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Strategies for the Contextualization of Religious Content Through Social Media for STKIP Students

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the contextualization strategy of religious content by STKIP Abdi Pendidikan Payakumbuh students through social media in order to strengthen the understanding and internalization of moderate and contextual Islamic values among the younger generation. This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method, and data collection techniques in the form of in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. The results showed that students not only act as passive consumers, but also as active, adaptive, and reflective producers of religious content. Contextualization strategies are carried out through the use of communicative and dialogical language, the selection of visual formats that match the characteristics of digital platforms (such as TikTok, Instagram, and WhatsApp), and the delivery of Islamic values that are moderate, reflective, and relevant to contemporary issues such as mental health and academic pressure. However, this process faces various challenges such as limited digital and religious literacy, time constraints, social media algorithmic pressure, and social resistance in the form of negative comments. This research recommends the need to strengthen digital Islamic literacy, creative media training, and the integration of digital da'wah into student character development programs. Thus, these findings not only contribute conceptually to the development of digital da'wah literature but also to the development of digital da'wah programs.

Keywords: Contextualization Of Religious Content, Social Media, University Students

INTRODUCTION

The transformation of information and communication technology in the last two decades has brought fundamental changes in the way humans interact, communicate, and access and disseminate knowledge (Aksenta et al., 2023). One manifestation of this transformation is the proliferation of social media as a new public space that transcends geographical and socio-cultural boundaries. Social media such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Twitter are now an integral part of everyday life, especially among the younger generation (Wiramaya et al., 2024). These platforms are not only used for entertainment and social interaction but have also developed into spaces for discourse production, including religious discourse. In this context, social media has become a new arena for Islamic preaching, which demands different approaches and strategies from conventional preaching (Trisakti, 2025).

The emergence of the digital da'wah phenomenon brings new opportunities and challenges in the delivery of Islamic values. On the one hand, social media allows da'wah to reach a wide audience with fast time and low cost. On the other hand, da'wah in the digital space must deal with algorithm complexity, new communication styles, and very dynamic and diverse audience expectations (Jaya & Pratama, 2025; Yati et al., 2023). This requires a process of contextualization of Islamic messages, which is an effort to adapt the substance of religious teachings to the social, cultural, psychological, and linguistic conditions of the audience, so that da'wah messages remain meaningful, communicative, and not reduced in value. Contextualization of da'wah is a necessity, especially in an effort to maintain the relevance of Islam to the current reality without losing its essential principles (Nafi, 2018).

Students, as part of the digital generation as well as a group of young intellectuals, play a strategic role in this da'wah transformation process (Pertiwi et al., 2021). Students are not only the target of da'wah, but also have the potential to be influential producers of religious content on social media (Marti et al., 2023). Especially for students in the STKIP Abdi Pendidikan Payakumbuh environment, this role is even more important because they are prospective educators who will become agents of social transformation in the future. Their ability to package Islamic messages with a contextual approach will determine how Islamic values are understood and applied by the next generation. This is where an in-depth study of how students produce, consume, and respond to religious content on social media is important.

However, the process of contextualizing religious content is not without obstacles. The rapid flow of digital information is often not matched by adequate religious literacy and media literacy skills (AR, 2016). Many da'wah contents oversimplify religious teachings, and some even deviate from the principles of Islamic moderation (Ramandani, 2024). In these conditions, students as digital da'wah creators must be able to sort and select narratives and delivery methods that are in accordance with Islamic values and communication ethics (Kosasih, 2019). They must also be able to navigate the pressure of algorithms and digital market tastes without sacrificing the substance of religious values. Therefore, understanding the contextualization strategies used by students in producing religious content is very important in an effort to formulate a wiser and more transformative digital da'wah model.

This study aims to explore in depth the strategies used by STKIP Abdi Pendidikan Payakumbuh students in contextualizing religious content through social media. The research focus includes three main aspects, namely: the patterns of consumption and production of

student religious content, the forms of contextualization strategies applied (including language, format, and value), and the challenges they face in the digital da'wah process. This research is expected to provide conceptual and practical contributions in developing a model of da'wah that is responsive to the times, without losing its authentic and deep Islamic roots.

This research is important because studies that specifically highlight the role of students as producers of contextual, moderate, and adaptive religious content in the digital space, especially in an educational campus environment such as STKIP Abdi Pendidikan Payakumbuh, are still very limited. Most previous studies have focused more on the role of religious leaders, da'wah communities, or formal institutions, while the role of students as reflective and creative digital da'wah agents has not been studied in depth. Thus, this research not only contributes to the development of campus-based digital da'wah literature but also offers an alternative model of da'wah strategies that are relevant to the dynamics of the younger generation and the development of information technology.

Through this study, it is hoped that strategies can be found that are not only effective in terms of digital communication, but also in line with the principle of da'wah bil hikmah, namely the delivery of Islamic teachings wisely, contextually, and with full consideration of cultural and social values. This research also aims to open a wider discussion on the importance of strengthening the capacity of student da'wah in the digital era, both through curriculum strengthening, creative media training, and the formation of a sustainable digital da'wah community in higher education. Thus, this research is not only a theoretical study, but also a strategic offer to advance the role of students in building a peaceful, moderate, and contextual Islamic narrative in the information age.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method (Rukin, 2019). The qualitative approach was chosen because it is able to describe in depth the social, cultural, and psychological realities of students in interpreting and disseminating religious content through social media (Safarudin et al., 2023). Case studies are used to contextually explore the phenomenon of religious content contextualization strategies in the STKIP Abdi Pendidikan Payakumbuh environment. This research aims to comprehensively understand the process of production, consumption, and student responses to digital religious content in an increasingly complex virtual interaction space.

The research was conducted at STKIP Abdi Pendidikan Payakumbuh, a higher education institution that has distinctive socio-cultural characteristics and a student population that is active in religious activities and the use of social media. The selection of this location was based on the consideration that students in this campus environment show interesting dynamics in utilizing digital platforms, such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and WhatsApp, as a means of religious expression as well as non-formal learning. In addition, this institution also has a Student Activity Unit (UKM), one of which is the Al-Qudwah Islamic Studies Institute (LKI) in campus religious programs that are relevant to the research theme.

The research subjects were selected purposively, namely active students who are involved in digital religious activities, both as producers and consumers of content. The main informants consisted of active students, managers of campus social media accounts that contain Islamic

content, and lecturers of Islamic Religious Education courses who understand the context of students' digital da'wah. The criteria for selecting informants include the level of participation, direct involvement with digital religious content, and diversity of perspectives in interpreting religious values on social media.

Data collection techniques were conducted through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to explore the understanding, motivation, strategies, and challenges faced by students in producing or accessing religious content on social media. Observations were conducted on students' digital activities, both through monitoring social media accounts managed by students and in digital-based religious activities in the campus environment. Documentation includes collecting visual data such as screenshots, short videos, infographics, and da'wah captions circulating on student social media. (Salam, 2023).

The data obtained were analyzed thematically by following the stages of Miles and Huberman's interactive analysis model, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Data reduction was done to filter out relevant information, data presentation was in the form of grouping themes and narratives based on informants' tendencies, and conclusion drawing was done through the in-depth interpretation of the thematic patterns that emerged. To maintain data validity, triangulation of sources and methods was conducted, as well as member checks to ensure the accuracy of the researcher's interpretation of the informants' answers.

This research also pays attention to aspects of academic ethics, such as conveying research objectives to informants, asking for informed consent, maintaining the confidentiality of informants' identities, and ensuring that the entire research process is carried out fairly, does not manipulate information, and does not harm participants. Through this method, the research is expected to produce an in-depth understanding of how STKIP Abdi Pendidikan Payakumbuh students contextualize religious values in the digital era and how strategies can be applied to strengthen social media-based religious literacy in a more educative and transformative manner.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Consumption and Production Patterns of Religious Content by College Students

This study found that STKIP Abdi Pendidikan Payakumbuh students show intense and diverse patterns of religious content consumption through social media. In in-depth interviews with 15 students from various study programs, the majority of students stated that they access Islamic content at least 3-5 times a week. This access takes place both passively and actively. The content includes short lectures, Islamic motivational quotes, practical fiqh studies, as well as reflective content such as heart advice and self-muhasabah.

Observations of students' social media accounts confirm this statement. It was found that their Instagram feeds and TikTok homepages consistently featured religious content, either from well-known scholars such as Ustaz Hanan Attaki, Buya Yahya, or from digital da'wah Community accounts such as @yukhijrah, @muslimahdaily, and @pemudahijrah. This shows that social media platform algorithms have adapted users' preferences to their consumption habits, creating a digital ecosystem full of Islamic information.

Students' preferences for content types are also interesting to observe. Based on screenshot documentation from the five student accounts observed, the most frequently reshared content (repost or story) are Islamic motivational quotes and short 1-3 minute videos that raise daily issues-for example, laziness in worship, sadness due to failure, and the importance of maintaining relationships. Based on an interview with a student (P. Husnul, personal communication, April 5, 2024) "I like content that is light, but touching. If it can directly hit the heart, especially if I'm tired of studying or have a lot of problems." This statement shows that the consumption of religious content among students is not only informative but also therapeutic, serving as a means of mental and spiritual strengthening in dealing with the pressures of daily life.

On the other hand, the pattern of religious content production by students has also developed significantly. Not a few of them act as da'wah content creators, both individually and through campus communities such as UKM Al-Qudwah. In observations of two student organization accounts at STKIP Abdi Pendidikan Payakumbuh, it was found that students actively produce religious content in the form of digital posters, short videos, and Islamic quotes that are distributed regularly, especially ahead of religious moments such as Ramadan, Isra Mi'raj, and Maulid Nabi.

The production of this content is not done carelessly but goes through a process of theme curation, language adjustment, and visual editing to make it more attractive and in accordance with social media trends. Based on an interview with an administrator of UKM Al-Qudwah (Y. Arianti, personal communication, April 10, 2024) explained "We usually brainstorm first, and discuss the weekly theme. For example, this week the theme is patience, so we will make 3 contents: one short video, one poster with hadith, and one longer carousel. We make the design in Canva, then post it through Instagram and WhatsApp groups." This information shows that students have an awareness of the importance of content management and digital dakwah branding. They do not just spread messages but also think about engagement, visual aesthetics, and consistency of da'wah identity.

Furthermore, the documentation shows that in the content production process, students often utilize actual moments as an entry point to convey religious values. For example, when a viral phenomenon emerges about "self-healing" or "mental health awareness," students relate it to the Islamic concepts of tawakal, dhikr, and muhasabah. This is a form of contextualization of da'wah that is creative and relevant to the lives of their audience.

However, although there are groups of students who actively produce da'wah content, there are also other groups of students who are passive, and only consume without producing. They admitted that they were not confident to talk about religion in the public sphere, afraid of being wrong in conveying arguments, or feeling that they did not have enough knowledge. Based on an interview with a student (Cici, personal communication, April 7, 2024), she said, "I like watching and sharing da'wah content, but if I am told to make my own, I am afraid. The problem is that da'wah is a big responsibility." This reflects the need for assistance in digital da'wah literacy, including digital communication skills coaching and a basic understanding of da'wah fiqh. In addition, there are differences in the level of activeness of content production between students of the Civics program and other study programs. Civics students are more likely to be active as content producers because they feel they have a stronger scientific provision.

In general, the pattern of consumption and production of religious content by STKIP Abdi Pendidikan Payakumbuh students shows a synergy between spiritual needs and digital skills. Students are not only passive consumers of Islamic information, but also transformed into adaptive, creative, and audience-oriented agents of da'wah communication. This phenomenon opens up opportunities for strengthening the role of students in building religious narratives that are moderate, contextual, and responsive to the dynamics of the times.

Content Contextualization Strategy

In the context of contextualizing religious content by STKIP Abdi Pendidikan Payakumbuh students, the strategies they use related to language, format, and values show a high awareness of digital audiences and the dynamics that occur in social media. In interviews with several students who are active in producing da'wah content, it was revealed that they choose language that is simple, easy to understand, and close to the daily lives of students in general. This indicates that they try to avoid using language that is too scientific or heavy, which might make it difficult for the audience to understand the da'wah message. Based on an interview with one of the students (Arya, personal communication, April 15, 2024) said: "We prefer to use light language, sometimes using slang or a mixture of Indonesian and a little Arabic, because it is easier for young people to accept." This statement confirms that da'wah content managers are well aware of the importance of simplicity in communication, especially in building relationships with young audiences who tend to want communication that is direct, straightforward, and touches on their daily problems.

Furthermore, the use of language in these da'wah contents is often dialogic, which means that it is not only one-way but also invites the audience to think and respond. This is evident in an interview with one of the students who actively create content on TikTok (Cici, personal communication, April 7, 2024), who explained: "The content we create must have the value of inviting discussion or reflection. For example, by using a question like 'Have you ever felt tired of praying, but it didn't come true?". Sentences like this can open up a space for dialog and trigger the audience to reflect more deeply on their spiritual lives and respond by sharing their personal experiences through comments or sharing the content. In observations of student accounts producing da'wah content, it was found that the use of such reflective questions is quite effective in attracting audience attention and creating a more personalized two-way interaction.

In terms of format, students utilize the advantages of visual and multimedia formats that are tailored to the platform they choose. For example, on the Instagram platform, the majority of uploaded content is in the form of a carousel, which allows the audience to scroll through images containing verse quotes, hadith, or religious advice. This content is often accompanied by light illustrations that support the theme discussed, such as pictures of natural scenery, pictures of mosques, or Islamic symbols that can attract attention visually. On the other hand, on the TikTok platform, content is mostly presented in the form of short videos lasting between 15 and 60 seconds. These contents have the advantage of using background music that is relevant to the theme, interesting visual effects, and narratives that are packaged in a way that touches the emotions of the audience, such as a 30-second video containing inspirational quotes about patience and tawakal. In this case, students not only consider the message to be conveyed but also try to adjust the content format to suit the way the audience consumes information.

This content format is also tailored to different audiences. Students who are more active using WhatsApp, often share content in the form of voice messages or audio tausiyah that are more personalized and can be listened to at any time. In WhatsApp groups of university students, it is common to find posts with links to online studies or podcasts that address light yet profound themes, such as "Why do we need to be grateful every day?" or "How to maintain peace of mind when life's trials come?" In this case, the audio format is considered more effective because it provides a more intimate and in-depth feel than just reading text.

Meanwhile, in terms of values, students are more likely to prioritize humanistic and moderate values. The religious values raised are not only limited to theological or normative knowledge about religion but focus more on practical applications in everyday life that intersect directly with social, psychological, and even mental health issues. In an interview with a student (Azzahra, personal communication, April 8, 2024), it was expressed: "We want to convey that Islam is not just about ritual worship, but how to live a life full of challenges with patience and trust in Allah." This approach is seen in the content they create, which often relates Islamic values to contemporary issues, such as the importance of maintaining mental health, how to deal with stress in studying, or how to be positive in living life amidst various pressures.

In addition, students also try to avoid content that is exclusive, sectarian, or that can cause conflict among audiences. They choose to prioritize the values of inclusivity, peace, and mutual respect. Values such as husnudzan (good faith), tolerance, and interfaith harmony are often raised in the content they disseminate. For example, content that raised the theme "Why do we need to take care of other people's feelings despite different beliefs?" managed to get a positive response from the audience who showed gratitude and appreciation for the way of da'wah that was soothing and did not corner the other party. From the observation documentation, it can be seen that students prefer to present content with a softer approach, explore the potential of virtue in each individual, and uphold the values of social justice and common welfare.

Through all these strategies, STKIP Abdi Pendidikan Payakumbuh students demonstrate skills in managing da'wah content that is not only relevant in content but also effective in delivery. They succeeded in contextualizing religious messages to be well received by a very diverse and challenging digital audience. By optimizing the use of friendly language, and interesting formats, and conveying moderate and applicable values, these students not only function as consumers of da'wah content but also as creative and thoughtful producers in building religious narratives that are relevant to the needs of the times.

Challenges in Contextualizing Religious Content

In the process of contextualizing religious content by STKIP Abdi Pendidikan Payakumbuh students, various challenges arise as a consequence of efforts to align Islamic values with the dynamics of digital communication that are fast, fluid, and full of narrative competition. These challenges are not only technical and platform-based, but also ideological, psychological, and even social. Interviews with several students showed that one of the main challenges they face is limited digital literacy and technical expertise in content design. Many students admitted that they are not yet proficient in using design applications such as Canva, CapCut, or Adobe Express optimally, making it difficult for them to create visually appealing content. Student (P. Husnul, personal communication, April 5, 2024) said, "Sometimes I have an idea, but I am

confused about what to make the video like, or how to make it look attractive. Finally, I just upload plain text." This shows that there is a gap between the intention of da'wah and the technical ability of content production.

In addition, time constraints are also a significant obstacle. Students who are active in creating da'wah content are often also involved in busy academic activities, student organizations, or even side jobs. In an interview, a student (Y. Arianti, personal communication, April 10, 2024) stated, "We want to consistently create da'wah content every week, but college assignments pile up, so it's not organized." Observations of several student da'wah accounts also show inconsistency in the upload schedule, where in one month there are only one to two uploads, with irregular intervals. In fact, in the context of social media algorithms, consistency is key to maintaining audience engagement and increasing message reach. This condition is exacerbated by the lack of teamwork or collaboration in content creation, where most content is still individual, not involving group synergy that can divide tasks according to fields, such as material research, graphic design, or interaction management.

Another more substantive challenge is the concern about misinterpretation or misunderstanding of the da'wah message delivered. Social media is an open space, where content can be accessed by anyone from different backgrounds of religious understanding. This makes students have to be careful in formulating every sentence so as not to cause controversy or be considered deviating from existing norms. A student (Cici, personal communication, April 7, 2024) revealed, "We are afraid that the content we create will be misunderstood or commented on negatively. Sometimes people even think we are satirizing certain parties, even though we don't mean it." This concern causes students to be conservative in conveying da'wah themes, avoiding sensitive issues such as differences in mazhab, controversial Islamic law, or religion-based social criticism. In the documentation of uploaded da'wah content analyzed, it can be seen that students tend to choose safe themes such as motivation for worship, the importance of gratitude, or the meaning of patience, and avoid themes that require in-depth figh or tafsir studies.

Ideological challenges cannot be ignored either. In the digital era, students are faced with a flood of information and religious content from various sources, including those from the extreme right or liberal left. Exposure to content that is not in line with the value of moderation can affect the narratives they build. In an interview, a student (Arya, personal communication, April 15, 2024) admitted that he was confused when he saw popular content that came from accounts with radical tendencies. "There is viral content, but the language is harsh, accusing others of being misguided. But because many people like and share it, we get confused, is that actually interesting?" This shows algorithmic pressure, where sensational content is easier to go viral than moderate and cool content. Students must be able to refrain from being tempted to follow a harsh communication pattern just for the sake of popularity or high engagement.

Another complex challenge is resistance from some audiences. Some students have reported cynical comments, ridicule, or even accusations of riya when they upload da'wah content. This can have an impact on their motivation to continue openly preaching on social media. One student (Y. Arianti, personal communication, April 10, 2024) said: "I once made a short da'wah video, but there were comments from friends who said 'pretentious', even though the intention was sincere. Since then I have been hesitant to upload again." This phenomenon is

known in the literature as the effect of digital shame culture, where a person feels intimidated by negative responses even though the content created is well-intentioned. Observations show that some student da'wah accounts that were initially active no longer update their content, most likely due to experiencing this kind of psychological pressure. On the other hand, there is no organized collective support system to strengthen the spirit of da'wah among students.

Furthermore, challenges also arise in terms of content validity. Not all students have an adequate Islamic scientific background, so they often refer to unauthoritative sources from the internet. In the documentation found, some contents quote hadith with unclear sources, or even invalid. This is a serious problem because the content disseminated has the potential to mislead if it is not verified first. Based on an interview with a student (Meri, personal communication, April 25, 2024) admitted, "We often take quotes from Google, sometimes we don't know if they are sahih hadith or not. But because it looks good, we make it a caption." This problem shows the need for digital Islamic literacy coaching so that students are able to sort and verify the religious information they use as da'wah material.

Thus, the challenges faced in the process of contextualizing religious content on social media cannot be viewed lightly. Students have to deal with technical limitations, time constraints, social pressure, and ethical dilemmas in maintaining the truth and politeness of da'wah. They also need to overcome the pressure from digital algorithms that prioritize viral content over content of substantial value. Therefore, systemic support from higher education institutions is needed, such as training in digital-based da'wah content creation, increasing religious and media literacy, and establishing campus digital da'wah communities that are able to provide moral and technical support on an ongoing basis. Without a collective and strategic approach, the potential of student da'wah on social media will be difficult to develop optimally and sustainably.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research conducted, it can be concluded that the strategy of contextualizing religious content through social media carried out by STKIP Abdi Pendidikan Payakumbuh students is a form of adaptive response to the challenges of da'wah in the digital era which is full of changes in communication styles, spiritual needs of the younger generation, and the dynamics of digital platforms that continue to grow. Students appear not just as passive consumers but as active producers of religious content who can package Islamic values in a language that is more communicative, dialogical, and easily understood by fellow social media users, especially Generation Z. They choose formats that fit the algorithm and characteristics of the media such as short videos on TikTok, carousels on Instagram, and audio tausiyah on WhatsApp, with an approach to Islamic values that emphasizes reflective, moderate, and relevant aspects of contemporary issues such as mental health, academic pressure, and adolescent social dynamics. However, this process is not free from significant challenges, ranging from limited technical skills and Islamic literacy, concerns about errors in message delivery, to psychological pressure due to negative comments from the audience, or social stigma. In addition, social media algorithms that prioritize viral content are also an obstacle to the dissemination of substantial but less sensationalized da'wah content. Therefore, it can be concluded that the contextualization of digital da'wah by students has great potential in building an inclusive and down-to-earth

understanding of Islam in the digital era, but requires systemic support to develop sustainably and have a broad impact.

The practical implications of this research can be utilized by various parties. For students, the results of this study can serve as a guide in developing more creative, relevant, and ethical digital da'wah content. For higher education institutions, the findings can be used as a basis for designing digital da'wah training, integration of technology-based Islamic literacy in the curriculum, and the formation of a sustainable campus digital da'wah community. In addition, for lecturers and managers of religious SMEs, this research provides strategic input in assisting students to be more confident and responsible in producing religious content in digital public spaces. Thus, the contribution of this research is not only conceptual but also applicable in supporting the strengthening of the role of students as agents of moderate da'wah in the digital era.

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