



Challenges and Solutions for Muslims in Facing the Digital Era Transformation

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Abstrak

Perkembangan teknologi digital telah mengubah lanskap praktik keagamaan umat Muslim, menghadirkan ruang virtual untuk ibadah, pengajian, dan dakwah. Fenomena ini memunculkan peluang bagi partisipasi yang lebih luas, tetapi juga menimbulkan tantangan terkait kualitas pemahaman, penyebaran hoaks, dan pergeseran otoritas keagamaan. Generasi muda, khususnya milenial dan Gen Z, membentuk identitas religius melalui konten digital yang bersifat singkat, hibrid, dan mudah diakses. Literasi digital-keagamaan menjadi kunci untuk menilai kredibilitas konten, memahami konteks ajaran, dan menghadapi disinformasi secara kritis. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif berbasis studi literatur, analisis dokumen digital, dan observasi non-partisipatif untuk mengeksplorasi praktik keagamaan digital, diseminasi hoaks, dan strategi literasi digital-keagamaan. Hasil penelitian menekankan pentingnya integrasi antara pendidikan agama, literasi digital, dan dakwah daring untuk membentuk respons yang cerdas, etis, dan substansial dalam menghadapi dinamika era digital.

Kata kunci: Digital religi, literasi digital-keagamaan, praktik keagamaan daring, disinformasi, dakwah digital.

Abstract

The development of digital technology has transformed the landscape of Muslim religious practices, providing virtual spaces for worship, study, and preaching. This phenomenon offers broader participation opportunities but also poses challenges regarding understanding quality, the spread of hoaxes, and shifts in religious authority. Young generations, particularly millennials and Gen Z, form religious identities through short, hybrid, and easily accessible digital content. Digital-religious literacy is key to evaluating content credibility, understanding religious context, and critically addressing misinformation. This study employs a qualitative approach based on literature review, digital document analysis, and non-participatory observation to explore digital religious

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practices, hoax dissemination, and strategies for digital-religious literacy. Findings emphasize the importance of integrating religious education, digital literacy, and online preaching to develop a knowledgeable, ethical, and substantive response to the dynamics of the digital era.

Keywords: *Digital religion, digital-religious literacy, online religious practices, misinformation, digital preaching*

A. Introduction

The development of digital technology has been a determining factor in reshaping the social, cultural, and religious landscape of global society, including Muslims. The internet, social media, and algorithm-based platforms no longer function merely as means of communication, but have transformed into spaces for the production of meaning, authority, and religious practices. In this context, religion is not only “present” in the digital space, but also undergoes a process of mediatization, which is when religious values, symbols, and practices interact intensely with the fast, instant, and visual logic of digital media. This phenomenon marks a fundamental shift in the way Muslims access, understand, and practice Islamic teachings in the contemporary era.

This transformation is clearly evident in changes to worship patterns, collective rituals, and the relationship between religious authorities and congregations. Research on Muslim religious practices in Indonesia shows that social media has created a hybrid space between the online and offline worlds, where religious activities are no longer entirely tied to the physical space of mosques or majelis taklim (religious gatherings). Rituals such as recitation of the Qur'an, khatmil Qur'an, and religious lectures are now often conducted virtually, which on the one hand expands participation, but on the other hand raises questions about the

quality of spiritual experience and depth of religious understanding. (Nisa, Eva F, 2018).

Among young Muslims, the digital space has even become the main arena for the formation of religious identity. Access to a variety of religious content with diverse ideological backgrounds, schools of thought, and communication styles encourages the formation of fluid and hybrid religious identities. Studies on digital religious identity show that millennials and Gen Z tend to build their understanding of religion through short pieces of content, verse quotations, lecture videos, and popular narratives that are widely circulated on social media. This condition opens up opportunities for a more inclusive attitude towards religion, but also carries the risk of fragmenting meaning and reducing Islamic teachings to mere symbols or trends. (Heidi A Campbell, 2013).

Along with these opportunities, the digital age also presents serious challenges in the form of rampant hoaxes, disinformation, and religious misinformation. Various studies reveal that religious content is one of the most vulnerable types of information to manipulation, especially because it is often wrapped in the legitimacy of verses, hadiths, or certain symbolic authorities. Religious hoaxes not only mislead individuals' understanding, but also have the potential to trigger social conflict, intolerance, and polarization among Muslim communities. (Munabiah Lestari dan Saidah, 2023).

Low digital literacy is a key factor exacerbating this problem. Several studies in the field of Islamic education show that most social media users do not yet have adequate skills to verify sources, evaluate the credibility of authors, and understand the context of religious texts circulating online. As a result, viral content is often considered true without critical analysis, even though it contradicts the principles of Islamic scholarship and the values of religious moderation. (Suyadi, 2015).

In addition, the digitization of religion has also influenced the shift in religious authority. Previously, scientific authority resided with religious scholars, Islamic boarding schools, and formal institutions, but now that authority is competing with popular figures on social media who gain legitimacy through their number of followers and level of virality. Research on Muslim access to Islamic websites and platforms shows a tendency to rely on search engines and religious influencers as the main references, who do not always have adequate scientific competence. (Paul K Bunt, 2019).

The phenomenon of digital da'wah shows a similar ambivalence. On the one hand, da'wah in the virtual world is able to reach a wider audience, across geographical boundaries and generations. However, on the other hand, digital da'wah also faces the risks of simplifying messages, commercializing religion, and using provocative rhetoric for the sake of engagement. Several studies on contemporary da'wah emphasize the importance of ethics, digital competence, and scientific foundations so that da'wah in the digital space does not lose the substance of Islamic values. (Muhammad Alfreda Daib Insan Labib, t.t).

In the Indonesian context, this challenge is even more complex due to the religious, pluralistic nature of society and its high level of activity on social media. Various local studies show that religious issues often become sensitive topics of digital discourse that are easily politicized. Without a strong framework of digital-religious literacy, the digital space has the potential to become an arena for the reproduction of symbolic conflicts that undermine social cohesion among the people. (Merlyna Lim, 2017).

Although many studies have discussed religion and digitalization, most of them are still descriptive and fragmented, with separate focuses on religious practices, hoaxes, preaching, or digital literacy. Relatively few

studies comprehensively link the transformation of religious practices, the challenges of hoaxes and disinformation, and the need for digital-religious literacy strategies within a single, comprehensive analytical framework. (Robert B Horwitz, 2007).

This condition shows that the discourse that has developed so far still tends to place Muslims in a passive relationship with the development of digital technology, limited to being recipients or users of information. This approach does not fully affirm Muslims as reflective subjects who have the capacity to manage, assess, and interpret digital space critically and responsibly based on Islamic values. On the other hand, discussions on religious digital literacy designed in an integrative manner that combines technological skills, ethical awareness, and da'wah orientation have not yet received adequate attention. As a result, the relationship between digital literacy and the strengthening of the quality of da'wah and the sustainability of Islamic values in the digital space has not been comprehensively mapped in academic studies. (Zulaiha, Mila, Indra Wijaya dan Popi Radyuli, 2024).

The approach developed in this study emphasizes the integration of religious practices, the challenges of disinformation, and the strengthening of digital-religious literacy as an interconnected ecosystem. Rather than emphasizing digitization solely as a technological issue, this study views it as a cultural and epistemological phenomenon that demands an educational and structural response from the Muslim community. This approach is expected to not only broaden theoretical understanding of the interaction between religion and the digital world, but also offer practical guidance for the development of adaptive strategies for Islamic preaching and education in the digital era. (Azyumardi Azra, 2003).

B. Research Method

This study uses a qualitative approach based on literature review and digital document analysis to understand the challenges and solutions faced by Muslims in the digital age. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows researchers to gain an in-depth understanding of online religious practices, religious disinformation, and digital-religious literacy strategies from the perspective of content, digital interactions, and published empirical studies. With this approach, the research focuses on discourse analysis, communication patterns, and digital content, without collecting primary data through interviews, thus remaining relevant to the broader digital context.

Data collection was carried out through three main strategies. First, a literature study of open-access scientific articles discussing digital religion, digital-religious literacy, online da'wah practices, and the dissemination of hoaxes. This literature was analyzed to understand the theoretical framework, previous research trends, and relevant empirical findings. Second, digital document analysis was conducted on online religious content, including articles, blogs, discussion forums, preaching websites, lecture videos, and public social media posts. This analysis aimed to assess the quality of information, narrative characteristics, and interaction patterns formed in the digital space.

C. Results and Discussion

The development of digital technology has fundamentally changed the landscape of Muslim religious practices. Access to religious materials such as the Qur'an, tafsir, hadith, and theological discussions can now be accessed in seconds via the internet, social media, and mobile applications. This phenomenon has driven structural transformations in patterns of worship and religious learning. A review of the literature shows how digital religion has opened up new spaces where religious practices are no longer limited to physical interactions, but also take place in virtual

spaces with increasing intensity each year. Religious understanding has become more personal but also more exposed to diverse interpretations, requiring digital literacy to filter credible and quality content. (Dwi Faruqi, 2025).

This transformation has created new dynamics in collective and individual rituals. Observations of online religious lectures, online Qur'an recitations, and virtual tafsir studies show that while quantitative participation has increased, the quality of understanding varies. Online participation allows believers from various locations to join the same ritual simultaneously, creating a sense of global solidarity. However, without quality control over content, this opportunity is also prone to giving rise to a performative understanding of rituals without adequate theological depth. This change underscores the need for a digital da'wah strategy that not only reaches a wide audience but also maintains the quality of teaching. (Jumadi, 2024).

One of the most serious challenges that has emerged in the digital space is the spread of religious hoaxes and disinformation. Recent articles consistently note that religious hoaxes often selectively quote verses or hadiths to support a particular narrative, without the proper methodological context. This kind of disinformation not only misinterprets Islamic teachings but also has the potential to weaken social cohesion within Muslim communities. Efforts to counter hoaxes require strong digital literacy, including the ability to assess sources, understand media bias, and evaluate content based on ethical principles and credible religious knowledge. (Agus Idwar Jumhadi, dkk, 2024).

Islamic education plays a strategic role in strengthening religious digital literacy. Integrating Islamic values such as *tabayyun* (verification), *amanah* (honesty), and *hikmah* (wisdom) into digital literacy education can shape intelligent and responsible responses to negative content. Studies

show that Muslim youth equipped with religious digital literacy are able to be more critical in dealing with hoaxes, assessing the context of content, and choosing narratives that are in line with substantial Islamic principles. (Rofidah, Muhid, 2022).

Digital literacy is not merely a technical skill, but also encompasses ethical and moral aspects of interacting in the digital space. Research on digital media literacy highlights the importance of understanding how to verify information, recognize hoaxes, and develop critical thinking skills regarding religious content. This effort requires collaboration between educational institutions, community organizations, and religious leaders in providing relevant and accessible literacy education to all Muslims. (Sundari dkk., 2024).

Social media has also become the primary medium for Islamic preaching in the digital age, opening up enormous opportunities for preachers to reach a wider and more diverse audience. Literature studies show that social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube are used to convey messages of preaching in an interactive and creative style that can attract the attention of younger generations. However, the challenges of information verification and interaction ethics remain important issues in the practice of digital preaching. (Moh Said Aqil Hasan, t.t).

Digital da'wah is not only about delivering messages, but also shaping interactions, relationships, and audience responses to religious content. Creative and contextual da'wah content can build positive engagement, but if it is not supported by strong literacy, the content can be misunderstood or exploited irresponsibly. Therefore, da'wah strategies must pay attention to scientific frameworks, digital ethics, and cultural sensitivity in order to produce healthy and productive understanding. (Naufal Taufikul Hakim Azhar dkk., 2024).

The role of social media in religious education has also created a hybrid model between online and offline learning. Studies show that Islamic learning on social media is often chosen by younger generations as a complement or alternative to traditional learning. Although it offers flexibility, this pattern carries the risk of religious understanding based on pop culture narratives or viral trends, rather than strong scientific references. This is why comprehensive religious digital literacy is crucial for young people to navigate the digital space critically. (Rizal dkk., 2024).

One consequence of digital information accessibility is a shift in religious authority. Traditional scholars, who were previously the main source of authority, now compete with popular and influential online figures on social media. This change in the structure of authority has given rise to a new dynamic in which the popularity of content can determine its legitimacy, often without scientific verification. Therefore, Muslims need to improve their evaluative skills to assess the credibility of sources based on scientific competence and preaching ethics. (Nurpriatna dkk., t.t).

In this context, the concept of cyber religion has emerged as a new paradigm that describes how religion is practiced in the virtual world. This phenomenon is not only about the symbolic representation of religion, but also reflects a shift in social and spiritual interactions in the digital age. Research shows that digital spaces enable new forms of religious practice that are not limited by physical space, but also change the way people interact with teachings, clerics, and communities. (Habibi Malik, 2021).

The digitalization of religion also has significant implications for learning environments and individual spiritual interpretation. Learning patterns that rely heavily on online sources may accelerate access to information; however, without critical guidance, such reliance can potentially lead to misinterpretation or superficial understanding. Therefore, it is essential to integrate digital religious education into both

formal and non-formal curricula, emphasizing the development of critical thinking skills in engaging with digital content. (Shofa dkk., 2025).

An analysis of current literature trends indicates that digital transformation has also influenced the way Muslims prioritize their daily religious practices. Numerous digital contents promote brief acts of worship or “quick religious tips” that attract attention but often fail to reflect the depth and comprehensiveness of the teachings. Such approaches are frequently favored by users seeking digital convenience; however, they pose the risk of fostering an instant and superficial understanding of religion without adequate contextual comprehension. (Syafaah dkk., 2024).

Moreover, the digitalization of religion has generated the phenomenon of commercially oriented or “pop Islamic” content, in which religious messages are blended with marketing strategies or entertainment formats. The literature indicates that such content may shape a consumeristic perception of religion, thereby necessitating that believers equip themselves with critical literacy to assess whether these messages genuinely align with the authentic values of Islam. (Ichwan dkk., 2024).

Within the sphere of da‘wah content, innovative forms of religious practice have also emerged, such as online muroja‘ah (Qur’anic revision), digital waqf for Qur’an distribution, and even virtual substitutes for ‘umrah, reflecting a negotiation between online and offline religious spaces. Research suggests that these practices signify a substantial shift in the modes through which worship and religious charity are performed, carrying social and spiritual implications that warrant further examination within the framework of digital ethics. (Syafaah dkk., 2024).

D. Conclusion

The digital era has brought significant transformation to the religious practices of Muslim communities. Acts of worship, religious gatherings, Qur'anic recitations (*khatmil Qur'an*), and tafsir studies are no longer confined to physical spaces but are increasingly conducted online through social media, applications, and various digital platforms. This transformation creates broader opportunities for participation and rapid access to religious information; however, it also presents challenges related to the quality of understanding, the risk of superficial spiritual experiences, and the shifting of religious authority from traditional scholars to popular online figures.

The most pressing challenges in the digital age include the spread of hoaxes, disinformation, and manipulative religious content, which may lead to identity fragmentation, social conflict, and the oversimplification of religious messages. Digital religious literacy becomes essential in addressing these phenomena, particularly the ability to assess the credibility of sources, verify information, and critically understand the context of religious texts. Islamic education and digitally oriented da'wah strategies grounded in ethics, scholarship, and critical awareness are crucial instruments in equipping younger generations to confront digital challenges while effectively utilizing its opportunities.

Thus, the digital era presents both opportunities and risks for Muslim communities. The responsible use of digital spaces requires the integration of digital literacy, knowledge-based da'wah strategies, and adaptive religious education. Only through such a holistic approach can Muslims navigate religious practice, religious identity, and da'wah content in the virtual sphere responsibly, critically, and in alignment with the substantive values of Islam.

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