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THE TRANSFORMATION OF RELIGIOUS VALUES IN THE ERA OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF ISLAMIC DIGITAL SPIRITUALITY

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Abstrak

Kajian ini bertujuan menganalisis transformasi nilai keagamaan dalam masyarakat digital dengan fokus pada aspek reinterpretasi nilai, praktik keberagamaan virtual, dan pengaruh media sosial terhadap spiritualitas generasi muda. Kajian literatur ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kepustakaan melalui analisis 15 artikel jurnal internasional bereputasi yang terindeks Scopus dan Web of Science periode 2021-2024, serta 2 buku referensi internasional. Analisis data menggunakan pendekatan Integrative Review yang meliputi identifikasi masalah, pencarian literatur, evaluasi kualitas, analisis tematik, dan sintesis naratif. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa teknologi digital telah mengubah paradigma keberagamaan dari praktik kolektif tradisional menuju pengalaman spiritual yang lebih individual dan fleksibel. Digitalisasi membuka akses luas terhadap ajaran agama namun menimbulkan tantangan terhadap otentisitas dan kedalaman pemahaman religius. Fenomena mediasisasi agama menghadirkan simbolisasi praktik religius yang cenderung menekankan aspek visual dibandingkan substansi ajaran. Transformasi ini menciptakan dualitas antara kemudahan akses informasi keagamaan dengan risiko penyimpangan makna dan individualisasi berlebihan dalam beragama. Kajian ini berkontribusi dalam memahami bagaimana media digital membentuk ulang identitas keagamaan generasi muda dan memberikan implikasi teoretis serta praktis bagi pengembangan model pendidikan keagamaan yang relevan dengan konteks digital kontemporer.

Kata kunci: *Spiritualitas Digital; Mediasisasi Agama; Transformasi Nilai Keagamaan.*

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the transformation of religious values in digital society, focusing on value reinterpretation, virtual religious practices, and the influence of social media on the young generation's spirituality. This literature review uses a qualitative approach, employing a literature review method, analyzing 15 reputable international journal articles indexed in Scopus and Web of Science from 2021-2024, and 2 international reference books. Data analysis employs an Integrative Review approach, including problem identification, literature search, quality evaluation, thematic analysis, and narrative synthesis. Results show that digital technology has transformed the religious paradigm from traditional collective practices toward more individual and flexible spiritual experiences. Digitalization opens wide access to religious teachings but poses challenges to authenticity and the depth of religious understanding. The religious mediatization phenomenon presents symbolization of religious practices that tend to emphasize visual aspects rather than teaching substance. This transformation creates duality between easy access to religious information and risks of meaning deviation and excessive individualization in religion. This

study contributes to understanding how digital media reshape religious identity among young generations and provides theoretical and practical implications for developing religious education models relevant to the contemporary digital context.

Keywords: Digital Spirituality; Religious Mediatization; Religious Value Transformation.

INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has changed almost all dimensions of contemporary human life, including in the realm of religion and spirituality (Akhyar et al., 2025). The development of information and communication technology has created a new space for religious practices that were previously unimaginable in the history of human civilization (Rafiki et al., 2024). This phenomenon is reflected in the increasing use of digital platforms for religious activities, ranging from online religious learning, preaching through social media, to the formation of virtual religious communities (Caldwell, 2020). Digital ethnographic studies show that online Muslim communities have developed unique and contextual religious practices in the global digital ecosystem (Radde-Antweiler, 2008; Ramdani, 2023). Campbell, (2013) and Hepp, 2019) argue that digital transformation is not just an expansion of the medium but a fundamental change in how religious people interact with religious texts and fellow believers.

However, these changes are not merely instrumental or technical, but have penetrated to the epistemological and ontological levels of how religious values are understood, articulated, and practiced in the daily lives of religious people around the world (Trianita et al., 2024). Digitalization has profound consequences for traditional religious authorities, as shown by research by Bunt, (2018) which explores the impact of the internet on the fragmentation and democratization of Islamic discourse. Otufowora, (2025) and Rachmadhani, 2021) identified the tension between conventional religious authority and authority emerging from the digital ecosystem, creating an interpretive pluralism unprecedented in the history of Muslim communities. In addition, (Guessoum, 2010) and (Nuriana & Salwa, 2024) have documented how digital platforms are changing the characteristics of religious leadership and religious legitimacy in the context of global Islam.

It is in this context that fundamental questions arise about how digitalization affects the essence and substance of religious values rooted in the long traditions of religious communities across cultures and geographies. Research (Komala et al., 2024) and (Firnando, 2023) reveal that the transformation of religious values in the digital age results in a spiritual hybridity that combines traditional elements with innovative practices. An empirical study by (Jafari, 2022) of Muslim communities in Europe shows that digital spirituality creates a dynamic and multivalent space for religious identity negotiation. Meanwhile, (Barzilai-Nahon & Barzilai, 2005) *Cultured technology: The internet and religious fundamentalism* analyzes how digital networks produce new religious meanings through crowdsourcing and co-

creation mechanisms in religious practices. More comprehensively, (Lövheim & Lied, 2018) and (Woodhead, 2002) have developed analytical frameworks to understand how religious values are transmitted, negotiated, and transformed in complex and heterogeneous digital ecosystems (Crocodile & Kolibu, 2024). These questions are becoming increasingly urgent to answer, given the increasingly massive penetration of digital technology in contemporary Muslim religious life (Carlo et al., 2020).

The existing literature on digital religion shows some significant gaps. Most previous studies have tended to focus on the technical aspects of using digital platforms or on phenomenological descriptions of virtual religious practices, but have not explored how fundamental values are reinterpreted or distorted in the digital context (Sugianto, 2024). Similarly, studies on the hybridity of Muslim identities in the digital space remain limited in their understanding of how traditional religious authorities are adapting to this shift (Soto-Acosta, 2020). Meanwhile, the impact of mediation on communality and social solidarity in digital religious practices has not been fully explored (Ibrahim, 2023).

This article fills this gap by focusing on the substantive transformation of Islamic religious values in the context of digitalization, specifically how Islamic spirituality negotiates with digital platform architectures that emphasize visibility, popularity, and personal branding. This critical approach is important given its implications for the formation of the younger generation's religious character and identity, who make the digital space their primary habitat for spiritual life. This study is not only descriptive-analytical, but also provides a normative contribution on how religion in the digital era must be directed to remain authentic, substantive, and relevant to the spiritual needs of contemporary society. For this reason, this paper analyzes the transformation of religious values in a digital society by focusing on value reinterpretation, virtual religious practices, and the influence of social media on the spirituality of the younger generation.

METHOD

This article uses a qualitative, literature-based approach to examine the transformation of religious values in the digital era (Helland, 2020). This method was chosen because it allows for an in-depth analysis of complex phenomena involving social, spiritual, and technological dimensions by synthesizing a range of relevant, high-quality academic literature (Einstein & Wagner, 2022). The data sources in this article come from the academic literature, including international scientific journals and reputable reference books. Source selection is carried out through the Scopus and Web of Science databases to ensure credibility and academic quality, as both databases apply strict curation standards to the journals they index. The use of this reputable international database was chosen in response to the limitations of Google Scholar, which lacks strict curation and may include articles



with inadequate academic standing. Keywords used in literature searches include "digital religion", "religious values transformation", "mediatization of religion", "digital spirituality", and "religious practice in the digital era".

Literature selection criteria are established to ensure the relevance and quality of the sources analyzed. The inclusion criteria include articles published in the range of 2021 to 2024 to ensure the actuality of findings according to the latest digital technology developments, articles indexed in Scopus or the Web of Science with a high academic reputation, and articles that specifically discuss the transformation of religious values or religious practices in a digital context. Meanwhile, the exclusion criteria include articles published before 2021, articles without a transparent methodology, and literature that only discusses technical aspects of technology without relating to the dimension of religious values. Based on these criteria, this article analyzes 15 articles from reputable international journals.

The validity and reliability of the data are guaranteed through several methodological strategies. First, source triangulation was performed by comparing findings from different studies that used different geographic contexts and religious traditions to identify consistent patterns across studies. Second, thematic consistency is maintained through a category framework developed inductively during the analysis. Third, discussions with other researchers with expertise in the sociology of religion were conducted to verify the interpretation and reduce subjective bias in the analysis. Data analysis uses the Integrative Review approach. This analysis model was chosen because it is well-suited to the study of literature on socio-religious and educational topics and can integrate various theories, methodologies, and findings from previous research to produce a comprehensive new conceptual framework.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Transformation of Religious Practices in the Digital Ecosystem

The findings of the literature review show a fundamental shift in the way religious people access, understand, and practice religious teachings in the digital age. An analysis of 15 articles in reputable international journals identified three key patterns of transformation that consistently emerged across geographic contexts and religious traditions.

First, there is a democratization of access to religious knowledge that was previously limited to formal authorities such as clerics, priests, or official religious institutions. (Jafari, 2022) shows that with technological advances such as the internet, religious applications, and social media, access to information and the implementation of worship have become easier and more efficient. Digital platforms allow individuals to access religious lectures, studies, and discussions without time and geographic location restrictions. (Zhang, 2025) asserts that social media

platforms have reshaped how religious content is shared, understood, and practiced, opening opportunities for global inclusion and the formation of online religious communities.

Second, religious practices undergo individualization, with spiritual experiences becoming more personal and reflective, while collective rituals emphasize physical presence in the community. (Caldwell, 2020) noted that information technology poses challenges in the form of individualization of worship and fragmentation of religious understanding among urban Muslim communities. Third, the format for delivering religious teachings shifts from in-depth discourse to concise content, visually and aesthetically packaged for quick consumption on social media.

This pattern of transformation creates a dialectic between accessibility and authenticity in religious understanding. On the one hand, digital technology opens up opportunities for individuals who previously had limited access to study religion independently. (Ratu Syifa Alrissa et al., 2025) revealed that internet usage behavior showed that 40.2% of respondents were in the "addicted user" category, and 59.6% were in the "medium user" and "heavy user" categories when accessing Islamic websites in the Greater Jakarta and Surabaya areas. On the other hand, this ease of access is not always followed by an adequate depth of understanding. Zhang, (2025) highlights the challenges posed by information overload, the fragmentation of religious messages, and the emergence of echo chambers that can lead to a superficial understanding of complex religious doctrines.

Another important finding concerns the emergence of new religious authority figures whose legitimacy no longer stems from formal theological credentials but rather from their popularity and the power of digital communication. Wu & Mustafa, (2023) found that a new generation of Muslim social media influencers who are Western-educated, unique in storytelling, and proficient in digital media production are challenging traditional religious authority by reimagining Muslim identities based on a new global lifestyle. Religious influencers with millions of followers on social media have a significant influence on shaping the religious understanding of the younger generation, though not all have an adequate religious education background. Personal charisma, the ability to package messages attractively, and consistency in producing content are the determining factors of credibility in the digital space. This shift in the structure of authority creates a paradoxical situation in which religious knowledge becomes more accessible, but its validity becomes harder to verify.

Mediation and Symbolization of Religious Practices

The literature review identifies mediaization as a dominant characteristic of digital religious practice. Mediation refers to the process by which the logic and format of mass media and digital platforms affect the way religious teachings are communicated and understood by religious people. (Akhyar et al., 2025) in a



quantitative analysis of 73,120 Islamic videos uploaded on YouTube from 2011 to 2020 found that Islamic videos continued to grow without a decline, from 6.04% in 2011 to 13.11% in 2019, increasing by more than doubling in eight years, demonstrating the continued growth of digital religious content. The findings show that religious content on social media tends to emphasize visual and performative aspects rather than theological substance.

The process of mediaization creates a new form of religious expression, religious performativity, in which religious practices are displayed as part of the construction of social identity in digital public spaces. (Akhyar et al., 2025) explains that social media allows individuals to construct and express their religious identities in increasingly personal and diverse ways, creating new forms of religious expression embedded in the digital public. Individuals not only perform religious rituals for spiritual purposes but also to gain social recognition through likes, comments, and social media sharing. This phenomenon raises critical questions about the authenticity of religious practices when spiritual motivation mixes with the need for social validation and self-image formation in the digital space.

Qualitative research that combines related sources (2024) emphasizes that social media can be used to positively influence others by promoting the beauty of Islam, tolerance, understanding, and compassion. However, it can also lead to negative behaviors such as addiction and the spread of uncivilized content. The importance of aligning online behavior with Islamic teachings to avoid hypocrisy and maintain authenticity, as well as the need to be mindful of social media's influence on personal behavior and relationships, becomes critical. These findings are consistent across a wide range of religious traditions, suggesting that mediasization is not a phenomenon limited to a particular religion or culture.

Further analysis revealed that mediasization also influenced the way religious communities understood and celebrated collective rituals. Zekrist et al. (2022) show that Islamic education and learning practices are transforming under the influence of innovations, with information technology integrated into religious education and teaching practices, while digital Islamic education is rapidly evolving, reflecting fundamental changes in the education system. While this expands accessibility, there are concerns about the loss of a communal dimension and a sacred experience that can only be felt through a physical presence with the community. Some religious traditions experience tensions between groups that accept virtual religious practices as a form of contemporary adaptation and those that consider them to be a reduction in the sacred value of religious rituals.

Spirituality of the Young Generation in a Digital Context

The study's findings show that the younger generation who grew up as digital natives developed a significantly different form of spirituality than the previous generation. (Trianita et al., 2024) found in a bibliometric analysis that since 2021, Instagram has become an important space for the expression and discussion of

Islamic identity, with research showing an increase in the integration of digital technologies in Islamic practice from 2008 to 2021, with a focus on social media and mobile applications for religious education and engagement. The spirituality of the digital generation tends to be eclectic, personal, and flexible in adopting religious practices. (Firnando, 2023) identifies that social media algorithms play a crucial role in shaping individuals' exposure to religious content, creating an echo chamber in which they tend to encounter perspectives that confirm pre-existing beliefs, with significant implications for the radicalization and polarization of religious understanding.

The younger generation also tends to separate religious identity from formal ritual practices. For many young individuals, being religious does not necessarily mean obedience to religious rituals or formal rules, but rather the search for meaning in life, moral values, and personal spiritual connections. (Firnando, 2023) in a systematic literature review of 49 studies found a significant positive correlation between happiness and religiosity in the Muslim population, with the majority of studies postulating a significant relationship between these variables, suggesting that spirituality has a positive psychological impact on the lives of the younger generation. They are more interested in religious narratives relevant to contemporary life, such as themes of mental health, social justice, environmental sustainability, and gender equality, as they relate to religious values.

Guessoum, (2010) in a bibliometric analysis of 1,060 studies from the Scopus database from 1969 to 2024 found that research on digital Islam shows how "digital Muslims" play a role in the "digital Ummah," combining conventional and modern techniques and using cross-disciplinary theoretical approaches, with particular attention to the increasingly visible role of women in widely cited studies.

Nevertheless, the findings also identify the risk of fragmentation of religious understanding among the younger generation. (Guessoum, 2010) in a scoping literature review of 359 studies on Muslims and social media from 2010-2022 found that although interest in studying Muslims on social media has grown significantly. The majority of studies focus on non-conflictual use of social media, with 82 percent being corpus studies with descriptive analysis. The literature should be complemented by additional studies that collect new empirical data through interviews, surveys, and mixed-methods approaches to understand when, what, and why individuals do or do not engage in certain behaviors on social media. Younger generations tend to adopt certain religious practices or values that resonate with their personal needs without understanding the broader theological context. This situation poses challenges for formal religious education in developing a comprehensive, in-depth understanding of religious traditions amid the dominance of informal learning through digital media.

The transformation of religious values in the digital era involves changes across various dimensions of religious life. Access to religious knowledge that

previously relied on formal authority is now more open and democratic, expanding learning opportunities but also increasing the potential for the spread of disinformation. The once-hierarchical structure of authority began to shift toward a more horizontal model, where popularity often trumps traditional legitimacy, leading to the fragmentation of authority. In the learning aspect, the in-depth discourse pattern is replaced by concise, visual content that is more accessible, though the depth of understanding is reduced. Ritual practices also shift from physical collective activities to virtual forms that offer flexibility but undermine communal experiences. Meanwhile, religious expressions that used to be private have become more public and performative, creating high visibility but also raising questions about the authenticity of religious practices in the digital space, as explained in Table 1.

Table 1. Patterns of Religious Value Transformation in the Digital Era

Transformation Dimension	Traditional Practices	Apprentice Digital	Implication
Access to Knowledge	Limited to formal authority	Democratic and open	Increased access, risk of disinformation
Authority Structure	Hierarchical and institutional	Horizontal and popularity-based	A shift in legitimacy, fragmentation of authority
Learning Format	In-depth and systematic discourse	Concise and visual content	High accessibility, reduced depth
Ritual Practice	Collective and physical	Individual dan virtual	Flexibility increases, communal dimension weakens
Religious Expression	Private and contemplative	Public and performative	High visibility, questionable authenticity

Meanwhile, the spirituality of the digital generation shows a pattern increasingly shaped by technology and today's social dynamics. Sources of religious knowledge no longer rely on formal institutions but instead shift to social media, apps, and various forms of digital content heavily influenced by algorithms and popular religious figures. Religious orientations appear more personal, eclectic, and flexible, in line with increasing individualization and the number of freely accessible perspectives. In carrying out rituals, this generation tends to be selective and not overly tied to institutional rules, as considerations of personal relevance and ease of digital access shape their practices. Prioritized values are changing, with a strong focus on mental health, social justice, and authenticity in response to contemporary issues and generational identity formation. The spiritual character of digital generalizations can be described in Table 2.

Table 2. Characteristics of Digital Generation Spirituality

Aspects	Characteristics	Forming Factors
Knowledge Resources Orientation	Social media, apps, digital content Personal, eclectic, flexible	Platform algorithms, religious influencers Individualization, plurality of perspectives
Ritual Practice	Selective, not institutionally bound	Personal relevance, ease of access
Priority Values	Mental health, social justice, authenticity	Contemporary issues, generational identity
Community	Virtual, cross-geography	Digital platforms, shared interests

Discussion

The transformation of religious values in the digital ecosystem shows how the process of mediatization of religion reshapes the identity, authority, and expression of the religious diversity of the people (Malik, et al, 2019; Lövheim & Lied, 2018; Tari & Revilla, 2025). Media is not only a means of transmission, but also an agent that helps redefine religious practices through visual logic, algorithms, and digital connectivity (Hjarvard, 2008). This has had an impact on the shift of religious authority from a hierarchical model to an authority based on popularity and digital competence (Couldry & Hepp, 2018; Hjarvard, 2008). The meaning of religion that is increasingly influenced by digital content also strengthens the analysis of how religious authority and interpretation are mediated by platforms, algorithms, and popular figures that dominate the digital space (Cheong, 2012; Martínez-Bravo et al., 2022).

This change in the structure of authority and access to information has implications for the emergence of new patterns of spirituality that are more personalized and flexible (Rachman et al., 2025). The digital generation builds spirituality through a process of self-selection and curation of the religious content they consume, as argued by Lövheim & Lied, (2018). which shapes an individual's religious exposure, as described by Saura et al., (2023); Zhang, (2025) strengthens the individualization of religious practices. This is made clear by Nikou & Aavakare, (2021); Radde-Antweiler, (2008) who saw that the structure of digital media shapes the logic of user attention, visibility, and preferences through filtering mechanisms and automatic recommendations. Consequently, the religious spirit is increasingly influenced by digital personalization patterns, which, on the one hand, encourage creativity and engagement, but on the other hand, create fragmentation of understanding and learning patterns that are not always based on authoritative religious knowledge (Kotowski, 2023).

In addition, digital religion also reorganizes the form of religious communities by giving birth to virtual networks that are no longer limited by geographical space (Nikou & Aavakare, 2021). Digital communities form a new ecosystem for the reproduction of spiritual values and expression, but they also carry risks such as rampant misinformation and the extremization of understanding (Nuryanto et al., 2024; Pujianto et al., 2024). The digital space has produced a new dynamic of competitive authority, in which religious influencers are the primary reference point for younger generations in understanding and interpreting religious



teachings (Siuda, 2021). On the one hand, this creates an inclusive space for religious discourse, but on the other hand increases vulnerability to superficial and sensational religious content (Blanchard & Taddeo, 2023).

The above phenomenon shows that digital spirituality is not only shaped by religious content itself, but also by the structure of platforms that structure the way users access, share, and understand religious teachings (Nikou & Aavakare, 2021). Social media exposure patterns influence the way users form religious beliefs, authority, and identities, especially among urban Muslim youth (Cheong, 2012). Thus, Islamic digital spirituality is the result of complex negotiations between the spiritual needs of individuals, the technological logic of the platform, and the rapidly evolving social dynamics (Wu & Mustafa, 2023). This transformation presents excellent opportunities for da'wah and religious education, but it also requires strong religious digital literacy to maintain Islamic values in an increasingly competitive, digitized interaction space.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This literature review serves the research purpose by identifying the three main dimensions of the transformation of religious values in the digital era. First, the reinterpretation of religious values shifts from a collective understanding grounded in institutional authority to a personal interpretation mediated by digital platforms, democratizing access but raising the risk of fragmentation and distortion of teachings. Second, virtual religious practices shift from physical communal rituals to flexible individual spiritual experiences, in which religious mediation becomes a symbolic practice that emphasizes visual and performative aspects rather than deep theological substance. Third, the spirituality of the younger generation is shaped by interactions with social media algorithms, which create an eclectic yet fragmented pattern of religious content consumption, leading to a more personal religious identity but potentially sacrificing the depth of spiritual contemplation. This transformation reflects the complex dialectic between opportunities for accessibility and the challenge of authenticity in contemporary religious life, demanding the development of religious digital literacy and educational models that integrate technological advances with the preservation of authentic and meaningful spiritual values to shape a healthy religious life in the digital age.

Based on the findings of the literature review, it is necessary to develop a religious education model that integrates digital literacy with deep theological understanding through a curriculum that equips the younger generation with the ability to criticize and filter religious information in the digital space, as well as training for religious leaders in the practical and responsible use of digital technology to maintain the quality of teaching delivery. Further research is recommended to empirically examine the long-term impact of digitalization on the character formation of the younger generation through comparative studies between cultures and religions, as well as the development of special digital platforms for religious learning that maintain communal and dialogical aspects. Collaboration between technologists, academics, and religious leaders is needed to create a digital ecosystem that supports healthy spiritual growth through the establishment of ethical standards and guidelines in the production of digital religious content, as well as the development of mechanisms for verifying and

curating religious content on digital platforms to maintain the quality and accuracy of information circulating in society.

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