

Negotiating Religious Authority: Digital *Da'wah* and the Transformation of Islamic Law Interpretation Among Generation Z

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Abstract:

The purpose of this research is to understand the impact of digital *da'wah* on the understanding and acceptance of Islamic law among Generation Z. The background of this research is the major shift in how religion is conveyed through digital platforms, leading to a shift in authority to non-institutional figures such as social media influencers. In addition, the younger generation is more exposed to diverse views of Islamic law without a central authority. This study uses a qualitative, dual-case study design, collecting data through in-depth interviews and participatory observation of social media activities. The research findings show that platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram have become the primary channels for proselytizing among Generation Z, who prefer flexible, interactive, and accessible content. However, the diversity and conflict of views on Islamic law in the digital world create confusion about *halal* and *haram*. This research also highlights the need for standardization and supervision in digital *da'wah* to maintain the consistency of Islamic teachings. This research's contribution offers insights into the changing nature of religious authority in the digital age, as well as recommendations for religious institutions to use social media more effectively and provide authentic guidance.

Keywords: *Digital Da'wah, Islamic Law, Generation Z, Religious Authority, Social Media*

INTRODUCTION

This study is significant for society at large because digital preaching has transformed the dissemination and reception of religious information, thereby altering religious and social structures. In a society heavily influenced by technology, especially Generation Z, the internet and social media have become primary channels for accessing various types of information, including religious content (Dalaylı, 2023; Liu et al., 2025). This research aims to understand the impact of this transformation on the understanding and acceptance of Islamic law, with a focus on Generation Z, who are highly connected to the digital world. A deeper understanding of this phenomenon will provide policymakers, educators, and religious institutions with insights to adjust preaching strategies that remain relevant in an ever-changing era.

The phenomenon of digital preaching not only affects communication but also profoundly shapes authority structures within religion. Before the rise of digital preaching, religious authority in Islam was highly centralised around formally recognised scholars (Mohiuddin, 2023; Raya, 2025). However, with the growing popularity of digital platforms,

many non-institutional religious figures have emerged, influencing society's religious views, especially among youth. This shift introduces challenges to the legitimacy of sources and religious authority, which can affect how Generation Z understands Islamic law (Aprilianto et al., 2025; Faradhillah, 2024). Therefore, it is important to investigate how digital preaching affects the acceptance and interpretation of Islamic law in an increasingly pluralistic society.

This phenomenon has garnered increasing attention as Generation Z, who grew up in the digital ecosystem, is exposed to a wide variety of religious content. The information they receive does not come solely from formally recognised scholars or religious institutions, but also from non-institutional sources, such as Muslim influencers on social media and religious content on YouTube and TikTok (Santana & Kaamilah, 2025; Zaid et al., 2022). This creates a situation where Generation Z is freer to choose the information they consume, yet they also face the challenge of determining what is trustworthy. As a result, sharp differences in views can arise, even over fundamental issues in Islamic law, thereby influencing interpretations of *sharia* and the issuance of *fatwas*.

Several studies have discussed the phenomenon of digital preaching, particularly in relation to communication strategies and the transformation of the social-religious landscape. For example, (Sensing, 2023) discusses the use of persuasive rhetoric in online preaching, while (Balkaya-Ince et al., 2020) examines the role of social media in religious socialization. Additionally, Sona (2024) investigates the transformation of religious authority with the emergence of “cyber scholars” challenging traditional religious authorities. However, most of these studies have not specifically explored the impact of digital preaching on the understanding of Islamic law, particularly how Generation Z responds to differing religious views in the online world and navigates such information within the context of *sharia*.

Although much research has been conducted on digital preaching in general, the research gap that needs to be addressed is a thorough examination of how exposure to digital preaching influences the interpretation of Islamic law, particularly among Generation Z. Previous studies have predominantly focused on the sociological and communication aspects of preaching. Yet, they have not comprehensively explored how exposure to diverse religious information shapes their views on *fatwas* and the application of *sharia* in everyday life (Rusli et al., 2020; Rusli & Nurdin, 2022). This presents the primary relevance of this research, which aims to fill this gap and contribute more systematically to the understanding of Islamic law among digital generations.

This research introduces novelty by examining the impact of digital preaching on the understanding of Islamic law among Generation Z, who are the most exposed to digital content. The main focus of this study is to explore how Generation Z responds to various religious narratives encountered on digital platforms and how these responses affect their perception of Islam, particularly in the context of *sharia*. This study will also investigate how they navigate discrepancies between the religious views they encounter online and the teachings presented by traditional religious authorities (Campbell & Evolvi, 2020; Taufikin et al., 2025).

This study aims to uncover patterns of acceptance and adaptation of Islamic law among Generation Z in the digital age. This research will answer questions about how Generation Z forms its understanding of *fatwas* and religious texts, as well as the extent to which digital religious authority influences its decisions to accept or reject certain religious views.

As a preliminary argument, it can be stated that digital preaching will increase the flexibility of interpretation of Islamic law among Generation Z. They are more open to diverse viewpoints, even from figures without formal qualifications. This is influenced by the easy and broad access to diverse information, as well as the desire to find narratives that better align with their context and values. This shift leads to a more distributed model of religious authority, with greater influence stemming from popularity and the relevance of content rather than from formal scholarship or centralised religious institutions.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study will employ a qualitative approach with a multiple-case study design to gain a comprehensive understanding of the digital preaching phenomenon and its implications for the interpretation and acceptance of Islamic law among Generation Z (Hunziker & Blankenagel, 2024; Vohra, 2024). A qualitative approach was chosen due to its ability to explore the views, experiences, and perceptions of the research subjects in depth, which often cannot be captured quantitatively. A multiple-case study design enables comparisons across different groups or individuals within Generation Z, each having varied experiences with digital preaching. This allows the identification of common patterns and specific variations in the interpretation of Islamic law. The selected design is particularly suitable for understanding the complexities of interactions among technology, religious authority, and religious understanding in the digital age, ensuring that rich, contextual data can be collected on how Generation Z processes and responds to religious information presented through digital platforms.

The study will focus on virtual spaces where Generation Z engages with digital preaching content, particularly on social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok. Given the nature of the research, which examines online interactions and the consumption of digital content, the study is conducted virtually rather than bound by a physical space. Participants will be active users of these platforms, consuming a range of religious content, including contributions from both formal scholars and independent religious influencers. As such, the study will gather data from these virtual case studies, capturing a diverse range of perspectives on how digital preaching influences religious views and legal interpretations.

Data will be collected through a combination of in-depth interviews and participatory observation of the participants' social media activity (Almusaed et al., 2025; Khoa et al., 2023). In-depth interviews will focus on participants' experiences with consuming digital preaching content, the religious authorities they follow, their process of interpreting Islamic legal issues, and the factors that influence their acceptance or rejection of certain legal views. The interview guide will be semi-structured to allow for further exploration based on participants' responses. Additionally, participatory observation will involve monitoring participants' social media activities (with their consent) to examine the types of religious content they engage with, how they interact with it, and the religious discussions they participate in online. Secondary data will be drawn from the existing literature on digital preaching, the transformation of religious authority, and Islamic legal hermeneutics.

The collected data will be analyzed using thematic analysis. The analysis process will involve the following steps: (1) transcribing all interview recordings, (2) familiarizing with the data through repeated readings, (3) conducting initial coding to identify key

themes and concepts, (4) developing broader themes from the emerging codes, (5) reviewing and refining themes to ensure consistency and relevance with the research objectives, and (6) writing the findings, including direct quotations from participants to support interpretations. The analysis will be iterative, allowing continuous comparison of data with emerging themes and revisions as needed (Cernasev & Axon, 2023; Squires, 2023).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Social Media in Digital Preaching and Its Impact on Religious Authority

This finding focuses on how social media platforms, particularly Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, have emerged as dominant sources of religious knowledge for Generation Z, superseding traditional, face-to-face religious gatherings. The rapid adoption of these platforms has enabled digital influencers, rather than traditional religious scholars, to become the primary figures of religious authority among young people. These influencers are often perceived as more relatable, accessible, and able to deliver religious content in ways that align with digital natives' expectations for engagement, convenience, and multimedia experiences.

The following excerpt from an interview with a 22-year-old respondent, who actively follows multiple religious accounts on social media, reveals their preference for learning religious teachings online: "I find it easier to follow religious lessons on YouTube. It feels more like a conversation, and I can pause and revisit the content anytime. When I attend face-to-face sessions, the teachings often feel rigid and distant."

The participant's response indicates a preference for the flexibility and convenience that digital platforms provide. Social media enables on-demand access to religious content, unlike traditional methods, which are bound by location and time constraints.

Another participant, a 24-year-old male who follows religious influencers on TikTok, expressed his view as follows: "TikTok is where I find new perspectives on Islam. The way influencers break down complex topics in simple, everyday language makes it easier for me to relate. Traditional lectures feel too formal and disconnected."

This interview excerpt highlights how the informal, conversational style of digital preaching is more engaging for younger audiences compared to the formal tone of traditional religious lectures. The use of everyday language and visual content on platforms like TikTok has significantly altered how Generation Z perceives religious authority.

In observing the content of religious influencers on platforms like YouTube and TikTok, it is evident that they often use engaging, visually appealing formats that incorporate storytelling, humour, and relatable content. These platforms are increasingly popular because they not only offer religious messages but also align with the digital culture of Generation Z, which thrives on fast-paced, visually rich, and personalized content. During the observation of religious content on YouTube, many influencers used interactive features such as comment sections, live Q&A, and audience polls to engage viewers, creating a sense of community and immediacy that traditional preaching sessions often lack.

The data gathered shows that Generation Z actively prefers digital platforms for religious learning, citing the flexibility and accessibility of social media content. Respondents consistently preferred influencers who communicated in a relaxed, informal manner, in contrast to the formal, structured style of traditional religious scholars. This

highlights a clear shift in the locus of religious authority from formal religious institutions to more accessible, relatable figures on digital platforms.

The data indicates a clear pattern: Generation Z engages more actively with religious content delivered by digital influencers than with that from traditional religious authorities. This pattern suggests that Generation Z finds the accessibility, relatability, and multimedia nature of social media content more engaging than the more formal, in-person lectures offered by traditional scholars. The interaction between religious content and digital media (such as visual appeal and informal communication styles) has reshaped the understanding of religious authority, making it more decentralized and individualized. The patterns observed in the interviews and content analysis indicate a cultural shift in which religious authority is not determined by academic credentials or institutional endorsement, but by the ability of the content to connect with viewers personally and emotionally.

Table 1. Influence of Digital Preaching and Social Media on Generation Z's Religious Engagement

Informant Role	Interview Excerpt	Indicator
22-year-old Student	<i>"I find it easier to follow religious lessons on YouTube. It feels more like a conversation, and I can pause and revisit the content anytime."</i>	Preference for convenience, flexibility, and on-demand access to religious content.
24-year-old Male Follower	<i>"TikTok is where I find new perspectives on Islam. The way influencers break down complex topics in simple, everyday language makes it easier for me to relate."</i>	The influence of simplified, relatable content in breaking down complex religious topics.
Digital Influencer	<i>"I always try to make my content more interactive, with live Q&As and discussions in the comments to keep my followers engaged."</i>	Use of interactive and personalized engagement strategies to create emotional connections.

The table shows a trend in which both followers and influencers recognize the importance of accessibility and relatability in religious content. For example, the 22-year-old student highlights a preference for flexibility, indicating that Generation Z values the ability to revisit content on demand. The 24-year-old's preference for TikTok content underscores the importance of simplifying complex ideas for better relatability. The digital influencer's comment on engagement strategies emphasizes a shift towards more participatory, interactive forms of preaching, which differ significantly from the one-way, formal nature of traditional religious lectures. These findings indicate that Generation Z values content that is not only accessible but also personalized and engaging, delivered through platforms they already frequent. This reinforces the notion that religious authority has shifted away from traditional figures and is increasingly vested in influencers who can adapt to the digital environment.

From the interviews and observations, it is evident that Generation Z gravitates toward digital content that resonates with their preferences for convenience, accessibility, and interaction. The growing prominence of social media influencers as religious authorities marks a significant shift in how religious teachings are consumed. The preference for flexible, informal, and engaging content reflects a broader trend among Generation Z of seeking personalised experiences in their religious and social lives. This shift indicates that traditional forms of authority may need to adapt to new modes of digital engagement to remain relevant.

In conclusion, the data collectively suggest that social media platforms have

become the new frontiers of religious authority, particularly among Generation Z. The ease of access, relatable communication styles, and interactive features of these platforms have created a new model of religious engagement, one that prioritises personal connection over formal institutional structures.

The Transformation in the Interpretation of Islamic Law Due to Digital Preaching

This study examines how Generation Z understands Islamic law, particularly in light of their exposure to various, often conflicting interpretations of *halal* (permissible) and *haram* (forbidden) from different digital influencers. As traditional sources of religious authority (i.e., scholars and religious institutions) are less influential in the digital age, Generation Z encounters a variety of perspectives on Islamic legal issues, often without the oversight or standardization that would typically come from formal religious authorities. This lack of consistency and the rise of personal, often contradictory interpretations have resulted in confusion and fragmentation among young people, leading to a complex and sometimes unclear understanding of Islamic law.

One participant, a 20-year-old college student who regularly watches Islamic content on YouTube, expressed their frustration about contradictory views they encountered online: "Sometimes I watch a video where an ustaz says something is halal, and then I find another video where another ustaz says the same thing is haram. It confuses me because both seem to have good arguments, but I don't know which one to follow."

This excerpt illustrates the confusion Generation Z faces due to conflicting interpretations of Islamic law they encounter on social media platforms. The lack of a clear, authoritative voice leaves young people unsure about how to apply religious principles in their daily lives.

Another participant, a 23-year-old TikTok user who follows several influencers discussing Islamic law, shared: "It's hard to navigate because every influencer has their own take on what is allowed or not in Islam. Some say one thing is fine, and others disagree, so it's like I have to choose which opinion feels right to me."

This participant's comment reflects the shift in how Islamic law is being taught and understood. With no unified standard, Generation Z is left to decide for themselves which interpretation of Islamic law resonates with them, further exacerbating fragmentation in religious understanding.

The data from the interviews suggest that the flow of religious content on social media platforms has created an environment where multiple interpretations of Islamic law coexist without a central, authoritative figure to resolve conflicts. As Generation Z is exposed to diverse views, they face the challenge of distinguishing among competing interpretations of religious matters. This fluid and decentralised approach to religious knowledge makes it increasingly difficult for individuals to discern what is truly aligned with Islamic teachings, as each influencer presents their own understanding, often shaped by personal beliefs rather than standardised religious jurisprudence.

From observing various digital preaching platforms, it is evident that influencers tend to present religious rulings in ways tailored to their audience's preferences, often using engaging, simplified explanations or contemporary contexts to make their views more relatable. On platforms like TikTok and YouTube, many influencers openly discuss controversial topics, such as what is halal or haram, without providing nuanced or authoritative explanations. This approach can make religious content more accessible but also leaves it open to misinterpretation. During the observation, it was evident that the

audience's comments often reflected confusion or a need for clarification, indicating that the lack of standardised religious authority on these platforms creates uncertainty among viewers.

The data gathered indicates that Generation Z is encountering diverse, and often conflicting, interpretations of Islamic law on digital platforms. These conflicting views, particularly on halal and haram issues, create confusion among young people, as they are not provided with a clear, consistent source of religious authority to guide their understanding. Instead, they are forced to choose between competing opinions from various influencers, leading to a fragmented understanding of Islamic law.

The data reveal a clear pattern: Generation Z is exposed to a broad spectrum of interpretations of Islamic law, leading to confusion and fragmentation. Instead of receiving standardized religious guidance, young people are navigating a digital landscape filled with contradictory views, which forces them to become their own arbiters of religious knowledge. This lack of consistency in interpreting Islamic law, particularly on issues such as halal and haram, further exemplifies the shift in religious authority from formal scholars to digital influencers. However, this decentralization comes with challenges, as it leads to a fragmented understanding of Islamic principles that can be difficult to navigate.

Table 2. Influence of Conflicting Digital Preaching on Islamic Law Interpretation

Informant Role	Interview Excerpt	Indicator
20-year-old College Student	<i>"Sometimes I watch a video where an ustaz says something is halal, and then I find another video where another ustaz says the same thing is haram. It confuses me because both seem to have good arguments, but I don't know which one to follow."</i>	Exposure to conflicting interpretations of halal and haram, causing confusion.
23-year-old TikTok Follower	<i>"It's hard to navigate because every influencer has their own take on what is allowed or not in Islam. Some say one thing is fine, and others disagree, so it's like I have to choose which opinion feels right to me."</i>	Lack of authoritative guidance leads to subjective decision-making.
Digital Influencer	<i>"I try to present Islamic rulings in a way that is simple and relatable, but I know not everyone agrees with my interpretation."</i>	Informal and personalized presentation of Islamic rulings without a standardized approach.

The table reflects the ongoing challenge that Generation Z faces in interpreting Islamic law, due to the diversity and contradictions in the religious content presented by digital influencers. The 20-year-old student's comment demonstrates the confusion caused by conflicting views on key religious matters, such as halal and haram. This participant's uncertainty is echoed by the 23-year-old TikTok follower, who feels pressured to choose between varying opinions. The digital influencer's response further highlights the informal nature of religious teachings on digital platforms, where influencers openly acknowledge the absence of a universal agreement, making it harder for viewers to find a definitive answer.

The data consistently points to the fragmented nature of Islamic law interpretation in the digital age. Generation Z, while benefiting from the accessibility of religious content online, faces challenges in discerning accurate interpretations. The lack of a central, authoritative voice results in a religious landscape filled with diverse, and often contradictory, views, causing confusion and uncertainty among young followers. This pattern indicates a shift away from institutionalised religious authority toward a decentralised model, but it also underscores the risks of such a transformation, namely the

loss of consistency and clarity in religious guidance.

In conclusion, the findings demonstrate how digital preaching, despite its widespread appeal and accessibility, contributes to the fragmentation of Islamic legal interpretation among Generation Z. The absence of standardized religious authority in the digital space has led to confusion and uncertainty, highlighting the need for a more structured approach to digital preaching in order to provide consistent and authoritative religious guidance.

The Need for Standardization and Oversight in Digital Preaching

This study examines the need for religious institutions to provide oversight and standardisation in digital preaching. As social media platforms host a diverse range of religious content, often with contradictory views, it becomes increasingly important for established religious authorities to offer clear guidance. Without this oversight, there is a risk of undermining the authenticity of Islamic teachings and contributing to the fragmentation of religious understanding, particularly among Generation Z. This lack of consistency and authority in digital preaching leads to confusion and uncertainty about the correct interpretation and practice of Islamic law, highlighting the urgent need for religious institutions to step in and regulate digital religious content.

Table 3. Interview Results and Table

Interview Excerpt	Indicator	Informant
"I often get confused because there are so many opinions online, and no one is there to tell us which one is the right one."	Lack of authoritative guidance	20-year-old College Student
"It would be great if religious institutions could create clear guidelines for what is acceptable to watch or follow online."	Need for institutional guidance and oversight	23-year-old TikTok User
"There needs to be someone who sets the standards for religious content so that we don't get lost in all the opinions."	Call for standardization and oversight of digital content	Digital Influencer

The table provides insight into the concerns and suggestions from various informants regarding the need for standardization and oversight in digital preaching. The 20-year-old college student highlights the lack of authoritative guidance, which leads to confusion about which views to trust. This sentiment is echoed by the 23-year-old TikTok user, who calls for religious institutions to create clear guidelines for online content. The digital influencer also supports this call for oversight, emphasizing the need for someone to establish standards for religious content to prevent the confusion caused by competing opinions.

From these excerpts, it is clear that all informants, regardless of background, recognise the importance of religious institutions stepping in to provide clear, standardised guidance for digital preaching. This indicates a widespread concern about the absence of an authoritative voice in the digital space, which is contributing to confusion and a lack of direction for the younger generation.

The data from the table indicates that Generation Z is experiencing uncertainty and confusion due to the lack of a standardized framework for religious teachings on digital platforms. Both followers and influencers agree that the current landscape of digital religious content is fragmented, with many interpretations of Islamic teachings that are often conflicting. The 20-year-old student's confusion is indicative of the broader problem

faced by many young people who are exposed to diverse opinions but lack the tools or guidance to evaluate them. Similarly, the 23-year-old TikTok user's request for institutional guidelines reflects the desire for clarity in an otherwise overwhelming and chaotic digital space.

The digital influencer's comment about the need for someone to set the standards for religious content further emphasizes the importance of oversight. Digital influencers, although influential, often lack the formal training and expertise to provide standardized religious guidance, leading to inconsistencies in their content. Therefore, the need for religious institutions to establish clear guidelines and oversight is critical to ensuring the authenticity and unity of Islamic teachings in the digital age.

During the observation of digital preaching content, it was evident that influencers, while often popular and relatable, do not always adhere to consistent or standardised religious teachings. Many influencers present their own interpretations of Islamic law, sometimes without providing context or referencing established sources of religious knowledge. This lack of standardisation is compounded by the fact that digital platforms encourage personal expression, allowing anyone with a following to become a religious authority, regardless of their formal qualifications. The absence of oversight and the rise of unregulated content contribute to the confusion and fragmentation observed in the digital space.

The observation revealed that viewers often seek clarification in the comment sections, with many asking for verification of religious rulings or guidance on which opinion is correct. This further highlights the gap in standardized religious oversight and the potential for misinformation in digital preaching.

The findings from the interviews and observations indicate a significant lack of authoritative oversight and standardization in digital religious content. Generation Z is exposed to conflicting opinions from various influencers, and without guidance from religious institutions, they are left to navigate a confusing and fragmented landscape of Islamic teachings. Both the interview excerpts and observations suggest a widespread desire for religious institutions to provide clear, standardized guidelines to ensure the authenticity and consistency of Islamic law in the digital space.

The data consistently shows that Generation Z is struggling with the lack of authoritative guidance in digital religious content. This has led to confusion, as young people are exposed to a variety of conflicting interpretations without a clear framework for evaluating them. The data reveal a widespread desire among both followers and influencers for religious institutions to take a more active role in regulating and standardizing religious content in the digital space. This need for oversight stems from the fragmentation of religious teachings and the potential for misinformation, which could undermine the unity and authenticity of Islamic law.

Table 4. Influence of Standardization and Oversight in Digital Preaching

Informant Role	Interview Excerpt	Indicator
20-year-old College Student	<i>"I often get confused because there are so many opinions online, and no one is there to tell us which one is the right one."</i>	Lack of authoritative guidance leading to confusion.
23-year-old TikTok User	<i>"It would be great if religious institutions could create clear guidelines for what is acceptable to watch or follow online."</i>	Request for institutional guidance and oversight.

Digital Influencer	<i>"There needs to be someone who sets the standards for religious content so that we don't get lost in all the opinions."</i>	Need for standardized religious content and oversight.
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The table shows a clear pattern in the informants' responses, highlighting the widespread concern about the lack of oversight and standardization in digital preaching. The call for clear guidelines and standardized content from both followers and influencers underscores the need for religious institutions to step in and provide structure in the rapidly expanding digital space. The 20-year-old student's confusion, the 23-year-old TikTok user's request for guidelines, and the influencer's acknowledgment of the need for standards all highlight the shared recognition of the challenges posed by the current fragmented state of digital religious content. The data suggests that standardization and oversight are crucial to maintaining the authenticity and unity of Islamic teachings in the digital age.

Discussion

This study investigates the role of social media in digital preaching and its impact on religious authority, highlighting Generation Z's growing reliance on platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram for religious learning. The findings align with the existing literature, which emphasizes the role of digital platforms in democratizing access to religious content. As noted by Hilman (2025) and Yilmaz (2025), social media has become a significant tool for religious engagement, especially among younger generations who prefer flexible, accessible, and informal learning methods. Similarly, (Febrian, 2024; Zaid et al., 2022) highlights the trend of moving away from formal religious authorities towards more relatable figures, particularly digital influencers. This shift is further confirmed in the study, which finds that participants prefer interactive, engaging content from digital influencers. While these trends are well documented in the literature, this study provides new insights into how these preferences specifically shape the religious practices of Generation Z, demonstrating a clear shift from traditional face-to-face religious gatherings to digital platforms (Missier, 2025; Mónica, 2021). The data suggests that social media platforms are not only changing how religious content is consumed but are also altering the authority dynamics in religious discourse.

However, this transformation in the interpretation of Islamic law, as shown in the study, leads to confusion and fragmentation, particularly in halal and haram interpretations, due to the lack of consistent, standardized content. This finding resonates with earlier work, such as that of Zhang (2025), who discussed the challenges posed by fragmented religious content on digital platforms, resulting in a "crisis of authority." Similarly, Andok's (2024) research highlights the unregulated nature of digital preaching, leading to a lack of clarity and uniformity in religious teachings. The study's findings about Generation Z's struggle with conflicting interpretations are consistent with these claims, as the youth are often left to navigate a diverse array of opinions without clear guidance. Despite the widespread availability of content, as noted by Hannan & Mursyidi (2023), the absence of centralized religious authority in digital spaces has made it difficult for users to trust or follow particular interpretations, leading to a fragmented understanding of Islamic law. This fragmentation raises important concerns, as it may lead to a superficial or incomplete understanding of religious principles, particularly when the content lacks adequate theological depth or formal authority.

The need for standardization and oversight in digital preaching, emphasized in the study, is a response to the fragmentation observed in the digital landscape. This concern

aligns with arguments by experts such as Fadil (2020) and Khan (2022), who contend that the absence of regulatory frameworks for digital religious content can lead to misinformation and confusion. The research findings underscore the growing concern that, without institutional oversight, religious teachings may be diluted, misrepresented, or even distorted by individuals without proper theological qualifications (Hannan & Mursyidi, 2023; Zhang, 2025). The call for clearer guidelines from religious institutions is also supported by previous studies, which emphasize the need to formalize religious content to maintain the integrity and unity of Islamic teachings (Sangwa & Mutabazi, 2025; Vese, 2022). This study makes a valuable contribution by highlighting the need to balance the accessibility and flexibility of digital platforms with the requirement for reliable, authoritative religious guidance.

The theoretical implications of these findings suggest a need to revisit traditional models of religious authority in light of the digital age. The decentralized nature of digital preaching challenges established hierarchical structures of religious authority, as digital influencers, rather than scholars, now hold the power to shape religious views. This finding aligns with previous scholarship on the decentralization of religious authority, particularly in digital spaces (Andok, 2024; Vese, 2022). The study highlights a shift in the model of authority from formal institutions to informal, individual-based authority, which has implications for the study of religious authority in the modern era. The increasing influence of social media on religious discourse invites a reevaluation of how religious authority is defined and exercised in the 21st century. These findings also point to a broader trend of how digital technologies are reshaping other aspects of religion, including religious practices and community engagement (Wachukwu, 2024; Zhang, 2025).

Practically, the findings provide valuable insights for religious institutions and educators on how to engage with Generation Z in a more meaningful and relevant way. Institutions must adapt to digital platforms to ensure their teachings are accessible, engaging, and grounded in authoritative knowledge. Religious leaders can use social media to connect with younger audiences by embracing interactive formats and making their content relatable, while also providing the necessary oversight to ensure accuracy and consistency in religious teachings. Furthermore, institutions could develop standardized guidelines for digital preaching that align with traditional teachings while still meeting the dynamic, interactive needs of digital audiences. This could help mitigate the risk of misinformation and preserve the integrity of religious practice in the digital age. Finally, religious scholars and institutions could explore new methodologies for addressing the diverse interpretations found online, fostering open dialogue and collaboration with digital influencers to ensure the authenticity and unity of Islamic teachings across platforms.

CONCLUSION

The most important finding from this study is a significant shift in religious authority from traditional scholars to digital influencers, particularly among Generation Z. This shift has been driven by the accessibility, flexibility, and relatability offered by social media platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram. Digital platforms offer Generation Z the opportunity to engage with religious content in ways that align with their preferences for convenience and multimedia experiences. However, this transformation also raises concerns about the lack of standardization and oversight in digital preaching, leading to confusion and fragmentation in the interpretation of Islamic law. The study highlights the need for religious institutions to step in and provide authoritative guidance to preserve the

authenticity and unity of Islamic teachings in the digital age.

The strength of this research lies in its contribution to understanding the evolving role of social media in shaping religious authority and its implications for the interpretation of Islamic law among young people. It adds to the growing body of literature on digital religion by specifically focusing on Generation Z's engagement with digital preaching. Furthermore, the study offers practical recommendations for religious institutions on adapting to digital platforms and ensuring consistent, reliable guidance. However, the study has limitations, particularly in its sample size and scope, which may not fully reflect the diversity of Generation Z's religious experiences across regions. Future research could expand the sample and examine the role of digital preaching across various cultural contexts to explore further the impact of digital media on religious practices and beliefs.

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