorization control book showed an average 25% decrease in weekly memorization achievement after the homecoming period since 2023. Ustadz A (tahfidz) confirmed, *'Students now often forget verses because of the distraction of notifications when they go home, this is not laziness, but identity conflict: santri vs netizens.'* These findings are in line with the study of the digital divide in Islamic boarding schools, where access to gadgets when returning home creates a gap that is carried back to the Islamic boarding school; Further interviews revealed that this conflict often peaked in the first week after returning, where students had difficulty recovering their memorization rhythm due to the shadow of viral content that was still attached to their minds. (Isnaini et al., 2024 Signed, 2024) (Maarif & Muhid, 2022 Akhsanudin M, 2024)

Drastic Decrease in Learning Motivation and Symptoms of Mass Saturation

Digital exposure when returning home triggers mass academic saturation, characterized by a decrease in memorization motivation and an increase in tahfidz class attendance after returning to the pesantren. The interview revealed a similar narrative: students feel 'bored' because of the comparison with digital content that is 'fast and exciting' at home compared to 'slow and heavy' memorization at the pesantren. S5 students complained, 'At home, TikTok makes you learn 1 minute immediately and have fun, but memorization at the pesantren takes hours, and it takes a long time to be lazy after going home.' Initial screening showed an average score of 4.2 out of 5 (high) on the item 'mental fatigue due to repetitive tasks post-digital exposure to the home'; . (Oktia, 2022) Digit, 2022)

Participatory observation during the post-homecoming dormitory routine noted that 60% of students showed low attention in class, only 40% were fully focused. Academic documentation indicates a decline in achievement: from 80% of students reaching the juz target per semester to 55% after the period of returning home from 2024. Hostel caretaker B stated, 'They are tired not physically, but mentally; Cellphones at home create instant gratification expectations that are difficult to eliminate when they return.' The focused discussion formulated a pattern: boredom appeared 2-3 weeks after going home, with a peak at the end of the semester, in line with the findings that the phenomenon of brain rot in the Alpha generation is characterized by decreased concentration and motivation to learn; This impact is deepening because students often bring 'residual effects' such as the habit of checking notifications secretly in Islamic boarding schools (Romadhon et al., 2025 Fitriyadi, 2023) (Friantini et al., 2024 ; Bujuri et al., 2023) .

Decreased Psychological Resilience and Weak Coping Strategies

The resilience of students is low, shown by the inability to rise from memorization failure due to digital distractions when returning home. The in-depth interview explored coping mechanisms: only 20% of students used post-return prayer or muhasabah, while 80% recalled the contents of their cellphones at home for a temporary escape. S8 students shared, 'Failing to memorize after going home, instead of repeating it, instead of remembering the game at home so that you forget the sadness.' Observations captured isolation patterns: students interacted with peers via home digital content memories rather than verse discussions in pesantren, causing prolonged social frustration; (Shofi & Hidayah, 2026) Ubaidillah & Jaelani, 2026)

From the perspective of the ustadz, resilience has declined due to the lack of integrated religious support to overcome the effects of going home. The head of madrasah C noted, 'Alpha students are vulnerable to addiction after returning home, needing Islamic-based resilience to recover.' Violation documentation shows a 35% increase in cases of 'fantasizing about cellphones' after returning home which leads to temporary dropouts. The focused discussion concluded: weak resilience due to lack of home content filtering and pre-home coping training. This is in line with studies that digital dependence while outside the pesantren inhibits readaptation (Alisah et al., 2025) (Scott, 2025) ; Quraini et al., 2024) Further, the findings highlight that this weak coping strategy affects not only individuals, but also group dynamics, where

students share stories of home content that reinforce negative cycles; (Nurkhurairokh et al., 2025 Pramudya et al., 2026)

These three points form a holistic picture of post-home-home digital disruption in students, with a total of 13 informants and 90 hours of observation focused on the transition from home to Islamic boarding school.

Discussion

The findings of this study enrich the understanding of the transitional dynamics of pesantren in the digital era, especially in PPTQ Al Imtiyaz, where exposure to mobile phones when returning home is the main catalyst. Cognitive dissonance (point 1) is in line with Festinger's theory, where secular exposure during a home vacation creates an internal tension that is unresolved upon return, similar to the digital divide that creates a gap in skills and technology use. The decline in motivation (point 2) reflects Ogburn's cultural lag, where home technology precedes the adaptation of pesantren norms; This condition has similarities with the phenomenon of brain rot which reduces the ability of Alpha generation students to concentrate on learning; . Meanwhile, low resilience (point 3) confirms the impact of internet addiction on the Alpha generation, where a lack of social support and post-home religious coping exacerbates isolation and frustration; (Isnaini et al., 2024 Signed, 2024) (Romadhon et al., 2025) Friantini et al., 2024) (Shofi & Hidayah, 2026) Ubaidillah & Jaelani, 2026)

Integration of findings with introduction: the hypothesis of mass saturation and academic gap is proven, with a strong correlation ($r=0.78$ from the reconstructed data matrix) between the duration of HP at home (>30 minutes/day) and the decrease in post-return memorization. Triangulation of sources validates the narrative of the students with the observation of the ustadz, reducing subjective bias. Compared to similar studies that examined academic burnout in general; , this research is unique because of the focus of tahfidz students and the transition of home-Islamic boarding schools. This post-discharge impact suggests that although pesantren limits daily access, short breaks are enough to be distracting, with repetitive patterns that weaken long-term psychological foundations (. (Oktia, 2022) Hijrah et al., 2024) Digit, 2022)

Theoretical implications: There is a need to expand the dissonance framework with the variable 'digital home exposure', such as the 'Islamic Transition Resilience' model. Practical implications: Pesantren are advised to hold a pre-return workshop on content filtering, set a 15-minute cellphone limit at home via parental agreement, and hold post-return deliberation sessions to rebuild students' mental resilience (Technology Integration, 2026; . Restrictions: Small sample (10 students), single location; Future recommendations are a Khoirunnisa et al., 2026) *multi-pesantren longitudinal study* with quantitative measuring the frequency of returns. This discussion emphasized the urgency of holistic interventions to save students' identities in the midst of digital disruption at home, ensuring that sacred memorization remains a top priority despite external challenges (Rahmah et al., 2023 ; Srifianti et al., 2023) .

IV. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that exposure to mobile phones when returning home is the main catalyst for psychological disruption in Alpha generation tahfidz students at PPTQ Al Imtiyaz, which interferes with the process of memorizing the Qur'an after returning to the Islamic boarding school. The main findings reveal three recurring disruptive patterns: cognitive dissonance due to secular content at home that collides with pesantren norms, a decrease in memorization motivation triggered by mental saturation 2-3 weeks after returning home with the peak of the end of the semester, and low psychological resilience marked by weak coping mechanisms such as fantasizing about cellphones rather than muhasabah. Data from 13 informants, 90 hours of observation, and triangulation of the narrative of the students validated this cycle, where a short holiday was enough to trigger a digital 'residual effect' such as checking silent notifications and social frustration, causing a significant decrease in memorization and an increase in violations of up to 35%.

Theoretically, this dynamic is in line with Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance, in which external exposure creates *Ogburn's unresolved cultural lag* tension on the adaptation of home technology to pesantren norms, as well as the impact of internet addiction on Alpha that weakens *religious social support*. Integration with the introduction proves the hypothesis of mass saturation and academic gaps, with a strong correlation between the duration of home cellphones and memorization drops. The uniqueness of the research lies in the focus of the transition of the home-pesantren of tahfidz students, emphasizing that the daily restrictions of the pesantren are not enough to overcome the disruption of the monthly holidays that damage the habituation of students in the pesantren.

Practical implications urge holistic intervention: pre-home workshops for content filtering and Islamic coping training, parental agreements to limit cellphones to 15 minutes/day, and post-return deliberation sessions to build transitional resilience. Islamic boarding schools need an 'Islamic Transition Resilience' model that integrates religious support with digital exposure management. The limitations of the study include a small sample and a single location, so the future suggestion is multi-pesantren longitudinal research. Ultimately, the digital disruption of the home threatens the identity of students as the heirs of sacred memorization, but with preventive strategies based on Islamic psychology, pesantren can transform these challenges into opportunities for faith strengthening and lasting spiritual resilience.

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