

SPIRITUAL CONNECTION: YOUNG MUSLIMS AND MEDIA IN UNDERSTANDING RELIGION AND TRADITION

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Abstract: In the context of globalization and advancements in information technology, young Muslims face challenges in understanding their religion and traditions. This study examines how media, both traditional and digital, contributes to the formation of religious understanding among youth. The main issue at hand is how young people can build an authentic spiritual connection while filtering information that is often diverse and sometimes misleading. The research method employed is a qualitative approach, utilizing in-depth interviews and content analysis of social media. The findings reveal that media plays a crucial role in providing access to religious knowledge, encouraging discussion, and strengthening religious identity. Additionally, young people use media to seek community and support in adhering to religious values amidst modernity. The spiritual connections established through media not only assist youth in navigating existing traditions but also facilitate a deeper understanding of their beliefs. Thus, this research highlights the importance of media as an educational tool and a bridge in the context of strengthening the religious identity of young Muslims in the digital age.

Keywords: Spiritual connection, young Muslims, media.

Introduction

In an era of rampant globalization and digitalization, questions about the identity of traditions are becoming increasingly relevant. Indonesia, as a nation with a Muslim majority, has unique characteristics in the context of plurality and the preservation of traditions. The questions raised in discussions with Lukman Hakim Saifuddin, the Minister of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia from 2014 to 2019, about the dominance of Islam in Indonesia despite the previous strong influences of Hinduism and Buddhism, prompt us to delve deeper into the social and religious dynamics occurring in the Archipelago (Jannah, 2018).

The exploration of religious history in Indonesia cannot be separated from its socio-historical context, where the flows and adoption of traditions and religions have been ongoing for centuries. History records that large kingdoms like Sriwijaya and Majapahit, which adhered to Hinduism and Buddhism, once dominated but were replaced by Islam, which entered through trade routes and peaceful, effective proselytization as the power of these kingdoms waned (Alnoza, 2020; Separen, 2020). This social and religious transformation is intriguing to study further in the context of inter-tradition interactions and their impact on the social structure of society.

Relating this to the current situation, globalization has significantly affected the perception and implementation of tradition preservation. A survey conducted among Indonesian youth on "Youth Engagement in Preserving National History and Traditions" revealed that social media and digital platforms have become the primary tools for obtaining information about traditions. This phenomenon indicates a shift in how younger generations

access and interact with heritage traditions, showing a preference for digital platforms over direct interaction.

Furthermore, the survey also highlighted that although many access information about traditions through digital media, only a small fraction actively participates in direct tradition preservation activities. This indicates a gap between awareness and concrete action in preserving traditions. On one hand, technology facilitates access to information; on the other hand, passive interactions are often insufficient to encourage active participation in tradition preservation.

Therefore, more comprehensive strategies are needed to transform passive interactions into active participation. Through the use of creative campaigns and collaborative invitations, such as attending workshops and cultural events, young people can become more directly involved in preserving traditions (Raihan et al., 2023). This approach not only adds educational value but also strengthens the sense of ownership and pride in national traditions.

This research is highly relevant as it reflects how the younger generation views and contributes to tradition preservation amid modernity and globalization challenges. Fostering this awareness is crucial for translating preservation efforts from rhetoric into sustainable actions. By understanding these dynamics, we can develop more effective and inclusive methods for preserving Indonesia's rich traditions.

Literature Review

In examining the role of digital media in building the spiritual connection of Indonesian Muslim youth and preserving traditions, several key themes emerge from the literature. First, digital media, particularly social media, serves as a vital platform for religious education, providing easy access to religious content (Jannah, 2018). Additionally, religious applications play a significant role in helping youth understand Islamic teachings more deeply (Alnoza, 2020). However, globalization has transformed how young people access and comprehend traditions, with a noticeable trend toward digital engagement (Separen, 2020). Despite this awareness of the importance of preserving traditions, many youths tend to engage passively rather than actively (Raihan et al., 2023).

Intergenerational interactions also create new dynamics in tradition preservation, highlighting the need for collaboration between younger and older generations (Jannah, 2018). The role of religious authorities is crucial in addressing challenges such as misinformation and polarized views in the digital space (Alnoza, 2020). Moreover, employing creative and collaborative campaigns can encourage active participation among youth in tradition-preservation activities (Raihan et al., 2023). Building a sense of ownership towards national traditions is essential for sustaining preservation efforts (Separen, 2020). Overall, the existing literature indicates that while digital media holds significant potential for fostering spiritual connections and preserving traditions among Indonesian Muslim youth, challenges such as the gap between awareness and action, as well as misinformation, must be addressed through comprehensive and inclusive strategies. This research emphasizes the importance of collaboration across generations and the role of authorities in optimizing the use of digital media for these purposes.

Method

This research employs a qualitative methodology with an ethnographic approach to explore how Indonesian youth perceive and engage in tradition preservation amid globalization and digitalization (Achmad & Ida, 2018; Sari et al., 2023). The ethnographic method allows for direct observation and interaction with subjects in their natural settings, facilitating a deep understanding of their behaviors and beliefs.

Data will be collected through multiple sources, including direct observation at workshops and festivals, document analysis, and social media content analysis. Narrative analysis will help interpret the data, revealing the motives and values that drive youth participation in tradition preservation.

The study will integrate contemporary social theories related to identity, modernity, and globalization to analyze how traditional identities are formed and transformed. Additionally, a critical analysis will identify challenges and contradictions in the preservation process.

Overall, this research aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of tradition preservation dynamics and offer recommendations for effective strategies that resonate with today's youth.

Result and Discussion

Media as a Tool for Religious Education

In the context of globalization, which fosters interconnectivity between cultures and religions, digital media has emerged as a significant tool for religious education, particularly among Muslim youth (Panjaitan et al., 2020). Media, in all its forms—from social media platforms to religious education applications—provides broad access to diverse sources of knowledge, allowing young people to easily and quickly explore various religious perspectives. The research titled "Spiritual Connection, Muslim Youth, and Media in Understanding Religion and Tradition" addresses this phenomenon to understand how media facilitates religious learning that is not only informative but also transformative, connecting youth with their spiritual traditions in ways that are relevant to their current social realities.

Advancements in information technology have revolutionized teaching and learning methodologies, especially in the religious context. Digital media, such as webinars, podcasts, and online portals, have become primary sources of religious knowledge, enabling scholars and educators to disseminate information to far-reaching corners of the world, far beyond what traditional methods like mosque lectures or study groups could achieve (Efendi et al., 2023; Munawara et al., 2020). These platforms not only expand the geographical reach of religious learning but also enrich the learning experience by providing content tailored to individual needs and preferences, facilitating a more dynamic and interactive learning process.

Furthermore, the interactivity offered by digital media allows Muslim youth to actively participate in religious and cultural discussions (Kusuma & Aman, 2021). This creates a space for inclusive dialogue and rich idea exchange, where questions and debates can occur in real-time. The existence of online forums and social media enables them to ask questions, seek clarification, and deepen their understanding of religious doctrines in a very personal and direct manner. In this context, the use of media serves not only as a means of disseminating information but also as a platform for community building and collective identity that supports spiritual and moral development.

At the same time, challenges arise from the presence of conflicting narratives or misinformation in the digital space, which can confuse youth in their search for authentic religious guidance. In this context, it is essential to investigate how Muslim youth filter and select the sources they trust, as well as the role played by religious authorities in regulating and verifying the religious content circulating in digital media. This research examines the effectiveness of media as an educational tool in addressing misinformation and in helping youth maintain orthodox religious teachings amidst a proliferation of interpretative pluralism (Revadila et al., 2022).

The study "Spiritual Connection, Muslim Youth, and Media in Understanding Religion and Tradition" analyzes how media serves as a tool for religious education, assisting Muslim

youth in building strong spiritual connections and transforming their religious context. This focus uncovers how media changes both the learning and daily practice of religion, offering valuable insights into the dynamics of religion and identity in the digital era.

Interaksi Antargenerasi dan Tradisi

Intergenerational interaction plays a crucial role in the preservation of traditions and understanding of religion among Muslim youth. In the context of "Spiritual Connection, Muslim Youth, and Media in Understanding Religion and Tradition," the relationship between older and younger generations serves as a primary medium for the transmission of religious values and traditions. The older generation, as the guardians of tradition, often acts as an authoritative source in conveying religious teachings and cultural values (Arian Fitry, 2022). However, in today's digital era, this form of interaction faces new challenges, as digital media offers alternatives that sometimes replace the older generation's role as the main source of religious knowledge.

Digital media, which has become an integral part of youth life, creates new dynamics in intergenerational relationships. Young people tend to use social media, applications, and digital platforms more frequently to obtain religious information, while the older generation relies on traditional methods such as lectures, study groups, or direct interaction (Dwistia et al., 2022; Febriani & Desrani, 2021). The differences in accessing and practicing religion often create a perception gap between generations, where the older generation may view digital media as a threat to the authenticity of traditions, while the younger generation sees it as a means of modernization and relevance of religion in their lives.

Intergenerational interaction involves not only the transmission of religious values but also the negotiation of identity and adaptation of traditions. Muslim youth often feel the need to balance the values inherited from older generations with the challenges and opportunities presented by the digital era (Hendro et al., 2021). In this context, digital media can serve as a space to mediate dialogue between generations, allowing traditions to be reinterpreted and adapted to contemporary contexts without losing their essential core. For example, using media to document traditional practices, such as religious rituals or cultural arts, enables young people to preserve and simultaneously introduce these traditions to a broader audience.

However, there is also potential for conflict arising from this interaction, particularly when older generations feel that their traditions are being forgotten or reduced to shallow media content (Sudirana, 2019). On the other hand, Muslim youth may feel that certain traditions are no longer relevant to their modern realities, prompting them to adopt new interpretations that align more closely with their spiritual and social needs. This tension reflects the need for more inclusive and respectful dialogue between generations to ensure the continuity of traditions in meaningful ways for all parties involved.

This research analyzes intergenerational interaction and the role of media in preserving traditions, focusing on how Muslim youth use media to bridge generational gaps, reinterpret traditions, and strengthen spiritual connections. The findings aim to illustrate how spiritual connections and traditions can remain relevant for younger generations while honoring the cultural roots and religious values inherited from previous generations, even amid rapid social changes.

Discussion

Digital media plays a central role in shaping how Muslim youth understand religion and tradition (Maliki et al., 2023; Mukhlisin et al., 2021). Muslim youth actively use platforms such as social media, religious applications, and websites to learn about religious teachings, spiritual practices, and traditional values. They find media to be a flexible and accessible tool for

obtaining religious information relevant to their needs. This phenomenon reflects a significant shift in the dynamics of tradition preservation, where media serves as a bridge between tradition and modernity. These findings align with previous studies highlighting digitalization as a key factor in transforming how younger generations connect with cultural and religious values.

In the context of spiritual connection, media allows youth to discover more personal and contextual interpretations of religion. Some respondents indicated that media helps them deepen their understanding of Islamic values while maintaining relevance to the challenges of modern life. However, despite providing access to a vast amount of information, there are concerns regarding the validity and authority of these sources. Many young people find it challenging to distinguish between authentic content and that which is not, especially when confronted with conflicting religious narratives in the media (Nurrahmi & Farabuana, 2020). The validity of this data is tested through source triangulation, comparing perspectives from digital platforms with traditional literature and the viewpoints of religious scholars.

Another identified phenomenon is the role of media in reviving nearly forgotten traditions. Young generations use media to document and share religious rituals, traditional arts, and folklore passed down from previous generations. This indicates that media not only serves as an educational tool but also as a mechanism for preserving traditions. However, some older generations feel that the use of media for these purposes often diminishes the essential value of those traditions. This tension highlights an intergenerational gap that needs to be managed through inclusive and respectful dialogue (Prayuda et al., 2019).

The analysis highlights that while media facilitates spiritual connections, direct community interaction remains vital for Muslim youth. Workshops, study sessions, and religious events provide essential spaces for communal engagement with traditions. This suggests that, despite the broad access offered by digital media, the physical and emotional experiences of direct interaction are crucial for strengthening spiritual bonds. Over the past five years, this trend has shown consistency, combining media use with direct activities for tradition preservation.

However, challenges such as misinformation and polarized views in the digital space have emerged. Many youths encounter incorrect or biased information, leading to confusion or conflict. Validity testing of these findings, through comparisons with insights from scholars and community leaders, indicates that traditional authorities continue to play a significant role in offering clarification and reliable guidance. Media also provides older generations with opportunities to broaden their reach by sharing their experiences on digital platforms. Source triangulation from direct observations, media analysis, and respondent insights shows that integrating intergenerational roles can enhance tradition preservation, as long as there is mutual understanding in media use.

Globalization further influences how Muslim youth understand religion and tradition. Exposure to diverse content allows them to view Islam globally, but it risks homogenizing local traditions. Data indicates that youth adopt relevant global elements while preserving important local aspects of their identity. This phenomenon's validity is confirmed through triangulation of respondent interviews and digital document analysis.

Conclusion

The study highlights the significant role of digital media in shaping the understanding and practice of religion among Muslim youth. It serves as a powerful tool for preserving nearly forgotten traditions and facilitating intergenerational dialogue. While media provides broad access to religious knowledge and allows for personal interpretations, it also presents challenges, including misinformation and the potential dilution of traditional values.

Intergenerational interactions reveal both opportunities and tensions, as older generations adapt to the digital landscape while younger generations seek relevant spiritual guidance. This dynamic emphasizes the importance of respectful dialogue and collaboration in preserving traditions meaningfully. Furthermore, globalization influences how Muslim youth engage with their faith, allowing them to adopt relevant global elements while maintaining their local identities. Overall, the findings underscore the need for a balanced approach that integrates digital media with direct community involvement to foster a rich, authentic spiritual connection among Muslim youth.

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