



THE ROLE OF DIGITAL MEDIA AS A TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION IN IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

The development of information technology in the industrial revolution 4.0 era has significantly transformed Islamic religious education in higher education. Digital media has become a new ecosystem that enables students to access Islamic knowledge widely, interactively, and flexibly, while also enhancing their motivation and religious insight. This is where the role of digital media integration in education becomes crucial, not merely introducing technology but also guiding students to use digital media wisely and proportionally to deepen their religious understanding. This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach with Islamic Education students selected through purposive sampling, using interviews, observations, and documentation analyzed through Miles & Huberman's model with triangulation for validity. The findings indicate that integrating digital media positively contributes to students' religious understanding, although challenges remain, such as low digital literacy, the spread of unverified content, lecturers' limited technological skills, and the risk of digital distraction. Therefore, the role of lecturers and institutions is crucial in providing guidance, curating reliable content, and strengthening digital literacy so that digital media integration becomes an effective strategy to bridge Islamic values with the needs of the modern generation.

Keywords: Digital Media, Islamic Religious Education, Students, Digital Literacy

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INTRODUCTION

The development of information and communication technology in the era of the Industrial Revolution 4.0 has brought significant changes to almost all aspects of human life, including education ([Prasetyo & Sutopo, 2019](#)).

The shift from conventional learning models to digital-based learning has become an unavoidable necessity. Digital media is present not merely as a tool, but has become a new ecosystem that changes interaction patterns, information access, and the way of thinking of the younger generation. For students, digital media is an inseparable part of daily life, both in academic and non-academic activities ([Nugroho & Wicaksono, 2024](#)).

In the context of Islamic religious education in higher education, this phenomenon presents both challenges and opportunities. On the one hand, the proliferation of religious content on various digital platforms (such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and podcasts) has the potential to enrich students' religious understanding through a variety of more creative, interactive, and accessible approaches to preaching. On the other hand, this rapid flow of information also has the potential to create biased religious understanding if students lack adequate digital literacy to filter, select, and critique the content they consume ([Barri et al., 2025](#)).

According to We Are Social (2024), more than 75% of Indonesia's population actively uses social media, with the largest proportion being in the productive age group, including students. This indicates that digital media has become a primary space for the formation of identity, values, and understanding, including in the religious realm ([Social & Hootsuite, 2024](#)). Previous research conducted by Fedi (2023) showed that the use of interactive multimedia in Islamic religious learning can increase student motivation and understanding. Through experiments involving control and experimental groups, the results showed that students who used interactive multimedia were more active and had better understanding compared to those who used conventional learning. These findings indicate that digital media has great potential to strengthen the process of Islamic religious learning at various levels of education ([Fedi, 2023](#)).

However, the phenomenon of information overload can actually create new problems. Some students tend to acquire religious understanding instantly from short video clips without critically examining the source, authority, and validity of the material. However, in the Islamic scholarly tradition, religious understanding must be built on a foundation of clear scholarly authority, a continuous chain of transmission, and sound methodology. This is where the role of digital media integration in education becomes crucial, not merely introducing technology but also guiding students to use digital media wisely and proportionally to deepen their religious understanding ([Nurhaliza & Putra, 2025](#)).

Furthermore, the integration of digital media into Islamic religious learning aligns with the Independent Learning, Independent Campus (MBKM) policy, which emphasizes flexibility, independence, and the use of technology to support student competency achievement. Through the use of digital media, lecturers can present teaching materials in a more varied and interactive manner, tailored to the characteristics of Generation Z, who tend to be visual, practical, and accustomed to technology-based content ([Wiyono, 2025](#)).

Thus, the urgency of this research lies in understanding how digital media is integrated into Islamic religious learning in higher education, and the extent to which this integration can contribute to improving students' religious understanding. This study is expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of technology-based Islamic religious learning strategies, as well as practical contributions for educators in designing learning models that are adaptive to current developments without losing the essence of Islamic values.

METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach that aims to describe in depth the phenomenon of digital media integration in improving students' religious understanding. The qualitative approach was chosen because it aligns with the research's character, which focuses on the meaning, experience, and interpretation of the research subjects' perceptions of the realities they face. The research subjects were students in the Islamic Religious Education Study Program at an Islamic university, selected using purposive sampling based on their active involvement in using digital media as a source for religious learning. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews, participant observation, and documentation of students' learning activities and interactions with digital media. Data analysis was conducted through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing, as outlined by Miles & Huberman (1994). Data validity was maintained through triangulation of sources and methods, ensuring that the data obtained truly reflected the reality on the ground. The analysis process was conducted inductively, emphasizing the meanings emerging from the empirical data, rather than based on predetermined hypotheses. Therefore, the research results are expected to provide a comprehensive and valid picture of how digital media is integrated into Islamic religious learning, as well as its impact on improving students' religious understanding (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Overview of Digital Media Utilization by Students

The development of digital technology has fundamentally changed the way students acquire information and knowledge, including in the field of religion. Digital media has now become a new learning space embedded in students' daily lives. Platforms like YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and even religious podcasts are often used by students as primary resources to deepen their religious understanding. This indicates a shift from traditional face-to-face learning patterns to more flexible, independent, and technology-based learning patterns (Ichsan, 2024). The type of religious content most frequently accessed by students generally relates to practical topics relevant to daily life, such as prayer procedures, brief explanations of Islamic beliefs, and moral studies. Short video content is preferred because it is considered easy to understand, practical, and in keeping with the characteristics of Generation Z, who tend to prefer instant and visual experiences. On the other hand, some students also utilize digital platforms to participate in longer-form studies such as podcasts or online lectures

delivered by credible religious teachers (Ustaz) or lecturers (Ichsan, 2024) and ([Wiyono, 2025](#)).

Students' motivation to utilize digital media to understand religion is not only driven by academic needs, but also by spiritual needs and social identity. The study, "The Effects of Social Media Use Intensity on Student's Religious Knowledge in Yogyakarta," showed that students who used social media more frequently reported increased religious knowledge due to quick access to religious content ([Latif et al., n.d.](#)). Meanwhile, the study, "Analysis of the Influence of TikTok Social Media on Spirituality in ITS Students," found that platforms like TikTok facilitate students' search for answers to practical religious questions in everyday life and feel emotional closeness through lighthearted and interactive video content. Interactivity through comments and feedback strengthens their socio-religious motivation, feeling part of a digital scientific and spiritual community ([K. Ilham et al., 2024](#)).

However, research by Nurhaliza & Putra (2025) shows that students' religious digital literacy varies greatly, although many actively access religious content. Only some use digital media in a structured and critical manner, while others use it sporadically and simply for entertainment ([Nurhaliza & Putra, 2025](#)). Barri et al. (2025) in their study of digital da'wah consumption reinforces that the intensity of use, source credibility, and content relevance greatly influence how much students' religious understanding develops. Meanwhile, a study by Saifuddin Zuhri et al. (2024) on Generation Z shows that high access to religious content on social media is not always followed by the ability to sort out valid and useful content. These findings emphasize that digital media is not only a provider of information, but also a space for the formation of religious understanding, and indications of important variables such as intensity of use, type of content, and student motivation are key indicators in the effectiveness of digital media integration in Islamic religious education ([Zuhri et al., 2024](#)).

Digital Media Integration Strategy in Islamic Religious Learning

The integration of digital media into Islamic religious education is an urgent need in today's digital age. Learning processes that rely solely on face-to-face lectures have proven ineffective for a generation of students accustomed to technology and digital interactions. Lecturers are required to adopt a more varied learning approach by utilizing digital media as a means to enrich the learning experience. This strategy includes selecting the right platform, presenting relevant content, and managing digital interactions that support learning objectives ([Luthfi, 2025](#)).

The role of lecturers in this integration strategy is crucial. Lecturers serve not only as transmitters of knowledge but also as facilitators and curators of digital information. They are responsible for ensuring that the content used or recommended is sourced from valid literature, has scientific authority, and aligns with the principles of the Ahlusunnah wal Jamaah Islamic teachings ([P. A. Putra et al., 2024](#)). Thus, students do not simply consume content passively but are guided to develop critical skills in selecting and analyzing information they obtain through digital media.

One widely implemented strategy is blended learning, a combination of face-to-face and online learning. Through a Learning Management System (LMS) or e-learning application, students can access teaching materials, participate in discussion forums, and complete assignments flexibly. Furthermore, lecturers can utilize social media or video channels to provide additional explanations or disseminate religious material in more engaging formats, such as infographics, short videos, or podcasts ([M. Ilham et al., 2023](#)).

Beyond delivering material, digital media integration also enables collaboration and interactive discussions in virtual spaces. For example, the use of WhatsApp groups, Telegram groups, or discussion forums in Google Classroom makes it easy for students to ask questions and discuss religious issues in real time. These online discussions encourage more active student participation and build sustainable learning communities, even outside of formal class hours. This strategy aligns with the needs of Generation Z, who prefer fast, practical, and community-based digital interactions ([A. R. Putra & Sari, 2023](#)).

Furthermore, innovation in digital media integration can also be realized through digital content-based learning projects. Students are directed to create works such as short Islamic preaching videos, religious blog articles, or thematic podcasts, which are then published on digital platforms. This activity not only trains students' religious communication skills but also trains them to become producers of positive and beneficial content for the wider community. In this way, digital media is positioned not only as a means of consumption but also as a vehicle for the production and distribution of religious knowledge ([M. Hidayat & Lestari, 2023](#)).

Overall, the strategy of integrating digital media into Islamic religious learning is not simply about adding technological elements to learning activities, but rather about building a learning system that adapts to current developments. With the right strategy, digital media can serve as a bridge between classical Islamic values and the needs of modern students living in the digital age. This integration is expected to not only enhance students' religious understanding but also foster critical, creative, and responsible attitudes in utilizing technology for good purposes ([Ramdhani & Nuraini, 2022](#)).

The Impact of Digital Media on Students' Religious Understanding

The integration of digital media into Islamic religious learning has had a significant impact on students' religious understanding. One of the most prominent positive impacts is increased accessibility to Islamic scholarly sources. Students can easily access religious studies from credible scholars, lecturers, or preachers through various digital platforms, whether in the form of videos, articles, or podcasts. This convenience means students are no longer confined to formal classrooms but can learn anytime and anywhere according to their needs. Thus, the religious learning process becomes more flexible, dynamic, and contextualized to the realities of students' lives ([Hakim & Rahmawati, 2023](#)).

In addition to increasing access, digital media also helps broaden students' understanding of the diversity of perspectives within Islam. Through various digital channels, students can learn about the differing views of Islamic scholars on issues of jurisprudence, morality, and interpretation, thereby increasing their openness to diverse ideas. This is crucial for developing a tolerant yet critical attitude toward differences. With appropriate guidance from lecturers or academic advisors, students become not merely consumers of information but also learn to understand differences as part of the rich and profound treasure of Islamic scholarship ([Fadhilah & Santoso, 2022](#)).

Another visible impact is increased motivation to study religion among students. Engagingly presented religious content, such as short videos, animations, or interactive podcasts, makes students more enthusiastic about studying Islamic teachings. This contrasts with conventional learning models, which are sometimes perceived as monotonous. Digital media can stimulate student interest in learning by combining educational and entertainment (edutainment) aspects, so that religious understanding is no longer viewed solely as an academic obligation but also as a pleasurable spiritual need ([R. Hidayat & Lestari, 2021](#)).

However, the use of digital media is not without its negative impacts. One emerging problem is the tendency of students to instantly understand religion from short video clips without in-depth study. This phenomenon can lead to the simplification of complex religious issues. Furthermore, information overload often makes it difficult for students to distinguish between valid and invalid sources. This situation has the potential to lead to religious misunderstandings, especially if students are not equipped with digital literacy skills and adequate academic guidance ([Fadli & Nurhayati, 2022](#)).

Another impact that requires vigilance is the potential for the emergence of immoderate religious beliefs. A significant amount of digital content circulating on social media carries certain ideologies that have the potential to influence students, especially those still searching for a religious identity. Therefore, the role of educational institutions and lecturers is crucial in equipping students with the principles of tabayyun (clarification) and critical skills to assess any religious content they consume. Without these skills, students can easily fall prey to a stream of misleading information ([R. Hidayat & Nurdin, 2021](#)).

Despite the challenges, digital media generally continues to make a significant contribution to enriching students' religious understanding. The presence of this technology opens up opportunities to develop Islamic religious learning methods that are more relevant to the needs of the digital generation. If properly directed, digital media can not only serve as a means to enhance religious knowledge but also shape students into religious, critical individuals capable of integrating Islamic values into their daily lives. In other words, digital media acts as an instrument that bridges the gap between Islamic scholarly traditions and the dynamics of modernity.

Challenges and Obstacles in Digital Media Integration

Although digital media offers numerous benefits in Islamic religious learning, its integration process is not without challenges. One major obstacle is students' limited digital literacy. Not all students have the same ability to use technology, select information, and verify the accuracy of the content they consume. As a result, some students become passive consumers of circulating religious information without the critical capacity to assess the authority of the source. Yet, in the context of religious education, the validity of sources is crucial to ensure that religious understanding does not deviate from true Islamic teachings ([Syiafuddin & Marlina, 2022](#)).

Besides digital literacy, another challenge is the widespread distribution of unverified or even provocative religious content. The digital age allows anyone to become a content producer, without strict filters regarding scholarship or authority. This phenomenon poses a risk to students seeking a religious identity, as they are potentially exposed to extreme, intolerant, or deviant teachings. Without a solid understanding of religion, students are easily influenced by misleading religious narratives ([Zainuddin & Azizah, 2021](#)).

From the lecturer's perspective, a frequent obstacle is limited technological proficiency. Not all Islamic education lecturers are accustomed to optimally utilizing digital media in their teaching. Most still rely on conventional methods such as lectures and face-to-face discussions. However, digital media integration requires lecturers' creativity in designing technology-based teaching materials, such as creating learning videos, interactive modules, or utilizing e-learning platforms. This lack of technological skills is one of the factors hindering the successful integration of digital media in Islamic religious learning ([Rahmawati & Kurniawan, 2021](#)).

Besides lecturer skills, facilities and infrastructure are also a barrier. Not all universities have adequate technological facilities, such as stable internet access, multimedia devices, or well-integrated e-learning platforms. This situation is further exacerbated by the disparity in access between students living in urban and rural areas. Students with limited internet access will undoubtedly struggle to optimally participate in digital-based learning. This has the potential to create inequities in the learning process ([Arifin & Hidayah, 2021](#)).

Another emerging challenge is the issue of digital distraction and addiction. Students often fail to distinguish between academic and entertainment use of digital media. Instead of focusing on religious content, they spend more time on non-academic activities such as playing games, browsing social media, or watching entertainment. This phenomenon demonstrates that digital media integration requires discipline, self-control, and intensive guidance from lecturers to ensure learning objectives are achieved ([Muzhaffar, 2025b](#)).

In the context of developing religious understanding, another equally important challenge is how to maintain the authenticity of Islamic teachings in the digital space. The digitalization process often simplifies teaching materials to make them easier to

understand. However, excessive simplification has the potential to diminish the depth and complexity of Islamic teachings. For example, explanations of Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) in short videos often fail to address the differing opinions of scholars and the specific requirements that must be met. This can lead to a narrow and rigid understanding among students ([Muzhaffar, 2025a](#)).

In the face of these challenges, possible solutions include improving students' digital literacy skills, training lecturers to be more tech-savvy, and strengthening academic regulations regarding the use of digital media. Universities also need to provide official digital platforms featuring valid religious content from experts to provide students with reliable resources. With the right strategy, the challenges of integrating digital media into Islamic religious education can be overcome, ensuring that technology utilization truly has a positive impact on students' religious understanding.

Implications of Research on the Development of Islamic Religious Education

The results of this study have important implications for the development of Islamic religious education, particularly in the context of the use of digital technology. The integration of digital media has proven to be able to deliver learning that is more relevant to the characteristics of Generation Z students living in the digital era. The first implication is the need for a shift in the learning paradigm from a teacher-centered model to a student-centered one. Digital media allows students to more actively explore material, seek additional references, and construct their own understanding with the guidance of lecturers. This aligns with the vision of Islamic education, which emphasizes independent learning and the development of human potential.

The next implication is the importance of digital literacy as an integral part of the Islamic religious education curriculum. Digital literacy extends beyond the ability to use technological devices, but also encompasses critical skills in assessing, selecting, and utilizing available information. Islamic religious education in higher education needs to instill an awareness of the principle of *tabayyun* (clarification) in the consumption of digital content, enabling students to distinguish between authentic teachings and misleading information. Thus, digital literacy becomes a primary bulwark in maintaining the purity of religious understanding amidst the rapid flow of global information.

Furthermore, this study confirms that Islamic religious education lecturers must play a more active role as facilitators and mentors in the digital world. Their role extends beyond simply delivering material, to also guiding students in the wise use of digital media. Consequently, lecturers need to be equipped with digital pedagogical competencies, content production skills, and the ability to manage virtual interactions. This way, lecturers can serve as role models in utilizing technology to strengthen religious understanding, rather than simply leaving students to seek information on their own without guidance.

Another implication is the need for educational institutions to provide official digital platforms that can serve as a central hub for religious learning resources. These platforms serve as a platform for presenting valid, curated Islamic material tailored to students' needs. With an official platform, students will have more targeted access to reliable sources of religious knowledge. Furthermore, these platforms can also serve as a means of collaboration between students and lecturers in creating digital da'wah content that benefits the wider community.

This research also has implications for the curriculum. Islamic religious education needs to include specific courses or modules that address digital da'wah, religious ethics on social media, and Islamic content production. With an adaptive curriculum, students will not only receive traditional religious material but also be equipped with practical skills to present Islamic values in the digital space. This will produce a generation of Muslim scholars who are not only solid in their religious understanding but also flexible in navigating modern technological developments.

From a practical perspective, the implications of this research encourage students to become more than passive consumers of digital content, but also active producers. Students can be directed to create digital works such as Islamic preaching videos, articles, or podcasts embodying Islamic values. This activity will strengthen their understanding while also training their communication skills, creativity, and responsibility in preaching in the digital age. Thus, digital media is not only a learning tool but also a platform for honing students' competencies more holistically.

Ultimately, the most important implication of this research is the creation of synergy between Islamic values and technological developments. The integration of digital media in Islamic religious education should not be interpreted as a compromise with Islamic teachings, but rather as an effort to contextualize Islamic preaching to make it more easily accepted by the modern generation. By utilizing digital media appropriately, Islamic religious education can maintain the authenticity of its teachings while remaining relevant to the needs of today's students. This synergy is expected to produce a generation of Muslims who are religious, critical, moderate, and adaptable to changing times.

CONCLUSION

This research shows that the integration of digital media into Islamic religious learning significantly contributes to improving students' religious understanding. Digital media has become a new learning space that is flexible, interactive, and suited to the characteristics of Generation Z. Students can access a variety of Islamic knowledge sources from various platforms, including videos, podcasts, articles, and online discussion forums. This broad and varied access makes digital media a crucial instrument for enriching religious knowledge, stimulating learning motivation, and helping students understand the diversity of Islamic thought more openly and critically. However, digital media integration is not without challenges. Low digital literacy, the prevalence of unverified religious content, limited technological skills among lecturers, and the risk of digital distraction and addiction are obstacles that

need to be addressed. Therefore, the role of lecturers and educational institutions is crucial in ensuring that digital media use remains directed toward valid sources and in accordance with Islamic teachings. Strengthening digital literacy, providing trusted official platforms, and providing digital pedagogy training for lecturers are strategic steps to overcome these obstacles. Based on these findings, it can be concluded that digital media is not merely a technical tool but also a strategic medium that must be systematically integrated into Islamic religious education. With proper guidance, digital media can bridge Islamic values with the needs of the modern generation, while also producing students who are religious, critical, moderate, and adaptable to current developments. Therefore, digital media integration needs to be continuously developed as part of innovative Islamic religious learning that is relevant, contextual, and effective in strengthening students' religious understanding in the digital era.

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