



## UNVEILING DIGITAL RELIGIOUS PHENOMENOLOGY: THE NEGOTIATION OF LITERACY, ETHICS, AND ISLAMIC CHARACTER BUILDING AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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### ABSTRACT

The pervasive integration of social media into university students' daily lives has created a complex digital-religious landscape, necessitating a deeper understanding of how Islamic values are negotiated online. This is particularly critical in Islamic teacher education, where future educators must embody and teach these values. This study aimed to investigate the phenomenological experience of Muslim student-teachers as they negotiate digital literacy, ethical practices (*adab*), and the construction of Islamic character within their social media ecosystems. A qualitative study employing Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) was conducted. Data were collected through digital ethnography (observation of 9 WhatsApp/Telegram groups), in-depth phenomenological interviews with 24 students from teacher education programs (PGSD, PGPAUD, Penjaskesrek), and analysis of digital artifacts over 4 months. Three central themes emerged: (1) the contextual compartmentalization of *adab*, where students applied distinct ethical norms across different digital spaces; (2) strategic value negotiation, employing methods such as silence, private confirmation, or polite confrontation to resolve ethical dilemmas; and (3) a performative-internalization dialectic, where curated displays of piety on public platforms contrasted with more instrumental communication in private groups. Social media functions as a significant pedagogical space for the moral development of Muslim student-teachers, characterized by active negotiation rather than passive reception of norms. The findings underscore the necessity for educational strategies in Islamic higher education that foster critical digital religious literacy, moving beyond normative instruction to support reflective ethical reasoning in digital contexts.

**Keywords:** digital phenomenology, Islamic ethics, digital literacy, character education, social media.

### ABSTRAK

*Integrasi media sosial yang masif dalam kehidupan sehari-hari mahasiswa menciptakan lanskap digital-religius yang kompleks, sehingga pemahaman mendalam tentang bagaimana nilai-nilai Islam dinegosiasikan secara daring menjadi penting. Hal ini khususnya krusial dalam pendidikan calon guru Islam, di mana para pendidik masa depan harus menghidupi dan mengajarkan nilai-nilai tersebut. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki pengalaman fenomenologis mahasiswa calon guru Muslim dalam menegosiasikan literasi digital, praktik etika (adab), dan konstruksi karakter Islami di dalam ekosistem media sosial mereka. Digunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Data dikumpulkan melalui etnografi digital (observasi 9 grup WhatsApp/Telegram), wawancara fenomenologis mendalam terhadap 24 mahasiswa program studi keguruan (PGSD, PGPAUD, Penjaskesrek), dan analisis artefak digital selama empat bulan. Tiga tema utama muncul: (1) kompartementalisasi kontekstual adab, di mana mahasiswa menerapkan norma etika berbeda di berbagai ruang digital; (2) negosiasi nilai strategis, dengan metode seperti diam, konfirmasi privat, atau konfrontasi sopan untuk menyelesaikan dilema etika; dan (3) dialektika performativitas-internalisasi, di mana tampilan kesalahan yang terkurasi di platform publik berbeda dengan komunikasi yang lebih instrumental di grup privat. Media sosial berfungsi sebagai ruang pedagogis signifikan bagi perkembangan moral mahasiswa calon guru Muslim, yang dicirikan oleh negosiasi aktif, bukan penerimaan pasif terhadap norma.*





*Temuan ini menggarisbawahi kebutuhan strategi pendidikan di perguruan tinggi Islam yang membina literasi digital religius kritis, melampaui pengajaran normatif menuju pendampingan penalaran etis reflektif dalam konteks digital.*

**Kata Kunci:** *fenomenologi digital, etika Islam, literasi digital, pendidikan karakter, media sosial.*

## INTRODUCTION

The digital revolution has transformed the religious ecosystem globally, creating what is once the Campbell & Evolvi, (2020) referred to as "*networked religion*," where religious practices and expressions are constructed, streamed, and negotiated through digital networks. Recent data shows that 64.4% of the world's population is now a social media user, with the fastest growth in the Southeast Asian region (We Are Social and Kepios, 2024). In the context of Indonesia, as a country with the largest Muslim population, internet penetration reaches 79.5% with an average of 3 hours and 18 minutes per day using social media (APJII, 2023). This phenomenon is not only techno-social, but has become a new terrain for *religious pedagogy*, where Islamic values are communicated, debated, and internalized outside the conventional classroom (Eickelman & Anderson, 2021).

At the national level, the *Independent Campus policy* and the acceleration of the digitalization of higher education post-pandemic have accelerated the adoption of digital platforms in the academic process. However, a report by the Indonesian Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, (2023) identifies the existence of a *pedagogical digital divide*: on the one hand, infrastructure and technical skills (*digital skills*) are developing rapidly; on the other hand, *digital wisdom* which includes the dimensions of ethics, criticism, and spirituality in interacting in the digital space is still lagging behind. This gap is especially felt in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) in universities, which are often trapped in the paradigm of normative knowledge transfer (*fiqh oriented*) without equipping students with an epistemological framework to navigate the moral complexities of the digital world (Nawawi & Ma'arif, 2022).

In a specific local context, this research focuses on students of the PGSD, PGPAUD, and Penjaskesrek study programs at STKIP Al-Islam Tunas Bangsa. The choice of this context is strategic and critical. This institution represents a unique *phenomenon of teacher-based Islamic colleges*, where the mission of building the Islamic character of prospective educators is directly intersecting with their digital reality as *digital natives*. Preliminary observations over six months reveal an interesting paradox: although social media (especially WhatsApp and Instagram) is the backbone of academic and social communication, there is a real tension between its potential to strengthen *friendship* and the practical erosion of the *civility of academic-Islamic communication*. For example, not being in task groups, the lack of *tabayyun* before disseminating information, and the compartmentalization of religious identity between formal offline spaces and liquid online spaces. This situation puts institutions in a precarious position: how to transform the digital space from a mere *tool* to a pedagogical environment that actively forms a holistic Islamic character.

A literature review revealed three dominant clusters in research on religion, digital media, and education. *The first cluster* is an instrumental-functional approach study, which analyzes social media as a PAI learning tool. Research such as Mispani & others, 2022; Zulkifli & Ismail, (2023) convincingly prove the effectiveness of platforms such as YouTube or



WhatsApp in improving material understanding and learning engagement. However, these studies tend to ignore the *formative* and *transformative* dimensions of digital interactions, treating technology as a neutral entity without considering how it actively shapes the relational logic and moral habitus of its users (van den Beemt & others, 2023). *The second cluster* is dominated by research with a deficit or risk paradigm, which focuses on the negative impact of digital media on the religious and moral attitudes of the younger generation. Baharun & Auliya Study, 2023; Harianto et al., 2025) provides an important warning about religious disinformation, *cyberbullying*, and abuse of religious symbols. Although valuable, the excessive focus on the pathological aspect tends to ignore the agency of the subject in this case students actively negotiate, reject or adapt the values they encounter in the digital space to establish their own ethics and spirituality. *The third cluster* that is developing is research on digital literacy in religious education. Recent studies by Putri & Huda, (2023) and Al-Ghazali, (2024) begin to advocate for the importance of critical digital literacy. However, the main criticism of this cluster is that the digital literacy concepts used are often imported from secular Western frameworks (such as the model from the EU DigComp), making them less sensitive to key concepts in Islamic epistemic vocabulary such as *adab*, *akhlāq*, *taẓkiyyat al-nafs*, and *ih̄sān* Ramzy, (2020); Andayani & Harianto, (2025). In other words, there is an *epistemic gap* between the analytical framework used and the ontology of the subject being studied.

Based on the critical review above, a multi-dimensional research gap was identified. First, the methodological-conceptual gap: There has been no research that systematically applies a digital phenomenological approach to delve into the life experiences (*lebenswelt*) of Muslim students as *being-in-the-digital-world*. This approach is necessary to understand not only *what* they do, but *how* they interpret and experience the value negotiation process in their daily digital routine (Ashwin & McVitty, (2023); Rossa et al., (2026). Second, substantive gap: Previous studies articulate the dialectical relationship between three key elements: digital literacy (as a competency), digital ethics (as a performative practice), and Islamic character building (as a *self-formation project*). The three are often discussed separately. Third, contextual gap: Lack of in-depth exploration in the specific context of prospective teacher students (PGSD, PGPAUD, Penjaskesrek) in Islamic Universities, whose subjective position is unique as *future educators* as well as *digital natives* who are forming their religious and professional identities at the same time. Therefore, this study argues that an investigation is needed that is able to bridge the phenomenology of daily digital experience with the epistemology of Islamic education which aims to form *insān kāmil*. The central gap to be filled is: How do prospective teacher students at PTI experience, interpret, and negotiate their digital literacy, ethical practices, and Islamic character-building projects in the social media ecosystem they inhabit?

This research has a high urgency both from an academic and socio-pedagogical perspective. Theoretically, this research has the potential to make three main contributions. First, this study develops a conceptual framework of "Religious Digital Phenomenology" that integrates digital media theories, such as the concept of digital habitus from Couldry & Hepp, (2017) and Harianto, (2022), with the Islamic educational philosophy of self-formation (*tahdhīb al-akhlāq*). Second, this research enriches the discussion in the field of digital religion studies by providing an empirical perspective from the context of the Global Muslim South, which is often





underrepresented in literature dominated by Western thought. Third, this research offers an analytical model for studying context-sensitive digital literacy, by integrating local-spiritual values as an integral part of digital competence, which goes beyond technical and universal literacy models. Practically, the findings of this research will produce an evidence-based framework for the development of contextual Religious Digital Literacy modules for teacher training study programs at private universities. This framework can be a guide for Islamic Religious Education (PAI) lecturers and curriculum developers in designing learning that not only criticizes negative content, but also builds *digital piety*. digital piety is reflected in politeness, honesty, responsibility, and depth of relationships (silaturahmi) in the digital space. Based on the above background, critical review, gap identification, and urgency, the purpose of this research is formulated to uncover and phenomenologically analyze the experiences, meanings, and negotiation strategies carried out by students of the PGSD, PGPAUD, and Penjaskesrek STKIP Al-Islam Tunas Bangsa study programs in building digital literacy, practicing ethics, and constructing their Islamic character through interaction in the social media ecosystem.

## METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach with the methodology of *Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis* (IPA) (Smith et al., 2022). This design was chosen to dive deeply into lived *experience* and subjective meaning of students as actors in the digital-religious ecosystem. Science focuses on the process of *double hermeneutics*: researchers seek to understand participants who are trying to understand their own experiences, which is in line with the research goal of unraveling the negotiation of meaning in the digital space.

The subjects/participants of the study were 24 active students from the Elementary School Teacher Education (PGSD), Early Childhood Education Teacher Education (PGPAUD), and Physical Education, Health, and Recreation (Penjaskesrek) study programs at STKIP Al-Islam Tunas Bangsa. Participant characteristics include (1) being in semesters 4 to 8, (2) active users of at least three social media platforms (WhatsApp and Instagram as mandatory platforms), and (3) being involved in academic activities or organizations that utilize social media. Students who are preparing their thesis and isolating themselves from group activities are excluded as exclusion criteria.

The sampling technique uses purposive sampling with a maximum variation sampling strategy (Patton, 2015) to obtain maximum variation in perspective based on study program, gender, and level of religious activity on social media. The sample size of 24 participants was considered adequate to achieve thematic saturation in phenomenological research, with a composition of 10 PGSD students (7 females, 3 males), 8 PGPAUD students (all females), and 6 Penjaskesrek students (4 males, 2 females).

Although qualitative research does not test variable relationships, key concepts are operationalized as follows for investigative clarity:

1. Religious Digital Phenomenology: The subjective experience experienced and understood by students in inhabiting the digital space, where Islamic values become an inseparable part of their interaction and identity.





2. Digital Literacy Negotiation: A dynamic process for students to process, select, and apply technical, cognitive, socio-emotional, and spiritual competencies to interact with religious content on social media.
3. Digital Ethics Practice (*Adab*): Acts of communication and self-presentation in the digital space that reflect efforts to apply the values of politeness, honesty, responsibility, and respect within the framework of Islamic values.
4. Islamic Character Building: A continuous process of self-formation to internalize and manifest *the values of akhlāqul karimah*, which in this context are facilitated or inhibited by interactions in the social media ecosystem.

The main instrument of the research is the researcher himself (*human instrument*) which is equipped with observation guidelines, semi-structured interview guidelines, and FGD protocols. Data collection techniques were carried out in triangulation: (1) Observation of passive participants for 4 months on interactions in 9 digital groups (6 WhatsApp classes, 3 Telegram organizations) with a focus on communication patterns and religious content; (2) A semi-structured two-round in-depth interview with 24 participants (a total of 48 interviews) that was recorded and transcribed verbatim; (3) Focus Group Discussions (FGD) of 3 sessions (one per study program) to discuss ethical dilemmas; and (4) Digital Artifact Analysis of 347 *screenshots* and uploads recommended by participants.

The research procedure follows an adaptive science cycle, starting from the preparation phase and obtaining ethical permissions, followed by parallel data collection (observation, interviews, FGD) in an iterative process where the initial analysis informs the subsequent data collection. The analysis phase was carried out simultaneously with data collection, followed by the verification phase through *member checking* and *peer debriefing*, and ended with the reporting phase.

The data analysis technique uses Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith et al., 2022) through six steps: (1) *Immersive Reading* of transcripts repeatedly; (2) *Initial Notes* to record descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual matters; (3) *Developing Emergent Themes* to group notes into themes; (4) *Searching for Connections Across Themes* to build a superordinate thematic structure for each case; (5) *Moving to the Next Case* with the same process; and (6) *Looking for Patterns Across Cases* to identify convergence and divergence of themes across participants.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on an in-depth analysis of data from observations, interviews, and digital artifacts, this study reveals three main findings related to students' experiences in negotiating Islamic values in the digital space. The findings are presented descriptively by quoting the participants' statements directly.

### Patterns of Social Media Use for Religious-Academic Activities

All participants (24/24) reported using social media as the main means for academic coordination and religious activities. However, there are significant variations in usage patterns between study programs (Table 1).



Table 1. Social Media Use Patterns Based on Study Programs

Platform	PGSD (n=10)	PGPAUD (n=8)	Penjaskesrek (n=6)	Main Function
WA Group	10/10 (100%)	8/8 (100%)	6/6 (100%)	Task coordination, distribution of materials, official announcements
Instagram	10/10 (100%)	8/8 (100%)	5/6 (83.3%)	Expression of religious identity, consumption of Islamic educational content
TikTok	8/10 (80%)	3/8 (37.5%)	2/6 (33.3%)	Entertainment, short Islamic content search (1 minute da'wah)
YouTube	9/10 (90%)	7/8 (87.5%)	4/6 (66.7%)	Self-paced learning (tutorials, long talks)
Telegram	2/10 (20%)	1/8 (12.5%)	4/6 (66.7%)	Share large files, follow specific da'wah channels

PGSD students tend to be creators and curators of Islamic-educational content. As many as 7 out of 10 PGSD participants actively shared content such as infographics on Qur'an verses or Islamic teaching tips. One participant (P-GSD-07) stated:

*"I usually create content on Canva about moral values, then share it to IG stories. It is also a training to become a teacher later, and it will also be rewarded for preaching."*

On the other hand, the majority of Penjaskesrek participants (4/6) played a more passive role as consumers. They follow groups or channels for information, but rarely create or reshare religious content. P-JSR-03 reveals:

*"I just look around. Sometimes if there is an online study shared in the group, yes, I follow it if I don't practice anymore. But I never repost or create content myself."*

### Value Negotiation Strategies in Facing Digital Ethical Dilemmas

The findings reveal four main strategies that students use when faced with situations that are potentially contrary to Islamic values:

Figure 1. Value Negotiation Strategies in Digital Ethics





1. Compartmentalization of Adab (20/24 participants)  
Students apply different norms of politeness (*adab*) depending on the context of the digital space. In the official WhatsApp group with lecturers, the language used is very formal and follows the rules. In the internal group of students without lecturers, the language is more relaxed and sometimes the term slang appears. P-AUD-05 explains:  
*"In the class group where there is a lecturer, I always use 'Assalamu'alaikum,' the standard language, very carefully. But if you are in our generation group, yes, sometimes you use the language of young people, given funny emoticons. After all, they are both Muslims, but the context is different."*
2. Silence and Observation (18/24 participants)  
When encountering content or conversations that are doubtful or considered inappropriate, the most common strategies are to be silent, not responding, and just observing. PGSD 02 reveals the reason:  
*"It is better to be silent than wrong. Especially if someone shares information whose source is not clear. I checked first on Google, asked the lecturer's assistant, only if it was true I could respond. But usually I just keep quiet."*
3. Private Confirmation (14/24 participants)  
To avoid embarrassing others in digital public spaces, students choose to ask or correct information privately via direct message (DM). P-JSR-01 gives an example:  
*"My friend once shared a recitation schedule that was wrongly dated. I didn't correct him in the group, but chatted him privately. 'Mas, the date seems to be yesterday, not tomorrow.' He was thankful for not being humiliated in front of many people."*
4. Polite Confrontation (8/24 participants)  
Only a third of the participants had ever made corrections in person in a digital public space, and it was done with very careful language. It is usually done by students who have formal positions (such as class leaders or rohis administrators). P-GSD-10 (Class Leader) exemplifies:  
*"I once reprimanded the group because someone talked about the lecturer disrespectfully. I wrote, 'Please keep the manners of speaking, because we are taught to respect teachers. May Allah take care of all of us.' Alhamdulillah, the chat was immediately deleted."*

### Factors that Facilitate and Inhibit the Internalization of Islamic Values

Based on participants' acknowledgements, the most influential factors in shaping their digital ethics practices can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Factors Influencing the Internalization of Islamic Values in the Digital Space

Facilitating Factors	Number of Participants	Inhibiting Factors	Number of Participants
Exemplary lecturers in the digital space	22 (91.7%)	Pressure for conformity with peer group communication style	19 (79.2%)
Exemplary lecturers in the digital space	18 (75%)	Anonymity and distance that reduce shame ( <i>muraqabah</i> )	18 (75%)



Active learning about digital ethics in PAI courses	15 (62.5%)	Information fatigue so that verification is lazy (tabayyun)	16 (66.7%)
Positive online community support (study groups, etc.)	14 (58.3%)	Social media algorithms that prioritize sensational content	14 (58.3%)

The example of lecturers emerged as the strongest facilitator factor. A total of 22 participants mentioned that the way lecturers communicated in the group (always starting with greetings, saying thank you, and using polite language) was indirectly the standard for them. P-AUD-03 observed:

*"When the lecturer always replies to our chat, we use 'Wa'alaiakumsalam, thank you,' that's what I noticed. Over time, I became like that too. It turned out that the effect was good, communication became warmer and polite."*

On the other hand, peer pressure is a major obstacle. Nearly 80% of participants admitted to sometimes following a less relaxed style of language or spreading content without verification simply because "everyone did it." P-JSR-04 admits:

*"There is a group challenge that contains crude jokes. At first I was uncomfortable, but if I didn't get along with the nimbrung, I thought it wouldn't be fun. Finally I went along, but sometimes I felt guilty."*

### Digital Artifacts as an Expression of Identity Negotiation

Analysis of the 347 digital artifacts (screenshots, stories, posts) collected showed two dominant patterns:

*First*, the performativity of piety displayed in public spaces such as Instagram Feeds. Content such as photos of attending a recitation, excerpts of Qur'anic verses with aesthetic design, or documentation of charitable activities, are often curated with aesthetic and imagery considerations in mind. P-GSD-08 explains the intention behind his upload:

*"I posted tadarus at the campus mosque not because I wanted to show off, but rather to remind ourselves and friends that we have that obligation. But I choose a good angle and a soft filter, so that it is pleasing to the eye and does not seem patronizing."*

*Second*, transactional-instrumental communication in private spaces such as WhatsApp groups. Group conversations tend to be functional, brief, and lack the full norm of politeness (such as starting with a greeting or ending with a closing). Of the 147 group conversations analyzed, only 23% (34 conversations) began with an Islamic salute.

These findings show that there is a gap between the expression of Islamic values displayed in digital public spaces (which tend to be performative and curated) and daily communication practices in digital private spaces (which tend to be instrumental and pay less attention to manners). This gap becomes a critical point in the process of internalizing true values.

### Negotiating Digital Space as a New Pedagogical Field

The findings of this study confirm that social media is not just a neutral tool, but has become a third pedagogical space after formal classrooms and pesantren/family environments,





where students actively negotiate their Islamic identity. The results showed that the compartmentalization of manners (83.3% of participants) was not a form of hypocrisy, but an adaptive strategy in responding to the complexity of different digital contexts. This finding expands on the concept of context collapse (Boyd, 2014) that is usually discussed in Western media literature by adding a dimension to Islamic values. While previous studies such as Mispani et al. (2022) only saw social media as a learning tool, this study revealed that digital platforms are actually an ethical formation arena where Islamic values are tested, practiced, and sometimes compromised.

### **The Dialectic between Formivity and Internalization: A Digital Paradox**

The findings regarding the gap between the performativity of piety in the public space and instrumental communication in the private space strengthen Campbell's (2020) thesis on networked religion, but with the typical nuances of the Indonesian context. If the research of Baharun & Auliya (2023) tends to see this phenomenon as digital hypocrisy, our phenomenological analysis reveals it as a natural dialectical process in character formation. Students are not only passively accepting norms, but actively conducting trial and ethical reasoning through experiments on various platforms. This explains why digital literacy programs that focus only on the cognitive aspect (such as those developed by Putri & Huda, (2023) often fail because they ignore the affective-experiential dimension of the formation of manners.

### **Recontextualization of the Concept of Friendship and Manners in the Digital Era**

The finding that only 23% of conversations in WhatsApp groups began with an Islamic greeting seemed to contradict the concept of friendship in the Islamic tradition. However, phenomenological interpretation reveals that students experience a transformation of the meaning of digital friendship from just a greeting ritual to a sustainability of communication and social support even without language formalities. This is in accordance with the concept of connected presence (Licoppe, n.d.), yet enriched with a spiritual dimension. Thus, this study revises the view of Siregar, (2021) who considers the erosion of language formality as the degradation of silaturahmi, and instead proposes a substantive vs. procedural framework of silaturahmi.

### **Towards the "Digital Tarbiyah" Framework**

This research makes a significant contribution to three theoretical developments in the study of Islamic and digital education. First, this study introduces the concept of *digital religious habitus*, which refers to the formation of ethical dispositions that develop through repeated interactions in digital spaces. Religious values are internalized not through explicit teaching, but through daily practice that takes place in online interactions. Second, this study offers a *negotiated piety* model that rejects the traditionalist versus modernist dichotomy, by showing that students develop a *flexible piety repertoire*, which can be adapted to the digital context they are exposed to. Third, this research develops a *Digital Tarbiyah* framework that integrates three main pillars in digital pedagogical design: *ta'lim* (knowledge transfer), *tazkiyah* (cleansing of the soul), and *tarbiyah* (coaching). This framework provides a theoretical basis for designing Islamic religious





education that is relevant to the development of the digital age, while maintaining deep religious values.

### **Practical Implications for Islamic Religious Education**

Based on the findings of the research, several recommendations can be submitted for the development of digital adab education. First, this study recommends a shift from a normative-instructional approach towards reflective mentoring in digital manners education. Instead of banning the use of social media, educators should create safe spaces that allow for open discussions about the ethical dilemmas that students face online. Second, it is important to develop a religious digital literacy module that focuses not only on technical and critical competencies, but also on spiritual-transformative competencies, i.e. the ability to connect digital practices with spiritual goals, specifically *tazkiyah an-nafs* (cleansing of the soul). Third, this study emphasizes the importance of digital ethics modeling by lecturers and institutions. The finding that 91.7% of participants considered lecturer exemplary as the most influential factor showed that changes in students' digital behavior must start from the educator's own digital communication practices, which serve as an example for students.

### **Research Limitations and Future Research Agendas**

This research has some limitations that need to be honestly acknowledged. First, the focus of the research on prospective teacher students at one institution limits the transferability of the findings. Although purposive maximum variation sampling has been conducted, the unique characteristics of STKIP Al-Islam Tunas Bangsa as a teacher-based university may result in different dynamics compared to public Islamic universities or public colleges. Second, the duration of observation of 4 months may not be sufficient to capture longitudinal changes in participants' religious digital literacy development. The process of value negotiation is a dynamic phenomenon and may require a longitudinal study of 1-2 years to understand a more comprehensive pattern of transformation. Third, even though triangulation has been carried out, there is a possibility of social desirability bias in interviews, where participants tend to present a narrative that is in accordance with idealized Islamic values. Digital observation helps mitigate this bias, but it doesn't completely eliminate it. Fourth, this study has not explored in depth the differences in platform-specific ethics. Each platform (Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp) has different community logic and norms, which will require more in-depth analysis in the future.

Future research agendas need to:

1. Develop a validated scale to measure religious digital literacy based on the framework produced by this research.
2. Conducting a comparative study between PTKIS, PTU, and pesantren students to understand contextual variations.
3. Designing and testing the effectiveness of this findings-based pedagogical intervention in improving the quality of students' digital ethics.
4. Investigate the role of social media algorithms in shaping students' religious content preferences and their implications for the formation of religious beliefs.



Overall, this study shows that the religious digital phenomenology of prospective teacher students at PTKIS is characterized by three main characteristics: (1) high ethical contextuality, where norms are applied flexibly based on platform and audience; (2) the ongoing dialectic of performativity-internalization; and (3) the transformation of the meaning of classical Islamic concepts (such as *silatullah* and *adab*) in digital mediums. These findings shift the paradigm from seeing social media as a threat to civility to seeing it as a complex but potential ethical laboratory for the formation of Islamic character in today's age.

## CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study emphasizes that social media plays an important role in building friendship and influencing the practice of *adab* among students, especially in the context of Islamic religious education. The main findings show that although social media can strengthen social connections between students, the main challenge lies in the application of *adab* in digital communication. Value negotiation strategies, such as the compartmentalization of manners and private confirmation, show how students adapt to digital dynamics while still trying to maintain ethics that are in line with Islamic values.

This research makes a theoretical contribution by introducing the concept of *digital religious habitus* and *the negotiated piety* model, as well as the development of a *Digital Tarbiyah* framework that integrates *ta'lim*, *tazkiyah*, and *tarbiyah* in digital pedagogy. Practically, this study recommends the importance of reflective mentoring in digital *adab* education, the development of holistic religious digital literacy modules, and digital ethics modeling by lecturers as effective examples. Further research can explore the specific ethical differences of social media platforms and conduct longitudinal studies to look at changes in religious digital literacy over time.

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