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THE IMPORTANCE OF ISLAMIC WORK ETHICS IN MOTIVATING THE NON-TECHNOLOGY BACKGROUND EDUCATORS FOR ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) APPLICATION IN EDUCATION

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Abstract:

With the awareness of Islamic Work Ethics (IWE) and its implementation as an individual's commitment as an educator, this study intends to see the motivating factors that caused the non-technology background educators to stay inspired in grasping the knowledge on artificial intelligence (AI) and includes the AI tools implementation while educating. As many are aware, AI tools can be an easy application for those with technology fundamentals, but it can be hard for those who are "digitally illiterate". Using a qualitative research method, an in-depth interview session has been conducted with six participants who are the educators at private higher education in Malaysia. All participants were non-technology background educators. The data were analysed using thematic analysis. Findings showed that all participants agreed that IWE awareness, such as effort and commitment, has driven them to seek knowledge on AI tools. Additionally, institutional support and personal satisfaction have caused them to include AI in their teaching and learning performances apart from valuing Islamic work ethics (IWE) in their profession.

Introduction

Application of artificial intelligence (AI) in teaching and learning seems to be crucial these days. Beginning year 2019 when COVID-19 hits the world, the pedagogies of teaching and learning transformed immediately. Studies on digital transformation focusing on digital skills, data literacy and computational thinking has been the highlights in many research studies (EIT Digital, 2022; Momin Iqbal, 2023, Nurul Farhanah & Rohaiza, 2024). This has made educators to self-equip themselves with the necessary skills in integrating the AI tools in order to support their personalised learning, such as getting automated feedback, creating educational materials or designing the learning pathways (Kaswan et. Al., 2024). It should be taken into consideration that AI not only providing advantages, but also it creates challenges and ethical concerns among the educators. Hence, academics need to explore how AI tools can give disadvantaged to the field of education if educators are not aware on this transformation. However, to explore on this matter requires effort and time among the educators. This field can be interesting to the people who do have IT background, but it can be challenges for those who need to grasp the knowledge from scratch and do not have any interest in doing so.

With the challenges that educators must equip themselves with AI tools, knowledge and application, few studies have been conducted in getting the perceptions of students and lecturers towards the application of the generative AI. Interestingly, Mwakalinga (2024) found that knowledge of AI between educators and students have a huge gap of 72%:22% ratio, which address the concern of the level of knowledge among educators on AI before they prepare the teaching and learning to the students. This huge gap also creates an issue where educators need to re-shape their perception on AI by not only looking at AI to facilitate the learning, but also to making sure students are embracing the AI without replacing their human capability of thinking (Holmes, 2019; Mwakalinga, 2024). Unfortunately, with the high expectations, not only to self-equip themselves with the application of AI tools, mastering it in the teaching and learning pedagogies, but the consideration on the workloads also bear by the educators should be highly pay into attention because it self-learning for AI tools will definitely taking some time to be mastered with. Hence, this study intends to:

1. Identify educators' opinion on the use of AI in teaching and learning
2. Analyse the importance of Islamic work ethics in motivating educators to search for new knowledge (AI)
3. Investigate the motivation to include AI in teaching and learning

Literature Review

Educators And Technology: What Happen to Non-Tech Savvy Educators?
The integration of technology in education has transformed teaching and learning practices across all levels. From Learning Management Systems (LMS) to interactive digital tools and virtual classrooms, technology has become a fundamental component of modern pedagogy. However, not all educators have adapted seamlessly to this shift. A significant challenge persists for non-tech-savvy educators who struggle with adopting and integrating digital tools effectively. This literature review explores the intersection of educators and educational technology, focusing particularly on the barriers, experiences, and support strategies for non-tech-savvy educators.

Researchers such as Selwyn (2014) and Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich (2010) have highlighted the potential of technology to enhance student engagement, facilitate differentiated instruction, and extend learning beyond the classroom. The COVID-19 pandemic further accelerated this trend, forcing rapid adoption of digital tools by educators regardless of their prior experience (Trust & Whalen, 2020).

Tondeur et al (2017) explained that non-tech-savvy educators face multiple challenges when integrating technology into their teaching. Many educators feel intimidated by the complexity of new technologies. Some educators demonstrate resistance due to fear of failure, lack of perceived usefulness, or comfort with traditional methods (Howard, 2013). This resistance can be intensified by age-related factors, where older educators may be less exposed to or trained in digital tools.

Unfortunately, non tech-savvy educators frequently have inadequate digital literacy, making it difficult for them to successfully incorporate technology into their lessons (Alfina et al., 2024; Nurul Farhanah & Rohaiza Rokis, 2024). This findings has been mentioned too by Rahim et al. (2023) as many teachers were not proficient in creating interactive digital content or using even the most basic learning management systems. Furthermore, professional development frequently falls short of meeting the practical needs of instructors who are not tech-savvy, and training opportunities are not always distributed fairly.

Meanwhile, Sahin et al. (2022) mentioned although some institutions provided training, it was frequently too general or theoretical to address the actual difficulties faced by educators in the classroom. Non-tech savvy educators also often experience anxiety or fear of failure when using unfamiliar technology. One of the issue addressed by educators found in Lee and Chow (2023), educators expressed concerns over making mistakes in front of students or losing classroom control due to tech failures.

Some educators also frequently lack time to explore the technology, and this is seen as a major obstacle. Preparing tech-based materials or learning new tools outside regular teaching hours also will add to their workload (Hamzah et al., 2024). Consequently, non-tech savvy teachers often revert to traditional methods.

Work Ethics as the Motivation

Motivation is an important factor to drive a person to practice work ethics and value in any work setting. Work ethics determine how a person approaches their daily tasks in view of the fact that they have passion and enjoy their work. The passion they have will bring them to high productivity and quality. Therefore, a strong work ethic will motivate a person to explore better chances to upskill themselves including searching for a new knowledge in delivering their job including educators.

In psychology there are two types of motivation which are intrinsic and extrinsic. According to Lisa Legault (2016), intrinsic motivation (IM) refers to engagement in behavior that is inherently satisfying or enjoyable such interest, enjoyment, and inherent satisfaction. Meanwhile, extrinsic motivation (EM) refers to performance of behavior that is fundamentally contingent upon the attainment of an outcome that is separable from the action itself for example, instrumental motivation and noninherent motivation. Motivators such as money or satisfaction can produce intrinsic and extrinsic motivation since they generate desire for the consequence of the activity. In the case of educators with non-technology background, the motivation brings them to seek knowledge in AI tools, can derived from intrinsic motivation (such as acknowledgement of the presence of IWE) or extrinsic motivation (institutional support).

Grabowski, et. al. (2021) study work ethic is connected on the one hand with autonomous motivation, including intrinsic motivation, and on the other hand with extrinsic motivation, with the striving for success, which is the result of work. After empirical verification the findings could become a base for training programs and shape the way of influencing people's motivation, morale, attitude towards work and job satisfaction. It shows a person with strong ethics committed to continuous self-improvement and actively seeks opportunities to upskill as they believe the outcome of the work.

Personal Branding and Islamic Work Ethics

Abun et al. (2022) investigated how work ethics affect employee performance. The results showed that elements like moral perspective, intrinsic drive, and work attitude have a big impact on task performance and lessen unproductive behaviours. This highlights how important moral work attitudes are to improving overall job performance. Rahim et al. (2024), work ethics have a favourable impact on work commitment in the context of Malaysian service organisations. According to the study, workers who have high ethical standards are more likely to be more dedicated to their companies, which is mediated by more drive at work.

A recent study looked at the connection between job performance, work ethic, and intrinsic motivation in the manufacturing sector. Strong work ethics boost intrinsic motivation, which in turn improves job performance, according to the study's findings. This finding is especially pertinent to high-risk industries where efficiency and safety depend heavily on ethical behaviour and motivation. This shows that work ethics can be used as a tool to motivate educators that have non-technology background to learn more about AI and can use AI as tools for teaching purposes.

As IWE focuses on four important components, which are effort, competition, transparency, and morally responsible conduct (Ali, 1988), this study intend to analyze the gap which may

falls to the study as many existing study on Islamic work ethics (IWE) uses quantitative study instead of qualitative study and different substance of fields, such as banking and economic (Abdul Shukor, Abdul Wahid, Mohamad Ghozali & Nor Azmi, 2010; Azharsyah & Nor 'Azzah, 2013; Ali, 1988; Ali & Al-Kazemi, 2007; Ali & Al-Owaihan, 2008), instead of education.

Methodology

This research used qualitative research method to inquire in-depth understanding on the awareness of educators on IWE and their inspiration to implement it despite of the challenges they have, focusing on the needs in implementing AI in their teaching and learning pedagogies. Six educators coming from different private university institutions were interviewed in investigating the importance of IWE. All participants were non-technology background educators as this study intended to analyze the spirit of IWE as a motivator in urging educators to learn AI. The participants ranging from mid-30-s to 50s and have more than four years of experience in teaching at higher education institution. These criteria were set to investigate their experience through out the transformation of including technologies (such as AI) in teaching and learning pedagogies in comparison to the period before Covid-19 hit us. The findings were analyzed manually using thematic analysis. Using six phases of procedures suggested by Braune & Clarke (2006), this study managed to get few important key points reflecting to the research objectives presented in the Introduction earlier.

Results And Discussions

This research focuses on six non-technology background educators for application of AI in teaching and learning. By using qualitative method, in-depth interview session was conducted to analyze the findings for three research objectives mentioned. Using thematic analysis focusing on educator's opination on AI tools, the importance of Islamic work ethics and the motivation to use AI in teaching and learning are the focus for this research.

Educators' Opinion and Knowledge on AI Tools

All participants in this research agreed that coming from non-technology background should not be the reason why they could not self-equipped themselves with the AI application. Hence, even though they have limited knowledge in AI tools and application, all participants are aware about their level of knowledge in this context. All participants highlighted their own level of knowledge in AI in their own words, with the concern of time constraint and limited access to the knowledge of AI.

Camelia who shared her experience in teaching, mentioned that she used to write her teaching-contents on the white board. However, she needs to change her teaching pedagogies when Covid-19 came and requires educators to utilize the online tools. Camelia, who have been teaching for 8 years was struggling to utilize the online tools due to her limited knowledge in AI tools and application.

> *I know that we cannot reject AI usage in our students' assignment, hence, I must **embrace** it. However, I must admit that my knowledge on AI is very **limited**.*

However, Camelia also agrees that there is no way for her to against online application tools, rather to embrace the tools available. For Camelia, it is important for educators to embrace the transformation and get along with the changes we have currently.

The same feedback given by Aisya, who also have 8 years of experiences in teaching. However, due to her work-constraint, she needs to figure out possible ways in expanding their knowledge in AI tools and application.

> *AI is important these days, so, I need **to learn** too on how to use AI in my teaching and learning. Unfortunately, due to time constraint because of high teaching workload, I always have **problem** to catch up the latest update on AI tools. For example, if students already know how to utilize Canva within few second, it took me few days to understand this thing (laugh).*

Danial, who has been teaching for 25 years, mentioned that his limited knowledge is not the only problem he is facing to self-equipped himself with AI tools and application in teaching and learning, rather the feeling of non-technology savvy educator like him felt overwhelmed most of the time because they need to utilize AI in their teaching and learning pedagogies.

> *Earlier, I only thought that AI can help me to facilitate the teaching and learning, through games, but now it's **beyond** that. I can actually use it for automated grading, getting data-driven insights, helping me with materials formulation… but, everything requires me to learn and I am very **bad at technology** (laugh). I wish I can learn things quickly, so that I can enhance my teaching pedagogies.*

Based on this feedback, this research identifies that with the limited knowledge that the educators may have on AI application in teaching and learning pedagogies, they are fully aware

that AI utilization is important in this field these days. However, the challenges that they may face while acquiring their knowledge in AI may delay their process of learning these AI tools to be implemented in their teaching and learning pedagogies. For instance, Aisya highlighted her constraint on her high teaching workloads, while Danial admitted his non-technical savvy has caused them to have dilemma in self-equipping themselves with AI knowledge. As a result, for these findings, this study focuses on the second research objectives, which is to identify the importance of Islamic ethics in motivating educators to enhance their knowledge in AI tools.

The Importance of Islamic Work Ethics in Motivating Educators to Search for New Knowledge (AI)

When universities were expected to implement different method of teaching and learning, such as online and hybrid learning, the incoming tool from generative AI has also creates some concern among the educators, especially on AI's misuse among the educators and students in their education setting.

> *We cannot avoid using these AI tools, but my concern is **dishonesty**. Not only among the students who may completing their assignments using ChatGPT, but also among the lecturer, I mean… those days we crack our head to create our own questions… now, you just prompting (laugh).*

This feedback has been given by Danial, from his observation among the young educators that he met. Admitting that he is not good in utilising tools like the young educators, he shared his concern on ethical consideration that educators must kept in this profession.

> *Work ethics is very important because I see myself as the **model** for my students. So, if we ourselves did not portray a good one, then, what do you expect from the students? (frown face). Wherever you go, your work ethics must be good. Hence, all staff, I mean… educators, practice and preserve your work ethics. The acknowledgment, the presence, we are the one who have to do it.*

Danial also added that if a worker is aware about work ethics:

> *They should know what they have to do. It is not about putting **effort,** it is about amount of **amanah** (responsibility) that you have with you. Same goes to AI too, I know I know nothing about this, but, I have to learn. Effort to learn is part of work ethics.*

This feedback has also been agreed by Erman, who experienced in teaching for four years. New in the industry but have little knowledge in AI because his majoring is in social sciences, that does not hinder him from learning AI tools.

> *With the changes we have at this moment**, work ethics** seems to be a motivation for me to do good, to be good to myself, my work, my students and my organization. Yes, in the first place, I worked for my KPI, now, I am more focusing on my **self-career** improvements. Hence, any trainings provided by my university, I will just attend it if I am free. Willing to learn is part of work ethics that I stand for.*

The same connotations have been mentioned by Batrisya, who were in the education field for eight years and been trusted with multiple roles of position instead of lecturer only.

> *I think knowing what you need to do is important as part of our work ethics. **Self-improvement** is part of the work ethics which will driven my work ethics. If I am being calculative, I will not go for the headship, like being the Head of Department (laugh)… we have a lot of things to do as a lecturer… but, since I know every position carries its responsibility, then, why not… but, must do it accordingly… and that is where ethics comes in (smile).*

Through this feedback under this section, this study found that all participants are aware about the importance of the implementation on work ethics. The same keywords on "responsibility", "career-development" has been repeated by the participants to show the presence of work ethics while they are fulfilling their job and responsibilities as an educator. Not only that, but even though key performance index also (KPI) has always been the indicator for workers to complete their tasks, it is not the focus among the educators as they are indeed needed to enhance their knowledge in different areas when it is necessary. In the discussion of AI, even though many institutions did not make it compulsory to use AI in teaching and learning, however educators are expected to improve their knowledge on this.

Motivation To Include AI In Teaching and Learning: Institutional Support & Personal Satisfaction

Apart from work ethics and its implementation, this study intend to search for the motivation in learning AI for their teaching and learning pedagogies. This section highlighted two findings which are personal satisfaction and support system.

(a) Personal satisfaction

Being an educator requiring them to meeting students most of the time. Juggling their own tsks, such as teaching, consulting, supervising, they also need to make sure they pick up new knowledge, such as AI application and tools. Be that as it may, it is not easy for those people who are non-tech savvy. Difficulties such as lack of motivation and fixed mindset is the biggest hurdles need to be taken out by the educators in embracing AI. This study found that one of the important motivations in learning AI even though they are the non-tech background educator, is the passion in their profession.

> ***Positive feedback*** *from students, especially when they understand what we teach, they value our effort to use new teaching and learning methods, like putting some games in my slides, seeing they enjoy it… I am more than happy.*

Batrisya responded that students' feedback is one of the key motivations for her to stay in this career. Even though the pathways is changing these days, receiving positive feedback from the students is part of the motivation among the educators. This feedback also given by Camelia, who is in the industry for more than four years. "Appreciation" is the word that she used in defining the factors which motivating her to spend time in learning the AI tools and application.

> *My students **appreciate** my efforts, my presence… they did that all the time.*

Danial, in his feedback, not only addressing his effort in teaching and learning, rather he again highlighted the word of responsibility (*amanah*) and worship (ibadah) as part of his personal satisfaction in doing works.

> *I value my profession as part of **ibadah**… if we are expected to add more value, add more effort to our teaching and learning, we should do it, right?*

From all connotations, this study found that personal satisfaction, includes receiving students' feedback, appreciation by the students, the value of Amanah and ibadah, has become the key points explained under personal satisfaction which driven the educators to sacrifice their time and add more effort in improving their teaching and learning pedagogies. With the limited knowledge and time they might face, these factors are important in upskilling their knowledge and skills, and at the same time improving their pedagogies in their profession.

(b) Support system

As many professions suggest, the main thing in work must come with passion, external support is also important to making employees stay at any organizations. In education field, since many were expected to change their pedagogies, support system is a must-provided value need to be offered to the employees. In this study, the non-tech background lecturer shared their experiences where three of them, who came from the same institution were not provided to any trainings by the organizations. Educators were expected to learn by themselves when world first hit by Covid-19 and everyone needs to change their teaching and learning platforms into online settings.

> *It was **so tough** that time… I know nothing… Zoom? Google Meet? I know nothing, for real.. then… we received circular saying that we can use any of the platform to teach*

our students… (laugh) I was… eh… if I want to recall back, I am happy I am still here, surviving (laugh).

Danial, from one private institution share his experience, when no support system been provided to the staff in utilizing the tools. He also added that for one year and half, there is no standardize rules outlined by the management, but to make sure the classes is executed has been scheduled. Hence, the word "confused", "uncertain" and "stress" were used in his feedback on no support system provided for that period. Erman, who is also teaching from the same university as Danial, also shared the same experience.

*I just begin my career, Covid-19 hit us. I was having hard time to do my classes. When I asked my colleagues, they are also **struggling**… to recall back, it was very bad because **no clear instruction** given. The platform listed like GoogleMeet or Zoom are the available platform to conduct our class. But, there is limited time to use it. For example, Zoom only work for 45 minutes… so, after that, I have to set new class at Zoom. That is our own initiative to figure out the solutions (sigh).*

Accordingly, through this feedback, this study found it is crucial for institution to provide support system, such as trainings and trainers to be available when new things were expected to be implemented by the educators at that time. The inaccessible of support system caused many educators having stress and burn out due to the feeling of incapable and worthless in their career journey.

Unlike Danial and Erman, Hawa, Aisya and Batrisya mentioned that they received institution support when they need to implement online learning. Simple and clear instruction, standardize platform and trainers to guide them (on-the-spot technical support through hotline number was provided to the educators if they have any problems while conducting their classes. These three participants came from two different institutions but provided with support system. Hence, it helps in motivating them to fulfil the career expectations given by the university management and the stakeholders, parents and students. Hawa stated the support system provided by the management was crucial and helps her to conduct her lesson from home. Despite of challenges such as wifi connection issues, she was happy to receive immediate feedback when it is necessary through hotline number provided by the management to the lecturer if in case, they are having issues while conducting their classes.

*Support provided by the management, such as **hotline number**, really helps me at that time. Simple things like I do not know how to upload slides etc, seems to be very easy to IT people, but, not me (non-tech background lecturer). Thinking of that alone makes me stay. Why? Because my friends from other university was struggling badly that time (laugh). We were in our whatsapp group, so, with the assistance I get from my university, I shared it to my friends. They said I am blessed to have this organization…*

Aisya, in her sharing mentioned about the support system she received was online classes such as tutorial to implement or using the online tools.

Free online courses *were provided to us by the management. It is online and recorded classes, we can actually check it.*

Meanwhile Batrisya was mentioning about new team or department was set up by the university to provide more assistance, such as trainers and trainings in making sure the educators can conduct their classes accordingly and manage to include the element of games in teaching and learning pedagogies because the management emphasized on engagement with students in online class.

> *The university set up* **Research & Development Team***… We learned Kahoot, for example, and we can use university account because they bought for us in our teaching and learning session.*

The outcome from this section highlights the importance of institutional support in motivating educators to implement any changes in teaching pedagogies. As mentioned earlier, the AI application can be easy for high-tech background educators, but it creates difficulties to the non-tech savvy educators.

Discussion

All educators intend to bring values to education. However, the rapid transformation of technology in education has brought significant changes in teaching and learning pedagogies.

With different exposures, experiences and study background, expectations to adapt technologies in education has caused stress to some educators, especially to those non-tech background lecturers. This issue could be happening due to many reasons, mainly to the willingness in embracing new pedagogies will administering their profession as an educator. Adeboye (2025) mentioned reluctant to learn something new, especially involving mindset, myth, such as "technology will make us all lazy", and absence of motivation, often seen as the main caused leads to hesitation in learning technological tools.

Knowing the fact that there are challenges too happening between the emergence of AI tools, this study intended to observe the importance of IWE in driving the motivation of educators in learning the AI tools, for teaching and learning pedagogies. It has been found that positive correlation between IWE and motivation to learn and apply AI despite of hurdles they might face as a non-tech background educators. Hence, this study highlights the importance of Islamic work ethics and its awareness among the educators. The consciousness in IWE implementation will stimulate more initiatives among the educators in enhancing their pedagogies of teaching and learning.

As the influence of external motivation such as personal satisfaction and institutional support is important, this study suggests more consistent and practical training provided to the educators to be effectively engage and updated with the recent information. Peer mentoring programs as suggested by Adeboye (2025) seems to be one of the effective wat to support the non-tech savvy colleagues. By mentoring processes, mentors with more tech-savvy knowledge can foster more collaborative learning environment in integrating technology in this field of profession.

Conclusion

The AI application is a continuous discussion which always requires educators to enhance their knowledge in technology. In this study which focusing on non-technology background educators, it should not be the reason for not implementing AI or Generative AI in teaching

and learning pedagogies. This transformation, however, requires motivation to educators to enhance their pedagogies of teaching and learning. External motivation such as personal satisfaction and institutional support can be wight as important in delivering the approach of the new learning era. However, this study emphasizes more on the implementation of Islamic work ethics in projecting their career as an educator. The highlights of self-driven motivation will only be possible if each employee is aware and fulfil their work ethics while working. Teh Choon Jin (2024) found that despite of the challenges faced by the non-tech savvy background lecturer, the educators themselves must always observe their duties and priorities their personal development too (Nurul Farhanah & Rohaiza, 2024). As a conclusion, this study found that apart from the personal satisfaction and support system provided by the institution, the spirit of upskilling their knowledge and practices must first come from the individual, through how strong their work ethics is as a professional worker.

Acknowledgement

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