

Digital Mediation of the Quran and Transformation of Religious Literacy in the Modern Southeast Asia: A Critical Analytical Review

 Shehar Bano^{1*},  Waqem Akram^{2*}

¹Universitas Islam Internasional Indonesia
Indonesia

²University of the Punjab
Lahore, Pakistan

✉ shehar.bano@uiii.ac.id, waqemakram39@gmail.com*



Article Information:

Received April 29, 2026

Revised July 19, 2026

Accepted July 21, 2026

Keywords:

Digital Media; Literacy on the Quran; Religious Education; Southeast Asia; Technological Change

Abstract

Background: In South-east Asia, the quick development of digital media has completely changed how people can access, comprehend, and study the Quran. Although social media, digital learning platforms, and mobile Quran applications have increased access to Quranic information, little study has critically analysed their effects on Quranic literacy in the area.

Objectives: The purpose of this study is to analyse the phenomena of mediation of the Quran in digital media in contemporary Southeast Asia, discuss the influence of the Quran on the religious literacy of the Muslim community and propose an analytical framework that will be attempted by comparing and contrasting the phenomena of the Quran in the context of the media in Indonesia and Malaysia.

Methods: The approach used in this study is a qualitative critical analysis with a methodology in the form of an extensive study of secondary literature that is studied in the fields of Islamic studies, digital religion, religious literacy and Southeast Asian studies. A comparative and thematic analysis was performed to explore the aspects of digital Quranic engagement, religious authority and religious literacy transformation in Indonesia and Malaysia.

Results: Digital media increases access to the Quran, yet also fragment interpretation and diminish the scholarly mediation. The effects differ based on the regulation, platform logic, language, and culture. The model incorporates textual, interpretive, ethical, and authority skills.

Conclusion: Digital transformation is changing the way Quranic knowledge is conveyed, necessitating digital literacy, ethical governance, and interpretive duty.

A. Introduction

The digital technologies have significantly transformed the production and circulation processes of religious knowledge in the twenty-first century. In the Muslim world, and Southeast Asia in particular, digital media are a part of the way people and groups read, understand, and disseminate Quranic knowledge. New opportunities for accessing the text of the Quran are created by the use of modern media such as mobile Quran apps, online tafsir archives, and social media ecosystems (Zaid et al., 2022). The examples are mobile Qur'an and tafsir applications that provide users with the ability to access the Quran in a more convenient format, multimedia, and interactive interfaces, which allow the Quran to be accessed beyond

printed codices and traditional study groups. Likewise, there are enormous amounts of Quranic recitation, exegetical, and devotional content available on such sites as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, and can be accessed at any hour and location.

The growth of these digital media platforms has also influenced the Islamic pedagogical practices and has made it possible to conduct online madrasah in the digital da'wah programs, and informal Qur'anic study groups that conduct their activities mostly on online platforms (Malkan & Mahmud, 2025). These technologies have provided not only greater availability of the content of the Quran but have also diversified ways of religious education and involvement. Consequently, the traditional institutions of interpretation, *Pesantren* or Islamic universities, and formal scholars no longer have the monopoly of power in their interpretive meanings, and the power is progressively negotiated in digitally mediated spaces (Campbell, 2021). This change indicates more global tendencies of digital mediation where access to the Quran as a sacred text is not only occurring but being acted upon, spread, and challenged digitally through the influence of algorithms, content formats, and platform logics. Although digital forms of religious media have begun to grow, the consequences of this phenomenon on religious literacy, especially in terms of the degree of knowledge, interpretive skills, and critical analysis, are quite complicated and multidimensional. An increase in the number and diversity of engagement opportunities created by digital access is accompanied by the question of the quality of Quran interpretation and the viability of the traditional paradigms of religious authority among Muslim communities in Southeast Asia.

The concept of religious literacy takes a dominant role in assessing the way people interact with sacred texts, religious knowledge, and the practice of morality. Religious literacy, in Islamic intellectual tradition, has never been a condition of familiarity with texts, but has always comprised epistemic and interpretive, and moral responsiveness. The classical Islamic concepts of *ilm*, *tafaqquh fi al-din*, and *adab al-ikhtilaf* are all expressions of a universal view of how to define religious literacy. *Ilm* is not merely the acquisition of knowledge, but an exercised epistemological process that is also based on revelation, reason, and ethical will (Adiyono et al., 2024). In the same way, *tafaqquh fi al-din* focuses on profound understanding and contextual thinking, especially in reference to the Quran and its application in lived reality (Ridho et al., 2025). The rule of *adab al-ikhtilaf* also emphasizes on ethical components of disagreement in interpretation, and stresses being respectful, modest, and responsible in discussing religion (Abdul-jabbar, 2026). However, modern discourses about religious literacy have appeared mostly in a secular educational and sociological context. Moore hypothesizes that religious literacy is in a position to see religious traditions as historically particular, internally various, and a social phenomenon (Hashmi, 2021). Dinham expands this paradigm, insisting on the crucial approach to religion in pluralistic societies, stating that the concept of religious literacy entails the ability to interpret, but not to be confessed (Dinham, 2017). Religious literacy, in this perspective, does not entail either devotion or religious knowledge; instead, it entails analytical ability, situational discernment, and moral judgment. This difference is especially applicable to the analysis of digital Qur'anic involvement. Devotional literacy is also more inclined towards recitation or memorization or affective attachment to the Quran, whereas critical religious literacy is accompanied by interpretive richness and contextual sense, as well as consciousness of scholarly authority. Online spaces often have a bias towards devotional types of interaction and provide little in the way of scaffolding against critical interpretive literacy, reformatting the process of acquisition and assessment of religious knowledge.

Digital religion is a concept that offers a critical theoretical view into how religious practices are being changed due to the mediation of technology. According to Campbell, digital religion refers to the merging of the online and offline worlds of religion, in which digital media have a direct influence over shaping religious belief, power, and community as opposed to being just a transmitter of traditional beliefs (Campbell, 2017). This view is not instrumental about the technology, but rather a conceptualization of the digital platforms as part of the religious meaning-making. This process is further explained by the larger theory of mediatization of religion. Hjarvard states that the contemporary media does not merely transmit religion but restructures religious symbols, authority, and practices based on the logic of media (Lövhheim & Hjarvard, 2019). In the digital mediated spaces, religious authority is increasingly displaced to the point that interpretive legitimacy is produced by the market of visibility, measures of engagement, and platform algorithms instead of by professional academic qualifications. Subsequently, the affordances and constraints of a particular platform tend to influence religious meaning. Scholarly work on platform logic that was published recently underscores the way the logic of algorithms can be used to shape religious discourse by promoting emotionally captivating, visually attractive, and easily digestible content (Gillespie, 2018). This logic can be used to further charismatic figures or minimize interpretations and expel complex

exegetical traditions within the context of Quranic content. As a result of this, in digital mediation, new forms of religious authority emerge that disrupt the hierarchies of knowledge transmission.

Digital mediation of the Qurays takes place in various forms, which, in combination, change the way the holy text is experienced and perceived. Mobile Quran applications and online translators constitute textual mediation, in which one can search, add audio and cross-reference text (Sihabussalam et al., 2024). Although these tools make the Quran more accessible, they also make the Quran abstracted to the traditional pedagogical settings where the interpretation of the Quran is supervised by scholars. The auditory mediation is manifested in the spread of the digital recitation platform, streaming applications, and algorithmically constructed playlists that focus on the emotional and aesthetic interaction with the Quran (Mahfudz & Munib, 2026). The websites promote the wave of devotional attachment and may suppress contact with the interpretative systems that put the recitation within the ethical and legal framework. Online tafsir lectures, short-form video content, and social media commentary are all areas that have grown to a large extent in the field of interpretive mediation. Such formats tend to focus more on brevity and emotional appeal than on rigor in their methods, so they cause decontextualization and oversimplification issues (Ale-Ebrahim, 2019). With an ever-decentralized interpretive authority, there is a proliferation of alternative interpretations of the Quran, with no consistent criteria by which to judge them. Such advances create a number of tensions. One, the disaggregation of interpretive power discards conventional linkages of knowledge transmission (Syukron et al., 2026), which makes it hard to discern between scholarly and personal interpretation. Second, hermeneutics of popularity promote the trivializing or sensationalistic accounts that pass platform tests as compared to exegetical soundness (Hoover, 2016). Such dynamics largely influence the concepts of religious literacy by allowing accessibility to dominate the depth and immediacy to dominate the critical reflection.

In response to these changes, this paper presents a Digital Quranic Religious Literacy Model, which theorizes religious literacy as a multidimensional phenomenon that has been influenced by digital mediation. The textual literacy is the first dimension, and it means proper interaction with the Quranic text, which entails proper recitation, tajwid, and good translation. Electronic resources are more convenient for textual access, but they usually do not include tools that can be used to verify accuracy or methodological consistency (Padriyanti et al., 2024). The second dimension, interpretive literacy, is the skill of putting the Quranic verses in their context in terms of more encompassing exegetical traditions, historical contexts, and thematic unity. The digital form is especially susceptible to interpretive literacy as pieces of fragmented texts and dislodged verses prevail (Aydin, 2024). The third dimension is the ethical literacy, which focuses on moral thinking, adab, and practicality of the Quranic values in social life. When the digital relationships are based on polemical or performative religiosity rather than moral development as a means of ethical literacy, this is a failure of ethical literacy. (Sari & Fasya, 2026) Finally, there is authority literacy in which a person can tell scholarly authority, methodological rigor, and epistemic boundaries. Digitally mediated spaces need authority literacy in order to minimize the manipulation and misinformation. (Literacy, 2024) These dimensions, when combined, are an analytical framework that is used to evaluate the digital mediation as redefining Quranic engagement and religious literacy in Southeast Asia today.

The swift increase in the production of digital Quranic materials has not been accompanied by an equivalent rise in academic research on the manner in which such materials influence the process of religious literacy. Current research in Southeast Asia and elsewhere has mainly focused on the technological adoption, patterns of user behavior, or descriptive narratives of digital practice without trying to critically intervene in the conceptual effects of digital practice on religious literacy. Although the studies on digital religion have pointed out the power of digital media to transform religion, there is still a significant gap in the knowledge of how digital mediation can change religious literacy, particularly in the case where Islam is not only deeply rooted in tradition but is also actively negotiating the sphere of modernity by means of digital innovation. The lack of a strong analytical framework to explain the role of digital Qur'anic media in shaping interpretive proficiency, ethical participation, and power systems is a serious gap in the academic field in Southeast Asia, where Internet penetration and use of social media among Muslim communities is widespread. The paper seeks to focus on the identified problem by the following objectives: to critically analyze the mediation of the Quran by digital space in modern Southeast Asia; to examine how digital Quranic applications are helping in changing religious literacy, and to suggest an analytical model, based on the secondary literature, for evaluating the impact of digital mediation on the construction and articulation of religious literacy of the Quran. The research is relevant in a number of overlapping academic areas. First, it pushes the discipline of religious studies toward developing an online presence: the point of

locating Quranic activity in the expansive dynamics of digital media and communicative practices. Second, it contributes to the study of the Quran to systematically investigate the way digital technologies impact the interpretive experience of the holy book. Third, it adds to the knowledge of Islamic education by proposing a conceptual framework that can be used in future empirical studies and pedagogical interventions in digital settings. Besides the scholarly value, this research will also provide hands-on information to educators, digital content creators, dawah workers, and policymakers trying to negotiate the opportunities and problems of digital Qur'anic media. The critical analysis of the intersection of technology and religious literacy on the basis of which the study is developed will allow the ethically and pedagogically justified approaches to engaging with the Quran in the digital age.

Research gap and Novelty

Although a number of studies have been undertaken with respect to digital religion, online Islamic authority, religious learning and applications of the Quran, only a few studies have attempted to critically analyze the aspects under the name of digital Quranic religious literacy in the Southeast Asian context. Besides, comparative studies between Indonesia and Malaysia in the implementation of the regulation by the platform, the logic of platforms, the language of the platform and the local culture in the engagement of the Quran through the digital media are still limited. Therefore, this study is expected to fill the gap, by developing the Digital Quranic Religious Literacy Model which integrates the competencies of the Quran, interpretation, ethics and authority. What makes its novelty innovative, however, is that it combines the study of the Quran using a digital lens with an analytical lens and approach, alongside a lens of comparison and a Southeast Asian context for the study.

B. Research Methods

Research Methods The research is interpretative qualitative research with critical analysis approach in analyzing the mediation of digital media in the knowledge of the Quran, religious authority and religious literacy in the modern times of Southeast Asia. The study was based on secondary data including peer reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, book chapters and academic publications on digital religion, Islamic studies and religious literacy, and studies on Muslim societies in the empirical studies of the Southeast Asian region of the Quran. The literature search was done to ensure that the analysis was up to date and was mostly restricted to last 10 years of published articles and mostly the 2010 peer reviewed journal articles. Some older publications have been retained as it is assumed that it is a basic or theoretically crucial contribution of a concept such as digital religion, religious literacy, Islamic epistemology etc. Indonesia and Malaysia were chosen as the comparative countries because of the following: Indonesia and Malaysia are important study areas of Quran in the context of a Muslim majority country; in both countries, there is a high level of digital media interaction and interaction with the Islamic education institutions; and there is a variety of types of digital mediated interaction with the Quran. The literature collected was thematically analyzed in an attempt to see whether there are any similarities in the discourse on access to knowledge of Qur'an, its interpretation, religious authority, digital pedagogy and ethical issues. Next, the differences and similarities between the two national contexts were examined in a comparative analytical context, which focused on the institutional regulation, platform logic, language and local sociocultural conditions. The findings were synthesized conceptually, and synthesized findings were applied to create the Digital Quranic Religious Literacy model in the form of four types of competences which include: textual competences, interpretative competences, ethical competences, and authority related competences. All of the four competences are interconnected as dimensions of religious literacy in the digital era. This allowed for the study to go beyond description of digital practices in the production of the Quran and a critical analysis of the changing dynamics in the production, circulation, interpretation and validation of the knowledge of the Quran in the era of digital change.

C. Results and Discussion

Results

Indonesia

The Indonesian situation is especially fruitful to explore in terms of digitally mediated Quranic engagement because of the high density of the Muslim population, the presence of a thorough and well-developed

Islamic public sphere, as well as because of the high rates of social media usage. The digital platforms, in particular, YouTube, have become the core platforms of Quranic spread, in which preachers provide recitation, thematic explanation, and inspirational cogitations to the masses. These YouTube preachers are usually located beyond the institutional framework, but they depend on visibility, interactions among the followers, and perceived authenticity to gain religious authority (Ale-Ebrahim, 2019). This trend is a major change in the majorly mosque- and pesantren-based transmission of Qur'anic knowledge to individualized and media-based religious learning. Meanwhile, Indonesia has experienced the appearance of virtual Quranic study programs and online pesantren with adapting the traditional pedagogical patterns to the digital space. These programs tend to recreate classical learning styles, e.g., using live streams and videos to replicate tafsir classes and monitored recitation. Even though these platforms broaden access to Quranic education beyond geographical boundaries, they also change the type of relationship between teacher and student that had guaranteed interpretive discipline and the development of ethical character. Digital mediation, therefore, improves accessibility and at the same time undermines long-term scholarly supervision (Hefner, 2019).

The textual mediation of the Quran in Indonesia can further be represented through a mobile Quran application that also has the translations of the text in the Indonesian language. Such apps are generally combined with translations, audio recitation, and thematic navigation, which enables the user to interact with the Quran on a regular and consistent basis. According to scholars, even though vernacular translations can facilitate understanding and devotional loyalty, they also pose interpretive layers that can make the meanings of the Quran easier to understand or to refract without sufficient contextualization (Nugraha et al., 2021). Consequently, there is an increase in textual literacy at the access level, whereas interpretive literacy is unequal and greatly relies on the religious training that the users have received beforehand. One of the peculiar features of the Indonesian online environment is the appearance of the hybrid religious authority, which is a combination of conventional religious leaders like kyais and communicative practices of social media influencers. Numerous digital preachers with formal Islamic learning have platform-specific aesthetics and rhetoric to appeal to younger audiences. With this hybridity, classical scholarship can spread throughout the world and at the same time is exposed to algorithmic logics that are rewarding of emotion and presentness. As a result, authority becomes performative and scholarly as well, modifying the circumstances according to which religious literacy is constructed and assessed.

Malaysia

Malaysia is seen as an opposite scenario of digital Quranic mediation with greater institutional control and state intervention. In Malaysia, the concept of religious authority is strongly related to the official Islamic bodies that have control over religious teaching, including digital ones. This system of institutions applies to online Quranic systems, state-approved applications, and official, approved tafsir projects, all of which are meant to create a doctrinal homogeneity and to avert non-official interpretations (Munira et al., 2017). The institutional tafsir sites in Malaysia are concerned with the rigor of the approach, the accuracy of the language, and adherence to the mainstream Islamic schools of thought. Religiously speaking, such a strategy favours the sound textual and interpretive interaction with the Quran in that users are likely to be exposed to interpretations based on the well-established exegetical customs as opposed to individualized as well as sensational readings. Consequently, the effect of digital Quranic use in Malaysia is to create increased institutional power as opposed to disintegrating it.

Nevertheless, control and plurality tension is also created through this regulatory environment. The institutional oversight will minimize the misinformation, but can also curtail the interpretive diversity and any critical involvement. Researchers believe that these spaces generate some kind of regulated religious dialogue, in which online action is promoted but enclosed by regulatory systems. This also bears some consequences on religious literacy because users can build a high level of textual competence without necessarily having to be exposed to the plurality of interpretation or critical argument. Nevertheless, Malaysian Muslims desire to be engaged by global content platforms to access transnational Quranism despite the state regulation. This establishes a point of contact between the legally authorized interpretations and the religious stories that flow all over the world. Users are thus required to plough through various sources of authority, and in most cases, they are not clearly told how to weigh conflicting claims. In this regard, authority literacy can be seen as an important aspect of religious literacy because it would allow individuals to differentiate institutional validity and platform-based popularity.

Comparative Analysis

Comparative analysis of Indonesia and Malaysia points towards two dissimilar and at the same time linked models of digital mediation of the Quran in Southeast Asia. The digital landscape of Indonesia has been characterized by decentralization, shared power, and participatory rates. This model pays further attention to accessibility and innovation, yet there is even a greater risk of interpretative fragmentation. Religious literacy construction in Indonesia is therefore guided by the encounter of a variety of interpretations with no evaluative guidelines used consistently, hence more responsibility on the individual users to determine credibility (Rhafik et al., 2026). Malaysia, in its turn, is an example of institutionalization, with online Quranic material being integrated into the existing frameworks of religious management. This model increases interpretive reliability and coherence of the doctrine at the expense of interpretive plurality. In Malaysia, religious literacy has been more inclined towards being concerned with righteousness and adherence, at the expense of plurality and critical thinking. In both settings, there is a major conflict between the depth and accessibility of literacy. In the context of online services, the barriers to interaction with the Quran are less in the way, and translations, recitations, and meanings are readily accessible to the user. Nevertheless, researchers note that the availability of anything does not necessarily mean improved comprehension. Immediacy and episodic formats, as well as algorithmic curation and non-exegetical formats, tend to put the immediacy in the way of long-term exegetical performance (Zhang & Qian, 2024). These processes are also mediated by language and local culture. This is because the general accessibility of the Quranic translations in both Bahasa Indonesia and Bahasa Malaysia improves understanding and also forms interpretive horizons. The interpretation and use of the meanings of the Quran are affected by translations, cultural idioms, and educational traditions. Due to this fact, digital Quranic media are not neutral systems but a system that is culturally coded and has problems with the local norms, institutional, and linguistic practices. Comprehensively, the comparative analysis has shown that not all digital Quranic media have the same effect on religious literacy in Southeast Asia. Instead, the platform relations, the institutional power, language, and cultural exchange transform the nature of literacy. The discovery of these variables will be instrumental in the development of subtle models capable of intricate Quranic interaction in the age of digital revolution.

Positive Transformations

Another considerable product of the digitally mediated Quranic interaction is the increased openness of the Quranic knowledge. The digital platforms have greatly reduced the structural barriers that involve geography, price, and institutional membership. Using the mobile Qur'an apps, online tafsir lectures, and the spread of information using social media, one can now interact with the Quran and do it on an ongoing basis. Media and religion scholars stress that this sort of accessibility redefines the process of religious learning, decentralizing the process of knowledge transmission and providing people with individualized ways of engagement (Tayob, 2025). This growth in Southeast Asia has had an especially imperative impact on those groups of people who were once excluded from official Islamic learning, such as women, communities residing in rural areas, as well as working adults. The digital Quranic media have also helped in engaging the youth by relating the religious information to platforms that are already integrated into the lives of the youth. Being more digitally fluent, younger generations follow Qur'anic material in the form of audio-visual, where the primary consideration is the focus on storytelling and emotional appeal, and images. According to the studies of the religiosity of the youth, it is believed that digital familiarity increases the strength of affective attachment to religious texts, irrespective of whether the interaction is informal or episodic (Uecker & Bowman, 2023). In this respect, the digital Quranic media can be viewed as a point of entry that helps maintain religious interest and identity for the youth who might otherwise feel out of touch with the traditional religious institutions. The other significant change is that informal and lifelong religious learning is becoming normalized. Digital environments allow continuous communication with the Quran in the course of their lives past the formal education levels; users are able to read the text again, to find thematic readings, and follow online groups of study throughout a long span. According to religious education scholars, this type of informal learning space complements institutional education in that it facilitates self-directed inquiry and reflective practice (Chakim, 2022). Informal learning is not properly evaluated, but it is an important element of maintaining religious literacy over a long-term period, especially in the face of fast-changing social situations.

Emerging Challenges

Although these are good changes, there are serious challenges posed by digital mediation that make it difficult to formulate religious literacy. The surface reading of Quranic material is one of them, which is provoked by the platform structures that favor conciseness, repetition, and emotional immediacy.

Algorithms, short-form video, and attention-based metrics all promote discontinuous interaction with individual lines or themes of the Bible instead of the exegetical study. According to media scholars, these consumption trends are threatening to turn the Quran into inspirational soundbites that are not connected to interpretive traditions and moral standards (Jahan et al., 2026). The second difficulty is related to the dilution of the traditions of learning via sanad. Classical Islamic pedagogy is a direct teacher-student teaching that is strict in teaching, responsible, and virtuous. The digitally mediated learning tends to ignore these relational spaces, enabling the users to engage in the consumption of the interpretations without the guidance of a scholar. The anthropological research on the Islamic knowledge transmission implies that the decline of the importance of the Sanad-based learning negatively affects the interpretive discipline and confuses the differences between authoritative learning and individual opinion (Hidayatulloh, 2025). Even as digital platforms nullify these conditions of access to the extent of democratizing them, they also unsettle once-longstanding epistemic hierarchies that once ensured interpretive integrity. The digital Quranic media also lead to ideological polarization and misinformation. The algorithmic curation typically supports the content, which is likely to increase the content that aligns with the existing preferences of the users, developing ideological echo chambers. This may escalate sectarianism, politicized interpretations, and exclusionary stories in the religious contexts. Religion and media scholars observe that it is not the content of religion per se but platform logics that incentivize controversy and participation over subtlety that lead to this kind of polarization (Sustein, 2018). In the case of religious literacy, such an environment makes it difficult to judge competing interpretations and constructively work with differences.

Discussion

Through a critical analytical approach, this paper has discussed how the Quran is being mediated digitally and how this affects religious literacy within the modern world in Southeast Asia. Theories of religious literacy, digital religion, and the Islamic epistemology have been brought together, and this discussion now re-examines how religious literacy needs to be conceptualized within digitally mediated spaces, the pedagogical implications of religious literacy within Islamic education in Southeast Asia, and how these implications are framed within the broader arguments of authority and authenticity in Islam.

Religious Literacy

The results of the current investigation suggest that established conceptions of the role of religious literacy in the context of the digital mediation-driven environment are inadequate in the context of digitally mediated situations. Digital Quranic spaces do not simply relay the content, but they also have a profound effect on interpretive practices, the power formations, and ethical orientations. Religious literacy should therefore be redefined as a multidimensional skill to be able to combine the accuracy of the text, its depth in interpretation, its ethical insightfulness, and its awareness of authority. The religious literacy mediated by digital means is defined by the lack of linearity of interaction as the users experience the verses of the Quran, its interpretations, and moral teachings in disrupted and algorithmically filtered versions. This contradicts theories that religious literacy is formed as a result of lifelong and progressive learning. Rather, literacy formation is carried out more and more in episodic exposure and affective resonance. On the one hand, this form of interaction increases accessibility; on the other hand, this type of interaction requires critical skills of a higher order to place content in context, evaluate credibility, and identify limitations of interpretation. Besides, the digital environment also prefigures the mediation process itself as the determinant of literacy outcomes. The three factors are platform logic, visual aesthetics, and popularity measures, and they decide what interpretations are visible and what is considered legitimate. As such, religious literacy needs to incorporate the sense of how digital infrastructures are creating the meaning of religion. This observation leads to further theoretical discussion of religious literacy, which shows that literacy is not a question of knowledge acquisition but also media consciousness in interpreting religions.

Islamic Pedagogy

The digitalization of Quranic practice has important consequences for the Islamic pedagogy in Southeast Asia, where linguistic diversity, pluralism of interpreting the Quran, and the extent to which the state interferes in teaching about the religion are prevailing trends. The conventional pedagogical frameworks with their focus on face-to-face learning, memorization, and a hierarchical structure of authority cross into less formal digital platforms of learning that do not fall under the supervision of an institution ever again. Instead of giving digital media as a threat to the Islamic pedagogy, this research postulates that there should be a pedagogical integration. Digital literacy elements should be included in the curriculum of Qur'anic studies at the Islamic educational institutions, such as pesantren, madrasah, and universities. This kind of incorporation must be geared towards educating the students to know how to appraise online Quranic

material critically, how to distinguish between academic perception and preaching with personal views, and how to be aware of the ethical implications of digital distribution. Moreover, teachers should understand that digital media may not be substitutes for conventional learning, but may be used as extensions. Hybrid models (classical instructional methods with guided digital interaction) provide the chance to reassert the learning based on sanad and adjust to the modern ways of knowledge consumption. Such a hybrid pedagogy may be used in Southeast Asia, where the religious authority tends to work both through the institute and charismatic levels to retain the interpretive rigor and social relevance. The results also demonstrate the need to train religious educators who are not only theologically based but also digitally competent. By being responsible in negotiating in the digital arena, the scholars can be better placed to guide the learners, break down fake facts, and offer them ethical models. This is especially relevant in Southeast Asia, where religious teachers assume central mediating positions between the global discourses of Islam and the local cultures.

Authority

The Quran digital mediation exacerbates old arguments within the Islamic philosophy on authority and authenticity. In the past, religious power was based on scholarly degrees, knowledge of classical sciences, and established chains of tradition. Digital media interferes with them, as now anyone, in spite of their low level of formal education, can communicate to large masses of people and influence religious perceptions. The paper shows that digital space generates hybrid relations of authority, where scholarly authority and media charisma, linguistic accessibility, and platform presence coexist. This hybridity in Southeast Asia appears in figures through a synthesis of religious education in a traditional manner with the use of the influencer style of communication. Though these figures may increase the interest of people in the Quran, they also create the fuses between scholarship and performance.

In this sense, authenticity is a disputable concept. To other users, authenticity implies emotional immediacy and personal relevance as opposed to methodological rigor. This turns out to be a challenge to classical Islamic epistemology, where disciplined interpretation and moral restraint are given the principal consideration. Nevertheless, the research also reveals that authenticity does not have to be discarded, but instead it has to be redefined in order to consider the digital realities. In the digital age, genuine Quranic engagement is required where transparency is involved in regards to the breadth of interpretation, respect towards the variety of scholarship, and observations of ethical communication. On a larger scale, the case of Southeast Asia can be added to the many discussions in the world on the topic of Islam and modernity because it shows that digital mediation is not simply the secularization or homogenization of religious practice. Rather, it creates regionalized negotiations amid tradition and innovation, power and availability. These discussions highlight the flexibility of Islamic interpretive traditions and, at the same time, unveil new weaknesses that need to be addressed by scholars.

Synthesis

Overall, the discussion highlights that the concept of digital mediation completely changes the nature of religious literacy, pedagogy, and authority without making the classical Islamic frameworks obsolete. The difficulty is to develop modes of Qur'anic religious literacy that are informed critically, ethically, and responsive to conditions of the digital world. In the case of Southeast Asia, it means the adoption of pedagogical hybridity, reinforcement of digital ethics, and renewal of interpretive responsibility in a more mediated religious environment.

Implications

The above changes have serious implications in terms of Islamic education and ethical governance. The incorporation of digital Quranic literacy into Islamic curricula is one of them. The digital encounter is increasingly being viewed as a central and even problematic issue that educators are being requested to prepare learners with tools of analysis to navigate the internet version of the Quran. According to educational theorists, source evaluation, contextual interpretation, and platform influence awareness should be viewed as the competencies that should be included in the educational process in the digital age (Almajdoub et al., 2026). Incorporating these skills in curricula would allow the students to think digitally and practice methodological rigor.

One of the associated implications is that there should be training of digitally competent religious scholars. Old-time learning experiences cannot be halted, yet they have to be supplemented with media literacy and internet communication skills. Anyone capable of adapting the classical exegetical knowledge to the

convenience of the digital world is better poised to disprove misinformation and offer an example of a responsible interpretation. Research about modern religious authority indicates that researchers who can operate online without violating methodological criteria are able to fortify trust and legitimacy on the online platforms. (Abdul-jabbar, 2026) Lastly, the increase in digital Quranic media shows the significance of ethical principles in the digital distribution. The ethical dilemmas to be addressed include the correctness of translation, contextual incorporation, courteous presentation of dissent, and absence of sensationalism. The scholars of Islamic ethics underline that responsibility in the sense of knowledge transmission (*amanah al-ilm*) is also applicable to the digital sphere, where information spreads quickly and far and wide (Rabiu et al., 2025). It is thus important that ethical principles of the digital spread of the Quran be developed to ensure that religious literacy can be not only informed but also morally sound.

Research Contributions

The current literature has two main contributions made in this paper. The former is a conceptual input by coming up with a digital Quranic religious literacy model. The conceptualization of religious literacy as a multidimensional construct, including textual, interpretive, ethical, and authority-related competencies, carries the study of religious literacy beyond theory to work in explicitly Islamic and specifically digital settings. This scheme gives researchers a touchstone to evaluate Quranic activity at the level of more than mere access or utilization. The second input is local and contextual. The study fills a gap in the literature by emphasizing Southeast Asia as an area in which digital religion has been discussed extensively, primarily highlighting the Middle Eastern or Western context of Muslims. The variety of linguistic, cultural, and institutional spaces of Southeast Asia demonstrates the interplay of the global digital technologies and localized Islamic traditions. Thus, this paper will show that digital mediation does not result in either homogenous secularization or blind revivalism but produces contextualized changes based on local pedagogies, power, or cultural norms.

Limitations

Irrespective of these contributions, the study has a number of limitations. Most importantly, it is entirely based on secondary literature. Although such a method allows the general synthesis of theoretical matters and comparatively analyzes them, the opportunity to evaluate the manifestations of digital literacy with the Quran and its perception as a user phenomenon is restricted. The lack of empirical validation implies that the given proposal of an analytical framework is rather conceptual and needs to be tested in various demographic and institutional environments. Also, the fast-changing nature of digital platforms implies that certain types of engagement that will be discussed in this paper are subject to modifications as time progresses. The practices, policies of platforms, and user behaviors are complex and dynamic, and this requires continuous scholarly review.

Suggestions

The key element in future studies is to focus on the empirical studies that explore the digital Qur'anic literacy as a form of practice. Surveys, interviews, and online ethnography may be useful to understand how users perceive the content of the Quran, evaluate power, and bargain morality issues in the Internet space. These studies would enhance and improve the analytic framework presented here. The other potentially successful direction is AI-based support of the Quran, such as automatic translation, analysis of recitations, and interpretive support. Although the potential of these technologies is great in terms of education, they bring up serious ethical concerns such as accuracy, interpretive bias, and accountability. Further studies must be approached with criticality in terms of the way AI changes the interpretation of the Quran and what ethical principles need to be followed to regulate its usage. Lastly, the digital Quranic learning should focus more on the views of genders and youth. Females and youth are commonly some of the most prolific users of online religious platforms, but their experiences were underrepresented in the literature. The investigation of the digital mediation effect on their religious literacy can inform us more about inclusiveness, agency, and generational transformation of contemporary Islamic education.

D. Conclusion

This paper aimed at critically reviewing the process of digital mediation of the Quran, and what it means to religious literacy in Southeast Asia today. With the help of interdisciplinary scholarship on digital religion and Islamic studies and religious literacy theory, the paper has shown that digital spaces not only increase access to Quranic data but also proactively revise the manner in which religious knowledge is read, authorized, and internalized. The conclusion encapsulates the main results, summarizes the intellectual

work of the research study, highlights its weaknesses, and suggests future research directions. The key conclusion of the present research is that digital mediation changes the way people interact with the Quran and its appropriateness and literacy considerably. Online education programs, mobile Quran apps, and social media have helped to change the modalities by which Muslims access the Quran to incorporate accessibility, visual and auditory experiences, and patterns of consumption. These trends enhance the scope of those who are engaged in the study of the Quran even as they undermine the conventional pedagogical frameworks based on lifelong learning and tradition-directed learning. The second important conclusion is that the remodeling of religious literacy is not homogeneous but conditional. Digital mediation does not necessarily have a deep or shallow outcome, but rather, those are determined by platform logic, algorithmic visibility, and the interpretive competencies of the user. Online communication in combination with contextualized knowledge, awareness of ethics, as well as recognition of academic authority has the potential to foster meaningful religious literacy. On the other hand, when the incentives making engagement are popularity measures and partial exposure, it is likely to contribute to superficial knowledge and interpretative reductionism. Lastly, the paper points out that online Quranic platforms heighten power and authenticity discussions. The rise of hybrid religious figures, the integration of scholarly education with digital power, is a manifestation of more significant changes in the ways of constructing and experiencing the concept of religious legitimacy. These dynamics provide the grounds for the necessity of a new approach to interpretive responsibility in digitally mediated Islamic discourse.

E. Acknowledgment

We would like to sincerely thank all of the people who helped us finish this study. We would especially want to thank our colleagues for their encouragement and insightful criticism. We also value the support our friends and family have given us during this process. Their patience and support were crucial to this research's effective conclusion.

F. Author Contribution Statement

SB managed the research process, came up with the idea and plan for this study, and contributed to the manuscript's drafting. WA carried out the experiments, gathered data, and helped with data analysis. SB and WA contributed to the interpretation of the findings, offered insightful criticism, and improved the text before submission. The manuscript was written with input from each author.

References

- Abdul-jabbar, W. K. (2026). The ethics of Disagreement (Adab Al-Ikhtilaf): Religious Education for Intercultural Competence in Arabo-Islamic Pedagogy. *British Journal of Religious Education*, 48(3), 344–359. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01416200.2026.2619036>
- Adiyono, Ni'am, S., & Akhyak. (2024). Methodology of Islamic Studies : Islam as Religion (A Perspective Epistemology, Paradigm, and Methodology). *Analisis : Jurnal Studi Keislaman*, 24(1), 169–200. <https://doi.org/10.24042/ajsk.v24i1.22636>
- Ale-Ebrahim, B. (2019). Hashtag Islam: How Cyber-Islamic Environments are Transforming Religious Authority. *MEDIAD Journal of Media and Religion Studies*, 2(2), 333–335. <https://doi.org/https://izlik.org/JA49GC56KK>
- Almajdoub, Z., Fidalgo, P., Alramamneh, Y., AlHakmani, R., & Kasasbeh, N. (2026). Artificial Intelligence in Qur'anic Education: Pedagogical Promise, Practical Challenges, and Ethical Concerns. *Frontiers in Education*, 11(June). <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2026.1876380>
- AydIn, S. (2024). قدحولا قيعوضولما في نأرقلا يمر كلا. Thematic Unity in the Holy Quran. *Universal Journal of Thology*, 9(1), 1–39. <https://doi.org/10.56108/ujte.1475544>
- Campbell, H. A. (2017). Surveying Theoretical Approaches Within Digital Religion Studies. *New Media & Society*, 19(1), 15–24. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444816649912>
- Campbell, H. A. (2021). *Digital Religion Understanding Religious Practice in Nw Media Worlds*. Routledge. <https://share.google/mdGhgybmNZlnrj04k>
- Chakim, S. (2022). The Youth and the Internet: The Construction of Doctrine, Islam in Practice, and Political Identity in Indonesia. *Journal of Social Studies Education Research*, 13(1), 217–236. <https://jsser.org/index.php/jsser/article/view/3727>
- Dinham, A. (2017). *Religious literacy in Public and Professional Settings* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781315679853-34/religious-literacy-public->

- professional-settings-adam-dinham
- Gillespie, T. (2018). *Custodians of the Internet: Platforms, Content Moderation, and the Hidden Decisions That Shape Social Media*. Yale University Press. [Google Books](#)
- Hashmi, J. T. (2021). Overcoming Religious Illiteracy : Towards a More Inclusive Approach to Islamic Bioethics. *Journal of Islamic Ethics*, 34(2), 278–329. <https://doi.org/10.1163/24685542-12340063>
- Hefner, R. W. (2019). Whatever Happened to Civil Islam? Islam and Democratisation in Indonesia, 20 Years On. *Taylor & Francis*, 43(3). <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357823.2019.1625865>
- Hidayatulloh, T. (2025). From Sanad to Algorithm : Authority, Rationality, and Participatory Interpretation of Uşul Al-Dīn in Cyberspace. *Ilmu Ushuluddin*, 12(2), 183–205. <https://doi.org/10.15408/iu.vi.50233>
- Hoover, S. M. (2016). *The Media and Religious Authority*. Penn State University Press. <https://doi.org/10.5325/j.ctv14gp1zt>
- Jahan, I., Noor, J., Nurain, N., & Islam, A. B. M. A. Al. (2026). “It should help me progress and strengthen my Imaan”: Understanding Algorithmic Experiences of Islamic Content on Social Media Recommendation Systems. In *Proceedings of the 2026 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems (CHI '26), April 13â•fi17, 2026, Barcelona, Spain* (Vol. 1, Issue 1). Association for Computing Machinery. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3772318.3791858>
- Literacy, L. A. A. N. (2024). Transformasi Digital: Pemanfaatan Learning Management System (LMS) dalam Pembelajaran Literasi Al- Qur ’An Digital Transformation : Use Of Learning Management System (LMS) In. *Anterior Jurnal*, 23(3), 83–91. <https://doi.org/10.33084/anterior.v23i3.7324>
- Lövheim, M., & Hjarvard, S. (2019). The Mediatized Conditions of Contemporary Religion: Critical Status and Future Directions. *Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture*, 8, 206–225. <https://doi.org/10.1163/21659214-00802002>
- Mahfudz, A., & Munib, A. (2026). The Evolution of Qur’anic Knowledge Authority from Traditional Transmission to Algorithmic Digital Platforms. *QiST: Journal of Quran and Tafseer Studies*, 5(1), 141–160. <https://doi.org/10.23917/qist.v5i1.16180>
- Malkan, S. N. A., & Mahmud, M. (2025). Digital Da’wah and its Social Impact : A Qualitative Study of Muslim Content Creators. *International Journal of Islamic Theology and Civilisation*, 3(4), 106–124. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17309587>
- Munira, M., Mutalib, A., & Sulaiman, M. (2017). Understanding Religious Pluralism in Malaysia : A Christian and Muslim Debate. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 7(Special), 175–188. <https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v7-i13/3139>
- Nugraha, E., Hasan, H., & Setiadi, Y. (2021). Literature Qur ’ an in Indonesia : Tafsir Al-Qur ’ an H . Zainuddin Hamidy And Fachruddin HS (Has Analysis Of The Philological Approach). *ICIIS 2020: Proceedings of the 3rd International Colloquium on Interdisciplinary Islamic Studies*. <https://doi.org/10.4108/eai.20-10-2020.2305183>
- Padriyanti, Ali, Z. M., Hilmi, M. Y., Lalu Nurul, S., & Akbar. (2024). Learning Qira’ah Al-Qur’an Using the Tilawati Mobile Application tn the Digital Era. *Intiha: Islamic Education Journal*, Vol. 2 No. 1 (2024): *Islamic Education*, 202–209. <https://jurnal.staidaf.ac.id/intiha/article/view/324/185>
- Rabiu, A. A., Merican, A. M. B. M. N., & Murshidi, G. Al. (2025). Ethics in the Digital Age: Exploring The Ethical Challenges Of Technology. *Journal of Information Systems and Digital Technologies*, 7(1), 29–50. <https://doi.org/10.31436/jisdt.v7i1.555>
- Rhafik, M. N., Yardho, M., Qohi, A., Mahmud, S. S., & Mahbub, M. I. (2026). Qur’anic Exegesis in the Digital Sphere : The Dynamics of Authority , Audience , and Algorithms on Individual and Collective Platforms. *QiST: Journal of Quran and Tafseer Studies*, 5(2), 597–626. <https://doi.org/10.23917/qist.v5i2.17742>
- Ridho, H., Sabil, A., Firmansyah, M., Mukhlis, F. H., & Khairi, A. (2025). Interpretation of the Qur ’ an from Classical-Textual to Contemporary-Contextual ; An Approach Proposed by Muslim Scholars. *QiST: Journal of Quran and Tafseer Studies*, 4(2), 645–674. <https://doi.org/10.23917/qist.v4i2.12593>
- Sari, N. K., & Fasya, Z. (2026). The Phenomenon of Religious Misinformation and the Challenges of Authority in the Artificial Intelligence Ecosystem. *Journal of Development Reesearch*, 10(May), 144–153. <https://doi.org/10.28926/jdr.v10i1.527>
- Sihabussalam, Lailah, S., & Wijaya, R. (2024). Digital Era Qur’anic Interpretation In Indonesia : Influence and Development on Contemporary Tafsir. *Shuhuf*, 17(1). <https://doi.org/10.22548/shf.v17i1.998>
- Sustein, C. R. (2018). *Republic : Divided Democracy in the Age of Social Media*. Princeton University Press. <https://www.torrossa.com/en/resources/an/5559626>
- Syukron, A., Alamsyah, R. P., Widayati, R., Masri, D., & Alwi, M. (2026). Digitalizing the Living Qur’an: Religious Authority and the Transformation of Qur’anic Knowledge in Indonesia. *Jurnal Indo-*

-
- Islamika*, 16(1), 191–207. <https://doi.org/10.15408/jii.v16i1.51744>
- Tayob, A. (2025). Muslim Publics between Discourses of Religion and Islam. In *Conceptualizing Islam* (1st ed., p. 13). Routledge. <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781003259350-9/muslim-publics-discourses-religion-islam-abdulkader-tayob>
- Uecker, J. E., & Bowman, C. D. (2023). Still Soul Searching? Remapping Adolescent Religious Commitment. *Sociology of Religion*, 85(2), 197–218. <https://doi.org/10.1093/socrel/srad025>
- Zaid, B., Fedtke, J., Shin, D. D., Kadoussi, A. El, & Ibahrine, M. (2022). Digital Islam and Muslim Millennials : How Social Media Influencers Reimagine Religious Authority and Islamic Practices. *Religions*, 13(4). <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13040335>
- Zhang, H., & Qian, C. Z. (2024). The Interplay of Religion and the Visual Arts : A Bibliometric Network Analysis (1991-2023). *Religions*, 15(4). <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15040481>
-

Copyright Holder

© Bano, S., & Akram, W.

First publication right:

Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies

This article is licensed under:

