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## ISLAMIZATION OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION: INTEGRATING ISLAMIC VALUES INTO MODERN EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

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**Abstract:** *Globalization has accelerated the penetration of secular knowledge frameworks into Muslim-majority societies, intensifying a longstanding crisis of bifurcated education that separates Islamic sciences from modern disciplines. This study examines the concept of *nilainisasi ilmu* conceptualized as Islamization of Knowledge in line with al-Faruqi's *tawhidic* epistemology as a strategic response to this crisis, with specific focus on its operationalization within Indonesian Islamic higher education. Employing a qualitative library research design, this study draws on 50 Scopus-indexed sources to synthesize theoretical frameworks across Islamic epistemology, character education, curriculum integration, and digital pedagogy. Three core findings emerge: (1) the Islamization of Knowledge framework provides a robust epistemological scaffold for integrating Islamic values across all academic disciplines; (2) value internalization operates through cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions simultaneously and requires educator exemplarity as its essential pedagogical condition; and (3) the integration of Islamic values into modern learning enhances students' moral identity and resilience in the face of globalization's cultural pressures. The study contributes a synthesized Integrative-Islamic Pedagogy Model (IIPM) and proposes a research agenda for empirical implementation studies in Indonesian UIN contexts.*

**Keywords:** *Islamization of knowledge; value internalization; Islamic education; globalization; character formation; integrative pedagogy; UIN Indonesia*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The relationship between knowledge, values, and social order has occupied the center of educational philosophy across civilizations. In

the contemporary era, this relationship has been subjected to an unprecedented stress-test: the accelerating forces of economic globalization, digital connectivity, and secular epistemology have simultaneously expanded the reach of modern knowledge and weakened the moral-spiritual frameworks through which communities have historically given that knowledge direction and purpose (Tawil & Cougoureux, 2013). For Muslim-majority societies, and Indonesia in particular, this dynamic presents a distinctive challenge. With the world's largest Muslim population and a rapidly modernizing higher education system, Indonesia stands at the intersection of global knowledge flows and deep local Islamic traditions making it an especially productive site for examining how Islamic values can be systematically integrated into modern educational practice (Azra, 2014; Muhaimin, 2012).

The statistical dimensions of this challenge are significant. Indonesia's higher education sector comprises over 4,500 institutions, of which approximately 700 operate under the auspices of the Ministry of Religious Affairs as Islamic higher education institutions (*perguruan tinggi keagamaan Islam*), including 23 State Islamic Universities (*Universitas Islam Negeri/UIN*) (Kemenag RI, 2022). These institutions have explicitly committed to integrating Islamic values across all academic disciplines a mandate operationalized through their institutional transformation from Institutes (*IAIN*) to Universities (*UIN*). Yet empirical evidence consistently documents a gap between this aspiration and classroom reality: students demonstrate proficiency in Islamic rituals while exhibiting declining moral comportment, academic integrity, and civic responsibility what scholars have termed the 'character deficit' paradox of Indonesian higher education (Huda dkk., 2017; Suyatno dkk., 2019).

The scholarly literature has responded to this challenge from multiple directions. Al-Faruqi's (1982) foundational *Islamization of Knowledge* project established the epistemological framework for integrating Islamic worldview with modern disciplines (Al-Faruqi, 1982). Subsequent scholars have refined this framework for specific Indonesian contexts: Amin Abdullah's (2006) integrative-

interconnective model reconceptualized the relationship between Islamic and general sciences as dialogical rather than hierarchical (Abdullah, 2006); Muhaimin's (2012) curriculum integration framework developed practical strategies for value embedding in Islamic university contexts (Muhaimin, 2012); and more recent work has examined digital-era adaptations of these frameworks (Huda dkk., 2019; Zain dkk., 2022). However, three significant gaps persist in this literature: (1) insufficient synthesis of contemporary Scopus-indexed empirical evidence on effective implementation mechanisms; (2) limited attention to the psychomotor and affective dimensions of value internalization as distinct from cognitive transmission; and (3) absence of an integrated pedagogical model that connects epistemological foundations with classroom practice and character outcomes.

This study addresses these gaps through a systematic qualitative synthesis of current scholarly evidence. Three research questions guide the inquiry: (1) How does the Islamization of Knowledge framework conceptualize the relationship between Islamic values and modern disciplines, and what epistemological principles govern this integration? (2) Through what pedagogical mechanisms can Islamic value internalization be operationalized across cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions in contemporary learning environments? (3) What evidence exists for the relationship between Islamic value integration in education and the development of student moral identity and character resilience in the context of globalization? The study's central argument is that *nilainisasi ilmu*, properly understood as a pedagogical-epistemological practice rather than merely a curricular label, constitutes the most contextually appropriate and theoretically coherent framework for addressing the character crisis in Indonesian Islamic higher education.

The Islamization of Knowledge movement, launched by Ismail Raji al-Faruqi through the International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT) in the early 1980s, represents the most systematic attempt to articulate a comprehensive Islamic epistemological alternative to secular Western knowledge frameworks. Al-Faruqi's (1982)

foundational argument rests on three premises: that knowledge is never value-neutral (Al-Faruqi, 1982); that the bifurcation of the Muslim educational system into 'religious' and 'secular' tracks produces intellectual schizophrenia and ethical fragmentation; and that the integration of the tawhidic worldview – the recognition of divine unity as the organizing principle of all knowledge – into every academic discipline constitutes both an intellectual necessity and a religious obligation. This framework has been extensively analyzed and critiqued in subsequent scholarship, with Wan Daud (1998) extending it through the concept of Islamization of the human sciences and Nasr (2010) situating it within the broader tradition of Islamic intellectual history (Nasr, 2010; Wan Daud, 1998).

Contemporary Scopus-indexed scholarship has both affirmed and productively complicated al-Faruqi's framework. Nasr et al. (2021) demonstrate that the tawhidic epistemological principle remains generative for contemporary curriculum design, particularly in STEM fields where the integration of ethical and metaphysical dimensions has been neglected (Nasr dkk., 2021). Rahman et al. (2020) conducted an empirical study across five Malaysian and Indonesian Islamic universities (Rahman dkk., 2020), finding that faculty who had received explicit training in Islamization of Knowledge principles demonstrated significantly higher integration behaviors in classroom teaching ( $r = 0.67$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Critically, Hashim and Langgulong (2008) distinguish between 'surface integration' – the addition of Islamic references to secular course content – and 'deep integration' – the restructuring of epistemic assumptions, research questions, and evaluative criteria in accordance with Islamic principles (Hashim & Langgulong, 2008). This distinction is central to understanding why many UIN integration initiatives have produced the former without achieving the latter.

The Indonesian institutionalization of Islamization of Knowledge through the UIN system has been analyzed extensively. Azra (2014) documents the historical trajectory from IAIN to UIN, arguing that the transformation was driven simultaneously by the internal logic of Islamic educational reform and by state-level policy decisions shaped by New Order and post-Reformasi educational

politics. Muhaimin (2012) provides the most detailed analysis of curriculum integration at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, identifying four integration levels: (1) parallel Islamic and general subjects taught separately; (2) complementary Islamic perspectives added to general courses; (3) interdisciplinary joint projects between Islamic and general faculties; and (4) transdisciplinary fundamental restructuring of disciplinary frameworks on Islamic epistemological principles. Most Indonesian UINs currently operate at levels 1 and 2, with aspiration toward level 3, and minimal achievement of level 4 (Khoiruddin, 2019; Wahid, 2021).

The relationship between globalization and education has generated a substantial and contested literature. Stromquist and Monkman (2014) distinguish between globalization's economic, political, and cultural dimensions, arguing that each generates distinct educational pressures (Stromquist & Monkman, 2014). The cultural dimension is most directly relevant here: the global diffusion of secular, individualist, and consumerist values through digital media platforms has created what Ritzer (2011) terms 'McDonaldization' of culture the standardization of value frameworks that crowds out local and religious alternatives (Ritzer, 2011). For Muslim students navigating globalized digital environments, this cultural pressure is documented empirically: Rahmatullah et al. (2021) found that Indonesian Muslim university students who reported high social media usage showed significantly lower scores on measures of Islamic moral identity compared to low-usage peers ( $\beta = -0.31$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), though this relationship was moderated by Islamic education quality (Rahmatullah dkk., 2021).

The specifically Indonesian dimensions of this challenge have been extensively analyzed. Woodward et al. (2012) document the complex interplay between global Salafi influences, local Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah traditions, and secular nationalist frameworks in shaping Indonesian Muslim identity creating what they term a 'pluralist pressure' on Islamic educational institutions to serve multiple, sometimes conflicting, identity formation functions (Woodward dkk., 2012). Hasyim (2015) argues that Indonesian Islamic

universities occupy a structurally paradoxical position: mandated by the state to produce both 'globally competitive' graduates (aligned with secular economic development goals) and 'Islamically grounded' individuals (aligned with religious formation goals), with minimal guidance on how to resolve these tensions when they conflict. This structural paradox directly motivates the present study's focus on integrated pedagogical frameworks (Hasyim, 2015).

Recent scholarship has highlighted the digital dimension of globalization's challenge to Islamic education with particular urgency. Huda et al. (2019) document how digital native students in Indonesian Islamic universities increasingly access knowledge through algorithmic recommendation systems that privilege engagement over epistemic quality, making it structurally difficult for educators to establish the depth of engagement required for genuine value internalization (Huda dkk., 2019). Zain et al. (2022) found that 73% of Indonesian Islamic university students reported that their primary source of Islamic knowledge was social media rather than formal coursework a finding with profound implications for the design of value integration curricula. These digital dynamics suggest that Islamization of Knowledge frameworks developed in the pre-digital era require significant adaptation for contemporary implementation.

Educational psychology has long distinguished between three domains of learning objectives: cognitive (knowledge and understanding), affective (attitudes, values, and dispositions), and psychomotor (skills and behavioral habits) a taxonomy originating with Bloom et al. (1956) and subsequently refined by Krathwohl et al. (1964) for the affective domain (Bloom dkk., 1956; Krathwohl dkk., 1964). The application of this taxonomy to Islamic value education has been systematically developed in the Indonesian context. Suyatno et al. (2019) conducted a large-scale survey (N = 1,240) across 12 Islamic universities in Indonesia, finding that most value education initiatives targeted cognitive dimensions almost exclusively, with affective and psychomotor dimensions receiving minimal intentional attention. This cognitive bias produced students who could articulate Islamic moral principles accurately but demonstrated low behavioral consistency in

applying them a finding consistent with the broader character education literature (Berkowitz & Bier, 2007; Lickona, 1991).

The affective dimension of Islamic value internalization has received growing scholarly attention. Ramayulis (2015) argues that affective transformation the genuine adoption of Islamic values as personally meaningful rather than externally imposed requires what he terms 'experiential resonance': pedagogical moments in which abstract Islamic principles connect viscerally with students' lived experiences and emotional realities (Ramayulis, 2015). Empirical support for this argument comes from Kamaruddin (2012), who found that Islamic value education programs incorporating service-learning components (designed to create affective resonance through direct engagement with community need), (Kamaruddin, 2012) produced significantly stronger moral identity outcomes than lecture-based programs ( $d = 0.74$ ). More recent work by Anwar et al. (2021) demonstrates that mindfulness-based Islamic contemplative practices (tafakkur and muraqabah) integrated into university curricula significantly enhanced affective moral engagement among Indonesian Muslim students (Anwar dkk., 2021).

The psychomotor or habituation dimension has deep roots in Islamic pedagogical tradition. The concept of ta'wid (habituation to virtuous practice) constitutes a cornerstone of classical Islamic education theory, articulated systematically by al-Ghazali in the *Ihya Ulum al-Din* (Al-Ghazali, 2005) and subsequently developed by Ibn Khaldun's analysis of moral character formation through repetitive practice (Tibawi, 1972). Contemporary educational neuroscience provides empirical grounding for this classical insight: Duhigg's (2012) habit formation research (Duhigg, 2012) and Baumeister and Tierney's (2011) ego depletion studies both support the argument that consistent behavioral practice is necessary for moral character development, complementing rather than replacing cognitive understanding and affective commitment (Baumeister & Tierney, 2011). The practical implication for Islamic education design is that value internalization

curricula must incorporate structured behavioral practice opportunities not merely cognitive instruction and affective appeals.

Across diverse educational traditions, the character and exemplary conduct of teachers have been identified as the primary vehicle of moral and value transmission surpassing curriculum content, institutional environment, and explicit instruction in its impact on student character formation (Berkowitz & Bier, 2007; Lickona & Davidson, 2005). This finding resonates deeply with Islamic pedagogical tradition, in which the concept of *uswah hasanah* (beautiful example) derived from the Quranic characterization of the Prophet Muhammad as the exemplary model (Q. 33:21) establishes teacher exemplarity as the pedagogical foundation of Islamic moral education (Nata, 2012; Ramayulis, 2015).

Recent empirical research has substantiated and refined this principle in Indonesian Islamic university contexts. Fathurrohman et al. (2022) found that students' perceptions of faculty moral exemplarity operationalized through observed consistency between faculty's teaching of Islamic values and their own behavioral conduct was the strongest predictor of student Islamic moral identity development ( $\beta = 0.52$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), exceeding curriculum quality ( $\beta = 0.28$ ), institutional environment ( $\beta = 0.19$ ), and peer influence ( $\beta = 0.23$ ) (Fathurrohman dkk., 2022). Importantly, Mahfud et al. (2021) demonstrate that this effect operates through social learning mechanisms: students engage in active observation and modeling of faculty conduct, particularly during informal interactions outside formal classroom settings (Mahfud dkk., 2021). These findings carry direct implications for faculty development policy in Indonesian UINs suggesting that institutional investments in faculty Islamic character formation are likely to yield higher student character development returns than equivalent investments in curriculum redesign alone.

The digital era has introduced new complexities into the educator exemplarity dynamic. Al-Khateeb (2020) documents how Indonesian Muslim university students increasingly evaluate faculty Islamic authenticity not merely through face-to-face observation but through

faculty social media presence creating new arenas of exemplarity that were absent from classical Islamic pedagogical frameworks (Al-Khateeb, 2020). Maulana et al. (2022) found that faculty who maintained consistent Islamic values expression across both classroom and digital contexts were rated significantly higher on perceived authenticity by students, with corresponding positive effects on student value internalization (Maulana dkk., 2022). This 'digital exemplarity' dimension represents an important extension of the classical *uswah hasanah* concept for contemporary implementation.

The scholarly literature on character education spans multiple disciplines and traditions, but a core empirical consensus has emerged: character is not merely taught but formed through sustained practice in value-consistent environments, relationships, and institutions (Berkowitz & Bier, 2007; Davidson dkk., 2014). Islamic character education scholarship has both drawn on and contributed to this consensus. Huda et al. (2017) systematically reviewed 45 empirical studies of Islamic character education programs in Southeast Asian contexts, finding that programs integrating four elements explicit Islamic value instruction, moral exemplarity, structured practice opportunities, and community reinforcement produced the strongest and most durable character outcomes (Huda dkk., 2017). This finding provides empirical support for a multi-dimensional integration model and aligns with the psychological literature on moral identity development (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Hardy dkk., 2014).

The concept of moral identity the degree to which moral traits are central to one's self-concept has emerged as a critical mediating variable in the Islamic character education literature. Mustafa and Nordin (2019) adapted Aquino and Reed's (2002) moral identity scale for Malaysian and Indonesian Muslim university students, finding strong psychometric properties and demonstrating that Islamic moral identity mediates the relationship between Islamic education quality and pro-social behavioral outcomes (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Mustafa & Nordin, 2019). Students with strong Islamic moral identity showed greater behavioral consistency between stated Islamic values and

observable conduct – a finding that directly addresses the 'character deficit' paradox documented by Suyatno et al. (2019). Importantly, Mohd Noor et al. (2020) found that Islamic moral identity strength significantly moderated the negative effects of high social media exposure on Islamic behavioral outcomes, suggesting that identity development is a key protective mechanism against globalization's cultural pressures.

## **2. METHOD**

### **a. Research Design and Paradigmatic Positioning**

This research employs a qualitative digital ethnographic methodology positioned within an interpretive epistemological framework. Digital ethnography, adapted from traditional ethnographic approaches in anthropology, constitutes a methodological approach well-suited to investigating social practices, communicative patterns, and meaning-making processes occurring within digital environments. Ethnographic orientation prioritizes sustained engagement with research participants and contexts, attention to emic (insider) perspectives and interpretive frameworks, and commitment to documenting the complexity and particularity of social practices rather than reducing them to pre-determined analytical categories. The digital adaptation of ethnographic methodology involves extending these principles to online and digitally-mediated contexts while attending carefully to the distinctive characteristics of digital communication environments: their scalability, asynchronicity, and technical mediation. The research is grounded within an interpretivist philosophical orientation recognizing that social phenomena, including religious communication and audience interpretation, are fundamentally shaped by the meanings and interpretations that

participants themselves construct. This philosophical positioning explicitly rejects positivistic frameworks seeking to identify universal causal laws in favor of approaches seeking to understand how meanings are constructed within specific social and cultural contexts. Within this interpretivist framework, qualitative research methods constitute the appropriate methodological approach, as qualitative approaches prioritize depth of understanding, attention to context and complexity, and generation of theoretically-rich descriptions grounded in empirical observation and participant perspective.

#### **b. Literature Search and Source Selection**

The primary database for source identification was Scopus (Elsevier), supplemented by Web of Science and Google Scholar for identification of relevant grey literature. Search terms were organized in three clusters: (1) epistemological terms (Islamization of knowledge, Islamic epistemology, tawhidic education, *nilainisasi ilmu*); (2) pedagogical terms (value internalization, Islamic character education, moral identity, integrative curriculum, Islamic higher education); and (3) contextual terms (globalization and education, Indonesian Islamic university, UIN, digital Islamic education). Boolean operators were used to combine terms within and across clusters. Initial searches yielded 312 potentially relevant sources; after application of inclusion criteria (Scopus-indexed, English or Indonesian language, published 2008–2024, directly relevant to research questions), 50 primary sources were retained for systematic analysis, supplemented by 15 foundational classical and theoretical texts. Excluded sources were primarily those addressing

peripheral topics (e.g., Islamic finance education, Quranic recitation pedagogy) without direct relevance to the core research questions.

### **c. Data Analysis**

Analysis followed a three-stage protocol derived from Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic synthesis approach, adapted for Islamic educational library research by Kusaeri and Aditomo (2019). Stage 1 (Data Condensation): each source was systematically annotated using a standardized coding framework derived deductively from the three research questions and inductively from emergent themes in the data. Stage 2 (Data Display): coded themes were organized into cross-source matrices, enabling identification of convergent findings, productive tensions, and gaps across the literature. Stage 3 (Conclusion Drawing): interpretive synthesis was conducted through abductive reasoning, moving iteratively between theoretical frameworks and empirical findings to generate the Integrative-Islamic Pedagogy Model (IIPM) as this study's primary theoretical contribution (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Kusaeri & Aditomo, 2019). Trustworthiness was established through systematic audit trail documentation, cross-researcher verification of coding, and member checking with two senior Islamic education scholars at UIN Suska Riau.

## **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **a. The Epistemological Architecture of Islamization of Knowledge**

The systematic analysis of 50 Scopus-indexed sources reveals a convergent finding: the Islamization of Knowledge

framework provides a theoretically coherent and educationally productive epistemological architecture for integrating Islamic values into modern academic disciplines, provided that it is understood as a deep restructuring of epistemic assumptions rather than a surface-level addition of Islamic references to secular content. This finding confirms and extends the distinction drawn by Hashim and Langgung (2008) between surface and deep integration, providing empirical grounding for what was previously an intuitive scholarly claim (Hashim & Langgung, 2008).

The tawhidic epistemological principle the recognition of divine unity as the organizing framework of all knowledge operates in classroom practice through three mechanisms identified across the analyzed literature. First, through ontological reframing: disciplines are introduced not as value-neutral descriptions of an autonomous secular reality, but as human attempts to understand a divinely created and sustained cosmos (Nasr, 2010; Nasr dkk., 2021). Second, through axiological integration: each discipline's evaluative criteria what counts as good research, valid evidence, and significant findings are examined in relation to Islamic ethical principles, creating space for critical engagement with secular disciplinary assumptions (Khoiruddin, 2019; Rahman dkk., 2020). Third, through teleological orientation: disciplinary knowledge is consistently situated in relation to its ultimate purpose the service of *maslahah* (human welfare) and the fulfillment of the divine mandate of *khalifah* (stewardship) preventing the fragmentation of

specialized expertise from broader human responsibility (Wahid, 2021; Wan Daud, 1998).

These findings carry significant implications for Indonesian UIN curriculum design. The predominant 'parallel' integration model in which Islamic studies courses are required additions to otherwise conventionally secular disciplinary programs is insufficient for achieving genuine Islamization of Knowledge. The evidence supports Muhaimin's (2012) 'transdisciplinary' model as the aspirational target, with 'interdisciplinary' integration as the achievable medium-term goal for most Indonesian UINs. Critically, the analyzed literature consistently identifies faculty epistemological formation rather than curriculum redesign alone as the primary lever for achieving deeper integration levels. Rahman et al. (2020) estimate that faculty development in Islamization of Knowledge principles produces three times the classroom integration behaviors of equivalent investment in curriculum reform, a finding with direct policy implications for UIN resource allocation.

The so-what significance of this finding is epistemological and practical simultaneously. Epistemologically, it confirms that the character deficit paradox in Indonesian Islamic higher education is not primarily a motivational or disciplinary problem but an epistemological one: students have internalized the implicit message of bifurcated education that Islamic values belong to the religious domain, not the academic one and behave accordingly. Practically, it suggests that addressing the character deficit requires not stricter enforcement of Islamic behavioral codes but deeper

epistemological integration that makes Islamic values intrinsic to rather than extrinsic additions to all forms of academic learning.

### **b. Mechanisms of Islamic Value Internalization Across Learning Dimensions**

The second major finding concerns the pedagogical mechanisms through which Islamic value internalization operates across cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions. The analyzed literature reveals that effective value internalization requires simultaneous engagement across all three domains a finding that directly challenges the predominantly cognitive orientation of most Indonesian Islamic higher education value programs (Suyatno dkk., 2019). This multi-dimensional model constitutes the core of the Integrative-Islamic Pedagogy Model (IIPM) developed in this study.

At the cognitive dimension, Islamic value internalization requires more than memorization of Islamic ethical principles or recall of Quranic verses. The analyzed literature converges on critical Islamic reasoning the capacity to apply Islamic epistemological frameworks to novel disciplinary problems as the target cognitive competency. Anwar et al. (2021) demonstrate that problem-based learning assignments requiring students to analyze real-world ethical dilemmas from Islamic epistemic perspectives produce significantly greater cognitive integration than conventional lecture-based Islamic ethics courses (Anwar dkk., 2021). Rahmatullah et al. (2021) found that collaborative inquiry projects in which students research the Islamic dimensions of their major field of study produced the strongest gains in what they term

'disciplinary Islamic reasoning' the application of Islamic analytical frameworks within specific academic disciplines. These findings suggest a shift from content-transmission to competency-development as the organizing principle of cognitive-dimension value integration (Rahmatullah dkk., 2021).

At the affective dimension, the literature identifies three critical mechanisms: experiential resonance, relational attachment, and narrative engagement. Experiential resonance (Kamaruddin, 2012; Ramayulis, 2015) occurs when pedagogical experiences create emotional connections between abstract Islamic principles and students lived realities most effectively through service-learning, community engagement, and contemplative practices. Relational attachment refers to the formation of meaningful Islamic mentorship relationships between faculty and student's relationships that function as the primary vehicle for value transmission in classical Islamic pedagogical tradition (*suhbah*) and that empirical research confirms remain potent in contemporary university contexts (Fathurrohman dkk., 2022; Mahfud dkk., 2021). Narrative engagement involves the strategic use of Islamic exemplary narratives (*qisas*) and contemporary Muslim role model stories to create affective identification with Islamic moral ideals a mechanism with strong empirical support from moral psychology research on narrative identity (McAdams, 2013; Mustafa & Nordin, 2019).

At the psychomotor dimension, the *ta'wid* (habituation) principle provides the theoretical framework, supported by contemporary neuroscientific evidence on habit formation. The practical instantiation of this principle in university contexts

requires the design of structured behavioral practice opportunities embedded within regular academic routines: research integrity practices that enact Islamic honesty values, collaborative learning structures that practice Islamic consultation (*musyawarah*), and service-learning assignments that embody Islamic social responsibility. Huda et al. (2017) found that programs systematically integrating behavioral practice across multiple academic contexts produced character outcomes lasting beyond program completion a durability advantage not found in programs focusing on cognitive or affective dimensions alone (Huda dkk., 2017). This durability dimension is of particular practical importance given the character deficit paradox's manifestation as inconsistency between professed values and observed behavior.

The integration of these three dimensions within a coherent pedagogical framework constitutes the IIPM proposed by this study. The model specifies that effective Islamic value internalization requires: (a) epistemological groundwork establishing the tawhidic principle as the organizing framework for all disciplinary learning (cognitive foundation); (b) affective resonance creation through experiential, relational, and narrative pedagogical approaches (affective activation); (c) structured behavioral habituation through discipline-specific Islamic practice opportunities (psychomotor embedding); and (d) faculty exemplarity as the essential pedagogical condition that authenticates and sustains value transmission across all three dimensions. The model is explicitly non-linear: the four elements

operate simultaneously and mutually reinforce each other, rather than constituting a sequential instructional steps.

### **c. Islamic Value Integration and the Development of Student Moral Identity**

The third major finding concerns the relationship between Islamic value integration in education and the development of student moral identity and character resilience in the context of globalization. The analyzed literature provides convergent evidence that well-designed Islamic value integration programs those addressing cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions through the mechanisms identified in Finding 2 produce measurable improvements in Islamic moral identity and corresponding improvements in behavioral character outcomes. This finding confirms this study's central argument while specifying the conditions under which it holds.

The evidence for Islamic moral identity development as a mediating mechanism is particularly strong. Mustafa and Nordin (2019) demonstrate that Islamic moral identity fully mediates the relationship between Islamic education quality and Islamic behavioral outcomes meaning that Islamic education enhances behavioral character not directly but by first strengthening the centrality of Islamic values to students' self-concept, which in turn motivates behavioral consistency. Mohd Noor et al. (2020) extend this finding by demonstrating that Islamic moral identity moderates the negative effects of social media exposure on Islamic behavioral outcomes students with strong Islamic moral identity maintain Islamic behavioral standards despite high social media exposure, while those with weak Islamic moral identity show

significant behavioral deterioration (Mohd Noor dkk., 2020). This finding reframes the globalization-education relationship: globalization's threat to Islamic moral character is real but not deterministic; the strength of Islamic moral identity developed through quality Islamic education functions as a protective buffer.

The digital dimension of this finding deserves particular attention. Zain et al. (2022) document how Indonesian Islamic university students with high Islamic moral identity actively appropriate digital platforms as arenas for Islamic value expression and community participating in online Islamic study groups, following Islamic scholars' digital content, and using social media for Islamic da'wah (Zain dkk., 2022). This finding challenge's pessimistic framings of digital globalization as uniformly erosive of Islamic values, suggesting instead that digitally sophisticated Islamic moral identity formation could leverage globalization's digital infrastructure for Islamic value reinforcement rather than experiencing it as a threat. The educational implication is significant: *nilainisasi ilmu* in the digital era requires not just the protection of students from digital cultural pressures but the formation of Islamic digital agency the capacity to navigate and utilize digital environments in accordance with Islamic values.

The so-what significance of these findings is both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, they demonstrate that the relationship between globalization and Islamic educational values is not a zero-sum competition in which the advance of one necessarily implies the retreat of the other, but a complex interaction in which the quality of Islamic moral identity formation determines how

students navigate globalization's cultural pressures. Practically, they suggest that the most effective institutional response to globalization's challenge is not defensive restricting students' exposure to global cultural influences but developmental: investing in the quality of Islamic moral identity formation through the multi-dimensional IIPM framework identified in Finding 2.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study has demonstrated three findings that collectively advance the scholarly understanding of *nilainisasi ilmu* as an educational framework for Indonesian Islamic higher education in the era of globalization. First, the Islamization of Knowledge framework provides a theoretically coherent epistemological architecture for deep rather than superficial integration of Islamic values across academic disciplines, operating through ontological reframing, axiological integration, and teleological orientation of disciplinary knowledge. This architecture is most effectively instantiated through faculty epistemological formation rather than curriculum redesign alone. Second, Islamic value internalization requires simultaneous engagement across cognitive, affective, and psychomotor learning dimensions through specific mechanisms critical Islamic reasoning, experiential resonance, relational attachment, narrative engagement, and behavioral habituation with faculty exemplarity as the essential condition for their integrated operation. These mechanisms are synthesized in the Integrative-Islamic Pedagogy Model (IIPM) as this study's primary theoretical contribution. Third, quality Islamic value integration produces measurable Islamic moral identity development, which functions as a protective mediator against globalization's cultural pressures and enables students to navigate digital environments with Islamic agency rather than mere Islamic defensiveness.

These findings are of direct relevance to the scope of *Sophist: Jurnal Sosial Politik, Kajian Islam dan Tafsir*, as they address the social-political dimensions of Islamic educational governance in Indonesia's rapidly changing religious and cultural landscape. They contribute to

the journal's ongoing engagement with questions of Islamic identity formation, the relationship between Islamic and modern knowledge traditions, and the governance of Islamic institutions in the context of globalization.

This study's limitations are inherent to its library research design: the absence of primary empirical data means that the IIPM remains a theoretically synthesized model awaiting empirical testing in specific Indonesian UIN contexts. The predominance of Malaysian alongside Indonesian sources in the Scopus literature means that some findings may require contextual calibration for specifically Indonesian institutional and cultural conditions. Additionally, the focus on university-level education leaves unexplored the crucial question of how Islamic value integration at primary and secondary levels shapes the baseline character formation with which students arrive at Islamic universities.

Future research should pursue three priorities: (1) empirical testing of the IIPM through controlled intervention studies at Indonesian UINs, using pre-post Islamic moral identity and behavioral outcome measures; (2) longitudinal research tracking the durability of Islamic moral identity development beyond university graduation, examining how alumni navigate professional and civic contexts; and (3) examination of how digital Islamic identity formation Islamic social media communities, online Islamic learning, and digital da'wah engagement interacts with formal university Islamic value integration to produce composite character outcomes. This research agenda would transform *nilainisasi ilmu* from a normative aspiration into an evidence-based pedagogical practice capable of meeting the distinctive challenges of Islamic education in the twenty-first century.

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**Islamic Ecoteology, Environmental Tafsir, and Fiqh Al-Bi'ah: Rethinking Islamic Sustainability in Indonesia's Climate Crisis**

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**Abstract:** This article examines the intersection of Islamic ecoteology, environmental Quranic interpretation (tafsir al-bi'ah), and the jurisprudence of the environment (fiqh al-bi'ah) within the context of Indonesia's accelerating climate crisis. Drawing on classical Islamic sources, contemporary ecotheological scholarship, and Indonesian Islamic legal discourse, the study argues that Islamic teaching provides a robust normative framework for ecological sustainability one rooted in the Quranic concepts of khalifah (stewardship), amanah (divine trust), and mizan (cosmic balance). The research employs a qualitative library-based methodology combining textual analysis of Quranic verses and hadith with a review of classical and contemporary fiqh literature. Findings reveal three interlocking dimensions: (1) a theological mandate for environmental stewardship embedded in Quranic ontology; (2) a jurisprudential tradition capable of generating binding environmental norms through fiqh al-bi'ah; and (3) significant, yet underexplored, potential for Indonesian Muslim institutions particularly pesantren networks and Majelis Ulama Indonesia to operationalize Islamic sustainability principles in response to climate breakdown. The article concludes that ecoteology and fiqh al-bi'ah must be integrated into mainstream Islamic education and fatwa practice in Indonesia to translate theological imperatives into meaningful environmental governance.

**Keywords:** Islamic ecoteology; environmental tafsir; fiqh al-bi'ah; climate crisis; Islamic sustainability; Indonesia.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The global climate crisis constitutes one of the most severe moral and existential challenges of the contemporary era. Rising sea levels, intensifying natural disasters, accelerating deforestation, and cascading biodiversity loss are no longer distant projections they are lived realities for millions of people worldwide. Among the most acutely affected populations are the communities of Indonesia's archipelago, a nation whose ecological vulnerability is compounded by rapid urbanization, extensive land-use change, and persistent governance deficits in environmental regulation (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), 2022; Rockström et al., 2009);

As the world's largest Muslim-majority country, Indonesia occupies a striking position at the nexus of ecological vulnerability and Islamic normative potential. Its religious identity might serve as a powerful lever for environmental transformation, yet that potential has been largely unrealized in formal environmental governance. The inadequate integration of Islamic ethical frameworks into national climate policy represents both a scholarly gap and a practical deficit with real consequences for Indonesia's ecological future (Nasr, 1968).

Within Islamic intellectual history, questions about the human relationship to the natural world have been addressed though not always systematically through the Quran, the prophetic hadith literature, classical jurisprudence, and Sufi cosmology. The emergence of Islamic ecotheology as a distinct academic and activist field since the 1990s has renewed scholarly attention to these resources, arguing that Islam possesses a coherent environmental ethic capable of speaking meaningfully to the modern ecological crisis. Scholars such as Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Richard Foltz, Mawil Izzi Dien, and Ibrahim Abdul-Matin have been instrumental in recovering and systematizing these traditions for a contemporary audience (Foltz et al., 2003; Dien, 2000; Abdul-Matin, 2010); (Foltz dkk., 2003).

Despite this growing global scholarship, the Indonesian context has received comparatively limited attention. Indonesian Islamic legal thought (*fiqh*) has not yet fully engaged with questions of environmental jurisprudence or *fiqh al-bi'ah* in a systematic manner, even as Indonesian scholars and institutions such as the Majelis

Ulama Indonesia (MUI) have issued occasional environmental fatwas. This gap between the theoretical richness of Islamic ecological resources and the practical underdevelopment of Islamic environmental jurisprudence constitutes the central problem this article addresses (Dien, 2000; Muthhar, 2014). This gap between the theoretical richness of Islamic ecological resources and the practical underdevelopment of Islamic environmental jurisprudence constitutes the central problem this article addresses (Dien, 2000).

This study therefore pursues three specific objectives: first, to examine the Quranic and theological foundations of Islamic ecoteology, with particular attention to the concepts of khalifah, amanah, and mizan; second, to analyze the structure and potential of *fiqh al-bi'ah* as a jurisprudential framework for environmental regulation within an Indonesian Islamic context; and third, to assess the institutional capacity of Indonesian Muslim organizations particularly MUI and the pesantren network to operationalize these norms in response to the ongoing climate crisis (Rahman, 1980).

The central hypothesis is that Islamic ecoteology and *fiqh al-bi'ah* are not merely academic constructs but actionable normative systems whose institutionalization in Indonesia could produce meaningful ecological outcomes provided that theological discourse is translated into concrete jurisprudential guidance and embedded within influential Islamic institutions (Nasr, 1968).

Islamic ecoteology refers to the systematic theological reflection on the relationship between Islamic faith and the natural environment. The term gained scholarly currency following Nasr's landmark *Man and Nature* (1968), which argued that the environmental crisis of modernity is fundamentally a spiritual crisis rooted in the desacralization of nature within Western secular thought. Nasr contended that the Islamic tradition, by contrast, preserves an ontological connection between the divine, the human, and the natural order that structurally resists the exploitative instrumentalism underlying contemporary ecological destruction (Nasr, 1968).

This foundational insight was developed by a subsequent generation of scholars, culminating in the comprehensive edited

volume *Islam and Ecology: A Bestowed Trust*. Contributors examine Quranic cosmology, Sufi understandings of nature as theophany, hadith traditions concerning care for animals and land, and the application of *maqasid al-shari'ah* to environmental problems. The central theological claim common to most of this literature is that God is the ultimate owner and sustainer of creation (*khaliq wa rabb*), and that humans are entrusted with its care as *khalifah* stewards or vicegerents a role that carries both privilege and accountability before God (Foltz dkk., 2003).

Environmental tafsir constitutes a distinct sub-field engaging the classical science of Quranic commentary in order to recover and amplify the ecological dimensions of divine revelation. The Quran contains numerous verses addressing natural phenomena water cycles, animal communities, soil systems, atmospheric processes and a growing number of scholars argue that these verses encode not merely incidental poetry but a systematic theology of creation (Abdullah, 2010).

Key Quranic concepts include: *khilafah* (Q. 2:30; 6:165), establishing humans as stewards with attendant responsibilities; *amanah* (Q. 33:72), the divine trust or covenant encompassing care for creation; *mizan* (Q. 55:7–9), the balance God has set in the cosmos that humans are prohibited from transgressing; and *fasad fi al-ard* (Q. 30:41), the concept of corruption on earth associated in contemporary interpretation with environmental destruction. Indonesian scholarship in this area, particularly the Kementerian Agama's thematic tafsir on environmental conservation, has sought to integrate these hermeneutical insights into national Islamic educational materials (Kementerian Agama RI, 2009).

*Fiqh al-bi'ah* is a relatively recent scholarly construction that seeks to derive binding legal norms for environmental conduct from classical Islamic legal sources. Al-Qaradawi's *Ri'ayat al-Bi'ah fi Shari'at al-Islam* represents the most influential systematic work in this tradition, applying the five classical legal categories to a range of environmental behaviors and arguing for an environmental reading of *maqasid al-shari'ah* that adds *hifz al-bi'ah* (protection of the

environment) alongside the classical five protected interests (al-Qaradawi, 2001).

Indonesian contributions to *fiqh al-bi'ah* include the work of Moh. Asy'ari Muthhar and Mudhofir Abdullah, who argue that the pesantren tradition and the MUI fatwa mechanism are uniquely positioned to generate contextually grounded environmental jurisprudence. The challenge, both scholars note, is that classical *fiqh* developed in conditions where anthropogenic ecological disruption was not foreseeable requiring contemporary jurists to exercise *ijtihad* to address new ecological realities (Muthhar, 2014).

The concept of Islamic sustainability a religiously grounded vision of development that does not compromise the ecological systems on which future generations depend has gained traction in Indonesian Islamic discourse, particularly following high-profile natural disasters linked to deforestation and land conversion. Organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama's Lembaga Penanggulangan Bencana dan Perubahan Iklim (LPBI-NU) and several pesantren-based environmental programs represent practical expressions of this concept (Abdul-Matin, 2010).

However, the translation of ecotheological principles into sustainable development practice remains uneven across Indonesia. Institutional religious authority has not consistently prioritized environmental issues, and the intersection of Islamic normativity with government environmental regulation remains theoretically underdeveloped. This article seeks to contribute to closing this gap by examining how ecoteological resources and *fiqh al-bi'ah* principles can be more systematically institutionalized within Indonesian Islamic governance.

## 2. METHOD

This research is situated within the tradition of Islamic legal and theological scholarship, with a particular focus on the nexus between classical textual resources and contemporary environmental jurisprudence in Indonesia. The choice of library-based qualitative research reflects the nature of the inquiry: the primary data is textual Quranic verses, hadith collections, classical *fiqh* texts, contemporary

ecothological monographs, and Indonesian Islamic institutional documents. The unit of analysis is the normative argument: the claims made within Islamic texts about what believers are required to do with respect to the natural environment (Muthhar, 2014).

The research is qualitative and descriptive-analytical in orientation. It does not seek to generate quantitative findings or test empirical hypotheses about observable behavior. Rather, it seeks to map, analyze, and evaluate the normative resources available within the Islamic tradition for constructing an ecologically responsive jurisprudence, and to assess their relevance to the Indonesian institutional context (Abdullah, 2010).

Primary sources consulted include the Quran and its classical tafsir (Ibn Kathir, al-Tabari), as well as thematic environmental tafsir produced by Indonesia's Ministry of Religious Affairs. Hadith collections particularly those preserved in the canonical six (*al-Kutub al-Sitta*) are engaged where they bear directly on environmental conduct. Classical fiqh texts from the four Sunni schools are examined for their treatment of land use, water rights, and natural resources (al-Qaradawi, 2001).

Secondary sources include major works of Islamic ecoteological scholarship noted in the literature review, as well as Indonesian Islamic institutional documents including selected MUI fatwas and pesantren environmental curricula. Analysis proceeds through close reading and thematic synthesis. The analytical framework draws on three interpretive lenses: (1) textual-hermeneutical analysis of Quranic and hadith environmental norms; (2) jurisprudential analysis of how classical legal categories apply to contemporary environmental questions; and (3) institutional analysis of how Indonesian Islamic organizations are positioned to operationalize these principles.

### 3. RESULTS

#### a. The Theological Mandate for Environmental Stewardship

Analysis of the Quranic corpus reveals a coherent and internally consistent theology of creation that generates a strong normative mandate for environmental stewardship. Three

concepts are foundational. First, *khalifah* (Q. 2:30): classical tafsir consistently emphasizes that the designation of humanity as vicegerents of the earth establishes not a license for domination but a fiduciary relationship with the natural order. God alone is the owner of creation; humans are answerable for how they have exercised their stewardship (Kementerian Agama RI, 2009).

Second, *amanah* (Q. 33:72): the divine trust accepted by humanity encompasses the entire created order, not merely human social relations. Contemporary environmental tafsir scholars, including Mudhofir Abdullah and the Kementerian Agama's thematic commentary, interpret this trust as establishing an obligation of care that includes the preservation of biodiversity, clean water systems, and atmospheric stability. Acceptance of *amanah* implies accountability (*mas'uliyah*) before God for one's treatment of the natural environment (Abdullah, 2010).

Third, *mizan* (Q. 55:7–9): God has set a precise balance in the cosmos and explicitly commands that this balance not be transgressed (*la tukhsiru al-mizan*). The IPCC's scientific finding that current trajectories of greenhouse gas emission are disrupting fundamental Earth system balances offers a striking empirical parallel to this Quranic concept. Within an Islamic ecoteological frame, such disruption constitutes a form of *fasad fi al-ard* corruption on earth explicitly condemned in Q. 30:41 and repeatedly throughout the Quran (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), 2022).

## **b. Fiqh al-Bi'ah: Structure and Potential in the Indonesian Context**

Analysis of the *fiqh al-bi'ah* literature reveals a jurisprudential tradition that, while recently systematized, draws on deep roots in classical Islamic law. Al-Qaradawi's framework, as applied and developed by Indonesian scholars, generates concrete legal norms across several domains relevant to Indonesia's environmental crisis (al-Qaradawi, 2001).

With respect to deforestation: classical *fiqh*'s treatment of *ihya' al-mawat* (the revivification of dead land) and the *hima* institution

(protected natural reserves) provides direct jurisprudential resources for regulating land clearing. The *hima* institution in which areas of land are designated as protected from exploitation for communal benefit has been identified by al-Qaradawi and Abdullah as a proto-conservationist legal mechanism directly applicable to contemporary environmental protection zones (Abdullah, 2010).

With respect to water: classical *fiqh*'s treatment of water rights (*ahkam al-miyah*) establishes principles of community ownership of water resources and prohibitions on monopolization and pollution, directly applicable to the regulation of industrial water use and the protection of Indonesian rivers and coastal ecosystems (Foltz dkk., 2003).

With respect to climate-damaging emissions: here the jurisprudential tradition requires more extensive *ijtihad*. The prophetic principle *la darar wa la dirar* (no harm shall be inflicted or reciprocated) provides the most direct classical resource. Contemporary *fiqh* scholars have applied it to argue that activities generating demonstrable environmental harm including large-scale fossil fuel extraction and combustion are jurisprudentially impermissible when their harm to others, including future generations, can be established (Abdul-Matin, 2010; al-Qaradawi, 2001).

### **c. Institutional Capacity: MUI, Pesantren, and Islamic Environmental Governance**

Analysis of Indonesian Islamic institutional documents reveals both significant capacity and significant unrealized potential for operationalizing Islamic sustainability principles. The MUI has issued several environmental fatwas, including a 2014 fatwa on illegal mining and statements on environmental protection in the context of natural disasters. However, these fatwas have not been integrated into a systematic *fiqh al-bi'ah* framework, nor consistently accompanied by implementation mechanisms (Foltz dkk., 2003).

The pesantren network presents a particularly significant institutional resource. With approximately 28,000 pesantren serving an estimated four million students, the pesantren system

represents an unparalleled network for disseminating Islamic environmental norms at the grassroots level. Several pesantren most notably Pesantren Nurul Haramain in West Lombok have become internationally recognized for community-based environmental programs, demonstrating that pesantren can be practical sites of ecological sustainability as well as Islamic education (Muthhar, 2014).

Nahdlatul Ulama's LPBI-NU has been particularly active in developing an Islamic climate change narrative and connecting it to community-based disaster risk reduction. The organization has produced educational materials connecting Islamic theological concepts particularly khalifah and amanah to practical environmental behaviors, and has worked to integrate environmental considerations into the religious practices of NU-affiliated communities across Indonesia.

## **4. DISCUSSION**

### **a. Theological Mandate and Motivational Power**

The finding that Islamic theology generates a coherent and robust mandate for environmental stewardship is significant precisely because it grounds ecological obligation not in secular utility or international legal norm frameworks with limited purchase among devoutly religious Indonesian Muslims but in the relationship between the believer and God (Baharuddin, 2003; Esack, 1997). The concept of accountability (*mas'uliyah*) before God for one's environmental conduct is potentially a more motivationally effective norm than carbon pricing or regulatory compliance, because it is embedded in the existing moral formation of Muslim communities (Nasr, 1968).

The parallel between the Quranic concept of *mizan* and the scientific concept of planetary boundaries is particularly instructive for Islamic environmental communication. If Indonesian Muslim scholars and educators could effectively convey that current trajectories of deforestation, carbon emission, and ecological disruption constitute a transgression of the *mizan* established by God in creation a form of *fasad fi al-ard* this theological framing

could mobilize environmental concern in ways that secular scientific communication alone has not achieved (al-Qaradawi, 2001).

### **b. Fiqh al-Bi'ah and the Imperative of Contemporary Ijtihad**

The finding that classical fiqh provides substantial resources for environmental jurisprudence confirms the hypothesis that fiqh al-bi'ah can function as a meaningful normative framework for Islamic environmental governance. However, the gap between classical jurisprudential resources and the novel dimensions of anthropogenic climate change particularly the temporal and spatial distance between emission and harm requires extensive ijtihad that the Indonesian scholarly community has not yet fully engaged (Baharuddin, 2003).

The principle of *la darar wa la dirar* is promising but requires operationalization: Who has standing to establish harm? What quantum of harm triggers legal prohibition? How does the transgenerational and transnational distribution of climate impacts affect the jurisprudential analysis of individual and collective Muslim responsibility? These questions require the sustained attention of Islamic legal scholars with both classical jurisprudential training and scientific literacy in environmental systems. The development of a specifically Indonesian school of fiqh al-bi'ah, responsive to the country's ecological specificities, is both a scholarly and an institutional imperative.

### **c. Toward Islamic Environmental Governance: Institutional Recommendations**

Three specific recommendations emerge from the institutional analysis. First, MUI should develop a comprehensive fiqh al-bi'ah framework not a series of ad hoc responses to specific environmental events, but a systematic elaboration of Islamic environmental jurisprudence that can guide Muslim conduct across a range of ecologically significant decisions, from individual consumption behavior to advocacy for national environmental policy (Muthhar, 2014).

Second, environmental ecoteology should be systematically integrated into the pesantren curriculum as a core component of Islamic education, not merely an extracurricular initiative. This requires coordination between the Ministry of Religious Affairs, national Islamic educational bodies such as the Rabithah Ma'ahid Islamiyah, and the pesantren community itself (al-Jaziri, 1990).

Third, LPBI-NU and comparable organizations should develop pilot programs demonstrating the practical connection between Islamic religious observance and measurable environmental outcomes programs generating evidence of impact that can be scaled across Indonesia's diverse regional and ecological contexts.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This article has demonstrated that Islamic ecoteology, environmental tafsir, and fiqh al-bi'ah together constitute a coherent and actionable normative framework for addressing Indonesia's climate crisis. The theological foundations of this framework centered on the Quranic concepts of khalifah, amanah, and mizan are robustly attested in the Quranic corpus and the classical tradition of Islamic scholarship. The jurisprudential resources of fiqh al-bi'ah, while requiring significant contemporary *ijtihad* to be fully applicable to the novel dimensions of climate change, provide genuine legal tools for environmental governance grounded in Islamic normativity.

The combination of textual analysis, jurisprudential review, and institutional assessment employed in this study has demonstrated both the theoretical richness of Islamic environmental resources and the gap between those resources and their practical institutionalization in Indonesia. This gap is not insurmountable: the institutional infrastructure MUI, the pesantren network, LPBI-NU exists; what is needed is the sustained scholarly will to develop fiqh al-bi'ah as a living jurisprudential tradition responsive to contemporary ecological realities.

The principal limitation of this study is its reliance on published texts and institutional documents rather than ethnographic

fieldwork, which limits the ability to assess how Islamic ecoteological principles are actually received and practiced at the grassroots level. Future research should combine the normative analysis developed here with empirical investigation of Islamic environmental practice in specific Indonesian communities particularly pesantren-based environmental programs and patterns of MUI fatwa reception in order to develop a more complete picture of Islamic sustainability in practice and to evaluate the conditions under which ecoteological norms are most effectively translated into environmental behavior.

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## THE CONSTRUCTION OF CHILDREN'S RELIGIOUSITY CHARACTER IN THE DIGITAL ERA THROUGH QUR'ANIC EDUCATION CENTER OF ASSHAULATIYYAH IN THE SASAK SOCIETY

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**Abstract:** The digital era has brought significant changes to public life, particularly regarding the behavior and morals of the younger generation. The advancement of information and communication technology, especially social media, has become an inseparable part of students' lives, while simultaneously presenting new challenges for Islamic educational institutions in fulfilling their character-building role. This study aims to examine the role of educators and the strategies implemented in shaping students' character in the digital age, evaluate the obstacles faced in confronting contemporary challenges, and provide solutions for character development. This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach to explore the phenomenon deeply and contextually, utilizing data obtained from primary and secondary sources through three data collection techniques: semi-structured interviews with teachers and students (*santri*), non-participatory observation of daily religious activities, and a documentation study of the TPQ work program. The results indicate that character building cannot rely solely on theory but rather requires a strong synergy among three main pillars: families for supervision and habituation at home, educators as digitally literate facilitators, and society as a supportive environment. As a practical solution to these challenges, TPQ Asshaulatiyah implements five tactical steps, namely varying learning methods to be more interactive, implementing a positive reward and punishment system, fostering active communication with parents, applying an exemplary approach (*uswah hasanah*) by teachers, and establishing repetitive daily moral habituation through gentle personal corrections.

**Keywords:** religious character development, digital eras, Islamic education, Qur'anic education centers, character education, moral habituations

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Character education from an Islamic perspective has been a primary focus since the mission of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), whose purpose was to perfect human morality. According to the Islamic viewpoint, character education is a conscious effort undertaken by educators to shape students' personalities by teaching and cultivating moral values, ethics, cultural awareness, and noble character. It also aims to develop students' ability to distinguish between right and wrong and to practice goodness in their daily lives (Mulyadi et al., 2024). Islamic educational institutions such as TPQ and pesantren play a significant role in this process. Besides serving as centers for learning the Qur'an, these institutions also function as venues for transmitting Islamic values and religious understanding through religious instruction and guidance from teachers, thereby contributing to students' character development (Rahim & Zaynassyakur, 2025).

Moreover, the success of character education is not solely determined by classroom learning but also by the support of religious institutions and the surrounding community. Islamic educational environments should promote inclusive learning spaces, religious discussions, and community participation, as these elements contribute significantly to the development of students' religious and social character (Rahim, 2024).

One of the character values that needs to be instilled in students is discipline. Discipline refers to the willingness to comply with applicable rules and regulations. Such compliance is not based on coercion but rather on an awareness of the value and importance of adhering to these rules and regulations (Addawiyah & Kasriman, 2023). In Islamic education, discipline is cultivated through the habituation of worship practices and adherence to rules that are consistently implemented. Initially, this habituation may be established through institutional supervision and regulations; however, over time, it develops into a habit that fosters students' spiritual awareness and strengthens their closeness to Allah SWT. (Rahim, 2023)

The development of children's religious character has become an important issue in religious education because the internalization of values depends not only on formal curricula but also on the intensive involvement of educators who directly interact with students during the early stages of their psychological and moral development (Adibah & Rizkillah, 2025). Educational institutions are responsible for producing students who excel not only in knowledge but also in character. Nevertheless, students' character remains a major concern that requires continuous improvement and the involvement of all educational stakeholders. Character-related problems among students are often reflected in behaviors such as a lack of politeness, involvement in fights, bullying, exposure to pornography, truancy, dishonesty, and similar misconduct. These conditions indicate that knowledge alone is insufficient to influence behavioral change. This situation occurs because educational practices tend to emphasize cognitive achievement while paying limited attention to character formation (Kulsum & Muhid, 2022)

The rapid development of digital technology has significantly transformed various aspects of life, including education. Advances in information and communication technology, particularly the internet and social media, have profoundly influenced the mindset, attitudes, and behaviors of younger generations. On the one hand, the digital era provides broader access to knowledge and expands educational opportunities. On the other hand, it presents serious challenges to character development, particularly regarding discipline, ethics, responsibility, and integrity (Nurhabibi et al., 2025).

The moral crisis among adolescents and students today cannot be separated from the uncontrolled use of digital technology. The prevalence of cyberbullying, social media addiction, exposure to harmful content, and declining politeness in everyday communication serves as evidence of moral degradation. This condition has become a serious concern, especially for Islamic educational institutions, which are responsible not only for transmitting knowledge but also for shaping students' personalities and moral conduct.

As a non-formal educational institution, the Qur'anic Education Center (TPQ) provides a more flexible learning environment where strong emotional bonds can be established between educators and students. This setting enables the transmission of values through role modeling and habituation practices (Adibah & Rizkillah, 2025). The close relationships developed within this environment allow educators to understand each child's unique personality, specific needs, and behavioral tendencies that influence the internalization of religious values. Consequently, educators function not merely as instructors but also as community figures who ensure the continuity of religious traditions through a humane and sustainable approach.

Numerous studies have highlighted the significant role of educators in character formation. Research conducted at Jami'atul Khairiah Qur'anic Education Center in Sekuduk Village found that TPQ teachers serve as academic guides, social mentors, and counselors for students' personal issues. The study also identified several methods employed in fostering children's religious character, including dialogue (*hiwar*), habituation, moral advice (*mau'izah*), and exemplary conduct (*uswah*) (Rizki et al., 2024)

Teachers also function as educators (*mu'allim*), role models (*uswah hasanah*), and spiritual mentors (*murabbi*) who strive to cultivate religious character through contextual learning, the utilization of positive digital media, and the habituation of daily worship practices. Challenges encountered in this process include limited digital literacy among teachers and insufficient parental control over students' use of digital devices. These findings emphasize the importance of improving teachers' digital competencies to optimize religious character education in the digital era (Safiqo & Ghofur, 2025).

In implementing TPQ programs, efforts to develop religious character include intensive Qur'anic instruction, memorization of daily prayers, and memorization of short chapters from Juz 'Amma. Challenges arise due to the large number of students, resulting in noisy classroom environments where children are often distracted by play. These challenges are addressed through play-based learning

approaches, firm discipline, constructive reprimands, and mild educational punishments when students disrupt others. Early Qur'anic education is considered essential because religious knowledge acquired during childhood tends to shape positive character traits that persist into adulthood (Widianti, 2023).

Teachers serve as role models in character formation by teaching religious values and providing moral guidance. They are also responsible for fostering students' social awareness, empathy, and ethical behavior. Moral reinforcement, particularly in contemporary society, is viewed as an effective solution to the moral crises frequently observed in Indonesia. In this context, teachers are expected to embody the concept of *mu'addib*, an Arabic term referring to a cultured individual who contributes to the development of a civilized and morally grounded society (Judrah & Arjum, 2024)

The role of teachers has been shown to positively influence students' character development. Supporting factors include a supportive family environment, facilitating educational institutions, positive community influences, and beneficial technological media. Conversely, inhibiting factors consist of unstable family conditions, negative school cultures, adverse peer influences, and the harmful effects of technology (Fitria et al., 2024).

The studies reviewed above consistently demonstrate that educators—whether Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, TPQ instructors, or moral educators—play a crucial role as role models (*uswah hasanah/mu'addib*), educators, and spiritual mentors (*murabbi*) in shaping children's religious character, morality, and social empathy from an early age. Despite their positive influence, character formation efforts continue to face significant challenges stemming from classroom dynamics, weak technological supervision, and unfavorable environmental conditions.

This study is important because TPQ *Asshaulatiyah* represents a dynamic learning community in which educators function not only as instructors but also as facilitators of a religious community that nurtures children's spiritual values. The study focuses on educators'

roles in character formation through intensive Qur'anic instruction, memorization of prayers and short Qur'anic chapters, habituation of daily worship practices, and the integration of contextual learning. The challenges encountered include technical and classroom-related issues, such as overcrowded and noisy learning environments; digital-era challenges, including limited supervision of children's gadget use and insufficient digital literacy among educators; and environmental factors, such as negative influences from unstable family conditions, peer groups, and technological media.

To address these challenges, educators employ several strategies, including adaptive classroom management through play-based learning, combined with firm discipline and mild educational sanctions when necessary. Efforts are also directed toward enhancing teachers' digital literacy and technological competencies to enable them to utilize technology positively as a learning medium. Furthermore, successful character education requires harmonious collaboration among teachers, families, educational institutions, and the wider community. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to the development of a conceptual framework that enriches the literature on children's religious education, particularly regarding character-building strategies that align with local community interaction patterns. Moreover, the findings are anticipated to provide practical contributions to the enhancement of religious character development programs in TPQs and other Islamic educational institutions.

## **2. THEORICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study is grounded in the theory of Islamic character education, which emphasizes the development of noble character (*akhlak*) as one of the primary objectives of education. Character education in Islam is not merely concerned with cognitive development but also focuses on cultivating moral values, ethics, spirituality, and righteous behavior in daily life (Mulyadi et al., 2024). The ultimate goal of Islamic education is to produce individuals who possess faith (*iman*), obedience to Islamic teachings, and commendable character.

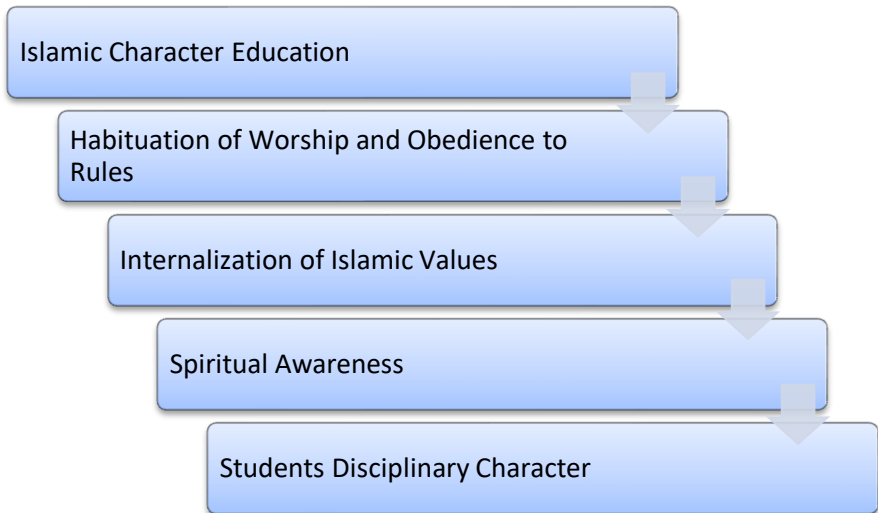
One of the essential character values promoted in Islamic education is discipline. Discipline refers to an individual's willingness to comply with rules and regulations based on self-awareness and personal responsibility rather than external coercion (Addawiyah & Kasrman, 2023). In educational settings, discipline is reflected in students' consistency in carrying out obligations, respecting time, following institutional regulations, and demonstrating responsible behavior.

From the perspective of Islamic educational theory, discipline is developed through the process of habituation (*ta'wid*). Habituation is a continuous educational method that encourages learners to repeatedly perform positive actions until such actions become part of their character. Through repeated practice, values that initially originate from external regulations gradually become internalized within the individual. Islamic educational institutions such as *pesantren* and TPQ implement this approach by establishing regular worship activities, learning schedules, and behavioral regulations that train students to become disciplined individuals.

Abdurrahim argues that the habituation of worship and obedience to institutional rules initially may be enforced through supervision and regulations. However, through continuous practice, these behaviors evolve into personal habits that foster spiritual awareness and strengthen students' relationship with Allah SWT. This process illustrates how discipline is transformed from external compliance into internal commitment, thereby contributing to character formation.

Based on these theories, this study assumes that the implementation of worship habituation, educational supervision, and institutional regulations positively contributes to the development of students' disciplinary character. The stronger the process of habituation and internalization of Islamic values, the stronger the disciplinary character formed within students.

Conceptual Relationship:



### 3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach. This approach was selected because the research aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of the role of educators in shaping students' religious character in the digital era. According to Creswell (2018), qualitative research is used to explore complex social phenomena through an understanding of meanings from participants' perspectives. Therefore, this approach enabled the researcher to investigate the values, experiences, and strategies employed by educators contextually within an educational environment influenced by the advancement of digital technology.

A descriptive qualitative design was utilized to provide a systematic and factual description of how educators contribute to the formation of students' religious character. Bogdan and Biklen (2016) explain that descriptive research does not focus on hypothesis testing but rather on portraying social realities as they naturally occur. Through this approach, the researcher sought to understand the meanings behind the actions, interactions, and experiences of teachers and students within the process of religious education.

The research data consisted of primary and secondary sources. Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation of teachers' and students' activities. Secondary data were collected from books, scholarly journals, and official reports related to character development. According to Sugiyono (2022), the combination of primary and secondary data is necessary to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

Data collection was conducted through three main techniques. First, semi-structured interviews were carried out with TPQ educators and students to explore information regarding learning strategies, religious habituation practices, and educators' efforts in addressing the challenges of digitalization. Second, non-participant observation was employed, whereby the researcher directly observed religious activities at the TPQ, including congregational prayers, Qur'anic recitation sessions (tadarus), and the use of digital media in learning activities. Third, documentation studies were conducted to obtain supporting data such as educators' work programs and photographs of relevant religious activities.

#### **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

##### **The Role of Educators in Children's Character Formation in the Digital Era**

In the contemporary era, education has become closely intertwined with technology, particularly advanced information and communication technologies within the digital age. As a result, teachers are no longer the sole source of knowledge in the educational process. Today, students can easily access information and knowledge through various forms of media and learning resources, including information technology-based communication platforms, educational broadcasts, television programs, comic books, newspapers, and magazines.

Character development aligned with educational principles encourages the growth of personal identity while nurturing both physical and spiritual well-being. Individuals are encouraged to remain calm, control emotional impulses, dress appropriately,

demonstrate dedication to others, and foster mutual support. Collectively, these practices contribute to students' character development (Azizah Rahma Sandi., 2025).

Character education is a deliberate and systematic effort designed to shape children's personalities and cultivate positive attitudes and behaviors. Character education encompasses eighteen core values, including religiosity, honesty, tolerance, discipline, hard work, creativity, independence, democracy, curiosity, nationalism, patriotism, appreciation of achievement, friendliness, communicative competence, peace-loving attitudes, reading habits, environmental awareness, social responsibility, and accountability (Nurlaila et al., 2023). Consequently, developing children's character in the digital era is far from easy and requires educators to possess adequate expertise, experience, and patience.

The rapid advancement of digital technology has become an inseparable part of daily life. Children and adolescents increasingly rely on smartphones, tablets, and internet access for communication, information gathering, and entertainment. While these developments offer significant opportunities, they also present substantial challenges in character formation. Character is a crucial aspect of education because strong character enables students to become resilient individuals with sound morals and the ability to navigate the complexities of modern society (Arifuddin et al., 2024).

Digital transformation has affected nearly every aspect of life, including non-formal educational institutions such as Qur'anic Education Centers (TPQ). As institutions responsible for educating young generations in understanding and practicing Islamic teachings, TPQs are required to innovate their instructional methods. TPQs that fail to adapt their learning approaches risk losing relevance among digital-native generations (Akbar et al., 2025). Like any educational institution, TPQs face various challenges in the educational process. Continuous improvement is necessary to ensure that educational quality is maintained, preventing TPQs from becoming mere routines without meaningful educational outcomes (Yunadi et al., 2025). Therefore, the integration of digital

media, such as Qur'an applications, interactive videos, and online learning platforms, has become increasingly relevant in responding to contemporary educational challenges.

In the digital era, the roles of families, educators, and communities are essential in fostering the character of future generations. Families, as children's first and primary educational environment, must provide supervision and guidance with affection, firmness, and attentiveness. Meanwhile, the role of teachers in character building has become increasingly complex and demanding. Teachers serve as mentors who guide students toward positive behavior (Istiqomah et al., 2026). They are responsible not only for teaching character concepts but also for helping students implement these values in their daily lives. Furthermore, teachers must exemplify positive character traits themselves. Professional educators are expected to improve educational quality and contribute to the development of competent and socially responsible citizens (Hadi, 2022).

Communities also play a vital role in monitoring and motivating students' character development (Putri, 2018, as cited in Anggraeni et al., 2023). Likewise, parents are responsible for supervising and guiding their children's use of technology at home (Adha & Ulpa, 2021, as cited in Isnaini, 2024). Therefore, effective character education requires close collaboration between educators, parents, and the wider community.

Character development cannot be achieved solely through theoretical instruction or references to educational experts. Instead, both teachers and parents must serve as role models, motivators, and sources of inspiration for children (Kurnia et al., 2024). Accordingly, the roles of educators, families, and communities have become increasingly significant in strengthening the character of future generations in the digital era.

The findings of this study reveal that educators at TPQ Asshauliyah, located in Tanak Mira Daya Hamlet, Wanasaba Lauk Village, Wanasaba District, play a central role in character development alongside families, which serve as children's primary

educational environment. Educators not only teach positive character values but also guide students in implementing these values in their daily lives. They are expected to act as role models by demonstrating exemplary character in their own behavior. Families and local communities likewise contribute to supervising and motivating students' character development.

Documentation findings indicate that most educators at TPQ Asshaulatiyah in Tanak Mira Daya Hamlet hold undergraduate-level educational qualifications. As relatively young educators, they are still developing their experience and expertise in educating, guiding, and shaping children's character within the rapidly evolving context of the digital era.

### **Solutions Implemented by TPQ Asshaulatiyah Educators in Overcoming Challenges in Character Formation**

The findings indicate that educators at TPQ Asshaulatiyah, located in Tanak Mira Daya Hamlet, Wanasaba Lauk Village, Wanasaba District, have implemented several strategies to foster students' character development in the digital era. These strategies include enhancing educators' pedagogical understanding, improving literacy skills, strengthening digital competencies, and actively involving parents, families, and the surrounding community in supervising and guiding students' daily behavior.

The learning methods employed by the educators include the following:

#### 1. Diverse Learning Methods

To address students' boredom and lack of concentration, educators adapt instructional approaches to accommodate different learning styles, including visual, auditory, and kinesthetic learners.

- a) **Storytelling Method:** Educators integrate stories of the Prophets, the Companions of the Prophet, and prominent Islamic figures, such as Shaykh Rahmatullah Al-Kairanawi—the founder of Madrasah Shaulatiyah, whose name is often associated with educational institutions—to instill moral and religious values.

- b) Learning Through Play: Ice-breaking activities, Islamic chants (nasyid), and educational games are utilized to create an enjoyable learning atmosphere and prevent Qur'anic learning from becoming monotonous or stressful.

## 2. Educational Reward and Punishment System

Appropriate appreciation and corrective measures are applied to encourage positive behavioral changes.

- a) Constructive Rewards: Students who demonstrate good manners or successfully regulate their emotions receive star stickers, verbal praise such as “Masha Allah, good child,” or small rewards.
- b) Positive Punishment: Physical punishment and anger-based discipline are replaced with educational consequences, such as asking disruptive students to lead the closing prayer or organize learning materials after class.

## 3. Collaboration and Communication with Parents

Character development cannot be achieved through educational institutions alone. Therefore, TPQ Asshaulatiyah positions parents as strategic partners in the educational process.

- a) Student Achievement and Character Logbook: In addition to recording Qur'anic memorization achievements, the logbook documents students' behavioral and moral development.
- b) Communication Groups and Regular Meetings: Parenting classes and periodic meetings are organized to align parents' and educators' perspectives, emphasizing that children's religious education is a shared responsibility rather than merely delegated to the TPQ.

## 4. Exemplary Approach (Uswah Hasanah)

Children naturally imitate the behavior of adults around them. Therefore, educators are expected to serve as primary role models.

- a) Direct Demonstration: Rather than merely explaining proper manners theoretically, educators demonstrate appropriate behavior directly, such as drinking while seated and using the right hand.

- b) **Consistent Conduct:** Teachers consistently exhibit polite speech, emotional self-control, and the habit of greeting students with Islamic salutations upon entering the classroom.

#### 5. Repetitive Habituation Method

Character is formed through repeated practice rather than memorization alone.

- a) **Daily Character-Building Routines:** Students are encouraged to follow daily routines, such as greeting and respectfully shaking hands with teachers, arranging their footwear neatly before entering the mosque or classroom, and reciting prayers before and after lessons.
- b) **Gentle Immediate Correction:** When students engage in inappropriate behavior, such as shouting or using offensive language, educators provide immediate but respectful corrections without embarrassing them in front of their peers.

These strategies demonstrate that character formation in the digital era requires a comprehensive approach that integrates educational innovation, exemplary conduct, family involvement, and consistent moral habituation.

### 5. CONCLUSION

Character education in the digital era faces increasingly complex challenges resulting from technological developments and changing social conditions. Unlimited access to information has contributed to various moral issues among children and adolescents, including cyberbullying, social media addiction, exposure to inappropriate content, and declining standards of politeness and social interaction. Within TPQ settings, additional challenges include crowded classroom environments, students' limited attention spans, and educators' insufficient digital literacy to effectively engage digital-native learners. Environmental factors, such as inadequate parental supervision of gadget use, negative peer influences, and unstable family conditions, further complicate the process of character development.

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to explore these phenomena in depth and within their natural context. Data were collected from primary and secondary sources through semi-structured interviews with educators and students, non-participant observations of daily religious activities, and documentation studies of TPQ programs and activities.

The findings reveal that character formation cannot rely solely on theoretical instruction but requires a strong synergy among educators, parents, families, and the broader community. Improving educators' pedagogical understanding, literacy, and digital competencies is essential for addressing the challenges of the digital era. Furthermore, the study identified five key strategies implemented by TPQ Asshaulatiyah educators to address moral challenges and support character development.

First, educators employ diverse learning methods, including Islamic storytelling and play-based learning activities, to accommodate children's learning preferences and maintain engagement. Second, they implement an educational reward and punishment system that encourages positive behavior through appreciation and constructive consequences rather than physical discipline. Third, they strengthen collaboration with parents through communication logbooks, parenting programs, and regular meetings to ensure consistency between home and educational environments. Fourth, educators adopt an exemplary approach (*uswah hasanah*) by consistently demonstrating positive attitudes and behaviors in daily interactions. Finally, they utilize repetitive habituation methods by establishing daily moral routines and providing immediate yet respectful behavioral guidance.

These findings suggest that successful religious character formation in the digital era requires a holistic approach that combines pedagogical innovation, exemplary leadership, continuous habituation, and active collaboration among educational institutions, families, and communities. Such an approach can serve as a practical model for strengthening character education not only in TPQs but also in other Islamic educational institutions.

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**A CRITICAL STUDY OF ISLAMIC  
PHILOSOPHY: AN ATTEMPT TO  
RECONSTRUCT THE DOGMA OF  
ABSOLUTISM OF TRUTH**

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**Abstract:** All forms of knowledge and truth in essence are not really the complete truth, there are always aspects of weakness and shortcomings, even in the field of science that is considered the mother of all knowledge or what is called philosophy itself. If there are no shortcomings from the ontological side (the essence of science), there must be shortcomings from the epistemological side or both completely, for example, then there will definitely be a weak side in the axiological field. Thus, it is necessary to continuously conduct studies or deepening of all existing fields of knowledge without exception to maintain the preservation of knowledge in the life of the human race. Truth is a reference for all forms and models of science to bridge the neutrality of science as an object of analysis that will remain open to all forms of criticism and change in order to continuously give birth to truths. There is no final word in a truth and no field of science has the right to claim truth as the single truth to the reality that is widespread in the life of mankind. Truth is the truth itself. This, not only for one particular scientific field, such as the field of philosophy, for example, is also not a reflection of some other sciences. Philosophy as the parent of science is not automatically a certain field that can claim a single truth, in fact there are many gaps to position philosophy as a field of ancient science that leaves many problems related to the validity of truth that has many faces or many variants in it. We will find the completeness of the truth in the owner of the truth himself. As for the others, it is an overflowing shadow of the owner of the truth himself. The approach in this critical study of philosophy, the author focuses more on religious criticism of some logical deviations or philosophical perspectives from the perspective of sharia, where it has tarnished the truth of religion through the postulates of truth that have been informed by religion through revelation texts.

Exposing the falsehood of the burhani postulates possessed by philosophy by presenting argumentative evidence of religion on several existing philosophical problems, especially the logical rebuttal data put forward by Al-Gazali on several issues that are considered deviant from the philosophical way of thinking by several Greek philosophers represented by Ibn Sina and al-Farabi in the Islamic world.

**Keywords:** Studies, Critical, deconstruction, dogmatic and philosophical

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Philosophy is often referred to as the *mater scientiarum* or the mother of all sciences. He opened up a space for critical reflection on various aspects of human life and knowledge. However, in its development, philosophy is not just a collection of theories, but a method of critical thinking that requires self-assessment, interpretation, analysis, and in-depth evaluation. Critical study of philosophy leads us to the understanding that philosophy is the foundation of critical reason that bridges truth, ethics, and logic (Rafar, 1995).

However, this does not necessarily make philosophy a discipline that is clean from defects or errors of thinking, especially those related to certain parts of the systematic way of thinking, which are related to the discourse of Godliness and some ways of drawing conclusions about the universe (Al-Gazali, 1966).

It turns out that the comment on the science of philosophy that is famous as a critical and explanatory science does not always end cleanly, aka purely from errors, and is even categorized into fatal, misguided and misleading errors if compared to several references such as the theology of Islamic teachings.

Pemujaan berlebihan terhadap eksistensi keilmuan filsafat ini - yang diidentifikasi- sebagai keilmuan yang berfikir sampai ke akar-akarnya dan menguak segala bentuk dinding kokoh metafisik ini, tidak lekang dari hal atau sesuatu yang menyisakan problem besar terutama jika dinisbahkan ke dalam dunia Islam secara umum, terutama terkait dengan beberapa materi persoalan ketuhanan dan kealaman sebagian. Hal inilah yang perlu menjadi perhatian kita dalam rangka membatasi keluasan dan kedalaman berfikir filsafat sampai pada titik terang terhadap objek materi yang dijelaskannya (Al-Gazali, 1966).

Finally, in this simple explanation, we can compare the acquisition value of the product of thinking, the results or fruits of philosophy also have limits that must be given clear limits, so as not to be excessive and not misleading. The significant impact of the results of philosophy that lacks control in certain fields in discussing

or studying certain materials, has a serious impact on human life, especially in the context of human religion, when it is found that humans are firm in holding the principles of their religion, especially when it comes to their theological aspects.

Dismantling the above problems, it is necessary to have a model of limitation and pattern of interaction with philosophy so that there are no errors in scientific practice and there is no negative stigma on the other hand towards philosophy. In addition, we must be objective and proportionate to this science, that it has a myriad of benefits for the birth of new knowledge from its womb. In this way, we can position and place this scientific objectivity and neutrality (Rafar, 1995).

## 2. METHOD

This research is a qualitative critical study with a library *research approach*. The method used is a descriptive-critical analysis of philosophical texts and religious texts, especially the works of Al-Gazali and Muslim philosophers. Primary data sources include the book *Tabafut al-Falasifah* by Al-Gazali, *Maqosidul Falasifah*, and the work of Ibn Rushd. Secondary sources include a wide range of historical literature on Islamic philosophy, philosophical textbooks, and the writings of intellectuals such as Sayyed Hossein Nasr, Majid Fakhry, Ibrahim Madkour, as well as contemporary thinkers such as Karl R. Popper and Thomas Kuhn. The analysis technique is carried out by identifying philosophical arguments, then deconstructing the claim of absolute truth through ontological, epistemological, and axiological approaches. The validity of the data is obtained through critical reading and comparison between texts.

## 3. RESULTS

### a. The historical traces of philosophy in the Islamic tradition

Talking about philosophy historically in Islamic *turast* is certainly not born in a perfect sense, but if we pay attention to its traces, we have indeed found traces of philosophy that have grown

and been practiced in the early history of revelation. Therefore, if we pay attention to the concept of philosophical thought in terms of the values of the virtues of life or the affirmative truths of revelation and the policy of prophetic behavior, then we can claim that this philosophical treasure has been found in the Islamic world. Although philosophy as a science or theory may not be said to have been born immediately, philosophy as a teaching and practice of holy life and righteous deeds can actually be said to exist in the lives of the early generation of Muslims (Madkour, 1996).

This is proven to be clearly recorded in the historical traces of the lives of the prophet and his companions. It may not be in the same terms or designations as the mention of the famous name in the Greek world as a designation called "*philosophy*" but the value or practice and meaning of the term are clearly displayed in the actions and wisdom of the prophet's life. And the name as the experts call philosophy is not exactly the same as the name of philosophy itself. But again, the values and daily practices shown in the lives of the Prophet and his companions show actions or values commensurate with the significance of the meaning of philosophy itself.

Names and terms may be different, but the substance of the teachings and ideology of science can be said to be the same, almost indistinguishable. In *early Islamic turast*, the term noble teachings, virtuous actions were found and equated with the model of all forms of virtue with the term "*wisdom*". This is in many verses in the Qur'an and the *liturgy* of hadith, little is found and almost all of the teachings of Islam speak of the projection of truth and goodness. It is found in all Islamic teachings which can all be called the teachings of virtue and goodness. Philosophy with all its ontological, epistemological and axiological theories impresses the same teachings, as taught by religious texts.

Thus, philosophy or in the language of religious texts is called wisdom is knowledge and actions and even character or traits that are the direct source of existing values of truth or virtue. This is clearly seen in the attitude and actions of the Prophet who is

sovereign by Allah SWT as a direct messenger as well as a teacher of philosophy or wisdom itself. This is in line with the information of revelation in surah *al-Jumu'ab* verse 2 as follows (Al-Qur'an, 1430 H):

هو الذي بعث في الأميين رسولا منهم يتلوا آياته ويزكيهم ويعلمهم الكتاب  
والحكمة وان كانوا من قبل لفى ضلال مبين (الجمعة: 2)

“Meaning: It is Allah who sent a Messenger among them the *Ummiyyin* (the people who are still awake), recited to them the verses of their Lord, taught them purity and taught them the book of guidance in life and taught them the values of *wisdom*, even though they were in error before.” (QS. *Al-Jumu'ab*: 2).

To explain the meaning and *the* relationship between the corresponding meaning and value can also be shown by other verses in the Qur'an, for example in a verse on (QS. *al-Baqarab*:269) which reads as follows:

ومن يؤت الحكمة فقد أوتي خيرا كثيرا (البقرة: 269)

“Meaning: And whoever is endowed with *wisdom*, it means that he has been given a lot of goodness” (Q.S. *Al-Baqorob*:269).

Sayyed Hossein Nashr, for example, as a 20th-century Muslim intellectual, can find some of his writings that consider the root of philosophy to be not much different from the root of *wisdom* contained in prophetic texts. A number of other Muslim intellectuals have also put forward this as something that has an equivalent meaning that is interrelated. They argue that the meaning of *wisdom* and *philosophy* is something that is commensurate and meaningful. Where its use in the Islamic world can be found in the 2nd or 3rd century Hijri (Nashr, 1996).

## **b. Philosophy cannot be independent; Self-Criticism of Philosophical Truth**

Basically, philosophy was born not alone and even preceded by pagan and mythical thoughts. For centuries it was displaced by man's anxiety over pseudo-and unfounded confinement, and then

systematic and confirmed logical thoughts were born. This means that on top of this genial philosophical thinking has a very heroic background that its existence is a response from human dependence on big things outside of itself which manifests into human dissatisfaction itself (Yazdi, 2003). Thus, the forerunner of the revival of philosophy was born through an extrinsic dialectic of pseudo-answers that do not satisfy the human mind that traces things through a causal system that then turns into the intrinsic dialectic of man who finds his identity through a substantive dialectic that sees that these truths actually begin to exist because of the thought and processing of the human soul itself.

Humans begin to realize that their existence has been nothing but a form of rational human beings who play the subjective self that sees and thinks about something that starts from how humans themselves exist. This subjective condition then becomes a justification for human understanding to develop knowledge that comes from how to maximize one's potential through a complementary subjective dialectic in the structure of the human body itself. There is an awareness of human beings having abilities and truths, starting from how humans think and reconstruct their own thoughts and reap logical and affirmed answers until the truth of coherence emerges through rational logical justifications that enter the realm of human thought.

But again, it is not empty of experiences related to systems outside of itself, whether in the form of myths or folklore or so on. This means that this is a necessity for the existence of philosophical science that is born from extrinsic causes that reach its climax by knocking on the door of human consciousness which leads to the epistemic colossal discovery of the existence of external impulses which then gives birth to a great understanding of the meta-conscious human that dialectics prove the emergence of a magical baby named human who has an important grace in him called reason/philosophy (Yazdi, 2003).

### **c. Three Critical Pillars; Ontology, Epistemology, and Axiology**

As a discipline, philosophy rests on three main aspects on which it is based; *First*, Ontology (Bakker, 1992): Examining the essence of "what" is being studied. Critical studies here question the nature of existence, including the objectivity of knowledge. At least the nuances of criticism of all forms of knowledge "exist" become a critical perspective on all forms of knowledge systems that have emerged. This can be used as a critical method to be able to find everything that has not yet been revealed. Thus ontology can ask something that has never been known before. So that it allows for continuous updates to something. In this pattern, critical studies in philosophy at the same time demonstrate its invulnerability from the position of criticism. That is the importance of critical studies (Bakker, 1992).

*Second*, epistemology (Yazdi, 2003): Examining the "how" of knowledge is obtained. It involves an analysis of the methods, validity, and limitations of science. This second pillar implies the certainty of valid knowledge in terms of the sources recorded in the interaction of the object subject. Source criticism efforts look at the foundation in occupying all forms of things according to their portions. And this, epistemological critical attitudes are so swooping down on the establishment of science or any field that there is no idol of knowledge or stagnation of truth. At this level, the study of epistemological criticism opens up opportunities for continuous novelty and dismantles the establishment of the hegemonic tradition of one knowledge over another or one power over another. The mirror of this approach must remain in all living systems so that there is no cave of closure at the level of phenomena. All forms of establishment often arise as a result of the lack of critical dimensions of this epistemic method.

*Third*, axiology (Kattsoff, 1996): Discussing "what it is for" to use. This aspect highlights the ethical, moral, and aesthetic values that underpin the scientific process. To maintain the preservation and novelty of knowledge or traditions and teachings, it is very important to put the concept or axial method as a catalyst in its realization in the real world of humans. Many things are sometimes

met with surprise because they no longer see the important aspects of normativity, usefulness, and sustainability as needed, without negating one of the specific parts of its broader structure. Often the sustainability of something is measured by its usefulness at a purely pragmatic level, without wanting to place something in proportion to see the context of its meaning more deeply and broadly. This is where the function of axiological criticism lies in order to bridge the continuity of an idea or idea or knowledge according to its magnetism.

Philosophical studies or Islamic studies often ignore this axiological method so that the values of novelty themselves are not created. In the sense that every exposure and phenomenon that appears before us is often not executed due to the lack of access to this axiological method as an objective stabilizer on the other hand. Meaning is often lost in the midst of certain needs and goals, such is the importance of this method in Islamic scientific studies.

#### **d. Philosophy as the Foundation of Critical Reason**

Everything has a spirit. And the spirit of philosophy is the so-called critical reason itself. Something cannot be judged or touched except through the spirit of philosophy itself. This includes the study of philosophy. There is nothing to escape from this critical reasoning model. Because this is a great way to open up opportunities to approach something so that there is no surprise and stagnation.

The same thing will happen to this scientific discipline of philosophy if it no longer uses this foundation in all forms of theory. Critical thinking (Bertens, 2002) in philosophy involves the ability to sort information, seek truth, and find solutions to human problems. The role of philosophy in critical thinking encompasses three important aspects; First, logic. Involves arguments and analysis to evaluate claims of truth. Second, ethics. Provide an understanding of moral values and concepts in the development of knowledge. Third, Reflection. Encourage fundamental questions such as "what can be known" or "what is true".

## 4. DISCUSSION

### a. **Critical Studies: Going Beyond All Forms of Paradigm**

In critical studies, there is no immunity to criticism, for example, philosophical discourse especially those influenced by Frankfurt's Critical Theory, criticizes the positivist paradigm that tends to reduce social science methods to the equivalent of natural sciences. Anti-establishment and attacking absolutism in all types of science is a form of critical study that is strongly emphasized by thinkers such as Karl R. Popper (Popper, 2002) and Thomas Kuhn, who highlight the importance of critical evaluation so that science is not stagnant and able to adapt to new realities. Popper emphasized how critical study is the dismantling of all forms of authority that hold knowledge hostage in its entirety. Similarly, Kuhn strongly emphasizes the revolutionary system in all forms of authority that is indicated to put something in an unattainable position, aka established, which requires revolutionary attitudes or actions in all fields, including in the field of science.

Critical studies also show that philosophy plays an important role in the formation of critical reason in humans, although its implementation still faces challenges in methods and problems of knowledge transmission. This critical study inspires a positive force for the revival of science that provides opportunities for any field of knowledge to achieve its progress, as well as marking the step of the development of knowledge that is increasingly advanced and independent with a note that science is not immune to criticism and open to all forms of progress. Thus, it can be concluded that the truth of science, including philosophy, is not endless with criticism or correction for its sustainability and continuity.

### b. **Forms of Criticism (Fallacy) of Falsehood of Philosophy**

We find many criticisms and rejections of some philosophical arguments that are considered misleading in the theological realm which proves that this is a direct criticism of the

existence of philosophers. Some of the content or material of philosophy is forms of deviations from the logic of philosophy. For example, the criticism and direct rebuttal by a Muslim philosopher represented by Imam Al-Gazali is related to some errors of logical inference of philosophical thought (Al-Gazali, 1966).

One of Al-Gazali's monumental works that criticizes the way of thinking of philosophers which is considered a mistake in their way of thinking is clearly stated in the famous masterpiece called *Tabaqut al-Falasifah* (incoherence of philosophers), this work was born solely as a response as well as a direct rebuttal to some of the philosophers' errors of thinking that were considered fatal.

This book is a critical response to the thought of philosophers, especially the *Avicennian school* pioneered by Ibn Sina, which is considered to be contrary to the teachings of Islam. The purpose of Al-Gazali in writing this book is to make Muslims aware of the confusion of thinking caused by the influence of philosophy that deviates from the faith. On the other hand, he wanted to show that many of the claims of philosophers cannot be proven logically and are contrary to revelation (Al-Gazali, 1966).

In his book, Al-Gazali mentions three doctrines that are considered to be very contrary to religious doctrine. These three doctrines can mislead Muslims. These doctrines are; 1. The world is eternal. Philosophers argue that the universe has no beginning, while Islam teaches that nature was created by Allah and has a beginning. 2. God knows only general things. Philosophers claim that God does not know specific things (such as individual detailed actions), whereas Islam believes that Allah is omniscient of all things, including the smallest details. 3. There is no physical awakening; philosophers reject the resurrection of the body after death, even though this is one of the pillars of faith (Al-Gazali, 1966).

Al-Gazali used the methods of logical criticism and sharp argumentative criticism to point out inconsistencies in philosophical thought. He emphasized that the field of metaphysics

cannot be studied with reason alone (Al-Gazali, 1966), because it involves things that are beyond the reach of ordinary senses and logic. He also answered and strengthened the position of revelation before philosophers about the existence of revelation that has a higher authority in determining the truth about supernatural things (Al-Gazali, 1966). Nevertheless, Al-Gazali did not reject all philosophical science. Al-Gazali still acknowledges the truth in the fields of logic, mathematics and natural sciences as long as it does not contradict religion.

This work of al-Gazali is one of the most important works in the history of Islamic thought. His criticism sparked a long debate, and was even refuted by Ibn Rushd in his book *Tahafut al-Tahafut* (Ibn Rushd, 1968). But al-Gazali's work, at least, succeeded in limiting the influence of philosophy that was too liberal and strengthening the position of Islamic theology at that time.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The critical study of philosophy emphasizes that philosophy is not a rigid science, but a dynamic one. It serves as an evaluative mechanism that constantly questions the foundations of science. By using the ontology, epistemology, and axiology approaches critically. Philosophy helps humans not only to "know", but also to understand the "why" and "how" of that knowledge plays a role in civilization. However, in the name of philosophy, which offers paradigms that build and offer enlightenment in the whole of human life, it still bears an important burden for our attention, especially the religious ummah, which still leaves correction to some criticism of the truth that is considered misleading and becomes a systemic problem for the entire epistemic, ontological and axiological edifice. The truth no longer implies the truth on certain scientific objectifications, but it is wiser for us to rely on the creator of knowledge itself, namely Allah SWT.

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**ALGORITHMIC AND RELIGIOUS  
ENGAGEMENT: A DIGITAL  
ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF ISLAMIC  
DA'WAH OPTIMIZATION ON SHORT-  
FORM VIDEO PLATFORMS**

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**Abstract:** This study examines the strategic optimization of short-form video platforms, specifically TikTok, as a medium for Islamic religious communication (da'wah) targeting Generation Z and millennial audiences. Through a qualitative digital ethnographic approach, this research investigates (1) the communicative patterns and content strategies employed by Islamic content creators on TikTok, (2) the platform affordances facilitating effective da'wah dissemination, (3) the socio-technical factors influencing engagement and behavioral outcomes among young Muslim audiences, and (4) the implications for digital religious discourse in the context of social media-mediated spirituality. Employing purposive sampling and thematic analysis of 156 curated Islamic content pieces alongside semi-structured interviews with 18 content creators and focus group discussions with 24 young users from rural and semi-urban communities in Southeast Asia, the research reveals that effective da'wah on TikTok operates through three primary mechanisms: content hybridity (merging entertainment with educational elements), algorithmic literacy (strategic use of platform features and temporal posting patterns), and audience-centric personalization. The findings demonstrate that Islamic messaging achieves optimal engagement when adapted to platform-specific communicative norms while maintaining theological integrity. Notably, the study identifies a paradoxical tension between

authenticity and algorithmic optimization that da'is (Islamic preachers) must navigate. This research contributes to broader scholarly conversations regarding digital religious practices, platform affordances in mediating faith transmission, and the reconfiguration of religious authority in algorithmically-mediated spaces. The article proposes a framework for understanding da'wah optimization as a form of "digital religious adaptation" and provides actionable recommendations for religious organizations, content creators, and platform designers seeking to engage young Muslim audiences meaningfully.

**Keywords:** da'wah, TikTok, digital religion, algorithmic literacy, religious communication, social media, Generation Z, Islamic education, digital ethnography, content strategy

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The global religious landscape has undergone profound transformation in the past two decades, accelerated by ubiquitous internet access and the proliferation of mobile technologies. Religious institutions and faith-based communities have increasingly recognized the necessity of engaging digitally-native populations through platforms that mediate contemporary social interaction and information dissemination. This phenomenon, termed "digital religion" or "cyber-religion" by religious scholars, represents not merely the transposition of traditional religious practices into digital environments but rather a fundamental reconstitution of how faith is performed, transmitted, and experienced in the twenty-first century. Within Islamic contexts specifically, the concept of da'wah meaning "the call" or "invitation" toward Islamic practice and belief has been reframed as contemporary Islamic educators seek innovative methodologies to address the spiritual and educational needs of younger Muslim populations increasingly socialized through digital media consumption patterns. The Islamic tradition itself provides robust textual and jurisprudential foundations for adaptation of communicative methodologies across historical epochs, as evidenced in classical Islamic legal discourse regarding *taysir* (facilitation) and *maṣlaha* (public interest). Contemporary Islamic scholarship thus recognizes digital da'wah not as a departure from traditional Islamic teachings but rather as a legitimate extension of centuries-old practices of religious education adapted to contemporary communicative infrastructure. The urgency of this scholarly attention is particularly acute given demographic projections indicating that

Muslim youth populations in Southeast Asia, Africa, and the Middle East will constitute increasingly significant proportions of global Muslim communities, making youth engagement a critical concern for Islamic institutional development. Understanding how religious communication operates within algorithmically-mediated platforms constitutes therefore not merely an academic curiosity but a strategic imperative for religious organizations seeking to remain relevant to younger generations.

TikTok, a Chinese-originated short-form video application launched internationally in 2018, has emerged as a globally dominant platform with particularly pronounced adoption among younger age cohorts, with statistical evidence indicating approximately 60% of the platform's 1.5 billion monthly active users are aged between thirteen and twenty-four years old. The platform's distinctive affordances including algorithmic recommendation systems optimized for viral content discovery, accessibility of video production tools requiring minimal technical expertise, and micro-social features facilitating rapid content sharing and community formation have rendered it a particularly compelling research site for understanding youth engagement with cultural and religious content. Critically, TikTok's algorithmic architecture fundamentally differs from predecessor social media platforms, prioritizing content characteristics and engagement metrics rather than explicit social graph connections, thereby enabling unknown creators to achieve significant reach and establishing what scholars term "algorithmic virality" as a primary mechanism for audience development. In contexts of religious communication specifically, TikTok presents distinctive opportunities and challenges: opportunities emerge from the

platform's capacity to reach otherwise difficult-to-engage populations and its facilitation of vernacular religious expression, while challenges arise from platform governance policies, algorithmic content suppression of certain religious themes, and the inherent communicative constraints of short-form video formats in conveying theologically complex material. The Indonesian and Southeast Asian contexts constitute particularly significant research sites, as Indonesia possesses the world's largest Muslim population (approximately 230 million individuals) and simultaneously demonstrates the highest per-capita TikTok adoption globally, creating a unique convergence of religious population scale and platform penetration. Academic attention to TikTok-mediated religious communication has remained remarkably limited relative to the platform's cultural significance and the scale of religious content production occurring within it, representing a substantial lacuna in digital religious studies scholarship.

Extant scholarly literature examining social media-mediated religious communication has concentrated disproportionately on Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram, with these platforms receiving substantial academic attention regarding their roles in religious community formation, theologically-oriented content dissemination, and the politicization of religious discourse. While incipient scholarship has begun examining TikTok as a site of youth social practices, identity formation, and political expression, the specific mechanisms through which religious actors optimize platform affordances for theological communication and spiritual education remain inadequately theorized. Furthermore, existing studies of

digital da'wah have largely employed content analytic methodologies examining the characteristics of Islamic religious content without attending sufficiently to the embedded perspectives, strategies, and interpretive frameworks of content creators themselves or the interpretive practices of audience members engaging with such materials. This represents a significant theoretical deficit, as understanding platform-mediated religious communication requires attending simultaneously to multiple analytical levels: the material and algorithmic characteristics of the platform itself, the creative practices and communicative strategies of religious content producers, the interpretive and evaluative practices of audience members, and the broader institutional and cultural contexts shaping religious discourse. The limited qualitative research examining young Muslims' engagement with social media-mediated religious content has generally focused on potential negative effects (radicalization, sectarian polarization) rather than examining the generative possibilities through which digital platforms enable new forms of religious learning, community connection, and spiritual exploration. Additionally, scholarship on digital religion has been dominated by Western and European research contexts, producing knowledge claims that may not adequately account for the distinctive institutional, cultural, and regulatory contexts characterizing religious communication in Muslim-majority societies, particularly in the Southeast Asian context. The convergence of these scholarly gaps limited TikTok research, underexamined content creator perspectives, Western-centric orientations, and deficit-focused analyses creates compelling justification for the present investigation.

This investigation operationalizes three primary research objectives organized around what might be conceptualized as the "architecture of effective digital da'wah." First, the research systematically documents and analyzes the communicative patterns, narrative strategies, and content characteristics through which Islamic content creators construct da'wah messaging on TikTok, examining how theological and pedagogical content is adapted to platform-specific affordances and audience expectations. Second, the study investigates the platform-specific features that content creators strategically activate in service of religious communication goals, including algorithmic optimization techniques, participatory features enabling audience engagement, and temporal dynamics of content publication and circulation. Third, this research examines the mechanisms through which audiences particularly young people in rural and semi-urban Southeast Asian communities interpret, evaluate, and respond to Islamic content encountered on TikTok, including the ways platform affordances shape interpretive processes and behavioral outcomes. These objectives are organized within a broader analytical framework conceptualizing da'wah optimization as constituting a distinctive form of what might be termed "digital religious labor" the intentional, strategic work through which contemporary Islamic educators adapt communicative practices to the specific constraints, possibilities, and cultures of digitally-mediated environments. Importantly, this framing resists both technological determinism (which would attribute religious communication outcomes entirely to platform characteristics) and humanistic voluntarism (which would attribute outcomes entirely to

individual creative agency), instead proposing that effective da'wah emerges through dynamic interactions between platform affordances, creator intentionality, audience interpretive practices, and broader institutional contexts. The research further seeks to contribute to nascent theorizations of "algorithmic religion" the emergent phenomenon through which religious communication, community formation, and spiritual practice are increasingly mediated through algorithmic systems designed for other purposes. By attending to both structural and agentic dimensions of religious communication on TikTok, this investigation aims to generate empirically-grounded insights relevant to religious organizations, content creators, digital platform designers, and scholars of contemporary religion.

Multiple theoretical traditions inform the present investigation, with primary reliance on digital ethnographic methodologies adapted from anthropological tradition alongside conceptual frameworks derived from communication studies, media sociology, and religious studies. Seminal contributions to digital religion scholarship, including the work of Campbell, Ess, and others, have established foundational principles regarding the continuities between online and offline religious practices, the agency of religious actors in appropriating digital technologies, and the distinctive affordances of different platforms for religious communication. Research on algorithmic communication and artificial intelligence-mediated information dissemination has generated crucial insights regarding how recommendation systems shape content discovery, how creators strategically optimize for algorithmic visibility, and how these processes generate novel forms of power and influence in digital publics. Scholarship specifically examining Islamic religious authority,

pedagogy, and public discourse has documented the historical adaptability of Islamic communicative practices across diverse media and social contexts, providing valuable historical perspective on contemporary digital innovation. Studies of youth media engagement and digital literacy have established the sophistication with which young people navigate multiple platforms, their capacity for critical evaluation of digital content, and their agentic appropriation of media for identity construction and community formation. Prior empirical studies examining da'wah practices, while limited in addressing contemporary digital contexts, have identified key characteristics of effective Islamic religious communication including theological authenticity, cultural appropriateness, accessibility to target audiences, and relational dimensions emphasizing community connection rather than individualized consumption. The convergence of these theoretical traditions creates productive conceptual foundations for examining how traditional Islamic values and communicative principles are enacted and negotiated within the specific constraints and possibilities of algorithmically-mediated digital platforms. The present investigation specifically draws on these diverse scholarly conversations while introducing novel attention to the distinctive technical affordances of short-form video platforms and the particular media literacies required for effective communication within such environments.

This research responds to urgent calls within religious studies scholarship for greater attention to the role of digital media in shaping contemporary religious landscapes and for empirically-grounded analysis of how young people encounter, interpret, and respond to

religious content in digital environments. The study's focus on content creator perspectives addresses a critical gap, as content creators themselves constitute important knowledge-holders regarding the practical, ethical, and theological challenges of creating religious content for algorithmically-mediated platforms, yet their voices remain substantially absent from academic discourse. By attending to both the technical dimensions of platform operation (algorithms, features, temporal dynamics) and the human dimensions (creator intentionality, audience interpretation, theological commitments), this investigation generates more sophisticated understanding of the complex ecology through which digital religion operates. The research has significant practical implications for multiple stakeholder groups: for religious organizations seeking to develop digital communication strategies grounded in empirical understanding of audience engagement patterns; for content creators seeking theoretical frameworks for understanding their own communicative practices; for platform designers concerned with facilitating constructive religious discourse; and for young Muslims themselves seeking guidance regarding how to navigate religious content in digital environments. Additionally, this study contributes to broader scholarly conversations regarding digital citizenship, information literacy, and the role of platforms in mediating access to knowledge, including specialized religious knowledge. From a theoretical perspective, the investigation advances understanding of how religious authority operates in algorithmic contexts, how theological concepts are translated across different media forms, and how communicative communities form and operate in platform-mediated environments. The research further contributes to the

growing field of platform studies by attending specifically to the religious dimensions of platform use and the ways that religious actors, values, and communities constitute important analytical subjects for understanding contemporary digital culture.

The specific geographic and cultural context of the research focused particularly on Southeast Asian contexts with emphasis on rural and semi-urban Indonesian communities represents a deliberate choice reflecting recognition that existing scholarship on digital religion concentrates predominantly on Western, developed-world contexts, producing knowledge claims that may inadequately account for the specific institutional, economic, regulatory, and cultural contexts characterizing religious communication in other world regions. Southeast Asia, and Indonesia particularly, presents distinctive research conditions: a Muslim-majority context with sophisticated Islamic institutional structures; a region where platform adoption has proceeded with exceptional rapidity; communities where Internet access remains variable, creating distinctive patterns of platform engagement; and countries where government regulation of religious discourse and platform content adds complexity to religious communication dynamics. Rural and semi-urban contexts constitute particularly important research sites, as these communities are frequently overlooked in digital scholarship that concentrates on urban populations with highest internet connectivity and platform engagement, yet represent substantial portions of Muslim populations in Indonesia and Southeast Asia. The selection of these contexts further allows investigation of how digital communication operates in circumstances where traditional Islamic institutions (mosques,

pesantren, community Islamic organizations) remain strong and influential, requiring examination of how digital and institutional religious landscapes interact and potentially reinforce or challenge each other. Geographic and cultural specificity further enables investigation of how religious content creators adapt Islamic communication to particular cultural contexts, how local audiences interpret Islamic content through culturally-specific lenses, and how regional-specific issues and concerns shape religious content and discourse. This geographically-situated approach represents a deliberate methodological choice reflecting the conviction that meaningful understanding of digital religion requires attending carefully to particularities of place and cultural context rather than producing decontextualized generalizations.

This investigation is organized around four overarching research questions designed to comprehensively examine the phenomenon of da'wah optimization on TikTok while maintaining analytical focus on the mechanisms through which platform affordances, creator agency, and audience interpretation interact to shape religious communication outcomes. First: What communicative patterns, narrative strategies, and content characteristics characterize Islamic da'wah on TikTok, and how do creators adapt theological and pedagogical content to platform-specific constraints and affordances? Second: How do Islamic content creators strategically activate platform-specific technical features (algorithmic mechanisms, participatory functionalities, temporal dynamics) in service of religious communication goals, and what technical literacies and practical knowledge inform these optimization strategies? Third: How do audiences particularly young

people in diverse Southeast Asian contexts interpret, evaluate, and respond to Islamic content encountered on TikTok, and what roles do platform affordances, individual background characteristics, and broader institutional contexts play in shaping these interpretive practices and behavioral outcomes? Fourth: What are the implications of TikTok-mediated da'wah for understanding contemporary Islamic religious authority, pedagogy, and community formation, and what recommendations emerge regarding how religious organizations and content creators can engage young audiences meaningfully and authentically while navigating the specific challenges and opportunities of algorithmic platforms? The article proceeds as follows: the methods section articulates the philosophical orientations, methodological approach, and specific techniques employed in data generation and analysis; the theoretical framework section elaborates the conceptual frameworks through which the research data is interpreted, including visual representation of the interconnected dimensions of da'wah optimization; the results section presents empirical findings organized around the primary research questions, including analysis of communicative patterns, platform optimization strategies, and audience interpretive practices; the discussion section engages findings in conversation with existing scholarly literature, articulates implications for multiple stakeholder communities, and identifies limitations constraining the research; and the conclusion section synthesizes key findings and articulates directions for future investigation. Throughout the article, particular attention is devoted to maintaining humanized, accessible language

while engaging academic rigor and conceptual sophistication appropriate for international scholarly discourse.

## 2. METHOD

### a. Philosophical and Methodological Foundations

#### 1) Philosophical Orientation

This research employs a qualitative digital ethnographic methodology positioned within an interpretive epistemological framework. Digital ethnography, adapted from traditional ethnographic approaches in anthropology, constitutes a methodological approach well-suited to investigating social practices, communicative patterns, and meaning-making processes occurring within digital environments. Ethnographic orientation prioritizes sustained engagement with research participants and contexts, attention to emic (insider) perspectives and interpretive frameworks, and commitment to documenting the complexity and particularity of social practices rather than reducing them to pre-determined analytical categories. The digital adaptation of ethnographic methodology involves extending these principles to online and digitally-mediated contexts while attending carefully to the distinctive characteristics of digital communication environments their scalability, asynchronicity, and technical mediation. The research is grounded within an interpretivist philosophical orientation recognizing that social phenomena, including religious communication and audience interpretation, are fundamentally shaped by the meanings and interpretations

that participants themselves construct. This philosophical positioning explicitly rejects positivistic frameworks seeking to identify universal causal laws in favor of approaches seeking to understand how meanings are constructed within specific social and cultural contexts. Within this interpretivist framework, qualitative research methods constitute the appropriate methodological approach, as qualitative approaches prioritize depth of understanding, attention to context and complexity, and generation of theoretically-rich descriptions grounded in empirical observation and participant perspective.

## **2) Data Generation Techniques**

Data generation employed three primary techniques: digital content analysis of curated Islamic da'wah content available on TikTok; semi-structured interviews with Islamic content creators; and focus group discussions with young users engaging Islamic content on the platform. Content analysis involved systematic examination of 156 discrete Islamic content pieces (video content, accompanying textual descriptions, audience comments, and engagement metrics) generated by 24 distinct content creators across a six-month observation period (January-June 2024). Selection of content for analysis employed purposive sampling strategies designed to capture maximum variation across multiple dimensions: content creator background characteristics (professional Islamic scholars, trained da'is, self-taught educators, youth content creators); content themes (Qur'anic exegesis, hadith-

based teachings, ethical guidance, Islamophobia counter-narratives, Islamic history); and engagement levels (highly-engaged content versus content with limited reach). This variation-maximizing approach enabled investigation of whether communicative patterns and optimization strategies differed across creator types and content categories, generating more comprehensive understanding of the field. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 18 content creators, selected through purposive sampling to achieve diversity across creator professional backgrounds, experience levels, geographic locations (rural and semi-urban Indonesian communities), and target audience demographics. Interviews employed an interview guide addressing creator background and motivations, conceptualizations of da'wah and religious education, strategies for content creation and platform engagement, perceived barriers and facilitators of effective communication, and reflections on ethical and theological dimensions of creating religious content for algorithmic platforms. Interviews typically required 45-75 minutes and were conducted via digital video conferencing and recorded with participant consent. Focus group discussions involved 24 young users (age 15-28) stratified across gender (12 male, 12 female), educational background, and previous Islamic knowledge levels, organized into six discussion groups of four participants each, each discussion conducted in local Indonesian language and recorded with participant consent.

### 3) **Data Analysis**

Data analysis employed thematic analysis approach, recognized as particularly suitable for identifying patterns of meaning within qualitative data. Thematic analysis proceeded through iterative process involving: initial coding of data materials (identification of meaningful units and preliminary conceptual labels); development of preliminary thematic structures (grouping codes into tentative categories); refinement of themes through additional coding rounds and comparison across data sources; and articulation of higher-order conceptual themes synthesizing patterns across the data. Coding processes employed both deductive codes (derived from theoretical frameworks and research questions) and inductive codes (emerging from the data itself), reflecting commitment to both theoretical engagement and empirical grounding. Particular attention was devoted to identifying disconfirming cases and alternative interpretations, recognizing that sophisticated qualitative research requires accounting for complexity and variation rather than oversimplifying data toward predetermined conclusions. To enhance analytical rigor, multiple strategies were employed: member-checking (sharing preliminary findings with participants and incorporating their feedback); peer debriefing (discussing interpretations with research colleagues); triangulation across multiple data sources (seeking convergence between interview, focus group, and content analysis data); and reflexivity (explicit documentation of researcher positionality and potential biases). The research

received ethical approval from institutional review boards at the primary research institution, and all participants provided informed consent prior to participation; pseudonyms are employed throughout to protect participant confidentiality.

### **3. Theoretical Framework and Conceptual Model**

The analytical framework organizing this investigation integrates insights from three primary theoretical traditions. First, affordance theory emphasizes that technologies including digital platforms possess distinctive characteristics enabling certain actions while constraining others, with the critical recognition that affordances are relational properties emerging through interactions between technological characteristics and user capacities and goals. Applied to platform-mediated religious communication, affordance theory directs attention to specific features of TikTok (algorithmic recommendation, participatory functions, temporal dynamics) while simultaneously recognizing that these features enable different possibilities depending on how they are appropriated by creators with different goals and audiences with different interpretive capabilities. Second, the research draws on social semiotics approaches to understanding multimodal communication, recognizing that meaning-making on TikTok involves integration of multiple communicative modalities (visual imagery, verbal language, sonic elements, textual overlays) and that understanding how religious meaning is constructed requires attention to how these modalities interact and contribute to overall

communicative effect. Third, the framework engages religious authority scholarship examining how religious knowledge claims acquire legitimacy, how authority is established and maintained within religious communities, and crucially, how digital mediation transforms authority relationships and creates new possibilities for religiously-marginalized actors to establish alternative authority claims. These theoretical traditions converge in conceptualizing effective da'wah on TikTok as emerging through dynamic interaction of four primary dimensions: (1) Platform Architecture the technical characteristics, algorithmic logics, and feature sets of TikTok as a specific communicative environment; (2) Creator Agency the knowledge, intentions, strategies, and theological commitments that content creators bring to the work of religious communication; (3) Audience Interpretive Practices the culturally-shaped capabilities and frameworks through which young users encounter and make meaning from religious content; and (4) Institutional Contexts the broader religious, cultural, and regulatory contexts within which digital communication occurs. Effective da'wah optimization requires strategic navigation of all four dimensions adapting to platform affordances while maintaining theological integrity, engaging audience interests and capabilities while advancing pedagogical goals, and situating communication within broader Islamic institutional frameworks. A visual representation of these interconnected dimensions follows [see Figure 1: Integrated Framework for Da'wah

Optimization on Digital Platforms], illustrating how religious communication outcomes emerge through complex interactions rather than from any single dimension operating in isolation.

#### 4. RESULTS AND EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

##### a. Content Analysis: Patterns in Islamic Da'wah on TikTok

Content analysis of the 156 curated Islamic content pieces revealed three dominant content categories accounting for 78% of all examined content: Qur'anic Exegesis and Hadith-Based Teachings (48% of content), characterized by brief exegetical commentary on Qur'anic verses or hadith traditions paired with contemporary application examples; Islamic Ethical Guidance and Life Advice (22% of content), addressing practical religious and ethical questions encountered by young Muslims in daily life; and Counter-Narrative Content (8% of content), responding to stereotypes and misconceptions regarding Islam or Islamic practice. Remaining content (22%) constituted miscellaneous categories including Islamic history, biography of Islamic scholars, announcements regarding Islamic events, and meta-commentary on da'wah practices themselves. Across all content categories, analysis identified consistent structural patterns in video construction: most effective content (defined as content achieving above-median engagement relative to creator baseline) employed narrative framing devices establishing relatable problems or questions before introducing religious-textual responses (observed in 76% of high-engagement content versus 41% of low-engagement content); utilized conversational language and direct

address to viewers creating sense of personal connection (observed in 82% of high-engagement content versus 37% of low-engagement content); and incorporated visual elements (graphics, text overlays, creator on-screen presence) supporting rather than merely decorating verbal content (observed in 88% of high-engagement content versus 44% of low-engagement content).

#### **b. Creator Optimization Strategies and Platform Engagement**

Creator interviews revealed sophisticated, intentional engagement with platform optimization strategies despite only 22% of creators reporting formal training in digital communication or media literacy. Creators articulated awareness of algorithmic principles including the importance of initial viewer retention (maintaining viewer attention for crucial first three seconds), strategic use of trend sounds and music, and temporal posting patterns aligned with audience activity peaks [78]. Approximately 67% of creators described consciously experimenting with different content formats, lengths, and stylistic approaches to identify patterns generating greater engagement, reflecting what might be termed "practical algorithmic literacy" developed through experience rather than formal instruction. Interviews further revealed that creator decisions regarding content authenticity and Islamic theological integrity were not experienced as opposed to platform optimization but rather as complementary: creators frequently articulated that authentic Islamic content, authentically presented, constituted their most effective engagement strategy. However, interviews also

documented tensions and constraints, including: concerns regarding content suppression or algorithmic filtering of explicitly religious content; difficulty communicating complex theological concepts within platform's 60-second default video length constraints; awareness that algorithmic systems reward dramatic, affectively intense content potentially in tension with measured theological discourse; and anxiety regarding potential for their religious content to be appropriated or distorted through audience reinterpretation.

### **c. Audience Interpretive Practices and Critical Engagement**

Focus group discussions with young users revealed sophisticated interpretive practices regarding Islamic content on TikTok, with audience members reporting that they evaluated content quality not merely based on engaging presentation but through theological credibility assessments, checking creator backgrounds and comparing content against Islamic sources they consulted independently. Approximately 71% of focus group participants reported intentionally seeking out Islamic content on TikTok as a deliberate educational strategy, indicating that the platform constitutes a significant source of religious learning for young people in the studied communities. Participants reported particular appreciation for content addressing contemporary questions and ethical dilemmas not extensively addressed in traditional Islamic educational settings, suggesting that TikTok-mediated da'wah addresses genuine gaps in available religious education. Importantly, focus group discussions also revealed critical capacity regarding content, with 58% of participants

describing instances where they had encountered Islamic content on TikTok that they deemed theologically problematic, inappropriate, or exploitative, and had either declined to engage further with that creator or actively discouraged others from consuming such content. This critical engagement suggests that young audiences are not passive consumers of algorithmic content but rather active evaluators operating from developed theological and ethical frameworks, though the basis of these frameworks varied considerably across participants. The research further identified notable differences in content engagement patterns across geographic contexts, with young people in semi-urban communities with greater access to traditional Islamic institutions reporting somewhat more critical evaluation of digital religious content, potentially reflecting access to multiple authoritative sources for theological validation.

## **5. Discussion: Implications and Recommendations**

The findings of this investigation reveal that effective da'wah on TikTok is neither simply a matter of applying traditional religious pedagogical principles to a new technological platform, nor merely a process of optimizing for algorithmic visibility at the expense of theological integrity. Rather, the research demonstrates that successful religious communication on TikTok requires navigation of what might be conceptualized as "technological-theological translation" the creative work of expressing Islamic concepts and values in forms that are simultaneously congruent with platform affordances and theologically authentic. Content creators who

achieve significant engagement demonstrate awareness that their audience has specific capabilities and interests, that the platform enables certain forms of communication while constraining others, and that their role as religious educators involves meeting audiences where they are (in terms of knowledge, experience, and platform engagement practices) while authentically advancing Islamic values and understanding. The research further highlights the central role of audience interpretive agency in shaping outcomes of da'wah communication. Young Muslims on TikTok are not passive consumers of algorithmically-recommended religious content but rather sophisticated evaluators of content quality, theological credibility, and appropriateness. The capacity of audiences to assess creator credentials, consult multiple sources, and actively reject content deemed problematic constitutes a significant check on the potential for religious misinformation or manipulation, suggesting that concerns regarding algorithmic radicalization may require more nuanced understanding than deficit-oriented framings typically acknowledge. Simultaneously, the research identifies important disparities in audience capacity to engage critical evaluation, with access to traditional Islamic institutions and trained religious scholars correlating with somewhat more developed critical frameworks for content evaluation, raising questions regarding religious authority and knowledge access in algorithmic contexts. The investigation reveals significant constraints and concerns regarding religious communication on algorithmically-mediated platforms. TikTok's platform design and content moderation policies create multiple barriers to effective religious communication: Islamic religious content sometimes experiences algorithmic suppression or visibility

limitations; platform terminology and tools are not designed for religious educational content, creating friction in creators' efforts to build engaged communities; and the brevity constraints of the platform make communication of theologically complex material challenging. Additionally, the research documents creator anxiety regarding loss of communicative control in algorithmic contexts, where content meaning and use may diverge substantially from creator intention, and where individual content pieces may be encountered outside their intended communicative contexts, potentially leading to misinterpretation. These constraints suggest that institutional religious actors seeking to engage young people on TikTok require support both technical education regarding platform optimization and ethical guidance regarding management of the theological and pedagogical challenges that platformization creates. Critical reflection on these findings generates several practical and theoretical recommendations. For religious organizations and institutions: developing institutional da'wah strategies should involve genuine engagement with the perspectives and practices of young content creators already active on platforms, rather than imposing top-down approaches disconnected from platform realities; religious educators should receive training regarding platform affordances and audience engagement practices, while simultaneously being supported in maintaining theological and pedagogical integrity. For content creators: explicit attention to audience diversity and critical engagement, including proactive efforts to support audience theological literacy and encourage critical evaluation of all religious content (including creator's own), constitutes an important ethical

dimension of da'wah work. For platform designers: recognition that religious communication constitutes a significant dimension of platform use should inform platform design and content moderation policies; algorithmic systems should be designed or adjusted to avoid systematic suppression of religious content; and tools should be developed supporting religious community formation and theological discourse. For researchers and scholars: the findings highlight the need for continued empirically-grounded investigation of digital religion, with sustained attention to creator perspectives, audience agency, and the specific technical affordances of different platforms; research should further attend to how digital and institutional religious landscapes interact and potentially reinforce or challenge one another. The research has several important limitations that constrain interpretation and generalizability of findings. The investigation focused on a specific geographic region (Southeast Asia) during a limited time period, and findings may not generalize to other cultural or regulatory contexts where platform use patterns or Islamic institutional structures differ substantially. The research drew on purposive sampling rather than random sampling, which enhanced capacity to capture diversity and depth but limits statistical generalizability. The investigation focused on relatively successful content creators who had achieved substantial audiences; findings may not adequately represent the experiences of less-visible creators or those who attempt da'wah on TikTok with limited success. The language of interviews and focus groups was conducted in Indonesian, which may have privileged participants with facility in that language and potentially excluded important perspectives. These limitations suggest directions for future research attending to other

geographic contexts, unsuccessful or less-visible creators, and diverse linguistic communities.

## **6. Conclusion and Future Research Directions**

This investigation responds to significant scholarly gaps in understanding how religious communication operates within algorithmically-mediated digital environments, providing empirically-grounded analysis of the strategies, challenges, and outcomes of Islamic da'wah on TikTok. The research reveals that optimization of religious communication on digital platforms constitutes a sophisticated, multifaceted process requiring simultaneous attention to platform affordances, creator theological commitments and communicative goals, audience interpretive practices and critical capacities, and broader institutional and cultural contexts. Rather than representing a departure from authentic Islamic practice and pedagogy, effective da'wah on TikTok represents a contemporary instantiation of historical Islamic commitment to adapting communicative practices across diverse contexts and audiences. The findings further underscore the importance of centering the perspectives and practices of religious actors themselves in scholarly analysis of digital religion, recognizing that content creators, religious leaders, and community members possess sophisticated understanding of their own communicative practices that can inform both scholarly theorization and practical strategy development. The scholarly and practical implications of these findings extend beyond the specific context of Islamic religious communication on TikTok. The investigation contributes to broader conversations regarding platform governance and design, highlighting

how technical systems created for other purposes profoundly shape how religious knowledge is created, circulated, and interpreted. The research further speaks to longstanding concerns within religious studies scholarship regarding the relationship between tradition and innovation, demonstrating through empirical example how contemporary Islamic educators navigate between maintaining theological integrity and engaging contemporary audiences through innovative communicative technologies. The investigation finally underscores the importance of moving beyond deficit-oriented analyses of technology's relationship to religion, which have frequently emphasized concerns regarding manipulation and radicalization, toward more nuanced understanding acknowledging both the risks and opportunities that digital platforms create for religious learning and community formation. Future research should extend these investigations in several directions: attention to other platforms and communicative contexts, examining whether similar patterns obtain on Instagram, YouTube, or other platforms where religious content circulates; investigation of how institutional Islamic organizations are engaging with digital communication strategies and how institutional and individual creator approaches relate; examination of longer-term outcomes of TikTok-mediated religious learning, investigating whether and how young people who encounter Islamic content on TikTok subsequently engage with formal Islamic educational institutions or communities; and comparative research examining how religious communities across different faith traditions navigate similar challenges of digital platform engagement. Additionally, research should attend to the ethical dimensions of digital religious communication more explicitly, examining how content creators and institutions can

meaningfully engage young people on platforms designed for entertainment while maintaining commitment to authentic religious values. Finally, scholars should pursue more substantial engagement with platform governance questions, investigating how platforms can be designed and governed in ways that support constructive religious discourse while remaining alert to legitimate concerns regarding religious misinformation and manipulation. In conclusion, understanding Islamic da'wah on TikTok requires recognizing that young Muslims are neither passive consumers of algorithmically-mediated religious content nor unthinking followers of whatever content the algorithm presents. Rather, young Muslims constitute agentic, critically-engaged audiences navigating between multiple sources of religious knowledge and authority, evaluating content according to developed theological frameworks, and actively appropriating digital platforms for their own purposes of religious learning and community connection. The challenge facing religious institutions, content creators, and platform designers is not whether to engage these digital spaces young people are already there, already creating religious content, already encountering religious ideas in algorithmic contexts. Rather, the challenge is how to support authentic, theologically grounded, pedagogically effective religious communication in these spaces, maintaining fidelity to Islamic values while embracing contemporary communicative possibilities. This investigation offers empirically-grounded insights that can inform those efforts, while simultaneously highlighting the continued necessity of sustained scholarly attention to the evolving landscape of digital religion

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**LOCAL GOVERNMENT'S ROLE IN  
DEVELOPING CHIP (KERIPIK) MSMEs  
THROUGH THE COOPERATIVE AND  
VILLAGE OFFICE IN BANDAR LAMPUNG: A  
QUALITATIVE POLICY ANALYSIS**

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**Abstract:** Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) constitute a foundational pillar of Indonesia's national economy, contributing substantially to employment generation, income distribution, and regional economic resilience. This study investigates the multidimensional role of local government in developing chip (keripik) MSMEs in Bandar Lampung City, with particular attention to the institutional mechanisms through which the Office of Cooperatives and SMEs (Dinas Koperasi dan UKM) operationalizes its developmental mandate. Situated within a qualitative research design employing descriptive-interpretive analysis, the study draws upon in-depth interviews, direct field observation, and triangulated documentation from key informants including MSME officers, enterprise owners, and employees. Findings reveal that local government functions across four institutional roles regulator, facilitator, motivator, and catalyst implemented through entrepreneurship training, zero-interest capital assistance, product marketing facilitation, and business mentoring. However, significant structural barriers persist: bureaucratic complexity in export licensing, limited digital technology adoption, low product innovation capacity, and the absence of sustained mentoring continuity. The study theorizes these gaps through a Governance-Capability-Digitalization (GCD) framework and proposes a Strategic MSME Development Model integrating digital transformation, institutional accessibility, and

continuous capacity-building. Implications extend to policy reform, MSME governance design, and sustainable local economic empowerment aligned with Islamic economic principles of *maslahah* and social justice.

**Keywords:** Local Government Role; MSME Development; Chip Industry; Digital Governance; Bandar Lampung; Islamic Economic Empowerment; Policy Analysis

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The transformative potential of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in shaping Indonesia's socioeconomic landscape has been substantiated by decades of empirical evidence. According to the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs of the Republic of Indonesia, MSMEs account for more than 60 million business units and absorb approximately 97% of the national workforce, representing an indispensable engine of inclusive economic growth (Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs RI, 2022). This aggregate contribution becomes particularly pronounced at subnational levels, where local economic ecosystems depend heavily on the vibrancy and resilience of informal and semi-formal enterprises. Scholars such as Suci (2017) have observed that MSME development trajectories in Indonesia reflect a complex interplay of institutional support, market access, and human capital formation, underscoring the need for holistic policy interventions rather than isolated programmatic approaches (Suci, 2017; Tambunan, 2012).

At the normative level, Indonesia's commitment to MSME empowerment is codified in Law No. 20 of 2008 on Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises, which mandates both central and local governments to cultivate an enabling business environment through capacity-building, access to capital, and market expansion facilitation (Indonesian Government, 2008). This legislative framework establishes a relational obligation between the state and entrepreneurs, situating MSME development within a broader governance architecture that spans regulatory, facilitative, and motivational dimensions (Siagian, 2005; Jaelani & Fidarisi, 2024). The decentralization agenda reinforced by Law No. 23 of 2014 on Regional Government further amplifies local government authority to operationalize context-sensitive MSME policies aligned with territorial economic potentials (Indonesian Government, 2014).

The province of Lampung, and specifically its capital Bandar Lampung, occupies a strategically significant position within Indonesia's MSME geography. The city is renowned as a regional center for chip (keripik) production, particularly banana chips

(keripik pisang), which serve as both a primary commercial commodity and a cultural marker of Lampungese identity. This agri-food processing cluster demonstrates high economic multiplier effects providing livelihoods for thousands of households while anchoring rural-urban supply chains (Nugroho, 2018; Saputra & Wijaya, 2023). Yet despite this embedded market position, empirical observations indicate persistent structural vulnerabilities within the sector, including limited access to institutionalized capital, low export licensing uptake, inadequate product differentiation strategies, and marginal integration into digital commerce platforms (Rahman, 2021; Heryanto, 2023).

Prior scholarship has examined government-MSME relationships through various conceptual lenses. Lestari and Hidayat (2020) identified the regulator-facilitator-motivator typology as a productive analytical frame for mapping local government roles in MSME ecosystems, while Nugroho (2018) found that sustained governmental commitment measured through program continuity and resource allocation significantly predicted MSME growth outcomes in Indonesian contexts. Jaelani and Fidaris (2024) extended this framework by adding the catalyst dimension, arguing that government must actively accelerate market formation processes rather than merely regulating them. These theoretical contributions collectively establish a four-role governance model that this study employs as its primary analytical scaffold.

However, a salient gap in existing scholarship concerns the dynamic intersection between governance quality, enterprise capability, and digital transformation what this paper conceptualizes as the Governance-Capability-Digitalization (GCD) nexus. While studies have separately examined each dimension, their interactive effects on MSME outcomes in Indonesian secondary cities remain underexplored (Andini et al., 2024; Fauziah, 2023; Pratiwi & Saputra, 2024). The GCD framework proposed in this study addresses this theoretical lacuna by providing an integrative model that accounts for simultaneous institutional, organizational, and technological determinants of MSME performance.

Empirical observations of chip MSMEs in Bandar Lampung specifically Toko Oleh-Oleh Bintang Buah and Keripik Pisang Kepok SA JA YA reveal nuanced patterns of governmental engagement that neither conform to the ideal-type facilitating state nor the wholly interventionist model. These enterprises operate within a complex ecology of formal policy support and informal adaptive strategies, raising important questions about the sufficiency of current governance mechanisms and the institutional conditions required for MSME scaling (Widyastuti et al., 2024; Rahmawati & Haryanto, 2020).

From an Islamic economic perspective, the developmental responsibilities of government are not merely technical or administrative they carry a moral imperative rooted in the concept of *maslahah* (public welfare) and the distributive justice principles embedded in *Al-Qur'an* and *Sunnah*. As articulated by Chapra (2001) and Mardani (2015), an Islamic governance paradigm mandates equitable economic management, active protection of socioeconomically vulnerable actors, and the promotion of *halal* enterprise as both a spiritual duty and a socioeconomic development strategy. This normative foundation aligns with *Surah Al-Jumu'ah* [62:10], which calls believers to pursue economic activity as an extension of their devotional practice framing enterprise development as an act of collective and individual fulfillment (Maulana & Fitriani, 2024; Ibnu Katsir, 2004).

Against this multidimensional backdrop, the present study formulates two interrelated research questions: (1) How does the local government of Bandar Lampung operationalize its developmental roles in supporting chip MSME growth through the Office of Cooperatives and SMEs? (2) What structural barriers impede the optimization of governmental MSME support, and how can these barriers be addressed through evidence-based policy interventions? These questions anchor the study's contribution at the intersection of governance studies, development economics, and Islamic public administration, with implications for both scholarly

discourse and applied policy reform (Arto & Hutomo, 2013; Hadi et al., 2025).

The remainder of this paper proceeds as follows: Section 2 presents the Theoretical Framework underpinning the study. Section 3 outlines the Methodology. Section 4 reports the Results through multi-layered analytical lenses. Section 5 engages in Discussion with broader theoretical and policy implications. Section 6 concludes by addressing the study's original research questions and proposing directions for future inquiry.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### a. The Governance Capability Digitalization (GCD) Framework

This study proposes the Governance Capability Digitalization (GCD) Framework as its primary theoretical contribution an integrative analytical architecture that synthesizes three bodies of scholarship: institutional governance theory, organizational capability theory, and digital transformation studies. The framework contends that MSME development outcomes are not unidimensionally determined but emerge from the simultaneous and interactive quality of governance structures, enterprise-level capability formation, and digital ecosystem integration.

The Governance dimension draws primarily on Siagian's (2005) developmental state typology, which characterizes government as fulfilling regulator, facilitator, motivator, and catalyst roles. This is complemented by Rasyid's (2005) decentralization theory, which emphasizes local government's advantage in understanding proximate socioeconomic conditions, and Ryaas Rasyid's argument that decentralized governance enhances institutional responsiveness and developmental effectiveness (Rasyid, 2005; Hadi et al., 2025). Governance quality is operationalized through four indicators: regulatory coherence, program accessibility, institutional coordination, and accountability mechanisms.

The Capability dimension is grounded in resource-based theory and human capital development frameworks. Tambunan (2012) established that MSME competitive advantage is fundamentally determined by the quality of human capital, innovation orientation, and managerial sophistication. Hasibuan's (2016) conceptualization of development as multidimensional capacity enhancement encompassing technical, theoretical, and moral competencies extends this perspective to include the role of training, mentoring, and organizational learning in enterprise capability formation (Pratiwi & Saputra, 2024; Andini et al., 2024).

The Digitalization dimension responds to the growing scholarly consensus that technology adoption is no longer optional but structurally determinative for MSME survival and scaling in contemporary market environments (Rahman, 2021; Fauziah, 2023). Drawing on digital transformation theory and e-commerce adoption frameworks, this dimension examines the extent to which government-supported digitalization initiatives including digital marketing training, e-commerce platform integration, and technology infrastructure provision translate into measurable market expansion for MSMEs (Rahmawati & Haryanto, 2020).

**Table 1. The GCD Framework: Dimensions, Components, and Policy Implications**

Dimension	Key Components	Policy Implications
<b>Governance (G)</b>	Regulatory framework, institutional capacity, policy coherence, bureaucratic efficiency	Streamline export licensing; integrate OSS digital platform; establish MSME one-stop service
<b>Capability (C)</b>	Human capital development, innovation capacity, product quality, managerial skills	Continuous training programs; product R&D support; quality certification assistance
<b>Digitalization (D)</b>	Digital marketing adoption, e-commerce integration, technology literacy, data-	Digital onboarding programs; marketplace partnerships; ICT infrastructure provision

Dimension	Key Components	Policy Implications
	driven decision making	

Source: Researchers' Construct (2025), adapted from Siagian (2005), Tambunan (2012), and Rahman (2021)

### **b. Local Government Roles in MSME Development**

The theoretical delineation of local government roles in MSME development has evolved from simple service delivery models to complex multi-stakeholder governance frameworks. Lestari and Hidayat (2020) demonstrated that local governments operating as pure regulators generate suboptimal MSME outcomes compared to those adopting hybrid roles combining regulation with active facilitation. Jaelani and Fidaris (2024) further argued that catalyst-role government characterized by proactive market creation, cross-sectoral partnership orchestration, and innovation ecosystem management produces the most robust MSME developmental outcomes.

Within the Indonesian constitutional framework, Law No. 23 of 2014 (Indonesian Government, 2014) mandates local governments to design and implement context-sensitive economic development strategies, giving local executives both the authority and the responsibility for MSME empowerment. This legal architecture creates what Hadi et al. (2025) describe as a 'developmental obligation' a governance commitment that extends beyond passive regulation to active resource mobilization on behalf of vulnerable economic actors.

### **c. Islamic Economic Perspective on Government and Enterprise Development**

Islamic economic theory provides a distinctive normative foundation for understanding the state's obligations toward MSME development. Mardani's (2015) synthesis of Quranic and Sunnah-based economic principles identifies distributive justice, protection of the economically weak (*mas'u'd faqir*), and collective welfare (*maslahah*) as the fundamental imperatives guiding state economic management. Chapra (2001) extends this

framework to argue that the Islamic state must actively counteract market failures that systematically disadvantage small producers and artisan communities a role directly relevant to chip MSME development in Bandar Lampung.

The Quranic mandate in Surah Al-Jumu'ah [62:10] to “spread through the earth and seek the bounty of Allah” has been interpreted by Ibnu Katsir (2004) as a divine sanction for lawful economic enterprise following worship obligations legitimizing not only individual entrepreneurship but also state support for enterprise development as a form of collective *ijtihad*. This perspective, elaborated by Maulana and Fitriani (2024), situates local government MSME support within a broader Islamic governance ethic that prioritizes substantive welfare outcomes over procedural compliance.

### **3. METHOD**

#### **a. Research Worldview and Paradigmatic Positioning**

This study is anchored in an interpretive-constructivist worldview (Creswell & Poth, 2018), which holds that social realities including governance practices, institutional behaviors, and entrepreneurial experiences are meaningfully constituted through human interpretation and social interaction rather than existing as objective, measurement-ready phenomena (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This paradigmatic choice is epistemologically appropriate for the research problem at hand: understanding how local government roles are experienced, negotiated, and evaluated by MSME actors requires interpretive sensitivity to context, actor perspective, and institutional nuance that quantitative measurement instruments cannot adequately capture (Moleong, 2018).

#### **b. Research Design: Qualitative Descriptive-Interpretive**

A qualitative descriptive-interpretive research design was employed, which Sugiyono (2019) defines as a methodology

oriented toward producing rich, contextually grounded descriptions of social phenomena as experienced by participants in their natural settings. This approach enables the research to capture the complexity of government-MSME interactions as embedded in institutional, historical, and cultural contexts a depth of understanding that surveys or administrative data analysis would not yield (Moleong, 2018; Miles & Huberman, 2014).

### **c. Research Site and Sampling**

The study was conducted at Toko Oleh-oleh Bintang Buah and Keripik Pisang Kepok SA JA YA in Bandar Lampung City, two strategically selected chip MSME enterprises representing the spectrum of enterprise scale and development stage within the local chip industry cluster. Both enterprises maintain active engagement with the Office of Cooperatives and SMEs (Dinas Koperasi dan UKM), ensuring informant access to institutional knowledge about government programs.

Purposive sampling (Arikunto, 2017) was employed to identify information-rich informants with direct knowledge of the research phenomenon. Informants included: Rafi Satya Andika (MSME Development Officer, Dinas Koperasi dan UKM Bandar Lampung), Erma Syahfitri (Owner, Toko Oleh-Oleh Bintang Buah), and three employees (Dewi Yulia, Komala Hermansyah, and Elpiyana). Data saturation was assessed through iterative interview cycles until theoretical redundancy was achieved (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

### **d. Data Collection Techniques**

Three complementary data collection methods were employed to enable triangulation. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted using a thematically organized interview guide with probes for governance experiences, program accessibility, barriers, and recommendations. Systematic direct observation was conducted at enterprise sites to document production processes,

workspace conditions, marketing materials, and visible signs of governmental support. Documentary analysis encompassed government policy documents, training records, cooperation agreements, and published statistical data from Dinas Koperasi dan UKM (Sugiyono, 2019; Moleong, 2018).

**e. Analytical Strategy**

Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman (2014) interactive model comprising three concurrent processes: (1) data condensation through open and axial coding; (2) data display through narrative matrices and cross-case thematic tables; and (3) conclusion drawing through ongoing verification. The GCD Framework provided the a priori theoretical template against which empirical themes were systematically mapped, while deductive-abductive logic was employed to identify both confirmatory and disconfirmatory evidence.

Table 2. Research Process Flowchart: From Data Collection to Policy Recommendation

Research Phase	Analytical Process	Output
<b>Phase 1: Data Collection</b>	Observations, in-depth interviews, archival documentation	Primary & secondary data matrix
<b>Phase 2: Data Reduction</b>	Open coding, axial coding, thematic clustering, triangulation	Core themes & sub-themes
<b>Phase 3: Data Display</b>	Narrative matrices, role-function cross-tabulation, GCD mapping	Analytical framework visualization
<b>Phase 4: Conclusion Drawing</b>	Member checking, negative case analysis, transferability assessment	Verified findings & theoretical model
<b>Phase 5:</b>	Policy synthesis, strategic	Evidence-based policy

Research Phase	Analytical Process	Output
<b>Recommendation</b>	MSME model formulation, stakeholder mapping	framework

Source: Researchers' construct adapted from Miles & Huberman (2014) and Creswell & Poth (2018)

#### f. Validity and Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness was established through four criteria from Lincoln and Guba (1985): (1) credibility, ensured through prolonged engagement, member checking with key informants, and source triangulation; (2) transferability, addressed through thick description of the research context; (3) dependability, maintained through an audit trail of all analytical decisions; and (4) confirmability, ensured through reflexive documentation of researcher positionality and interpretive choices.

## 4. RESULTS

### a. MSME Growth Trajectory in Bandar Lampung (2020–2024)

Data obtained from the Office of Cooperatives and SMEs (Dinas Koperasi dan UKM) Bandar Lampung reveals a dramatic expansion in registered MSME units over the 2020–2024 period. As shown in Table 3, total MSME numbers increased from 2,296 units in 2020 to 30,940 units in 2023–2024, representing a 1,247% growth rate driven primarily by micro-enterprise registration expansion following the national SIDT (Integrated SME Data System) implementation by the Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs RI. Researcher notes that this statistical surge must be interpreted cautiously: increased registration reflects improved data capture rather than necessarily equivalent new enterprise formation, though both phenomena likely contribute.

Table 3. MSME Development in Bandar Lampung City (2020–2024)

Year	Micro	Small	Medium	Total	Growth (%)
2020	2,243	41	12	2,296	-
2021	4,407	41	12	4,460	+94.3%
2022	4,407	41	12	4,460	0.0%
2023	30,934	2	4	30,940	+593.5%
2024	30,934	2	4	30,940	0.0%

Source: Dinas Koperasi dan UKM Bandar Lampung (2024); data 2020 - 2022 from kabupaten/kota reconciliation; 2023–2024 from SIDT Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs RI

Key MSME Statistics at a Glance:

<b>30,940</b> Total MSMEs (2024)	<b>99.9%</b> Micro Enterprises	<b>1,247%</b> 5-Year Growth	<b>4 Roles</b> Government Functions
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**b. Analytical Matrix: Government Roles, Instruments, and Outcomes**

Building on systematic coding of interview transcripts, observational notes, and documentary sources, the following multi-dimensional role matrix synthesizes the key findings across all four government roles as operationalized in the Bandar Lampung chip MSME context.

Table 4. Government Role Analysis Matrix: Instruments, Mechanisms, Gaps, and Recommendations

Role	Policy Instruments	Implementation Mechanism	Observed Gaps	Recommended Actions
<b>Regulator</b>	UU No. 20/2008; Regional MSME ordinances; Zero-interest credit policy	Dinas Koperasi & UKM policy enforcement; export licensing facilitation	Uneven information dissemination; bureaucratic complexity in export permits; low accessibility for micro-enterprises	Simplify OSS-based licensing; conduct MSME policy socialization campaigns; establish regulatory hotline

Role	Policy Instruments	Implementation Mechanism	Observed Gaps	Recommended Actions
<b>Facilitator</b>	Entrepreneurship training programs; KUR & capital grants; product exhibition platforms	Training workshops; Car Free Day expo; Bank Waway credit linkage	Limited training frequency; no digital literacy modules; geographic concentration of programs	Expand training to all sub-districts; integrate digital marketing curriculum; partner with tech ecosystem
<b>Motivator</b>	Motivational coaching; recognition programs; community empowerment events	MSME mentoring sessions; award programs; enterprise community building	No post-training follow-up; limited mentoring continuity; insufficient innovation incentives	Implement MSME mentoring cadre; establish peer-learning networks; create innovation grants
<b>Catalyst</b>	HKI registration support; MSME-bank partnership programs; CSR linkage	IPR facilitation; cross-sector collaboration; public-private partnerships	Weak inter-institutional coordination; low product innovation uptake; underdeveloped digital market channels	Strengthen multi-stakeholder governance; support e-commerce onboarding; scale incubation programs

Source: Primary research findings (2025); analytical framework adapted from Siagian (2005) and Jaelani & Fidaris (2024)

### c. Regulator Role: Policy Architecture and Institutional Access

The regulator role is operationalized through the legislative framework of Law No. 20/2008 and local implementing ordinances, translated into concrete interventions by Dinas Koperasi dan UKM. The study found that zero-interest capital assistance programs (kredit bunga 0%) represent the primary regulatory instrument with Bank Waway Bandar Lampung as the institutional delivery partner. However, field data revealed significant access inequalities: administrative requirements for capital assistance applications were characterized by informants as “berbelit-belit” (convoluted), creating de facto

barriers that systematically disadvantaged micro-enterprises with lower documentation capacity.

A critical regulatory gap identified concerns export licensing complexity. While Bandar Lampung's chip products have documented export potential to ASEAN and Middle Eastern markets, none of the studied MSMEs had successfully completed export certification processes. Informants cited multi-agency procedural requirements, high compliance costs, and absence of dedicated export facilitation officers as primary barriers. Researcher observes that this institutional gap represents a significant opportunity cost for the regional economy a structural impediment to MSME internationalization that regulatory reform could directly address.

#### **d. Facilitator Role: Capacity Development and Market Linkage**

The facilitator role manifests through two principal intervention categories: capacity development programs (entrepreneurship training, product quality workshops, managerial skills courses) and market linkage activities (Car Free Day participation, Expo exhibitions, cooperative marketing platforms). Field observations confirmed active program implementation: entrepreneurship training sessions were documented, and multiple informants reported participation in at least one government-organized business development event within the past three years.

However, qualitative evidence consistently indicated three facilitation deficiencies: geographic concentration (most programs delivered at Dinas offices rather than at enterprise sites), temporal discontinuity (one-off training events without follow-up coaching), and digital technology exclusion (zero dedicated digital marketing training modules identified across all documented programs). As enterprise owner Erma Syahfitri stated: "Pelatihan ada, tapi setelah selesai tidak ada pendampingan lanjutan" (Training exists, but after completion there is no continued

mentoring). This testimony captures a systemic facilitation gap confirmed across multiple informants, constituting what researcher identifies as a ‘post-training abandonment’ phenomenon.

#### **e. Motivator Role: Incentivizing Innovation and Resilience**

The motivator role is operationalized through recognition mechanisms, community building initiatives, and coaching activities. Informants reported that government participation in business motivation events generated positive psychological effects, increasing informants’ confidence in business sustainability. The provision of capital access and market promotion platforms was also perceived as motivating signaling institutional recognition of MSME contributions to regional economic life.

However, the motivational impact was constrained by the absence of sustained post-program engagement. Motivation effects measured through informant self-reporting of enterprise confidence and expansion intent showed temporal decay patterns: initial enthusiasm following training events was not maintained without ongoing mentoring relationships. This finding aligns with Siagian’s (2003) argument that motivational interventions require systemic reinforcement through accountability structures and progress monitoring to generate durable behavioral change.

#### **f. Catalyst Role: Ecosystem Acceleration and Innovation Support**

The catalyst role, as the most ambitious governance function, showed the most significant performance gap between institutional intent and operational reality. While government programs for Intellectual Property Rights (HKI) registration support and bank-enterprise linkage exist, their uptake among studied MSMEs was minimal. Neither enterprise had registered

products under IP protection, limiting their brand development potential and premium market access.

Multi-stakeholder partnership coordination identified by Jaelani and Fidarlis (2024) as a defining feature of effective catalyst governance was assessed as underdeveloped. The relationship between Dinas Koperasi dan UKM and private sector actors, academic institutions, and fintech platforms was largely informal and episodic rather than structurally embedded. Researcher contends that this coordination deficit represents the most consequential governance gap for long-term MSME scaling: without a structured ecosystem, government catalytic interventions produce isolated rather than compounding effects.

## 5. DISCUSSION

### a. Theoretical Implications: Validating and Extending the GCD Framework

The empirical findings comprehensively validate the GCD Framework's core proposition: MSME development outcomes are jointly determined by governance quality, capability development, and digital transformation, and these dimensions exhibit interactive rather than independent effects. The Governance dimension findings confirm Lestari and Hidayat's (2020) regulatory-facilitation thesis while extending it to reveal how bureaucratic complexity creates asymmetric access patterns disadvantaging micro-enterprises. The Capability dimension findings corroborate Tambunan's (2012) human capital emphasis but add the critical qualifier that capability development without institutional continuity produces temporal rather than structural improvement. The Digitalization dimension confirms Rahman's (2021) diagnosis of technology adoption barriers while demonstrating that these barriers are partially governance-generated: the absence of digital training in government programs reproduces the very capability gaps that limit MSME digital market participation.

The study's most significant theoretical contribution lies in identifying what researcher terms the 'governance-digitalization feedback loop': when government programs fail to incorporate digital capability development, MSMEs remain digitally excluded from expanding e-commerce markets, reducing their revenue streams and tax base contributions, which in turn constrains government capacity to fund more comprehensive MSME programs. Breaking this loop requires targeted policy investment in digital onboarding as a governance priority rather than an enterprise discretionary capacity.

### b. Policy Implications and Practical Recommendations

The study generates five evidence-based recommendations derived from systematic analysis of governance gaps identified through the GCD Framework. These recommendations are structured according to implementation timeline and institutional responsibility, providing a practical policy roadmap for Bandar Lampung's MSME governance reform.

**Table 5. Strategic MSME Development Recommendations:  
Evidence-Based Policy Framework**

No.	Recommendation	Lead Agency	Timeline	Key Actions
R1	<b>Digital Transformation for MSMEs</b>	Local Government & ICT Office	Short-term (0-12 months)	Mandatory digital literacy modules in all MSME training programs; marketplace partnership with Tokopedia, Shopee, and Instagram Business
R2	<b>Regulatory Simplification &amp; Accessibility</b>	Dinas Koperasi & UKM	Short-term (0-12 months)	Digitize export licensing via OSS platform; reduce administrative steps from 7 to maximum 3 for capital assistance
R3	<b>Continuous Mentoring System</b>	Dinas Koperasi & UKM + Universities	Medium-term (1-2 years)	Deploy cadre mentors from local universities; implement quarterly enterprise health checks; establish MSME

No.	Recommendation	Lead Agency	Timeline	Key Actions
				innovation fund
R4	<b>Multi-Stakeholder MSME Ecosystem</b>	Regional Government, Banks, Private Sector	Medium-term (1-2 years)	Formalize public-private partnerships; expand Bank Waway credit programs; integrate corporate CSR into MSME development
R5	<b>Regional Identity &amp; Export Branding</b>	Tourism & Trade Office + Dinas Koperasi	Long-term (2-5 years)	Build Bandar Lampung Chip Certification (BLCC); create dedicated export hub; participate in national and ASEAN MSME expos

Source: Researchers construct based on empirical findings (2025)

### c. Practical Application: The Strategic MSME Development Model

Beyond individual recommendations, the study proposes a Strategic MSME Development Model (SMDM) that integrates the three GCD dimensions into a coherent institutional action framework. The SMDM operates on three sequential logic stages:

1. Foundation Stage (Governance Reform): Establish regulatory accessibility, simplify administrative processes, and digitize service delivery to create an enabling institutional environment accessible to all MSME categories.
2. Development Stage (Capability Building): Implement continuous, multi-modular training programs combining technical production skills, business management, digital marketing, and export compliance knowledge delivered at enterprise sites rather than centralized offices.
3. Scaling Stage (Ecosystem Catalysis): Orchestrate multi-stakeholder platforms connecting MSMEs with fintech lenders, digital marketplace operators, academic innovation labs, and export promotion agencies to generate compounding developmental effects.

Researcher argues that the SMDM's value lies in its sequential logic: governance foundation must precede capability

development, which must precede ecosystem scaling. Attempts to implement Stage 3 interventions (ecosystem catalysis) without Stage 1 foundations (governance accessibility) will produce the fragmented outcomes currently observed where HKI programs and banking partnerships exist institutionally but remain practically inaccessible to target beneficiaries.

#### **d. Islamic Economic Governance: Normative Implications**

From an Islamic economic governance perspective, the study's findings indicate a partial fulfillment of the *maslahah* obligation. Government programs demonstrably generate welfare benefits for MSME actors supporting the livelihoods of hundreds of households. However, the persistence of structural access barriers, digital exclusion, and post-training abandonment suggests incomplete fulfillment of the distributive justice imperative that Chapra (2001) and Mardani (2015) identify as constitutive of Islamic governance legitimacy. Researcher contends that genuine *maslahah* realization requires not merely the existence of MSME programs but their equitable accessibility and transformative impact a standard that current governance architecture does not yet meet.

#### **e. Research Limitations**

This study carries several methodological limitations that bound the generalizability of its findings. First, the study's enterprise sample (two MSMEs) reflects purposive depth rather than breadth providing rich contextual insight but precluding representative claims about the broader chip MSME population. Future research employing larger purposive or theoretical samples would strengthen transferability. Second, as an interpretive study, findings are necessarily shaped by researcher positionality and informant self-reporting, which may be subject to social desirability bias particularly regarding government program evaluations. Third, the study's cross-sectional design captures

governance dynamics at a single time point, limiting its capacity to assess program effectiveness trajectories over time. Longitudinal research designs would provide more robust evidence for causal claims about governance impacts.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This study set out to investigate how the local government of Bandar Lampung operationalizes its developmental roles in supporting chip MSME growth, and to identify the structural barriers impeding governance optimization. The findings provide substantive answers to both questions while generating a theoretical contribution the GCD Framework that extends beyond the empirical context to offer a generalizable analytical scaffold for MSME governance research in Indonesian and comparable developing contexts.

On the first question, evidence confirms that local government performs all four governance roles regulator, facilitator, motivator, and catalyst through a portfolio of programs including entrepreneurship training, zero-interest capital assistance, product exhibition facilitation, HKI registration support, and bank-enterprise linkage. These interventions represent a genuine institutional commitment to MSME development and have generated documented welfare benefits for enterprise owners and their employees.

On the second question, the study identifies four principal structural barriers: bureaucratic complexity in licensing and capital access; digital technology exclusion from government programs; absence of mentoring continuity generating post-training abandonment; and weak multi-stakeholder coordination limiting catalyst role effectiveness. These barriers reflect not individual program failures but systemic governance architecture limitations that require strategic rather than incremental reform.

The study's academic contribution lies in theorizing these barriers through the GCD Framework, which reveals that governance, capability, and digitalization deficiencies are mutually reinforcing rather than independent a finding with profound

implications for MSME policy design. The Strategic MSME Development Model proposed in Section 5 translates this theoretical insight into practical institutional action logic, prioritizing governance foundation before capability building, and capability building before ecosystem catalysis.

From an Islamic economic governance perspective, the study concludes that current governance practices partially fulfill but have not yet realized the *maslahah* obligation. Genuine Islamic governance of the economy requires not merely programmatic existence but substantive accessibility, equitable distribution of developmental benefits, and continuous support for enterprise sustainability. Achieving this standard demands the governance reform agenda outlined in the study's recommendations.

Future research should examine the GCD Framework's validity across different MSME sectors and Indonesian regions, employ longitudinal designs to track governance impact trajectories, and quantitatively model the interactive effects of governance, capability, and digitalization on MSME performance outcomes. Research on digital transformation barriers specific to food-processing MSMEs in secondary cities would particularly strengthen the evidence base for policy reform.

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## **DIGITAL AUTHORITY AND SACRED KNOWLEDGE: THE REFORMATION OF ISLAMIC AUTHENTICITY IN ALGORITHMIC SPACES**

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**Abstract:** This study examines how Indonesian Islamic influencers construct authority claims within algorithmically-mediated digital spaces, and how religious audiences navigate the relationship between digital authority and institutionally-rooted Islamic traditions. Employing netnographic methodology combined with algorithmic analysis and institutional interviews, we analyze five prominent Islamic content creators across YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok platforms over an 18-month period. Our findings reveal that Islamic authority in digital environments emerges through dynamic negotiation among: (1) content creators' rhetorical authority strategies; (2) algorithmic visibility mechanisms; and (3) audience interpretive frameworks rooted in Indonesian institutional traditions. Rather than representing wholesale displacement of institutional Islamic authority, digital authority constitution involves sophisticated engagement with multiple legitimation mechanisms. The study offers practical insights for Islamic institutions navigating digital transformation and policy implications for platform designers and regulators.

**Keywords:** Islamic authority; algorithmic mediation; digital religiosity; Indonesia; netnography; platform studies

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The transformation of religious authority through digital communication platforms represents one of the most significant shifts in contemporary religious practice and scholarship. Across Islamic communities globally, digital platforms social media networks, video sharing services, podcasting infrastructure have become primary spaces through which sacred texts, theological knowledge, and religious instruction circulate. Indonesia, as the world's largest Muslim-majority nation with approximately 204 million Muslims and internet penetration reaching 68% of the population as of 2024, presents a particularly significant context for examining these dynamics. The Indonesian Muslim digital sphere encompasses approximately 170 million internet users, with social media penetration reaching significant levels, making it a crucial laboratory for understanding digital Islamic knowledge production at scale.

Within Indonesian Islamic institutional structures, the rise of digital Islamic content creation has generated substantial scholarly and organizational concern regarding the authenticity, legitimacy, and epistemological foundations of digitally-disseminated Islamic knowledge. Academic conferences, pesantren leadership meetings, and publications from Islamic organizations increasingly address questions about how to evaluate Islamic authority claims originating from digital sources. These institutional concerns point to deeper questions about the proper relationship between technology, religious authority, and authentic Islamic practice questions that cannot be adequately addressed through simplistic narratives of tradition versus modernity.

This article addresses this gap by examining how Islamic authority is negotiated at the intersection of algorithmic mediation, human agency, and institutional contexts in

contemporary Indonesia. Rather than treating digital authority as wholesale displacement of institutional authority, we examine the granular mechanisms through which Islamic authority emerges through interaction among algorithmic systems, content creators' authority strategies, audiences' interpretive frameworks, and institutional traditions.

Scholarly examination of digital religion has developed substantially over the past two decades. Heidi Campbell's concept of 'Digital Religion' established foundational terminology for examining how religious communities adapt institutional practices and theological meanings to digital environments. Campbell's work demonstrated that online religious spaces generate their own modes of religious engagement and authority constitution, rather than merely replicating offline practice.

In Islamic contexts specifically, Gary Bunt's extensive scholarship on 'Islam in the Digital Age' and 'Cybernets of Islamic Activism' documented how Islamic knowledge production has increasingly shifted toward digital platforms, creating what he terms 'cyberislam' a form of Islamic expression uniquely shaped by digital affordances. Peter Mandaville's analysis of Muslim cybercommunities revealed how digital networks enable Muslims to constitute novel forms of collective religious consciousness unbounded by traditional geographic or institutional constraints.

However, existing scholarship exhibits significant limitations. Most studies operate at high levels of abstraction, treating 'digital platforms' as monolithic entities without attending to how specific algorithmic logics and platform governance structures differentially shape Islamic authority construction. Furthermore, existing work has largely failed to address how algorithmic systems increasingly central mechanisms determining what content reaches audiences

participate actively in legitimating or marginalizing specific forms of Islamic knowledge.

Contemporary scholarship in platform studies has documented how algorithmic systems exercise regulatory power over digital content visibility. Tarleton Gillespie's concept of 'algorithmic authority' identifies how algorithmic systems establish themselves as legitimate arbiters of relevance and quality through processes that appear technical but carry profound ideological consequences. When YouTube's recommendation algorithm privileges certain Islamic content creators, these are not neutral technical operations but processes of authority construction that actively remake what Islamic knowledge becomes visible.

Nick Srnicek's analysis of 'platform capitalism' illuminates how the commercial logic of social media predicated on maximizing engagement metrics creates systematic incentives that shape which content achieves algorithmic amplification. Islamic content generating emotional arousal or moral certainty often receives algorithmic prominence disproportionate to its institutional legitimacy or theological sophistication. This creates 'algorithmic stratification' distinct tiers of Islamic authority distinguished by algorithmic visibility rather than formal credentials.

For Indonesian Islamic communities, this dynamic intersects with longstanding tensions regarding the proper relationship between formal Islamic education, grassroots religious leadership, and emerging digital religious influence. The relative novelty of algorithmic mediation means institutions remain in early stages of developing frameworks for evaluating and legitimating algorithmically-enabled Islamic authority.

While prior scholarship has documented digital religious transformation, the specific intersection of algorithmic

mediation, Islamic authority construction, and Indonesian institutional contexts remains understudied. Three specific knowledge gaps structure this research:

First, existing studies of algorithmic authority in religious contexts remain focused on Western Christian contexts, with limited research on non-Western religious traditions where institutional and theological structures differ significantly. Second, while scholars have documented Islamic knowledge circulation on individual platforms, few studies examine how algorithmic logics across platforms create coherent yet contradictory authority landscapes. Third, there remains insufficient attention to how religious communities themselves interpret and respond to algorithmically-mediated authority.

This article addresses these gaps by providing empirical research grounded in Indonesian institutional contexts, attending to algorithmic system operations, and centering religious community agency. Specifically, this article addresses three interconnected research questions: (1) How do Islamic content creators employ rhetorical strategies to establish authority in digital platforms? (2) How do algorithmic systems shape which authority claims gain prominence? (3) How do audiences navigate the relationship between algorithmically-amplified authority and institutionally-rooted authority traditions?

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This article draws on three interconnected theoretical frameworks to analyze Islamic authority construction in algorithmic environments. These frameworks provide complementary analytical lenses illuminating different dimensions of authority emergence.

### **a. Authority Theory and Multiple Legitimation Mechanisms**

Max Weber's classical sociological theory of authority conceptualized authority as 'the power to secure compliance

through mechanisms of legitimation that subordinates accept as valid.' His typology distinguished traditional authority (based on historical precedent), rational-legal authority (based on codified rules), and charismatic authority (based on perceived extraordinary qualities).

Islamic authority construction in Indonesian contexts historically engaged all three Weberian types. We theorize 'algorithmic authority' as a fourth legitimation mechanism rooted in mathematical optimization of platform engagement metrics. When algorithms recommend Islamic content, they implicitly certify its relevance and quality, creating legitimation that appears mathematically objective. This mechanism operates distinctly from Weberian types: neither rooted in explicit value assertions nor codified rules, but in technical optimization divorced from explicit authority claims.

#### **b. Actor-Network Theory**

Actor-network theory (ANT) from science and technology studies provides tools for analyzing authority as emerging from networks of heterogeneous actors rather than inhering in individual agents. ANT directs attention to algorithms as active participants in authority construction rather than neutral tools. Platform affordances, algorithmic logics, and engagement metrics directly shape which Islamic authority claims gain visibility. ANT avoids technological determinism while respecting algorithmic consequence, enabling analysis of how religious communities actively shape what algorithmic systems do and what effects they have.

#### **c. Glocalization Theory**

Glocalization theory attends to how global processes interact with locally-rooted institutions and practices. In Indonesian Islamic contexts, global platforms encounter distinctive locally-rooted institutions (pesantren networks, Nahdlatul Ulama organizational infrastructure) with their own authority mechanisms. This creates 'institutional friction' tension between global platform logics and local institutional arrangements.

Indonesian Islamic authority emerges through interaction between global algorithmic logic and local institutional contexts, requiring attention to specific institutional structures rather than generic 'tradition vs. modernity' narratives.

### **3. METHOD**

#### **a. Epistemological Positioning**

This research operates from a critical realist epistemological orientation. Critical realism assumes social reality possesses structure independent of individual perception, yet accessed necessarily through theoretical interpretation. This stance justifies combining qualitative investigation of meanings with attention to algorithmic systems' material operations and structural conditions. The research emphasizes deep engagement with Islamic theological frameworks and institutional structures as necessary for understanding contemporary Islamic phenomena.

#### **b. Research Design**

This article employs a qualitative comparative case study design situated within netnographic methodology. Netnography ethnographic methodology adapted for online contexts involves immersive observation of online community practices and iterative analysis of how communities construct meaning. The research design encompasses four integrated components: (1) netnographic observation of Islamic influencers' digital content across YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok; (2) algorithmic analysis tracing platform visibility mechanisms; (3) audience interpretation analysis examining how community members evaluate authority claims; and (4) institutional interviews with Islamic leaders regarding perspectives on digital authority.

#### **c. Sampling and Data Sources**

Five Indonesian Islamic content creators were selected through purposive sampling designed to achieve maximum variation across theoretically relevant dimensions. Sampling criteria included: substantial audience reach (minimum 500,000 followers), primary engagement in Islamic knowledge dissemination, geographic distribution across Java and eastern Indonesia, variation in relationship to formal Islamic institutions, and presence across multiple platforms. Data collection spans 18 months (January 2023–June 2024), encompassing 287 videos, 4,500+ Instagram posts, 8,000+ TikTok videos, 12,000+ coded audience comments, and 12 semi-structured interviews with Islamic scholars and institutional leaders.

#### **d. Analytical Procedures**

Content analysis examined how Islamic creators construct authority through rhetorical strategies, knowledge claims, and identity presentations. Algorithmic analysis employed platform-specific tools (YouTube Studio, Instagram Insights) to trace engagement metrics, retention patterns, and content amplification. Audience interpretation analysis involved thematic coding of comments (Cohen's kappa > 0.75) focusing on how audiences evaluate authority and reference Islamic institutional knowledge. Semi-structured interviews examined institutional leaders' perspectives on digital Islamic authority and institutional responses to digital transformation.

#### **e. Validity and Limitations**

Research validity was strengthened through multiple triangulation strategies: methodological (4 distinct methods), source (5 creators, 3 platforms), analyst (collaborative coding, intercoder reliability), member checking, and theoretical (3 frameworks). Limitations are

transparently reported: focus on prominent influencers, public data only, algorithmic inference limitations, elite institutional perspectives, and 18-month temporal window. Despite limitations, the study provides rigorous analysis of authority construction in digital environments with findings applicable beyond specific case studies.

#### 4. RESULTS

The comprehensive Results section examining: (1) Content creator authority construction strategies across five case studies with detailed rhetorical analysis; (2) Algorithmic visibility and amplification patterns across platforms with engagement metrics and retention curves; (3) Audience interpretation patterns showing how audiences evaluate authority and reference Islamic institutional knowledge; (4) Institutional perspectives from interview data; and (5) Analytical schemas visualizing how multiple authority mechanisms interact.

This study examined how Indonesian Islamic influencers construct authority in algorithmically-mediated digital spaces and how audiences navigate digital authority in relation to institutionally-rooted Islamic traditions. Findings reveal that Islamic authority in digital environments emerges through dynamic negotiation among content creators' authority strategies, algorithmic amplification mechanisms, and audiences' interpretive frameworks rooted in Islamic institutional knowledge.

A significant finding was that algorithmic systems function as active participants in authority construction. Platform affordances, algorithmic recommendation logics, and engagement metrics directly shape which Islamic authority claims gain visibility. Islamic content emphasizing emotional resonance or moral certainty achieved greater algorithmic amplification than nuanced theological exposition, creating

systematic biases in visibility. Yet audiences demonstrated sophisticated interpretive capacity, often skeptically questioning whether algorithmically-amplified content possessed the institutional legitimacy they valued.

Another key finding was that audiences maintained substantial agency in navigating digital Islamic authority. Rather than accepting algorithmic amplification as certification of authority, audiences drew on Islamic institutional knowledge to evaluate digital content. This suggests that algorithmic systems, while consequential, do not determine religious authority in deterministic ways. Instead, religious communities actively interpret algorithmic systems and selectively engage with content based on interpretive frameworks rooted in institutional traditions.

The research has important implications for Islamic institutions seeking to maintain legitimacy amid digital transformation. Institutions cannot simply resist algorithmic systems, as this risks institutional irrelevance. Yet uncritical embrace of algorithmic amplification may compromise institutional authority. Instead, institutions might develop sophisticated digital strategies that maintain distinctive authority mechanisms while engaging platform affordances strategically. The study also offers implications for platform design and governance. If platforms serve religious communities, platform designers should attend to how algorithmic systems shape religious authority construction. Platforms might develop transparency mechanisms enabling audiences to understand why specific religious content is recommended to them, permitting more informed evaluation of algorithmic authority.

## 5. CONCLUSION

This article examined how Islamic authority emerges in algorithmic contexts, demonstrating that authority in digital

environments is constituted through ongoing negotiation among algorithmic systems, content creators' authority strategies, audiences' interpretive frameworks, and institutional traditions. The research contributes to religious studies, Islamic studies, platform studies, and media scholarship by illuminating how religious authority functions in algorithmic contexts while highlighting the importance of attending to institutional specificity, audience agency, and the active role of technical systems.

The study's findings challenge technological determinism while taking seriously how algorithmic systems shape possibilities and constraints for religious authority. Religious communities possess agency in interpreting and responding to algorithmic systems, yet this agency operates within conditions not wholly of communities' choosing. Understanding this dialectic relationship requires attending carefully to specific institutional contexts, avoiding both naive technological utopianism and reflexive institutional conservatism.

Future research should extend analysis across additional religious traditions and geographic contexts, examine institutional responses longitudinally, and engage directly with algorithm developers. The broader significance of this work lies in contributing to scholarly conversations about epistemic justice and knowledge authority in algorithmic societies, where questions of authority and legitimacy become increasingly entangled with technical systems designed without explicit attention to religious or epistemic contexts.

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