Students' Perception of Digital Alternative Assessment Practices in Islamic Studies

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Abstract
Online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic has paved the way for a new shift in Islamic studies towards the implementation of digital alternative assessments. Although the shift was initially characterized by urgency due to the Movement Control Order (MCO), the evolvement has increasingly gained acceptance and proven to be effective in achieving learning outcomes. This study aims to identify the perceptions of Islamic studies students on the implementation of the digital alternative assessments they undertook in terms of practice, form, and effectiveness. A survey questionnaire was carried out involving 461 students. Data were measured using a five-point Likert scale and were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) 26.0. The findings indicate that the respondents' perception of the practice and form of digital alternative assessment in Islamic studies is at a high level. All learning and assessments carried out by the lecturers were conducted online, and the effectiveness of the assessment was also perceived to be at a high level. The finding indicates that the assessment enabled the students to synthesize information and harnessed their skills through the process of self-reflection on learning. Through the assessment, they managed to synthesize information and hone their skills through the process of self-reflection on their learning. This means that the practice of digital alternative assessment in Islamic studies is assessed as authentic because it allows students to apply high-level skills and knowledge as well as provides a real-world learning experience. Nevertheless, the digital aspect necessitates further improvement to provide a meaningful learning experience. This study suggests that the practice of digital alternative assessment in Islamic studies considers the challenges faced by students and their views towards developing a more sustainable guideline for implementing the online alternative assessment.
Keywords: Alternative Assessments, Digital Learning, Islamic Studies, High-Impact Educational Practices.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has hit the world including Malaysia and created a new norm in society. The world of education is also not spared from undergoing such changes; digital education has become a necessity, not just for side learning. Digital learning can be conceptualized as a transformation of the education system in Malaysia toward positioning the country as an education hub that can meet global needs (Ministry of Higher Education, 2010). At the global level, online learning serves to transform the education system by utilizing information technology to improve learning quality. Such evolvement also coincides with Education 4.0 which highlights 21st-century skills as necessary to be applied in education (Zulkifli et al., 2020). The use of online learning platforms is an appropriate strategy for improving the quality of the teaching-and-learning process, particularly in the era of industry 4.0 today (Nawi & Hamidaton, 2020). Online learning during this pandemic can be used as a catalyst for such transformation, particularly by enabling the development of online learning to stand as a medium proven to be effective for learning (Jamidi & Surat, 2021).

The implementation of Education 4.0 criteria in Islamic studies, particularly at the higher education level, has encountered a dilemma regarding its suitability to adopt the characteristics of such criteria. The Industrial Revolution (IR) 4.0 is said to erode the values of manners and morals, humanity, and justice, which are significant in Islamic education. The criteria are also considered to have changed the paradigm of Islamic education tradition, such as the close interaction between students and teachers, which is an indicator of the success of the educational process. To address this issue, the Islamic higher education system needs to review its curriculum and the teaching approaches adopted, including the means for measuring students' achievement. The field of Islamic studies in higher education institutions (HEIs) is also appropriately responsive and proactive to the latest educational needs in the IR4.0 era; it is prepared to face current challenges, whether anticipated or unforeseen, such as the COVID 19 pandemic (Hussin et al., 2021). The question that arises is the extent of the student's readiness to deal with the issue and how their potential can be harnessed to change their learning needs.

- Digital alternative assessments are new learning practices for the students of Islamic studies who are more comfortable with face-to-face learning methods which have long been the learning mode in these studies (Zulkifli et al., 2020). Nevertheless, the insistence on movement control orders has brought changes to the learning and assessment processes by transforming them into digital learning as a whole. Therefore, this study seeksTo identify the perception of the Islamic studies students on the practices and forms of digital alternative assessment that have been conducted.

- To analyze the level of effectiveness of the digital alternative assessment on the learning of the Islamic studies students in the COVID-19 season.

Definition of Alternative Assessment

The word *assessment* is rooted in the Latin verb *assidere*, which means "to sit with." The word comes from an act performed in assessment, where the teacher or lecturer as evaluator sits with the student and undertakes a process akin to the lecturer "doing" with the student and for the student and not to the student (Heritage, 2010). Therefore, this assessment can be understood as a process performed by lecturers/teachers with students and is a systematic measurement and evaluation process that involves the activities of collection, analysis, and translating of a student's achievement level of learning objectives (Hussin et al., 2021). Alternatives to this assessment can be the variety used in the

standardized appraisal process, also known as authentic, continuous, performance, and portfolio appraisal (Simonson et al., 2000).

Alternative assessment can be defined as the process of collecting, analyzing, synthesizing, and interpreting all information related to teaching and learning to hone students' abilities and decision-making skills. The assessment serves towards improving the teaching and learning process hence achieving goals in learning (Hussinet et al., 2021). Alternative assessment is one of the methods viewed as able to provide a comprehensive assessment of a student's potential with an emphasis on the important aspects of physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual potential (Aziz & Yamin, 2011). This continual learning process is implemented to ensure that each student understands and can translate an assignment's requirements. Teachers and lecturers can also determine the areas requiring facilitation in improving their students' performance (Reeves, 2000). Thus, the alternative assessment can be described as an assessment process conducted by lecturers together with their students to measure their level of achievement in learning and stimulate the students to develop their talents and potential in the learning process.

Form and Practice of Alternative Digital Assessment

Simonson et al (2000) note three types of approaches in the alternative appraisal: authentic appraisal, performance-based appraisal, and constructivist appraisal. Reeves (2000) explained that among the alternative assessment methods that can be integrated into online learning are cognitive assessment, performance appraisal, and portfolio appraisal. In alternative assessment, the task given to students should be linked to learning about the real world so that the learning process is assessed to be authentic. This matter is in line with Dikli (2003), who viewed the role of authenticity in enabling an alternative assessment to allow students to use high-level thinking skills to solve real-world problems in their learning assignments. Alternative assessments also provide opportunities for students to develop their talents and express themselves creatively through their choices. Among the methods applied as alternative assessments are answering short questions, essays, performance appraisals, oral presentations, exhibitions, and portfolios (Aziz & Yamin, 2011).

A study conducted by Alonso-Diaz (2016) who used online conferencing as an assessment method found that the conference was synchronous learning and proved to be the best medium for conducting alternative assessments digitally to students. This is because the synchronous method provided an opportunity for lecturers/teachers to interact directly with the students, in contrast to the asynchronous method, which was more flexible thus allowing the lecturers to provide learning materials and the students to obtain learning materials and complete on time (Lubis et al., 2017). Yet, synchronous learning was seen as more synonymous with online learning. Another descriptive study conducted by Nawi and Hamidaton (2020) on the use of Microsoft Teams as a learning platform for students of Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM) found that the use of the platform was positively received, and the students were prepared in terms of their skills and motivation to succeed in learning. However, another study by Norehan et al (2020), Mailis et al. (2020), and Gani et al. (2020) found that students' acceptance of online learning was at a moderate level.

Another qualitative content analysis was conducted by Hussin et al (2021) on the performances of courses for all Bachelor of Islamic Studies programs at Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM). The study found that the forms and practices used include activity-based learning, fieldwork, essay writing and presentation, seminar organization, and the use of digital technology. This finding indicates that the assessment method used by the lecturers

for the courses in the Bachelor of Islamic Studies program at UKM focused on formative assessment, particularly during or throughout the learning process and instruction to see their students' progress. Another method conducted is a summative assessment, in which a final examination or final assessment is used to assess the students' overall achievement (Yusof & Othman, 2019). However, summative tests are not able to measure students' overall achievement, particularly those related to the achievement of generic skills (Alias & Osman, 2018).

Another literature review conducted by Ismawi et al (2022) categorized the online formative assessments applied in Malaysia into three parts: observation, oral, and written. In online observational formative assessment, students make video recordings of the assignments given by the lecturer, and the lecturer also provides assessment and response through a video recording. The second method is oral formative assessment, which involves online discussion, portfolio, self-assessment, and peer-assessment. In this method, the lecturer asks the students questions who can then give responses related to their learning. The third online formative assessment method is writing. In this method, lecturers review students' writings such as essays, project reports, and written exercises. These assignments are provided through various types of online applications, such as Google Docs, Google Slides, and Google Forms. Previous analyses found that the formative assessment practices often used to assess online students are group discussions, portfolios, presentations, and quizzes using Google Classroom, Google Meet, WhatsApp, and Telegram applications.

Effectiveness of Digital Alternative Assessment on Students

Aziz and Yamin (2011) argue that assessment in the teaching-and-learning process is an important aspect that can help improve the effectiveness of the process as well as unearth students' potential and talents. Digital assessment is one of the progressive assessment methods that replace the conservative assessment method, namely the written examination, which has long been a learning practice in higher education. The development of technology and educational approaches in the 21st century has made digital assessment a new learning practice in assessing student learning and providing feedback on the effectiveness of teaching and learning methods (Kundu & Bej, 2021). Nevertheless, two review studies (Mailis et al., 2020; Abdillah & Musa, 2021) found that students' readiness for digital learning is at a moderate level. Such a state is influenced by the provision of existing facilities that affect the learning process (Abdillah & Musa, 2021). Students and lecturers' readiness and commitment must also be strengthened in ensuring effective teaching and learning.

Another study conducted by Huda et.al (2020) on Bangladeshi students concerns the learning effectiveness of digital alternative assessments. The students gave positive responses to the digital assessments conducted, though some viewed the use of computers to some extent had put pressure on them. Their lack of skills in using digital equipment had made it difficult for them to go through the assessment processes, including the examinations. Nevertheless, they still viewed the digital alternative assessment to be more practical for achieving learning objectives because the technology used could help provide an effective assessment of student learning outcomes (Huda et al., 2020). Similarly, a study conducted by Kundu and Bej (2021) on Indian students' perceptions of digital alternative assessment proved that the COVID-19 pandemic has attracted students' interest in this learning practice. The finding indicates that the students' overall perceptions of digital assessment are at a moderate level, and this perception differed in terms of gender, academic level, type of study, and economic situation. Of the eight domains studied, three showed

lower values such as awareness, resource facilities, and technological equipment. Nevertheless, epidemic factors such as COVID-19 had provided an avenue for the students to learn more about technology-related matters.

Another preliminary study was conducted on students of the Bachelor of Al-Quran Language Studies Program at the Selangor International Islamic University College (KUIS) on their perceptions related to online teaching and learning methods. The study found that 55% of the students stated that online teaching and learning left a positive impact in that the mode was easy and fast and could be performed anywhere and anytime, while 66% of the students stated the negative aspects of online teaching and learning due to internet problems (Husin, 2021). These findings contradict another study conducted on Hulu Langat Community College (KKHL) students who underwent online learning and teaching (e-learning). The learning method was applied as an alternative to the conventional learning method (face-to-face learning) in a lecture room so that learning could continue. Descriptive statistics were used to identify the level of effectiveness of student learning and the challenges faced. The results indicated that the level of effectiveness of the use of online learning was at a high level and that the barriers encountered were at a moderate level. The study also suggests the need for immediate action to address the challenges encountered to improve the effectiveness of learning and teaching.

The conclusion derived from the previous studies is that the digital alternative assessment method is an effective teaching and learning method to be applied in an online learning process. The method is more effective and practical, and it can sustain the learning process even in epidemic situations such as COVID-19. However, the effectiveness depends on the readiness of students and lecturers, knowledge related to technology, as well as the equipment that affects the level of students' understanding of their teaching and learning.

Methodology

A quantitative approach using a survey questionnaire was used to identify students' perceptions of the practice, form, and effectiveness of digital alternative assessment through the courses they attended. A questionnaire was used as a research instrument to obtain data. A simple random sampling technique was used to select the respondents, and data were collected by distributing the questionnaire online through Google form. This method was chosen because it can facilitate collecting data from respondents who were following online teaching and learning at that time. A total of 461 students were recruited, consisting of students who were undertaking an Islamic studies program at various public and private universities. The respondents were also those who have followed alternative assessment methods online. The questionnaire comprises five parts. Part A queries the respondents' demographic information, and part B queries their understanding of digital alternative assessment. Sections C and D are related to the respondents' perceptions of the practice, form, and effectiveness of the digital alternative assessment. Part E contains two open-ended questions related to the challenges encountered in the assessment of the digital alternative, as well as suggestions for improvement. Parts B, C, and D seek responses on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) to measure the respondents' perceptions of the statements given. The data obtained were then analyzed descriptively using SPSS software version 26.0. Results are presented as the mean score values and standard deviation (S.P.). The scores were interpreted based on the suggestions of Nunnally and Bernstein (1994) (Table 1).

Table 1
Analysis of Likert Scale (Interpretation of Mean Score)

Mean Score	Interpretation
1.00 to 2.00	Low
2.01 to 3.00	Moderate-Low
3.01 to 4.00	Moderate-High
4.01 to 5.00	High

Source: Nunnally dan Bernstein (1994)

Findings

The findings of the study were obtained from the respondents' demographic information (Section A), their perceptions of the practices and forms of digital alternative assessment (Section C), as well as findings regarding their digital alternative assessment learning practices (Section D).

Demography of Respondents

This study involved 416 respondents consisting of Islamic studies students from various public institutions of higher learning and private institutions of higher learning. Table 2.1 below presents the respondents' demographic data. The analysis found that the majority of respondents are within the age group of groups 1 (item A1), which is 18 to 22 years. This is evidenced by the findings that most of the respondents in this study are those studying at the bachelor's degree level (78.5%) and diploma level (21.5%) (item A4). The study also involved 149 male respondents (32.3%) and 312 female respondents (67.7%). Most of the respondents in this study are from various public institutions of higher learning students (item A3) of a research university such as *Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia* (UKM), *University of Malaya* (UM), *Universiti Putra Malaysia* (UPM), and others (61.6%) and those from a public university (comprehensive university) (1.1%).

Table 2.1
Respondents' Demographic Information (Item for Questions A1 – A4)

Question item (A1-A4)	Item Division	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Age (A1)	Cluster 1 (18 – 22 years)	353	76.57
	Cluster 2 (23 – 28 years)	102	22.13
	Cluster 3 (29 years–and above)	6	1.30
Gender (A2)	Male	149	32.3
	Female	312	67.7
Type of University (A3)	Public University (Research University)	284	61.6
	Public University (Comprehensive University)	5	1.1
	Public University (Focused University)	109	23.6
	University/Private University College	52	11.3
	Others	11	2.4
Level of Study (A4)	Diploma	99	21.5
	Bachelor's Degree	362	78.5

Source: Questionnaire Survey (2021)

Table 2.2 provides further information on the 461 respondents involved in the study. The results of frequency analysis (N) and percentage (%) show that most of the respondents are in the study program (item A5) of *al-Quran and as-Sunnah* which is 131 respondents (28.4%) and *Syariah* which is 120 respondents (26.0%). A minority of the respondents are in year 4 of their study (item A6) (6 respondents, 1.3%). One justification is that the Islamic studies program at the bachelor's degree and diploma level is usually within 3 years only. A total of 444 respondents (96.3%) stated that they are registered under the "full-time" mode of study (item A7), while the rest were undertaking the part-time study mode. In terms of the respondents' Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) value, most of the respondents could not state their CGPA values because the results of the evaluation results for the semester had yet to be announced at the time of questionnaire distribution. However, the total number of respondents who answered this questionnaire was 70 (15.18%), comprising those who are still waiting for the results of their CGPA values for the semester. None of the respondents with a CGPA value of 0.1 to 2.50 were involved in the study. The majority of the respondents obtained a CGPA of 2.50 to 4.0.

Table 2.2
Respondents' Demography (Items A5–A8)

Question item (A5-A8)	Item Division	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Study Program (A5)	Islamic Studies	45	9.8
	Al-Quran and As-Sunnah	131	28.4
	Syariah	120	26.0
	Dakwah (Islamic preaching) and Leadership	55	11.9
	History and Islamic Civilization	3	.7
	Arabic Langauge	37	8.0
	Usuluddin	58	12.6
	Others	12	2.6
Year of Study (A6)	1	205	44.5
	2	144	31.2
	3	106	23.0
	4	6	1.3
Study Mode (A7)	Full time	444	96.3
	Part-time	17	3.7
CGPA Value (A8)	.000	70	15.18
	0.1–2.50	0	0
	2.51–3.50	78	16.92
	3.51–4.00	313	67.9

Source: Questionnaire Survey (2021)

Practice and Form of Alternative Digital Assessment

To analyze the respondents' perspectives on the practice, form, and effectiveness of the alternative digital assessments they undertook in the courses, a descriptive analysis was conducted using means and standard deviation (S.D.) values for each item on the questionnaire. Twelve questions were addressed in this section to assess the respondents' perceptions of the forms and practices of digital alternative assessment they followed through the courses. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Mean Score Value and Standard Deviation (S.D.) for Practice and Form of Alternative Digital Assessment

Item No.	Question Statement	Mean Score	Standard Deviation (S.D.)
C1	The evaluation of the courses followed is conducted online	3.94	1.426
C2	Guidelines on the criteria required for an assignment are available	4.33	0.722
C3	Refer to the guidelines given in completing the assignment	4.52	0.677
C4	Be informed about the assignment scoring rubric	4.50	0.706
C5	Can complete assigned course assignments	4.42	0.728
C6	Given the freedom to demonstrate abilities in completing assignments	4.34	0.805
C7	Using digital platforms to find reference material	4.64	0.633
C8	Use e-learning portals to connect with lecturers	4.01	0.955
C9	Use social media to discuss with friends for group assignments	4.65	0.633
C10	Ask for classmates' views on the assignment	4.36	0.780
C11	Lecturers provide feedback on student achievement in a form of assessment	4.21	0.872
C12	Improve assignments if given the opportunity by the lecturer	4.64	0.656
TOTAL		**4.38**	**0.211**

Source: Questionnaire Survey (2021)

The highest mean score was obtained for item C9. Most of the respondents agreed that they use social media to discuss with peers for group assignments (mean = 4.65, S.D. = 0.633). This item is followed by items C7 and C12, which shared the same mean score value but not S.D. The difference suggests that the C7 question items are more reliable since the data are more clustered around the mean score compared to the C12 items (following Everett & Benos, 2004). The next items are items C3 and C4, which recorded high mean score values, thus indicating that the respondents referred to the guidelines and scoring rubrics given to complete the assignment. Most of them also acknowledged that they could complete a given task, as evidenced by the high mean scores for items C5, followed by items C10 and C6. In the latter, the mean score values showed that the respondents admitted that they asked for peer views and were given the freedom to demonstrate their abilities in completing the assigned tasks.

Item C2 indicates that the respondents obtained guidelines on the criteria for the tasks they performed. This is evidenced by the mean score value which is at a high level (mean = 4.33, S.D. = 0.722). As for item C11, the mean score is also interpreted to be at a high level, thus indicating the respondents' acknowledgment that their lecturers provided feedback on their achievements through the assessment given. Although item C8 received a low mean value compared to other mean scores, the score is still at a meaningful high level, indicating that the respondents admitted that they used the *e*-portal to communicate with lecturers throughout the digital alternative assessment. The item receiving the lowest value is C1, with

the mean score being at a moderately high level. This means that in the practice and form of the assessment undertaken by the respondents, the online assessment was still at a moderately high level. However, the overall mean value shows a high mean score interpretation (mean = 4.38, S.D. = 0.211), indicating that the respondents' perceptions of digital alternative assessment in terms of form and practice through the courses are at a high level.

Level of Effectiveness of Alternative Digital Assessment

This study also seeks to identify the respondents' perceptions of the effectiveness level of the digital alternative assessment. The findings (Table 4) indicate that their perception is at a high level as the total mean value for items D1 to D14 is 4.29 (S.D. = 0.109). This finding indicates that the assessment of digital alternatives undergone by the students was highly effective for them. The mean score values and standard deviation (S.D.) for items D1 to D14 are shown in Table 5. The highest mean score value was recorded for item D1 (mean = 4.49, S.D. = 0.665), and therefore, is at a high level based on Nunnally and Bernstein's (1994) interpretation. This result indicates that the respondents could apply their knowledge to complete their assignments. This value is followed by item D2, which denotes that the respondents can also apply the skills they possess as a process from the alternative assessment. The items that share the same mean score value are items D6 and D8 (mean = 4.38). Nevertheless, these two items show different standard deviation values with item D8 recording a more reliable value (S.P. 0.728) than item D6 (S.P. 0.744). Both items are indicative of the same element; to the respondents, the assessment of digital alternatives undergone had trained them to think creatively and innovatively.

Table 4

Mean Score Value & Standard Deviation (S.D.) of Level of Effectiveness of Digital Alternative Assessment

Item No.	Question Statement	Mean Score	Standard Deviation (S.D.)
D1	Apply knowledge when preparing assignments	4.49	0.665
D2	Apply the skills you have	4.46	0.616
D3	Make a self-reflection on the task	4.25	0.777
D4	Online assignments train us to be prepared for the challenges of the outside world	4.31	0.867
D5	Continuous assessment-based learning can hone problem-solving abilities	4.36	0.750
D6	Continuous assessment-based learning trains creative thinking	4.38	0.744
D7	Continuous assessment-based learning trains critical thinking	4.33	0.755
D8	Continuous assessment-based learning trains innovative thinking	4.38	0.728
D9	Online continuous assessment-based learning creates an interactive learning environment	4.07	0.947
D10	The use of digital platforms in the assessment of learning enhances knowledge	4.33	0.793
D11	The use of digital platforms in the assessment of learning enhances skills	4.31	0.794
D12	Online continuous assessment-based learning helps to actively follow teaching and learning	4.03	1.002
D13	Continuous assessment-based learning online helps to achieve good results	4.25	0.859
D14	Comfortable to be assessed based on the continuous assessment as opposed to the final exam	4.18	0.972
TOTAL		**4.29**	**0.109**

Source: Questionnaire Survey (2021)

Table 4 above shows that item D5 received a mean value that can be interpreted to be at a high level. Apart from the creative and innovative elements, the respondents' agreed that the digital alternative assessment sharpened their ability to solve problems. They also agreed on the effectiveness of this method in training them to think critically. This can be seen from the mean score value on item D7 (mean = 4.33, S.D. = 0.755), which also shares the same mean value with item D10, though both record different S.D. values. The next item that recorded the closest S.D. value to item D10 is item D11. This finding is in line with the respondents' high level of agreement that the use of digital platforms in the assessment of digital alternatives also improved their skills. The mean score value shares the same value as item D4. Thus, the respondents acknowledged that the online assignments had trained them to be prepared for real-world challenges.

Items D3 and D13 also share the same mean score value of 4.25, and the interpretation of the mean score for these two items is at a high level. This means that the respondents had made self-reflection on the results of their assignments and that the learning method had helped them to achieve good results for the course. As for item D14, the respondents stated that they were comfortable being assessed through this method instead of a final examination, which was also at a high level. Similarly, item D9 is received at a high level in that the respondents viewed online learning as making the learning environment more interactive. The highest S.D. value was recorded for the D12 item (S.D. = 1.002), which means that the result is not reliable as the data are not clustered around the mean score (Douglas & Dale, 2004). However, the latter item is still at a high level (mean score = 4.03) which implies that the respondents felt that the outcome of the digital alternative assessment could help them to actively follow the teaching and learning. The overall mean value of queries above is 4.29, which is also at a high level. Such indicates the respondents' agreement that the digital alternative assessment had affected their teaching and learning.

Students' Perceptions Towards Practice and Form of Digital Alternative Assessment in Islamic Studies

The respondents' perceptions of the alternative assessment based on practice and form through the course followed can be divided into three parts. Part 1 deals with the use of media and platforms, where they use social media to discuss with friends about group assignments in addition to using digital platforms to find reference material. This is in line with the analysis of the literature review conducted by Ismawi et al (2022) that alternative online assessment practices in Malaysia often use Google Classroom, Google Meet, WhatsApp, and Telegram applications as learning mediums. Part 2 in the practice and forms of digital alternative assessment is the assignment that is the primary form of assessment used. The respondents believed that they would improve the assignment if given the opportunity by the lecturer. They also refer to the guidelines and are informed concerning rubric scoring in completing assignments. They believed in their ability to complete a given task and therefore asked their friends' views on the task. They also agreed that they were given the freedom to demonstrate abilities in completing their assignments. This finding coincides with Aziz and Yamin's (2011) view that the assignments given in an alternative assessment allow students to show what they have learned as well as focus on their development and performance. The alternative assessment is also a regular assessment that allows lecturers to measure the strengths and weaknesses of their students in various fields and situations from time to time.

Section 3 queries the respondents' "perceptions of lecturers" practices in the digital alternative assessment. Lecturers play an important role in providing feedback on respondents' achievements through assessment. The use of e-portals makes it easier for lecturers and students to communicate with each other. This finding is in line with a study conducted by Mohamad and Ahmad (2014) that lecturers are the main drivers in ensuring the successful implementation of alternative assessments in a study program. Therefore, lecturers' readiness should be considered before deciding to implement an alternative assessment. Essentially, the practice and form of digital alternative assessment according to the respondents' perceptions is online learning, assignments as assessment methods, and lecturers as evaluators. These components are shown in Figure 1.
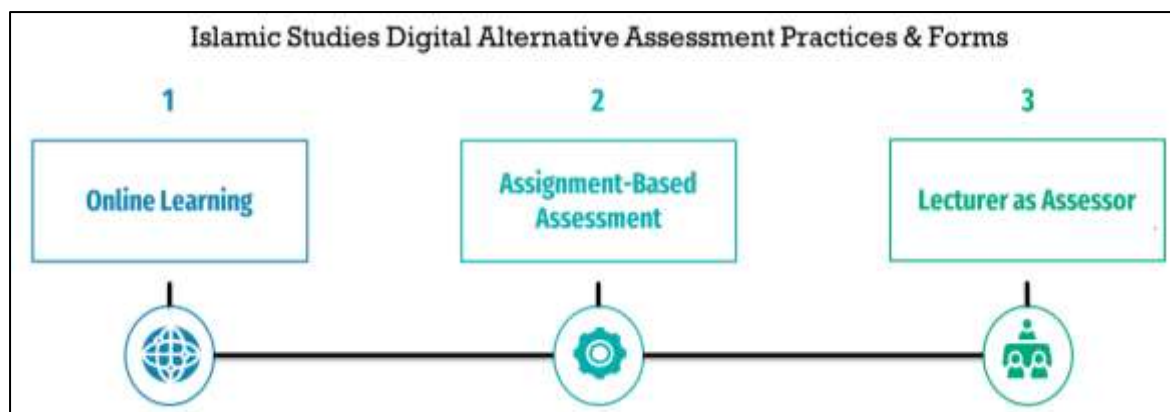
Figure 1: *Practice and Form of Digital Alternative Assessment in Islamic Studies*
Source: Questionnaire Survey (2021)

Students' Perceptions of The Effectiveness of Alternative Digital Assessment Practice in Islamic Studies

The respondents' perceptions of the effectiveness of the alternative assessment practices they undertook can be captured in three aspects, namely (a) their ability to synthesize information, (ii) tasks that can be trained and development of new skills, and (c) making self-reflection on learning. Their ability to synthesize information can be observed from the results of the given assignment. The proof is that they were able to apply their knowledge and skills. As Wyman (n.d.) stated, the impact of alternative assessment is evidenced through the ability to synthesize available information more creatively, innovatively, and expressively.

The study also concluded that the digital alternative assessment has impacted the students' skills in two aspects, namely trained skills, and formed skills. The respondents agreed that the skills they acquired were creative, innovative skills, critical thinking, and the ability to solve problems through their assignments or other assessment mediums given by their course lecturers. This finding is in line with Huda et al. (2020) and Kundu and Bej (2021), whose respondents also agreed that the assessments done digitally have harnessed their digital skills. The alternative assessments, which were performed on digital platforms, also showed effectiveness in harnessing the respondents' skills, particularly in increasing their knowledge and skills hence preparing them to face the challenges of the outside world. The third aspect of the effectiveness of alternative assessment according to the students' perceptions is self-reflection through assignments as well as reflection on learning. The respondents agreed that they did self-reflection on the tasks performed. The findings thus explain Davis, Ponnamperuma and Ker (2009) finding that the alternative assessment provides not only an improvement in learning outcomes but also the opportunity for students to self-reflect on the outcome of their assignments. Even so, they somewhat disagreed that online learning is interactive and could help them to follow the teaching and learning actively. Some were more comfortable to be assessed on an ongoing basis than on the final exam. The results of this study are also in line with Suwaed (2018), whose respondents acknowledged that the alternative assessments conducted through portfolios had helped them to improve their writing skills. The respondents in the study were more comfortable being assessed in traditional assessments than in alternative assessments.
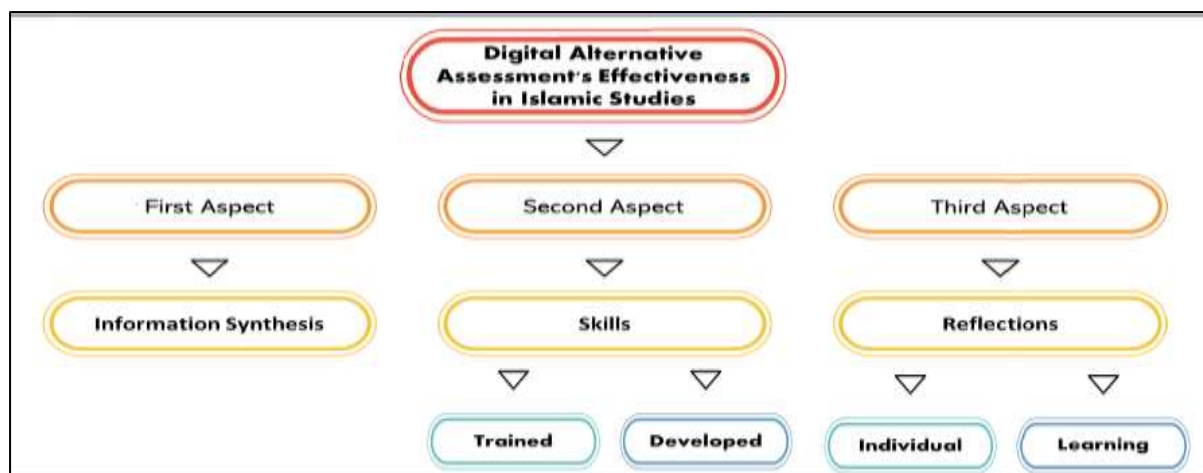
Figure 2: *The Effectiveness of Digital Alternative Assessment in Islamic Studies*
Source: Questionnaire (2021)

Conclusion

In the face of current challenges in the digital era, the implementation of online alternative assessments is a new shift in Islamic studies. This shift shows the flexibility and openness of the field of Islamic studies to achieve student learning outcomes. The findings indicate that the respondents' perception of the practice and form of digital alternative assessment in Islamic studies is at a high level. The practice consists of three components: online learning, assignments as an assessment medium, and lecturers as assessors. The respondents also viewed the effectiveness of the alternative assessment to be at a high level, particularly from three aspects: ability to synthesize information, skill formation, and reflection on self and learning. This finding implies that the practice of digital alternative assessment in Islamic studies is authentic because it allows students to use high thinking skills as well as provides them with a real-world learning experience. However, the digital aspect is seen as requiring further improvement in providing a more meaningful learning experience. Therefore, in developing more sustainable guidelines for online alternative assessment, this study suggests that the practice of digital alternative assessment in Islamic studies considers the challenges faced by the students and their views.

Acknowledgment

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