Adapting and implementing the new normal: an Islamic university perspective

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Abstract
Purpose – This paper explores the experiences and strategies that have emerged from an Islamic university in Brunei Darussalam in its efforts to adapt to the new normal. It aims to provide a comprehensive post COVID-19 teaching and learning strategies framework and understand how the principles of Islam can be harmonised with modern practices, offering valuable lessons for educational institutions worldwide.
Design/methodology/approach – The study employed a three-fold methodology. Initially, the authors conducted a comprehensive review of the post-COVID-19 experiences within Islamic universities. Subsequently, they administered a structured questionnaire to academic staff and students at an Islamic university in Brunei, utilising Google survey forms. Based on the insights from the data analysis, strategies were carefully formulated. Ultimately, this informed the development of a framework grounded in the established strategies.
Findings – The significant findings from this study include the adoption of "e-Talaqqi" and how this can be related to Maqasid Shariah to produce a conceptual framework of post-COVID-19 strategies adaptable for Islamic Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and how that can be related to Maqasid Shariah in line with the values of Islamic-based universities.
Research limitations/implications – The applicability of the framework developed from data gathered at an Islamic university in Brunei might have certain limitations when extended to other Islamic HEIs. Future research should aim to cover more Islamic HEIs across various countries, thereby strengthening a broader applicability of the framework. Moreover, it is advisable that the developed framework undergoes statistical validation to fortify it.
Practical implications – The study’s implications encompass theory, researchers, educators, policymakers, and all stakeholders concerned with the past, present, and future of HEIs, particularly in facilitating the adaptation of post-COVID-19 norms within Islamic HEIs.
Originality/value – This study has developed a conceptual framework that offers strategies tailored for Islamic HEIs in the post-COVID-19 era, harmonising with the principles of Islamic-based universities, in alignment with Maqasid Shariah. Consequently, this research serves as a significant contribution to the evolution of new theoretical paradigms because of COVID-19.

Keywords Islamic university, Post-COVID-19, Adaptations, Framework, Talaqqi Mushafahah, e-Talaqqi, Brunei

1. Introduction
In recent times, the global education landscape has witnessed a rapid transformation, catalysed by unprecedented events due to the COVID-19 global pandemic outbreak that has
redefined how societies, institutions and individuals operate. For instance, universities have had to adapt quickly to the changes brought about by COVID-19 and universities have switched to online or hybrid learning models (Daniela and Visvizi, 2021) to keep students and faculty safe while continuing to provide education. Educators and students were facing challenges due to the unexpected transition. Transitioning to online learning is not easy and has created many issues in learning institutions. Unstable Internet connections and lack of access to digital devices were significant problems encountered by several countries (Pokhrel and Chhetri, 2021). Murgatrotd (2020) identified multiple challenges in conducting online classes, including availability, cost-effectiveness, adaptability, teaching methods, continuous education and educational regulations.

The outbreak of the pandemic resulted in an unparalleled circumstance, leading educational researchers to focus on exploring appropriate technologies that could improve and streamline learning procedures for diverse learners and various target audiences. Universities have been creative and proactive in adapting to the challenges of COVID-19, and they continue to explore innovative ways to support students and maintain the quality of education. For instance, in the case of online examinations, various approaches were adopted based on convenience and expertise among educators, as well as the compatibility of the learners (Pokhrel and Chhetri, 2021). The transformation of higher education triggered by COVID-19 is still underway, even though WHO declared an end to the COVID-19 global health emergency on May 4, 2023. While much of the literature focuses on universities in general, coverage on how Islamic universities cope and adapt to the changes brought about by COVID-19 is still lacking.

Islamic universities’ approaches in coping with COVID-19 may be similar to conventional universities by implementing measures such as online learning, social distancing and increased cleaning and sanitation protocols. However, there may be some differences in terms of how online learning are implemented as they usually have a strong emphasis on Qur’anic studies and Islamic studies. Within this context, Islamic universities, characterised by their commitment to holistic education and spiritual development, are confronted with distinctive challenges and opportunities. Islamic universities also faced the challenges of nurturing spiritual growth and moral development in an environment beyond physical boundaries.

There may be some similarities in terms of Islamic universities approach in coping with COVID-19, such as ensuring the health and safety of their students and faculty, which are their primary concerns. It is also essential for them to maintain their commitment to Islamic teachings and values. As centres of learning deeply rooted in religious principles and values, these institutions have a unique perspective on how to adapt and implement the new normal without compromising their core ethos. For instance, Talaqqi Mushafahah is a traditional Islamic approach to face-to-face learning, where information is delivered and taught directly from a teacher to a pupil. It is interesting to see how this method can be incorporated in the new learning method.

The new normal compels educators and administrators to rethink strategies for instilling values, fostering a sense of belonging and nurturing the spiritual well-being of students, even from a distance. Thus, this paper seeks to explore the experiences and strategies that have emerged from an Islamic university in Brunei Darussalam in its efforts to adapt to the new normal. The study aims to provide a comprehensive post COVID-19 teaching and learning strategies framework and understand how the principles of Islam can be harmonised with modern practices, offering valuable lessons for educational institutions worldwide.

This paper is structured as follows: In the following section, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)’ responses to the COVID-19 pandemic are outlined, with a specific focus on Islamic universities, and how their strategies differ. The subsequent section presents the research
methods employed in this study. The fourth part of the paper presents the results of the data analysis. In the fifth part, a conceptual framework is proposed based on the experience of academic staff and students. Finally, the conclusions are drawn with several recommendations for the development and standardisation of a comprehensive framework across all Islamic universities worldwide, aimed at better preparing them for the transformation into a new norm Islamic university.

2. Literature review
2.1 Brunei HEIs responses
Brunei’s public HEIs, under the purview of the Ministry of Education (MoE), comprise three universities (including one Islamic university) and a polytechnic. Meanwhile, only one Islamic university college is under the purview of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MoRA). In 2007, Brunei’s first Islamic university was founded with the overarching objective of becoming a focal point for the spread of Islam throughout the region (Asean Focus, 2007). This initiative was initially put forth by His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah Mu’izzaddin Waddaulah, Sultan and Yang Di-Pertuan of Brunei Darussalam during his address at the University of Brunei Darussalam’s 16th convocation in 2004 and reiterated in 2005 at the 17th convocation, wherein His Majesty articulated that the forthcoming university would be dedicated to Islamic education.

Upon confirmation of the first COVID-19 case, MoE promptly closed all academic institutions, including HEIs. Subsequently, the MOE introduced a uniform Business Continuity Plan (BCP) for all institutions through the “Schools Operation Protocol Matrix during COVID-19” (MOE, 2020), based on the Brunei Government measures and MoH guidelines. The institutions were required to outline their respective Business Continuity Plan (BCP) as all the institutions have decided to suspend face-to-face teaching and learning for students (Suhaili, 2020), and all academic institutions developed their BCPs based on the MoE guidelines.

According to Yousef Jarrah et al. (2022), there is a growing number of modern, innovative educational programs and courses, along with the development and implementation of new teaching methods in the educational process as a result of COVID-19. However, Shahril et al. (2021) explained that the new normal has presented challenges and opportunities for universities in Brunei in managing their day-to-day operations during a pandemic crisis in a higher education institution in Brunei Darussalam. Likewise, Suhaili (2020) illustrates the adjustments made in methods of student engagement due to the COVID-19 pandemic, wherein remote instruction has been implemented for online teaching and learning.

2.2 Islamic universities experiences
The idea of an Islamic university can be dated back to 1985. Zaman (1985) explained that a fundamental role of an Islamic university is the continuous nurturing of knowledge across diverse fields and subjects, encompassing both traditional and contemporary, Western and Eastern domains through the incorporation of Islamic perspectives into the essence of each field of study. Given this, the authors define the Islamic universities within this framework as higher educational institutions that integrate Islamic principles, teachings and values into their academic curriculum and campus life. Hence, there is a need to delve into how Islamic universities are adapting and implementing changes to embrace the new normal.

Research concerning the adaptation and implementation of the new normal at Islamic universities remains relatively scarce. For example, in Indonesia, Quranic reading classes moved online. Yahya et al. (2021) note that this shift prompted Muslim communities and institutions globally to adopt online methods for teaching Quran and Islamic studies.
Their research revealed no significant contrast in undergraduate students’ performance between in-person and online Quran reading classes. Both students and instructors generally adopted the online Quran classes, given the necessity to adapt to sudden changes and embrace the transition.

Yudiawan (2020) evaluated the implementation of the Blended, On-Line Digital (BOLD) Learning in State Islamic Higher Education, West Papua Indonesia, during the COVID-19 pandemic and found that it was effective and can be used as a learning medium during the pandemic, with the recommendation of an immediate policy on education costs due to financial difficulties faced by students.

E-learning was adopted during COVID in Islamic universities in Malaysia (Ismail, 2022; Jaffar et al., 2022). Ismail (2022) proposed that since educational institutions in Malaysia have resumed in-person operations, adopting a blended learning approach would be appropriate. Determining the suitable proportion of online learning is crucial to achieving the learning goals. Simultaneously, institutions should revamp the teaching environment with e-learning to align with the preferences of the current generation.

The context is different in Saudi Arabia. According to Islam et al. (2021), before the emergence of COVID-19, Saudi Arabia had established online learning platforms, Learning Management Systems (LMSs), with several universities to complement traditional in-person classes, facilitating the delivery of virtual lessons and evaluations.

In general, Islamic universities have shown resilience and flexibility in responding to the pandemic by transitioning to digital learning platforms. Nonetheless, there remains limited understanding of how their significance might differ within an Islamic context.

2.3 Talaqqi Mushafahah in the digital era

_Talaqqi Mushafahah_ is a method that The Prophet S.A.W inherited from Gabriel A.S, and the companions continued the practice, which was later adopted as a methodology for learning Quran and other Islamic knowledge (Zainal Abidin et al., 2019; Moktar and Sharif, 2021). Yusof et al. (2018) defined _Talaqqi Mushafahah_ as face-to-face and one-to-one learning with a qualified teacher. It is a common method widely used in teaching and learning the Quran. Ali et al. (2022) analysed the adaptation of the _Talaqqi Mushafahah_ concept during the COVID-19 pandemic through an online learning platform for effective teaching and learning. Badri (2022) explained that in considering this pedagogy, it is important to understand the philosophy and concept of _Talaqqi Mushafahah_ and how it is relevant to contemporary teaching and learning. Although _Talaqqi Mushafahah_ has limitations due to the pandemic, such as not being conducted face-to-face and directly, it can be modified to adapt to the current situation (Ali et al., 2022).

It is undeniable that educators must implement a change in the teaching methodology of Islamic studies to keep up with the changing times. This involves incorporating the latest techniques and approaches that utilise information and communication technology (ICT) facilities as an intermediary to create an educational model compatible with the present (Naim and Harun, 2014). Sinha and Bag (2023) highlighted the fact that as using of ICT and digital modes has become the new norm in the teaching and learning environment, policymakers have had no other option but to maintain its continuity in academic classes in higher educational institutions. This continuity of academic classes in higher educational institutions using these modes is now necessary, regardless of location or infrastructure backup. According to Yousef Jarrah et al. (2022), the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019–2020 has led to an increasing recognition among HEIs worldwide of the need to use and integrate online learning methods.

The change in approach in the _Talaqqi Mushafahah_ session still maintains the same essence, which requires two-way cooperation, the willingness and cooperation of students when receiving knowledge, as well as the teacher’s ability and skill in delivering lessons.
The session should take place in small groups for a proper supervision (Ghazali and Mohamad, 2019). However, it is important that both educators and students are familiar and ready with the new delivery mode of *Talaqqi Mushafahah* to ensure that the implementation of online learning sessions still fulfils its objectives. Hence, it is important to gain insights from the experience of Islamic universities in using this method during the pandemic. It should be adaptable in modifying teaching and learning approaches as well.

According to Zainal Abidin et al. (2019), there are five conventional methods in the *Talaqqi Mushafahah* concept which is used to teach the Holy Quran and other Islamic knowledge: *al-Talqin* (a two-way interaction between the teacher and student), *al-’Ardh*, (a one-way interaction from the student to the teacher), *al-Sima’* (a one-way interaction from the teacher to the student), *Riwayat al-Huruf* (learning through narration only) and *Ijazah Mujarradah* (recognising a student’s recitation). Typically, the first three methods can be used effectively in the classroom. In addition to the five methods, other *Talaqqi* methods can also be used particularly for the study of the hadith (Ismail et al., 2018, 2019), such as *al-Mukatabah* (writing notes), *al-Tajribah* (experiment or assignment) and *al-Tikrar* (revision or assessment).

### 2.4 The preservation of Maqasid Shariah

From the Islamic point of view, access to education has been linked to *Maqasid Shariah*. *Maqasid Shariah* refers to the higher objectives of Islamic law that aim to promote and protect human well-being and welfare in this world and the hereafter (Rashid et al., 2020). It comprises of the protection of people’s religion, life, intellect, lineage and property. The essence of *Maqasid Shariah* is the well-being (*maslahah*) of humanity (Al-Nahari et al., 2022). Education also plays a significant role in achieving these objectives as it is a means of acquiring knowledge and skills that enable individuals to live a fulfilling life in accordance with the teachings of Islam. Furthermore, in times of crisis, it is important to make sure that there is a holistic approach to education that addresses students’ learning, social and emotional needs. Through education, individuals can understand their rights and responsibilities as Muslims and develop a sense of morality and ethics especially in acquiring Islamic knowledge. Additionally, education can help individuals to develop the necessary skills and knowledge to contribute positively to society (*ummah*) and achieve personal and collective goals. By aligning educational practices with the *Maqasid Shariah*, educators can create an environment that promotes critical thinking, ethical values and social responsibility. This approach can help students develop a holistic understanding of Islamic teachings and enable them to apply these principles in their daily lives. Thus, it is important to understand and develop strategies aligned with *Maqasid Shariah*, which will benefit Islamic higher educations.

### 2.5 Blended learning in practice

Considering that the post-COVID-19 new learning environment has emerged, it is crucial to exchange ideas about the most effective blended and online delivery methods (Ayob et al., 2023). This is necessary to ensure that educational programs of all levels can adapt to the changing landscape and incorporate the best practices available. Hakim et al. (2023, p. 4) explain the Blended Learning Method (BLM) as “a learning activity that combines face-to-face learning processes with e-learning activities through aspects of learning theory, learning approaches, and learning models to achieve the desired learning objectives”. While Ayob et al. (2023) defined blended learning as a form of education in which e-learning merges with traditional classroom learning in one framework.

The degree of flexibility in teaching and learning methods differs based on the type of course, ranging from traditional to blended and hybrid. Blending online sessions with
traditional academic curricula enhance peer-to-peer learning and satisfaction, as DeLacey and Leonard’s research found that blended learning increases students’ satisfaction and improves their learning experience via online sessions in comparison to traditional classroom teaching (Sharma and Shree, 2023). According to Borstorff and Lowe (2007), a study carried out in the UAE revealed that students had a general perception that blended learning courses were easy to follow and offered flexible learning, thereby enhancing learning effectiveness and perceived value. Yousef Jarrah et al. (2022) highlighted the importance of studying the modern methodological paradigm of blended learning which is undeniable and is evidenced by the increased demand for its impact on the formation and development of various types of professional competencies for both teachers and students in the learning process.

Hakim et al. (2023) found that blended learning can play a crucial role in reconstructing the teaching model. It is essential to note that blended learning, typically characterised by direct face-to-face learning, has been adapted as virtual face-to-face learning during the pandemic. Earlier study conducted by Basir et al. (2023) has shown that universities in Brunei have integrated online and structured blended learning into all future higher education plans. Thus, strategies for effective and sustainable implementation are crucial especially for Islamic universities. While most studies emphasised the relationship of blended learning between both traditional classroom education and online education (Al-Shannaq and Bani Doumi, 2009; Khachatryan, 2020; Milheim, 2006; Singh, 2003), no studies have examined the alignment between blended learning and the practices of Talaqqi Mushafahah.

3. Methodology
The study employed a three-fold methodology. Initially, the authors conducted a comprehensive review of the post-COVID-19 experiences within Islamic universities. Subsequently, they administered a structured questionnaire to academic staff and students at an Islamic university in Brunei, utilising Google survey forms. Based on the insights from the data analysis, strategies were carefully formulated. Ultimately, this informed the development of framework grounded in the established strategies.

3.1 Participants
This study involved 51 academic staff and 424 undergraduate students at an Islamic university in Brunei. Their participation in this study is voluntary and all data remains anonymous. This study investigates their perspectives on online teaching and learning experience during the pandemic. Based on the findings, the present study proposes a conceptual framework for a sustainable learning landscape for Islamic universities.

3.2 Data collection
The conventional Talaqqi Mushafahah approach is no longer practical in the post-COVID era as we need to live with the virus. Integrating the online learning approach into the education system is crucial to move forward and minimise the impact of any crisis, as experienced during the pandemic era. Therefore, the present study collected data using two similar sets of questionnaires using Google Forms to investigate the following questions.

(1) How can an Islamic university adapt to the new norms of teaching and learning after the pandemic?

(2) How should an Islamic university reframe itself to be able to move towards building a more sustainable learning landscape?

The data was collected from 26 to 30 October 2021. For the online learning experience section, each set of survey outlined 9 statements using 5-point Likert Scale questionnaire:
strongly disagree”, 2 = “disagree”, 3 = “neutral”, 4 = “agree” and 5 = “strongly agree”. At the end of the section, there is an open-ended question to gain more insights on their online teaching and learning experience.

4. Results
4.1 Online learning experience
A total of 424 undergraduate students (N = 424) participated in the online survey. Table 1 shows the students’ perception of their online learning experience. The results indicate that 69.3% of the students agreed that the online learning requires more effort and time compared to conventional learning (Statement 1). This is mainly due to technical errors such as unstable Internet connectivity and lack of digital skills.

In terms of effectiveness, most students (79%) also preferred conventional approach over online learning (Statement 2), indicating that they are not ready to embrace the online learning experience. A possible explanation for this is their response to Statement 3. 70.3% of them agreed that there are fewer interactions between students and lecturers during online learning compared to conventional learning.

However, in terms of their preferred assessment methods (Statement 4), more than half of the responses (53.5%) are neutral. A possible explanation for this is both conventional and online learning approaches can be convenient for them. For example, online tests or quizzes can be more engaging and less stressful than physical ones. On the other hand, physical assessment, such as class presentation, provides more interaction between them and their lecturers.

In addition, 41.7% of the responses felt neutral when asked if online learning is more manageable and efficient than the conventional approach (Statement 5), indicating that both online and conventional learning approaches can be useful. Online learning platforms, such as Google Classroom and Microsoft Teams, offer cloud-based document management system where students can freely create, edit, store and share documents with their peers and lecturers. On the other hand, conventional classroom allows them to interact with their peers and lecturers easily without interruptions caused by unstable Internet connectivity, distractions from family members at home and unfamiliarity with online learning tools.

In terms of course design (Statement 6), 42.5% of the responses were also neutral, indicating that both conventional and online learning approaches can be interesting and interactive when used in certain situations. Online course learning programs can provide flexibility and active engagement when designed and conducted properly using interactive online tools. Some students also expressed that they felt less pressured when attending online

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Source(s): Authors’ own

Table 1. Overall responses of the 5-point Likert Scale questions on students’ perception of online learning (N = 424)
classes. Therefore, they can be more engaging and creative in online activities. On the other hand, the conventional approach provides an actual learning experience. For example, it enables them to conduct group activities in the classroom without technical restrictions instead of facing difficulties to conduct online group discussions. Such an environment can be chaotic when facing poor Internet connection and lack of supervision from the lecturer.

The results also show that 37.7% of the students were neutral in response to Statement 7. They felt that they could get feedback easily in physical and online classrooms. Getting prompt feedback in the physical classroom and automated feedback using online tools can be convenient for both students and lecturers, primarily when dealing with a big group of students.

When asked regarding class attendance, 41.3% of the responses agreed that their attendance increased in online classes compared to physical classes. A possible explanation of this is that online learning provides flexibility. For instance, when a student is feeling sick or having transport problem, they can still attend their classes comfortably at home.

In terms of their level of understanding, 42% of the responses were neutral, 42% disagreed and 16% agreed with Statement 9, indicating that their online learning experience was inadequate to help them understand their lessons. A possible explanation for this is interacting with their lecturers via online learning platform can be a hassle as they need to type their questions in the chat section. Delays between responses can also be frustrating when having unstable Internet connectivity. As a result, some students might feel discouraged to ask questions.

A similar set of questions was also given to the academic staff (see Table 2). Most of them (76.5%) agreed that online learning requires more effort and time compared to conventional learning (Statement 1). A possible explanation for this is that preparing materials for online lessons requires more effort and time as it requires excellent digital skills to prepare interactive lecture slides and online assessment.

In response to Statement 2, most of them (76.5%) also agreed that the conventional approach is more effective than online learning. A possible explanation for this is their response to Statement 3. A total of 68.6% of the lecturers felt less interaction in online learning than in physical classrooms.

The results also show that almost half of the lecturers (49%) were neutral when asked if online learning assessment is more comprehensive than the conventional approach (Statement 4). The flexibility of online assessment can be beneficial to lecturers, particularly when dealing with a big group of students, as an online learning platform can provide automated feedback if designed properly. On the other hand, they can provide prompt feedback in the physical classroom.

In terms of manageability and efficiency (Statement 5), 41.2% of the responses were neutral. However, 31.4% agreed with the statement, indicating the flexibility and automation

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**Source(s):** Authors’ own
can be crucial in teaching. This is evident in their response to Statement 6. A total of 47.1% agreed that the online course design is more interesting and interactive than the conventional approach. Lecturers can easily find interactive learning materials and use suitable online learning tools to help students understand their lessons. Their response to Statement 7 also indicates the convenience of flexibility and automation. A total of 41.2% of them felt that it is easier to give feedback online compared to the conventional approach.

The results also show positive responses when asked if the students’ attendance increased in online learning compared to attendance in physical classroom. More than half of the lecturers agreed with Statement 8, indicating that online learning can help improve students’ attendance, as it offers flexibility as students can conveniently attend their classes at any location if they are facing any difficulties.

However, 58.8% of them were neutral in response to Statement 9. They were unsure if the students’ level of understanding the lessons increased in online learning compared to the conventional approach, indicating no significant change in learning outcomes when using both conventional and online learning approaches.

4.2 Preferred teaching and learning method
Based on the previous data analysis, there is a correlation between the students' and lecturers’ responses particularly to Statement 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8 and 9, indicating that they have similar perceptions towards both conventional and online learning experience.

When looking at their responses to Statement 1–3, most agreed that online learning requires more time and effort, while the conventional approach is more effective as it encourages more interaction between lecturers and students.

The results also found more neutral responses from the students and lecturers, indicating that blended approach is preferable and recommendable, as it gives flexibility to them to experience both online and physical classes. The students also expressed some difficulties when booking classroom at the beginning of the semester due to limited number of classrooms at the university. They also find it difficult to park their cars due to limited parking spaces and the increasing number of students each year. Therefore, many students felt that blended learning could solve these issues while waiting for the construction of a new and bigger campus in another location to complete.

The survey also asked their preference for teaching and learning methods (see Table 3). Based on the results, most lecturers and students are leaning towards face-to-face and blended learning. A total of 50.7% of the students preferred the conventional learning method, 42.9% chose blended learning and 6.4% enjoyed online learning. The lecturers also provided similar responses: 49% preferred teaching physically, 43.1% preferred blended learning and 7.8% chose online learning.

The results also showed that the Islamic approach, Talaqqi Mushafahah, remains more effective in teaching and learning. However, changes in the educational landscape caused by COVID-19 may have transformed this approach to a more interactive and convenient way when combined with the online learning approach. A blended approach (physical and online Talaqqi Mushafahah or e-Talaqqi) would provide flexibility to both students and lecturers as

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning method</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Lecturers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td>215 (50.7%)</td>
<td>25 (49%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online</td>
<td>182 (42.9%)</td>
<td>22 (43.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blended</td>
<td>27 (6.4%)</td>
<td>4 (7.8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source(s):** Authors’ own

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*Table 3. Preferred teaching and learning method among students and lecturers*
it will fix many issues, such as lack of interactions and absence due to sickness or other personal problems.

5. Proposed framework

Based on the previous data analysis, the present study proposes an e-Talaqqi concept for a blended learning approach, which combines the six conventional Talaqqi Mushafahah with online learning (See Figure 1). In the e-Talaqqi concept, students and lecturers have the options to attend class physically and online. All six conventional methods can still be adapted in an online learning environment so that the learning outcomes can still be achieved if the students or lecturers cannot attend physically.

For the al-Talqin method, lecturers can conduct face-to-face and online classes using online learning tools, which allows a two-way interaction between them and their students. The al-‘Ardh method gives the students options to conduct their presentation physically or online. The al-Sima’ method, on the other hand, gives the lecturers options to give their lectures physically or online. Students can take notes during the lectures (al-Mukatabah) or they can access all lecture notes and slides or any reading materials via a cloud-based document management system such as Google Drive, OneDrive and Dropbox. The al-Tajribah method is used for assigning tasks and projects to be completed and submitted physically. By adapting the online learning tools, students can conveniently opt for online submission for their tasks or projects. For assessment, the al-Tikrar method is used to carry out formative and summative assessments in the classroom. However, various online learning tools can also be used to conduct online tests, quizzes and discussions (questions and answers) to assess their level of understanding in an interactive way (See Figure 1).

The present study also proposes a framework of post COVID-19 teaching and learning strategies for Islamic higher education institutions. The framework consists of four main components in the proposed e-Talaqqi concept: flexibility, equity, innovation and sustainability (See Figure 2).

5.1 Flexibility

In this fourth industrial revolution era, digital skills are required, particularly after the pandemic hit worldwide, as it enhanced the digital transformation of any institution or organisation. In the educational setting, it affected the teaching and learning experiences as

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**Figure 1.**
e-Talaqqi Blended Framework

**Source(s):** Authors’ own
we can no longer solely use the conventional approach. Therefore, the adoption of a modern Islamic blended approach, such as e-Talaqqi, provides the flexibility that both lecturers and students need as we need to live with the pandemic.

5.2 Equity
The flexibility of the e-Talaqqi approach also provides equitable access to all students and lecturers as they can attend the classes conveniently at any location. In the case of inability to attend physical classes, students can opt for attending the classes online. Therefore, they will not miss any classes. Consequently, it will decrease the lecturers’ workload, as they do not have to reschedule their classes or teach extra hours for students affected by COVID-19. Learning materials, such as lecture slides, references and notes, are also available using cloud-based document management system, such as Google Drive, OneDrive and Dropbox. Therefore, students can access these resources at any time and location.

5.3 Innovation
E-Talaqqi is also an innovative teaching and learning approach as it integrated the digital aspects of online learning into the conventional Talaqqi Mushafahah. Instead of the physical face-to-face learning environment, e-Talaqqi can enhance the teaching and learning experience through virtual learning tools such as Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams and WhatsApp. Through e-Talaqqi, the lecturers can utilise these platforms for teaching, such as online assessment for students who cannot attend a class physically and online submission for all assignments, which can be convenient for both students and lecturers.

5.4 Sustainability
In terms of sustainability, conventional Talaqqi Mushafahah and online learning are interdependent. In the post-COVID era, the conventional approach can no longer be sustainable without integrating digital aspects. On the other hand, an entire curriculum of online learning is not quite as effective as the conventional approach based on the previous
data analysis. Therefore, the *e-Talaqqi* approach is required towards building a more sustainable learning landscape.

Such a learning landscape requires a support system such as digital skill development, a substantial budget and moral support. As an Islamic university, the said university is working towards the digital transformation of higher education institutions in Brunei. Recent years have seen various development towards providing an inclusive and conducive learning environment, particularly after the second wave of the pandemic. Professional capacity development workshops have been actively conducted to ensure that all academic staff are highly skilled and competent to conduct their classes. Students are also offered to enrol in skill development workshops to ensure that they can fully utilise the digital facilities such as online library sources, learning management system (LMS) and student portal.

Financially, the university also has funding systems, such as *Tu‘awun* and *Khairat* funds, to support staff and students who come from unfortunate families and are affected by tragic events, such as the loss of family members, natural disasters and low income. These students are entitled to apply for the laptop loan system to ensure that they can have access to their lessons and complete their assignments remotely.

Based on the previous discussion, the four components preserve Islamic values in providing an inclusive and conducive learning environment.

1. Maqasid Shariah principles

The four components in the *e-Talaqqi* approach preserve the five principles of *Maqasid Shariah*: faith, life, intellect, wealth and lineage. This is more evident in preserving faith and intellect. Using the modern Islamic blended learning approach, students are instilled with Islamic values inside and outside the classrooms. Other than learning in class, students are encouraged to engage with the community through community-based projects in which students can turn their knowledge into action, such as fundraising, cleaning campaign and building homes for unfortunate families.

2. Identity of Islamic University

The *e-Talaqqi* approach can also preserve the identity of an Islamic university as it provides an inclusive and conducive learning environment while instilling Islamic values in the curriculum design. The *e-Talaqqi* concept is a modern-day version of the conventional Islamic approach to teaching and learning, *Talaqqi Mushafahah*, combining face-to-face and online learning to enhance the learning outcomes, particularly for Islamic studies courses.

### 6. Conclusions

COVID-19 enhanced the digital transformation of higher education institutions. Islamic universities were also affected by these transitions, including Brunei. Adapting to the new norms in the post-COVID is challenging as conventional face-to-face is no longer sustainable as we need to live with the pandemic. The options of adopting online or blended learning entirely depend on the readiness of the university. The present study investigated online learning experiences during the pandemic era. Both students and academic staff gave similar responses in the survey. Even though their responses to several statements (1–3) are leaning towards the conventional approach, the abundance of neutral responses to the other statements, particularly among the students, indicate that they do not resist the online learning approach. Therefore, a blended approach, such as the *e-Talaqqi* concept, is highly recommended to address this issue. This corresponds with their responses when asked regarding their preferred teaching and learning methods. Both students and academic staff slightly leaned towards the conventional approach, followed by the blended approach. Only a few chose the fully online learning experience.
The present study also proposed a blended approach, *e-Talaqqi*. It gives both students and lecturers options to attend the classes physically and online by adapting the six conventional *Talaqqi Mushafahah* methods to an online learning environment using various platforms. The present study also proposes a framework of post-COVID-19 teaching and learning strategies for Islamic higher education institutions that revolve around the *e-Talaqqi* concept. Four components are reflected in the blended approach: flexibility, equity, innovation and sustainability. The comprehensive blended approach is a future-proof strategy to ensure that the university can remain open in providing equitable access to quality education, even when a similar crisis reoccurs. By adopting the *e-Talaqqi* approach, the university can provide quality education while preserving Islamic values at the core of its operations.

The *e-Talaqqi* approach and the proposed post-COVID strategic learning framework are conceptual based on findings from previous studies and online learning experiences among the students and academic staff. It is crucial to conduct empirical studies on the implementation of the proposed framework in any Islamic university. The success of its implementation may lead to the successful digital transformation of Islamic higher education institutions towards becoming Islamic smart universities.

The applicability of the framework developed from data gathered at an Islamic university in Brunei might have certain limitations when extended to other Islamic HEIs. Future research should aim to cover more Islamic HEIs across various countries, thereby strengthening a broader applicability of the framework. Moreover, it is advisable that the developed framework undergoes statistical validation in order to fortify it.

References


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