The Role of Social Media in the Formation of Young Generation's Islamic Identity: A Systematic Review of Islamic Lifestyle Trends

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Abstract: This study aims to examine the role of social media in the formation of young people's Islamic identity through a library research approach with an integrative review design. This study reviews literature from 2015 to 2024 obtained through Google Scholar, Scispace, DOAJ, and Scopus databases. The study results show that social media plays a dual role as a space for spiritual expression and a field of contestation of Islamic ideology. Young Muslims use digital platforms to shape and visualize their religious identity through Islamic content, symbols and lifestyle narratives. On the other hand, social media has also become a site of rivalry between progressive and conservative Islamic ideologies, raising issues of authority and authenticity of Islamic representations. Thematic analysis identifies that online movements such as #IndonesiaTanpaJIL reflect a strategy of digitizing Islamic values combined with popular culture. The findings confirm that social media functions as a new public space that enables the transformation of Islamic identity while presenting ethical and sociological challenges. This study recommends the need for Islamic digital literacy as a strategic approach in shaping an adaptive and reflective Muslim community in the digital era.

Keywords: Islamic Identity, Social Media, Young Generation, Islamic Lifestyle, Integrative Review.

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A. INTRODUCTION

Spiritual experience is an important aspect of religious practice, reflecting the depth of an individual's connection with the transcendental dimension. According to the Pew Research Center (2025), spiritual experiences can include feelings of inner peace, awe of the universe, and a deep connection with humanity. In the Islamic context, the Friday sermon serves as the primary medium for conveying religious messages and strengthening the spiritual bonds of the congregation. However, with the development of digital technology, the form of sermon delivery has been transformed, allowing worshipers to access it virtually. This raises the question of how this change in medium affects the quality of the congregation's spiritual experience.

A study by Robinson-Neal (2008) showed that direct participation in worship provides a more profound spiritual experience compared to virtual participation. This is due to the social interaction, physical atmosphere, and more intense emotional engagement in live worship. Meanwhile, Grayson (2017) found that worshipers who physically attended worship reported higher levels of spiritual development compared to those who followed online. Another study

by the Pew Research Center (2023) indicated that despite the popularity of virtual religious services, many worshipers still feel that physical attendance provides a more fulfilling experience.

On the other hand, a study by Laflamme (2022) showed that millennials feel that digital religious practices enrich their faith experience, allowing more flexible and personalized access. Research by Pew Research Center (2023) also found that around 43% of adults in the US regularly attend religious services either in person or virtually, indicating significant adoption of digital formats. Additionally, a study by Academia.edu (2020) suggested that virtual spaces can facilitate unique spiritual experiences, albeit different from physical ones.

Research by Robinson-Neal (2008) highlights that although virtual worship can strengthen spiritual connections, there are concerns about the lack of depth of experience compared to physical worship. Grayson (2017) also notes that online worshipers may face challenges in building the same community and engagement as in live worship. However, a study by Pew Research Center (2023) shows that virtual religious services remain a popular choice for many worshipers, especially during the pandemic.

Usuli Institute provides live streaming of Friday sermons, enabling worshippers who cannot physically attend to remain engaged in worship. This practice shows that virtual khutbahs can be an effective alternative, especially for those who are isolated or have limited mobility. However, more research is needed to understand how this format affects the spiritual experience of worshipers compared to physical attendance.

From the above review, it appears that both physical and virtual participation in the Friday sermon have their own advantages and disadvantages in facilitating spiritual experiences. However, there is a gap in the literature regarding a direct comparison between these two formats in the context of the Friday sermon. Most studies focus on religious services in general, without highlighting the specifics of the Friday sermon in the Islamic tradition. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the transformation of pilgrims' spiritual experience through live streaming of Friday sermons, by comparing physical and virtual participation, in order to understand the implications of this change in medium on the quality of pilgrims' spiritual experience.

B. METHOD

This study uses a library research approach with an integrative review design, which is a literature review method that aims to systematically integrate and synthesize relevant empirical and conceptual research results. This approach was chosen because it is able to explore the complexity of pilgrims' spiritual experiences from various perspectives and contexts, both through quantitative, qualitative studies, and theoretical reviews. In line with the guidelines developed by Whittemore and Knafl (2005), integrative review allows researchers to identify, evaluate and combine diverse research results to build a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study.

The data sources in this study were obtained from several reputable scientific databases, namely Google Scholar, Scispace, DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals), and Scopus. These sources were chosen because they provide open and broad access to relevant academic

articles in the fields of Islamic communication, contemporary Islamic studies, and digital communication technology. The inclusion criteria in this study included articles that: (1) were published between 2015-2024, (2) addressed the topic of spiritual experiences in the context of online and offline worship, and (3) were written in Indonesian or English. Meanwhile, the exclusion criteria included articles that were not available in full-text, non-academic popular articles, and publications that were not peer-reviewed.

The literature search process was conducted systematically using keywords such as: spiritual experience, virtual religious worship, Jum'ah sermon, Islamic online khutbah, and digital faith practices. These keywords were combined using boolean operators (AND, OR) to obtain relevant results. Each article found was recorded and classified based on topic relevance, publication type, and journal source. After the initial collection process, screening was conducted using abstracts and main keywords, to ensure suitability to the research objectives. Successful articles were then analyzed in greater depth through a thorough reading of the text.

The data analysis method was conducted through a thematic approach, by identifying patterns, key findings, and main themes from each of the selected articles. This stage includes the process of coding, categorizing, and thematizing, to find similarities and differences in the narratives of pilgrims' spiritual experiences, both in physical and virtual formats. To ensure validity and reliability, the researcher applied the principle of source triangulation by comparing different types of studies (empirical, conceptual, review) as well as noting and evaluating the methodological quality of each article. In addition, content validity was strengthened through cross-reading by two expert researchers in the field of Islamic communication and qualitative methods.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Social Media as a Space for Expression and Negotiation of Islamic Identity

Social media serves as a dynamic platform for the expression and negotiation of Islamic identity, particularly in diverse contexts such as North America and Southeast Asia. It enables Muslims to navigate their identities amidst cultural challenges and societal perceptions, fostering both community building and activism. Social media platforms allow Muslims to articulate their identities in ways that counter mainstream narratives which often depict them as outsiders (Kamal, 2022). In this space, influencers and content creators play a crucial role by reshaping Islamic practices and offering modern interpretations of faith that resonate with younger generations (Zaid et al., 2022).

Furthermore, online environments facilitate the formation of communities that transcend ethnic and generational boundaries, providing a platform for shared experiences and collective action, especially in the face of issues like Islamophobia (Kamal, 2022). Movements such as #IndonesiaTanpaJIL highlight the capacity of social media to mobilize urban youth through Islamic discourse, blending religious convictions with expressions of national identity (Ardhianto, 2017).

However, the digital domain is not without its tensions. Religious leaders often approach new media cautiously, concerned about potential conflicts between traditional values and online expressions (Rahman, 2023). Representation and authority within digital Islam are

increasingly contested, as social media can amplify both progressive and conservative voices, raising critical questions regarding the authenticity and legitimacy of such expressions (Lengauer, 2016). While social media fosters diversity in Islamic identity formation, it simultaneously reflects the ongoing negotiation of faith in a rapidly evolving digital age, making it a site of both opportunity and contestation in the lives of Muslim youth.

2.   Digital Islamic Lifestyle: From Hashtags to Influencers

Social media has emerged as a pivotal platform for the expression and negotiation of Islamic identity, offering a space where individuals and communities can explore, articulate, and redefine their religious and cultural selves. This phenomenon is particularly significant in the context of globalization, where Muslims across the world grapple with issues of identity, community, and belonging. The following sections explore how social media serves as a dynamic space for Islamic identity construction, negotiation, and expression, drawing on insights from various regions and contexts.

Social media platforms have become integral to the expression of Islamic identity, offering a wide range of tools and spaces for religious practice, self-presentation, and community building. In North America, for instance, Muslims utilize platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and even dating apps to navigate their dual identities as both Muslim and American/Canadian (Kamal, 2022). Similarly, in Indonesia, urban youth employ social media to articulate Islamic identity through popular culture, blending religious discourse with nationalism and citizenship (Ardhianto, 2017).

The diversity of platforms and practices is evident in the Gulf Region, where social media influencers like Salama Mohamed and Khalid Al Ameri use Instagram and YouTube to reimagine Muslim identities based on a global lifestyle, challenging traditional religious authorities (Zaid et al., 2022). These influencers often combine religious teachings with modern aesthetics and storytelling, creating a unique space for young Muslims to engage with their faith in a contemporary context.

Humor has also emerged as a powerful tool for expressing and negotiating Islamic identity on social media. The hashtag #muslimcandyheartrejects, for example, was used on Twitter to construct and reinforce a Muslim diaspora identity, combining humor with critiques of both Muslim community practices and the challenges of living in non-Muslim countries (Wills & Fecteau, 2016). This example highlights the ways in which social media can facilitate cohesion and tension relief within Muslim communities, while also providing a space for self-reflection and critique.

Counter-Publics and Resistance: Social media has enabled the emergence of counter-publics, where marginalized groups can challenge dominant discourses and negotiate their identities. In Indonesia, the #IndonesiaTanpaJIL movement used social media to propagate a conservative Islamic ideology, appropriating urban pop culture to articulate notions of nationalism and citizenship (Ardhianto, 2017). This movement demonstrates how social media can be a site of resistance, where Islamic identity is negotiated in response to perceived threats to religious values.

3. Virtual social interaction plays a significant role in strengthening the Islamic

Community by providing platforms for engagement, identity expression, and community building. The internet and social media have facilitated the creation of virtual spaces where Muslims can connect, share experiences, and reinforce their religious and cultural identities. These platforms offer opportunities for minority groups, such as Latinx Muslims, to express their unique identities and needs within the broader Islamic community, fostering a sense of belonging and representation (Medina, 2024).

Virtual discussions have proven effective in enhancing engagement and interaction among Islamic education pre-service teachers, as seen in Kuwait. These discussions promote peer cooperation, communication skills, and constructive feedback, although they require careful moderation to ensure balanced participation (Alkandari, 2024). Online learning environments have become crucial for Islamic education, allowing for the dissemination of religious knowledge and fostering a sense of community among learners.

Social media platforms like Instagram enable millennial Muslim youth to express their religious identities through symbols and content that resonate with their peers. This virtual interaction helps bridge differences in religious perceptions and fosters a relaxed, approachable image of Islam(Maryani et al., 2024). The creation of virtual communities allows for the hybridization of ethnic and religious identities, as seen in the Latinx-Muslim community, which uses cyberspaces to assert their identity and connect with others(Medina, 2024).

The digital era has highlighted the interplay between economic, political, and religious factors within Islamic communities. Virtual spaces serve as arenas for discussing and negotiating these dynamics, influencing community development and policy-making(Anam, 2023). While virtual spaces offer significant opportunities for strengthening the Islamic community, they also present challenges. The potential for dominant voices to overshadow others in discussions and the need for effective moderation are critical considerations. Additionally, while virtual communities can enhance identity and engagement, they cannot fully replace the depth of face-to-face interactions and the traditional communal aspects of Islamic life (Alkandari, 2024) (Choi, 2023).

4. Tantangan dan Ambiguitas dalam Pembentukan Identitas Keislaman Digital

The formation of digital Islamic identity presents various challenges and ambiguities, primarily stemming from the intersection of traditional values and modern digital platforms. As Islamic identity is deeply rooted in physical and communal contexts, the transition to digital spaces often leads to conflicts and a cautious approach among religious leaders and educators. This complexity is further compounded by the overwhelming amount of information available online, which can dilute the quality of knowledge and distract from core Islamic teachings.

he formation of Islamic identity in the digital era presents several challenges. One significant issue is the conflict with traditional values; Islamic identity, which has historically been rooted in physical and communal spaces, often clashes with the fluid and decentralized nature of digital media. This has led to a cautious adoption of digital platforms by religious leaders (Rahman, 2023). Additionally, the overwhelming abundance of information online

poses difficulties for users in discerning credible sources, thereby threatening the preservation of authentic Islamic teachings (Mardiya & Sofa, 2024). Exposure to harmful or misleading content further endangers the moral and ethical foundations of Islamic identity, underscoring the need for effective filtering systems and guidance (Gultom et al., 2025).

Despite these challenges, the digital age also offers valuable opportunities for the development of Islamic identity. Digital platforms grant unprecedented access to Islamic knowledge and educational resources, enabling a broader and deeper understanding of the faith (Mardiya & Sofa, 2024). Furthermore, technology facilitates interactive and engaging learning experiences that can support character formation in accordance with Islamic values (Gultom et al., 2025). The strategic integration of Islamic principles into the management of educational institutions also allows these organizations to preserve their religious identity while adapting to the demands of digital globalization (Jabbar et al., 2025). Ultimately, with thoughtful and intentional use, digital technology can serve as a powerful tool for fostering a well-informed and morally grounded Muslim community.

D. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Social media has become a complex and dynamic space in the formation of young people's Islamic identity. On the one hand, digital platforms allow for the expression of diverse progressive and conservative Islamic values, providing a democratic space for identity negotiation and resistance to the dominance of certain discourses. However, on the other hand, social media also raises issues of authority, authenticity and fragmentation in the representation of Islam, which can lead to polarization among Muslim communities. In Indonesia, phenomena such as the #IndonesiaTanpaJIL movement show how Islamic identities are strategically constructed through social media, often by utilizing symbols of popular culture to convey ideological messages. While virtual spaces can expand religious participation and form cohesive online communities, the limitations of physical interaction and the challenges of content moderation remain obstacles to building an inclusive and authentic understanding of Islam. Therefore, the utilization of social media in the formation of Islamic identity must be accompanied by critical awareness and a strategic approach that considers aspects of values, ethics, and community sustainability.

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