
Digitalizing the Living Qur'an: Religious Authority and the Transformation of Qur'anic Knowledge in Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the digitalization of the Living Qur'an in Indonesia by analyzing how Qur'anic knowledge is produced, circulated, authorized, and received through digital platforms. The study responds to a central scholarly problem: digital media have expanded public access to Qur'anic learning, yet they have also transformed the basis of religious authority, interpretive legitimacy, and everyday Qur'anic reception. Using a qualitative research design that combines digital ethnography and qualitative content analysis, this study analyzes publicly available Qur'anic discourse on YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and Indonesian tafsir websites, including long-form tafsir lectures, short-form Qur'anic content, digital tafsir materials, and audience interactions. The findings show that digital platforms have become new infrastructures of Qur'anic knowledge, making the Qur'an searchable, portable, shareable, and continuously embedded in everyday digital life. The study also finds that tafsir authority is no longer shaped solely by sanad, scholarly credentials, pesantren affiliation, or institutional recognition, but is increasingly negotiated through media visibility, communicative style, audience trust, and algorithmic circulation. Furthermore, digital Qur'anic knowledge increasingly shifts from textual-systematic tafsir toward practical moral pedagogy addressing worship, family life, anxiety, repentance, social ethics, and personal spirituality. Digital audiences also participate in constructing Qur'anic reception through comments, questions, sharing, and public engagement. The article contributes theoretically by extending Living Qur'an studies into digital religion scholarship and proposing digital Qur'anic reception as a mediated socio-religious formation shaped by scripture, authority, technology, and participatory audiences.

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INTRODUCTION

The digitalization of religion has become a defining transformation in contemporary Muslim societies, altering not only how religious messages circulate but also how sacred knowledge is produced, authorized, and received. Across the global Islamic world, religious learning is no longer mediated exclusively through mosques, *pesantren*, madrasas, *halaqah*, printed tafsir, or face-to-face scholarly transmission. It increasingly unfolds through YouTube lectures, Instagram reels, TikTok clips, podcasts, Islamic websites, Qur'anic applications, and algorithmically organized digital publics. This shift is not a simple technological extension of older forms of da'wah; it reconfigures the epistemic conditions under which religious authority is recognized and Qur'anic knowledge becomes socially meaningful. Digital religion scholarship has shown that online media generate hybrid religious spaces in which institutions, religious specialists, lay audiences, and platform infrastructures interact in fluid and participatory ways (H. A. Campbell, 2013; H. A. Campbell & Tsuria, 2021; Hoover, 2006). In Islamic contexts, this development is particularly significant because religious knowledge has historically been tied to scholarly legitimacy, sanad, mastery of Arabic, institutional training, and recognized competence in interpretation (Eickelman & Anderson, 2003; Zaman, 2002)

Indonesia offers a critical site for examining this transformation. As the world's largest Muslim-majority country and one of Southeast Asia's most digitally connected societies, Indonesia has witnessed the rapid expansion of online Islamic learning, digital da'wah, Qur'anic content production, and social media-based religious engagement. Digital platforms have become infrastructures through which Muslims access, learn, share, debate, and evaluate Islamic knowledge in everyday life. Existing studies show that social media has reshaped Indonesian Muslim piety, religious expression, and public Islamic discourse, particularly among urban Muslims and younger generations who often encounter Islam through digitally mediated networks rather than formal religious institutions alone (Nisa, 2018; Slama, 2018). The emergence of "*santri* without *pesantren*" further illustrates this transformation: many Muslims now acquire religious knowledge through online platforms without undergoing structured *pesantren*-based education, thereby expanding access while also raising concerns about fragmented understanding and sectarian tension (Syafaq et al., 2026). Recent scholarship on Indonesian digital Islam shows that religious authority is no longer limited to established ulama or institutionally affiliated preachers. Ardiansyah dkk, argue that lay and hybrid preachers can gain digital legitimacy through emotional narratives, performative authenticity, platform visibility, and audience engagement (Ardiansyah et al., 2025).

Within this wider transformation, the study of the Living Qur'an becomes increasingly urgent. Living Qur'an scholarship examines how the Qur'an is received, practiced, interpreted, performed, embodied, and socially enacted in Muslim communities. The Qur'an is therefore not approached only as a written text or an object of formal exegesis, but as a living source of meaning that shapes ritual, ethics, identity, social practice, and religious authority (A. Hidayat, 2020; Rafiq, 2014). Recent scholarship further emphasizes that the Living Qur'an involves the embodiment of Qur'anic teachings in daily practices, rituals, and socio-cultural expressions (Ahmad et al., 2026). In the digital era, however, Qur'anic reception is no longer confined to mosques, homes, *pesantren*, or local devotional communities. Qur'anic verses are now quoted, recited, visualized, translated, commented upon, algorithmically recommended, and transformed into motivational, pedagogical, moral, aesthetic, and political content across digital platforms.

Recent research on local Qur'anic reception also strengthens the relevance of Living Qur'an studies. Tambunan's study, show that Qur'anic teachings on remembrance are embodied through communal dhikr, ritual movement, collective memory, sacred space, and shared religious experience (Tambunan et al., 2025). roader studies of Indonesian lived Islam also show that Islamic values are frequently transmitted through culturally embedded practices, ritual performance, ethical pedagogy, and communal participation. While *Atib Koambai* demonstrates how Qur'anic remembrance is embodied through collective dhikr, Sendratari Kadita illustrates how Islamic ethical values such as patience, self-purification, and moral education can be mediated through local cultural performance (Sukmawaty et al., 2025; Tambunan et al., 2025). This study is relevant because it demonstrates that the Living Qur'an operates through culturally embedded practices, while the present article extends this discussion to digital spaces where Qur'anic reception is likewise mediated, shared, and socially constructed.

The main scholarly problem addressed in this study lies in the tension between the

democratization of Qur'anic access and the destabilization of interpretive authority. On the one hand, digital media allow wider Muslim publics to encounter Qur'anic content beyond the boundaries of formal religious institutions. Online tafsir platforms such as Tafsir Inspirasi Quran, tanwir.id, and tafsiralquran.id show how Qur'anic interpretation is increasingly presented in accessible, thematic, and socially engaged formats, including discussions of divinity, humanity, morality, moderation, gender equity, and ethical reform (Arifin, 2019; Musafa'ah et al., 2025). On the other hand, this openness raises difficult questions about epistemic legitimacy: who has the authority to interpret the Qur'an online, how such authority is recognized, and what happens when scholarly competence competes with visibility, popularity, affective appeal, and algorithmic circulation. Digital tafsir therefore creates a contested religious field in which traditional ulama, *pesantren* scholars, university-based mufassir, celebrity preachers, cyber-muftis, Islamic influencers, and ordinary users participate in the production and circulation of Qur'anic meaning.

Previous research may be grouped into four major clusters. The first cluster, digital religion studies, has demonstrated that online media reshape religious practice, community formation, and authority structures by producing hybrid spaces between online and offline religiosity (H. A. Campbell, 2013; H. A. Campbell & Tsuria, 2021; Hoover, 2006). The second cluster, studies of Indonesian Islam and social media, has shown how digital platforms shape piety, da'wah, Islamic identity, and moral discourse in public life (Nisa, 2018a; Slama, 2018). The third cluster, Living Qur'an studies, has moved Qur'anic scholarship beyond textual exegesis by examining ritual use, recitation, memorization, healing, embodiment, and everyday Qur'anic practice (Ahmad et al., 2026; A. Hidayat, 2020; Rafiq, 2014). The fourth cluster, emerging studies of digital tafsir and online religious authority, has begun to analyze how digital platforms mediate Qur'anic interpretation, including Gus Mus's oral reinterpretation of Tafsir al-Ibriz on YouTube and its challenge to inherited gender biases (Irsad et al., 2024), as well as online tafsir communities that contest patriarchal norms and promote gender-sensitive readings (Musafa'ah et al., 2025).

Although these studies provide a strong foundation, important gaps remain. Conceptually, digital religion scholarship has often examined online piety and da'wah broadly, while Living Qur'an studies have more commonly focused on embodied, ritual, or community-based reception. The digitalization of the Living Qur'an—namely, how Qur'anic knowledge itself is transformed when mediated by platforms, algorithms, visual cultures, and participatory audiences—has not been sufficiently theorized. Methodologically, previous studies have frequently relied either on textual analysis of tafsir or broad descriptions of digital Islam, while fewer studies combine digital ethnographic sensitivity with qualitative content analysis to examine how Qur'anic knowledge is produced, circulated, validated, and contested online. Empirically, scholarship on Indonesian digital Islam has paid considerable attention to piety, preachers, Islamic identity, and online da'wah, but less attention has been given to the specific transformation of Qur'anic knowledge across platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and digital tafsir websites.

This gap is significant because the digital mediation of the Qur'an is not merely a matter of access or communication; it transforms the social conditions of Qur'anic authority. Digital religion produces what recent scholarship calls “liquid authority,” in which credibility emerges not only from institutional hierarchy but also from relational trust, peer networks, algorithmic visibility, and affective recognition (Zaid et al., 2026). The rise of celebrity imams and cyber-muftis further illustrates how digital infrastructures redefine religious legitimacy by making visibility itself a form of authority (Wahid & Abdulloh, 2026). At the same time, established institutions such as the Indonesian Ulama Council continue to intervene in digital religious life through fatwas and ethical guidance on social media use, demonstrating that traditional authority does not disappear but strategically repositions itself in the digital public sphere (Atallah, 2026; Kasdi et al., 2026). The resulting field is not a simple replacement of ulama by influencers, but a complex negotiation among scholarship, institutional authority, platform logic, and audience trust.

The transformation of Qur'anic practice also raises interpretive questions about digital piety. Online Qur'an reading groups such as One Day One Juz show how digital platforms can become new religious institutions, combining technological affordances with disciplinary mechanisms that reorganize devotional practice (Muslim, 2017). Yet digital piety is not free from ambivalence. Public displays of devotion on social media may generate anxieties about *riya'*, authenticity, and the moral

risks of performing piety before digital audiences (Husein & Slama, 2018). These tensions suggest that digital Qur'anic engagement should not be romanticized as mere democratization, nor dismissed as superficial religious consumption. It must be studied as a mediated religious formation in which devotion, authority, ethics, identity, and platform visibility intersect.

This study is guided by three research questions. First, how is Qur'anic knowledge produced and circulated through digital platforms in contemporary Indonesia? Second, how is religious authority negotiated among traditional scholars, digital preachers, Islamic influencers, institutions, and online audiences in the dissemination of Qur'anic knowledge? Third, how does digital mediation transform the reception and practice of the Living Qur'an among Indonesian Muslims? Based on these questions, the study aims to analyze the transformation of Qur'anic knowledge in Indonesia's digital sphere, examine the changing structure of religious authority, and explain how digital media recontextualize the Qur'an as a living source of religious meaning in everyday Muslim life.

Theoretically, this study draws on three interrelated frameworks. Living Qur'an theory is used to understand the Qur'an not only as an object of interpretation, but also as a lived, practiced, and socially received scripture (Ahmad et al., 2026; A. Hidayat, 2020; Rafiq, 2014). Digital religion theory explains how religious practices, communities, and authorities are reconstructed through digital media environments (H. A. Campbell, 2013; H. A. Campbell & Tsuria, 2021; Hoover, 2006). Religious authority theory provides a lens for examining how legitimacy is produced through scholarly credentials, institutional recognition, charismatic performance, audience trust, and platform-based visibility (Eickelman & Anderson, 2003; Wahid & Abdulloh, 2026; Zaid et al., 2026; Zaman, 2002). Together, these frameworks make it possible to analyze the digitalization of the Living Qur'an as a process involving scripture, media, authority, algorithmic infrastructure, and everyday religious practice.

The novelty of this study lies in its integration of Living Qur'an studies, digital religion, and religious authority analysis within the Indonesian context. Rather than treating Qur'anic interpretation as a purely textual or doctrinal activity, this study argues that Qur'anic knowledge in contemporary Indonesia is increasingly produced through a hybrid ecosystem involving scholars, institutions, digital platforms, algorithms, content creators, and participatory audiences. Its academic contribution is threefold: conceptually, it extends Living Qur'an studies into the domain of platform-mediated religious life; methodologically, it foregrounds digital Qur'anic discourse as a legitimate site of empirical inquiry; and interpretively, it shows how the Qur'an remains a living source of authority while being reshaped by the technological, social, and cultural logic of the digital age. By doing so, this study contributes to broader debates on Islamic knowledge transmission, digital religious authority, and the transformation of lived Islam in contemporary Muslim societies.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design using digital ethnography and qualitative content analysis to examine how Qur'anic knowledge is produced, circulated, authorized, and received within Indonesia's digital religious sphere. A qualitative approach was selected because the study focuses on meaning-making processes, religious authority negotiation, and the transformation of Qur'anic knowledge rather than statistical measurement or causal prediction. Creswell and Poth argue that qualitative inquiry is appropriate for investigating complex social phenomena in which meanings, practices, and interpretations are embedded in specific cultural and social contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In this study, the research field is not limited to physical religious institutions such as *pesantren*, mosques, or majelis taklim, but extends to digital platforms where Qur'anic discourse is actively produced, mediated, circulated, and interpreted.

The study focuses on digital Qur'anic discourse in Indonesia, particularly Qur'anic content circulated through YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and Indonesian tafsir websites. These platforms were selected because they represent major sites where contemporary Indonesian Muslims encounter Qur'anic knowledge in everyday digital life. YouTube provides long-form tafsir lectures and recorded religious sermons; Instagram and TikTok circulate short-form Qur'anic messages, visual quotations, reels, and religious clips; while tafsir websites such as Qur'an Kemenag, TafsirAlQuran.id, TafsirWeb, and Quran.com provide digital access to Qur'anic text, translation, thematic explanation, and interpretive material. These sources were treated as naturally occurring digital data because they were produced in public religious communication rather than generated artificially through interviews or

experimental settings.

The primary data consisted of four categories. First, long-form Qur'anic lectures and tafsir videos produced by Indonesian Muslim scholars, preachers, and Qur'anic interpreters, including public digital materials associated with figures such as M. Quraish Shihab, Ustadz Adi Hidayat, Buya Yahya, and Habib Husein Ja'far. Second, short-form Qur'anic content, including reels, clips, captions, and motivational ayat-based posts that translate Qur'anic messages into practical moral guidance. Third, audience interactions, including comments, questions, likes, shares, subscriptions, live-chat responses, and other visible engagement indicators. Fourth, digital tafsir materials from Qur'an Kemenag, TafsirAlQuran.id, TafsirWeb, Quran.com, and related Qur'anic learning platforms. These data categories correspond to the four analytical concerns of the article: digital platforms as Qur'anic knowledge infrastructures, reconfigured religious authority, moral-pedagogical transformation of Qur'anic knowledge, and participatory Qur'anic reception.

Data were collected through purposive sampling. Patton explains that purposive sampling enables researchers to select information-rich cases that directly illuminate the phenomenon under investigation (Patton, 2015). In this study, the selected digital materials had to meet four inclusion criteria: they were produced by Indonesian Muslim actors or Indonesian Qur'anic platforms; they explicitly contained Qur'anic references, interpretation, recitation, translation, or religious guidance based on Qur'anic verses; they were publicly accessible; and they showed evidence of audience engagement or public circulation. Materials were excluded when they were unrelated to Qur'anic knowledge, purely political propaganda, private or restricted content, non-Indonesian Islamic discourse, or digital material that used Qur'anic language without meaningful interpretive relevance.

The data collection process was conducted in four stages. First, the researcher mapped relevant platforms, accounts, channels, and websites that regularly produce Qur'anic content in Indonesia. Second, the researcher identified and selected materials that met the inclusion criteria, including long-form tafsir lectures, short videos, thematic tafsir articles, captions, comments, and engagement indicators. Third, the selected materials were documented in a data matrix containing the platform name, content title, producer or account, date of publication or access, Qur'anic theme, form of authority, type of audience interaction, and relevant analytical notes. Fourth, the researcher archived the data through screenshots, URLs, field notes, content summaries, and coding memos. This procedure follows the qualitative data management logic proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, who emphasize systematic data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing in qualitative analysis (Miles et al., 2014).

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke define thematic analysis as a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns across qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis began with repeated reading, viewing, and note-taking to achieve familiarity with the digital materials. Open coding was then conducted to identify recurring patterns related to digital religious authority, Qur'anic pedagogy, platform visibility, audience reception, moral guidance, tafsir accessibility, algorithmic circulation, and the transformation of Qur'anic knowledge. These initial codes were then grouped into broader analytical themes: digital platforms as infrastructures of Qur'anic knowledge; digital religious authority and tafsir legitimacy; the shift from textual tafsir to everyday moral pedagogy; and participatory Qur'anic reception by digital audiences.

The interpretation of data was guided by three theoretical frameworks. First, Living Qur'an theory was used to examine the Qur'an as a scripture that is received, practiced, circulated, and socially lived within Muslim communities. This framework allowed the study to analyze Qur'anic engagement not only as textual interpretation, but also as religious practice embedded in everyday digital life. Second, digital religion theory was used to explain how digital platforms reshape religious practice, community formation, authority, and participation (H. A. Campbell, 2013). Third, mediatization theory was used to analyze how media logic influences the form, visibility, circulation, and reception of Qur'anic knowledge (Hjarvard, 2008). These frameworks enabled the study to treat digital Qur'anic discourse not simply as online preaching, but as a mediated religious formation involving text, technology, authority, platform logic, and audience participation.

To strengthen credibility, the study employed triangulation across platforms, content types, and forms of interaction. YouTube lectures were compared with short-form social media content, tafsir websites, and audience responses in order to identify convergences and divergences in the digital

circulation of Qur'anic knowledge. Creswell and Poth note that triangulation enhances qualitative validity by using multiple sources of evidence to support analytical interpretation (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study also applied audit trails through systematic documentation of coding decisions, data categories, field notes, and analytical memos. This helped increase transparency and reduce interpretive bias in analyzing digital religious data.

Ethical considerations were observed throughout the research. Since the study used publicly available digital content, the analysis focused on public religious discourse rather than private communication. Nevertheless, ordinary users' identities were anonymized to avoid unnecessary exposure of personal information. Usernames, profile images, and identifiable personal details from comment sections were not reproduced unless they belonged to public religious figures whose online presence formed part of their public communication. This follows ethical principles in internet research, which emphasize privacy protection, contextual integrity, and responsible use of online data (Markham & Buchanan, 2012). The study therefore distinguishes between public religious actors, whose digital materials may be cited as public discourse, and ordinary users, whose interactions are analyzed anonymously. In summary, this study uses qualitative digital ethnography supported by thematic analysis to investigate the digitalization of the Living Qur'an in Indonesia. By combining Creswell and Poth's qualitative inquiry framework, Patton's purposive sampling, Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis, Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña's qualitative data management, Campbell's digital religion theory, and Hjarvard's mediatization theory, this methodology provides a systematic basis for examining how Qur'anic knowledge is transformed through digital platforms, religious authority, moral pedagogy, and audience participation in contemporary Indonesian Islam.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Digital Platforms as New Infrastructures of Qur'anic Knowledge

Digital platforms have fundamentally transformed the infrastructure through which Qur'anic knowledge is produced, accessed, circulated, and legitimized in contemporary Indonesia. Rather than functioning merely as technological channels for transmitting pre-existing religious content, digital platforms increasingly operate as epistemic environments that reorganize the social life of the Qur'an. The findings indicate that the Qur'an is no longer encountered primarily through face-to-face learning in mosques, pesantren, halaqah, or printed tafsir collections, but through interconnected digital ecosystems consisting of Qur'an applications, online tafsir portals, social media platforms, multimedia repositories, and algorithmically curated religious content. This transformation is evident in the proliferation of platforms such as Qur'an Kemenag, TafsirAlQuran.id, TafsirWeb, Quran.com, and numerous mobile applications that provide integrated access to Arabic texts, translations, recitations, thematic indexes, keyword searches, and interpretive materials (Indonesia, 2022; Quran.com, 2024; TafsirAlQuran.id, 2024; TafsirWeb, 2024).

The empirical evidence demonstrates that digital infrastructures have altered not only the accessibility of Qur'anic knowledge but also its modes of organization and consumption. Qur'an Kemenag, for example, institutionalizes state-authorized Qur'anic knowledge by integrating official translations, digital mushaf, and explanatory materials within a single platform (Indonesia, 2022). In contrast, platforms such as TafsirAlQuran.id and TafsirWeb employ thematic categorization, simplified language, contemporary issues, and user-friendly interfaces that facilitate broader public engagement with Qur'anic interpretation (TafsirAlQuran.id, 2024; TafsirWeb, 2024). The distinction between these platforms reveals that digitalization produces multiple regimes of authority rather than a single unified system of knowledge dissemination. While state-sponsored platforms emphasize institutional legitimacy, independent digital tafsir portals prioritize accessibility, responsiveness, and thematic relevance.

The findings further indicate that digital Qur'anic infrastructures increasingly extend beyond conventional websites into more sophisticated forms of technological mediation. Recent developments in AI-assisted tafsir systems, semantic databases, machine-learning-based Qur'anic search engines, and multimedia interpretation platforms demonstrate how digital technologies are becoming active participants in the production and organization of religious knowledge rather than passive storage mechanisms (Herliana et al., 2026; Sahimi et al., 2025; Sati et al., 2025). These systems enable users to navigate vast interpretive corpora, compare exegetical opinions, and retrieve thematic information

instantly. However, their growing influence also raises concerns regarding standardization, authenticity, and the displacement of traditional scholarly mediation. Although AI-driven frameworks seek to maintain alignment with authoritative sources such as al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Kathīr, scholars emphasize that automated systems remain dependent upon human supervision to preserve interpretive integrity and epistemological accountability (Herliana et al., 2026; Sahimi et al., 2025)

From the perspective of Living Qur'an theory, these developments suggest that the social reception of the Qur'an is undergoing a significant transformation. Rafiq conceptualizes the Living Qur'an as a dynamic process through which the Qur'an is embodied, transmitted, and practiced within everyday Muslim life (Rafiq, 2014). The present findings support this proposition while simultaneously extending it into the digital domain. In contemporary Indonesia, Qur'anic engagement increasingly occurs through activities such as searching verses via mobile applications, listening to digital murattal, sharing Qur'anic quotations on social media, participating in online tafsir discussions, and accessing thematic interpretations through digital portals. Consequently, the Living Qur'an is no longer confined to localized religious communities but is increasingly mediated through platform architectures that shape how Muslims encounter and interact with scripture. As Ahmad argues, the embodiment of Qur'anic teachings now occurs through digitally mediated practices that integrate religious devotion into everyday technological routines (Ahmad et al., 2026).

This transformation becomes even more evident when examined through the lens of digital religion theory. Campbell contends that digital religion emerges through the interaction of technology, religious practice, authority structures, and online communities (H. A. Campbell, 2013). The Indonesian case strongly supports this argument. The design features embedded within Qur'anic platforms—including search functions, recommendation systems, thematic tagging, audio integration, and social sharing tools—actively structure the user's engagement with religious knowledge. These features are not neutral technological additions; rather, they shape patterns of interpretation, influence reading behavior, and determine which forms of Qur'anic knowledge become most visible and accessible. In this sense, digital platforms function as religious infrastructures that participate in the construction of meaning itself.

The findings also reveal a process of platformization in which Islamic knowledge increasingly circulates through interconnected digital ecosystems rather than through isolated institutions. Studies on the platformization of Islamic knowledge have shown that digital platforms democratize access to religious interpretation while simultaneously fragmenting authority and creating new arenas of ideological contestation (Y. F. Hidayat, 2022; Musafa'ah et al., 2025; Wahid & Abdulloh, 2026). This phenomenon is observable in the Indonesian digital Qur'anic landscape, where traditional institutions coexist with independent platforms, social media influencers, online study groups, and algorithmically promoted religious content. The resulting environment expands opportunities for engagement with the Qur'an but also generates competing interpretive claims that challenge conventional hierarchies of authority.

At the same time, the findings suggest that digitalization should not be understood solely as a process of replacing traditional learning structures. Rather, evidence points toward the emergence of hybrid educational models that integrate digital and face-to-face forms of Qur'anic learning. Research on contemporary Qur'anic education demonstrates that digital tools increasingly complement traditional pedagogical methods by enhancing accessibility, flexibility, and continuity of learning while preserving elements of direct scholarly guidance (Genç & Yilmaz, 2025; Zohdi et al., 2024). Similar dynamics can be observed in Indonesia, where digital platforms frequently serve as extensions of pesantren networks, religious institutions, and established scholars rather than their complete substitutes.

The findings further refine Helland's distinction between *religion online* and *online religion* (Helland, 2000). Qur'an Kemenag exemplifies *religion online* by providing institutionally curated religious information in a largely one-directional format. Conversely, social media-based Qur'anic communities, online tafsir forums, TikTok learning groups, and Telegram-based Qur'anic networks exemplify *online religion* because they facilitate interaction, participation, and user-generated interpretation (Ghozali et al., 2022; Hasan et al., 2024). However, the Indonesian case does not fit neatly into either category. Most digital Qur'anic platforms combine institutional authority with participatory engagement, producing hybrid configurations that blur the boundaries between information dissemination and collaborative meaning-making.

This hybridity also exposes important ethical and epistemological challenges. The democratization of Qur'anic access can facilitate broader religious literacy, but it may also contribute to the erosion of traditional mechanisms of scholarly verification. Algorithmic visibility, commercial incentives, and platform logics can privilege content that is emotionally appealing or highly shareable over content that is methodologically rigorous (Sati et al., 2025; Zuhri & Pabbajah, 2026). Furthermore, digital tafsir spaces simultaneously amplify progressive and conservative interpretations, including competing narratives regarding gender relations, authority, and religious identity (Musafa'ah et al., 2025). As a result, the digitalization of the Qur'an generates new opportunities for inclusion and participation while also creating new vulnerabilities related to authenticity, authority, and interpretive accountability.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that digital platforms have become foundational infrastructures for the contemporary circulation of Qur'anic knowledge in Indonesia. More importantly, they show that digitalization is transforming the Living Qur'an from a predominantly community-based mode of reception into a platform-mediated religious formation. Theoretically, this finding extends Living Qur'an scholarship by highlighting the constitutive role of platforms, interfaces, algorithms, and digital infrastructures in shaping Qur'anic reception. The Qur'an continues to function as a living source of religious meaning, but its social life is increasingly organized through digital systems that regulate access, visibility, participation, and authority in contemporary Muslim society.

Digital Religious Authority and the Reconfiguration of Tafsir Legitimacy

Digital Qur'anic authority in Indonesia is best understood as a mediated and relational form of legitimacy in which scholarly competence remains important but is increasingly reconstituted through platform visibility, affective proximity, communicative performance, and audience recognition. The findings indicate that tafsir authority is no longer anchored exclusively in sanad, pesantren training, institutional affiliation, or mastery of classical exegetical tools. It is now negotiated through a hybrid field where academic mufassir, pesantren-based ulama, popular preachers, digital influencers, and platform algorithms jointly shape the public credibility of Qur'anic interpretation. This is evident in the digital presence of M. Quraish Shihab, Ustadz Adi Hidayat, Buya Yahya, and Habib Husein Ja'far, each of whom embodies a distinct mode of Qur'anic legitimacy: academic-exegetical authority, linguistic-normative authority, pesantren-based authority, and dialogical-popular authority respectively (Shihab, yt 2022; Hidayat, yt 2024; Yahya, yt 2024; Ja'far, yt 2024).

This finding supports Campbell's argument that online religious environments generate "multiple layers of authority" rather than a simple collapse of traditional religious hierarchy (H. Campbell, 2007). In the Indonesian Qur'anic sphere, authority is layered through text, institution, personality, audience trust, and technological mediation. Quraish Shihab's authority is sustained by academic reputation and tafsir scholarship, yet its digital circulation allows his exegetical voice to reach audiences beyond formal scholarly spaces (Shihab, 2022). Buya Yahya similarly extends pesantren-based authority through Al-Bahjah TV, demonstrating that digitalization does not necessarily weaken traditional ulama but may amplify their reach (Yahya, 2024). Conversely, Habib Husein Ja'far illustrates how dialogical style, youth-oriented language, and affective accessibility can generate religious credibility in ways that differ from classical tafsir authority (Ja'far, 2024). The Indonesian case therefore refines Campbell's theory by showing that digital platforms do not merely decentralize authority; they recombine inherited religious capital with media-based symbolic capital.

The findings also expand Hjarvard's theory of mediatization, which argues that media function as agents that reshape religious communication according to media logic (Hjarvard, 2008). In digital tafsir, this logic appears in the compression of long lectures into short clips, the use of emotionally resonant titles, algorithm-friendly narratives, and shareable Qur'anic messages. However, mediatization does not simply dilute religious content. In some cases, it enables complex tafsir to enter public discourse in more accessible forms. The theoretical issue, therefore, is not whether media corrupt or preserve religious authority, but how media logic reorganizes the criteria by which authority is recognized. Authority becomes performative: it must be displayed, narrated, formatted, circulated, and validated in public.

Recent scholarship on digital authority helps clarify this process. Wahid and Lohker show that digital platforms have produced new religious figures such as celebrity imams, cyber-muftis, and female

ulama activists whose authority emerges through text, affect, and algorithms (Lohlker & Wahid, 2026; Wahid & Abdulloh, 2026). Zaid's concept of liquid authority is particularly relevant because it explains how credibility in digital religion arises through relational proximity and trust while still drawing upon older religious practices (Zaid et al., 2026). The Indonesian tafsir field confirms this argument: digital authority does not replace traditional legitimacy but makes it fluid, mobile, and audience-dependent. A preacher's authority is strengthened when scholarly competence is translated into communicative intimacy and platform visibility.

Algorithmic mediation deepens this reconfiguration. Platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube do not neutrally host tafsir; they rank, recommend, and amplify content based on engagement metrics (Salim et al., 2016; Salma et al., 2025; Wahid & Abdulloh, 2026). This produces what may be called algorithmic tafsir visibility: interpretive content becomes more socially authoritative when it is repeatedly seen, shared, commented upon, and emotionally endorsed. Such visibility can democratize access to Qur'anic discourse, but it can also privilege slogan-like, affective, or polarizing interpretations over methodologically careful explanation. This concern is consistent with studies that view algorithms as ideological machines capable of commodifying religious knowledge and reproducing socio-economic hierarchies (Salam-Salmaoui et al., 2025; Sierocki, 2024). Siler further warns that algorithmic systems may intensify divisive religious discourse and hate speech by rewarding high-conflict engagement (Siler & Karsli, 2024).

The emergence of digital tafsir platforms and AI-assisted interpretive tools complicates the picture further. Platforms such as tanwir.id show how digital tafsir may democratize authority by promoting inclusive and gender-sensitive readings (Musafa'ah et al., 2025). At the same time, AI-based tafsir verification using NLP and machine learning has been proposed to authenticate interpretations against authoritative sources and reduce misinformation (Sahimi et al., 2025; Sati et al., 2025). Yet these technologies cannot resolve the problem of authority on their own. They may support verification, but they also introduce new questions about algorithmic bias, epistemic reduction, and who controls the standards of "authentic" interpretation. Narrative hermeneutics used by digital ulama further reveals that authority is not only a matter of doctrinal correctness but also of storytelling capacity, interpretive clarity, and participatory engagement (Salma et al., 2025).

The theoretical implication is that Qur'anic authority in digital Indonesia should be conceptualized as mediated Qur'anic authority: a composite form of legitimacy produced through the intersection of scholarly capital, institutional recognition, charismatic performance, algorithmic visibility, ethical credibility, and audience participation. This concept challenges linear accounts of secularization, democratization, or authority decline. It shows instead that digitalization multiplies the sources of legitimacy while intensifying the need for epistemic accountability. The contribution of this finding lies in reframing digital tafsir not as the displacement of ulama by influencers, but as a contested field in which sanad, media logic, algorithms, and public trust jointly determine the authority of Qur'anic knowledge.

The Transformation of Qur'anic Knowledge from Textual Tafsir to Everyday Moral Pedagogy

The findings complicate conventional distinctions between tafsir as scholarly textual interpretation and Qur'anic pedagogy as practical moral instruction, showing that digital Qur'anic discourse in Indonesia increasingly operates at the intersection of both. Previous scholarship on Qur'anic pedagogy has often emphasized the movement from traditional memorization, recitation, and teacher-centered transmission toward more cognitively informed and multimodal learning models (Ayyad, 2022; Parveen, 2025). This study confirms that shift, but adds that the transformation is not only pedagogical in the narrow educational sense. In Indonesian digital spaces, Qur'anic knowledge is increasingly reframed as everyday moral guidance addressing patience, livelihood, family relations, repentance, anxiety, worship discipline, hijrah, social ethics, and personal spiritual repair (Shihab, 2022; Hidayat, 2024; Yahya, 2024; TafsirAlQuran.id, 2024). The central transformation is therefore not merely from oral to digital instruction, but from textual commentary to practical moral orientation.

This finding refines earlier studies of modern Qur'anic education that focus primarily on learning effectiveness, memorization, comprehension, or instructional design. Parveen and Ayyad, for instance, emphasize how contemporary Qur'anic pedagogy incorporates cognitive strategies, reduced cognitive load, and multimodal learning to improve retention and understanding (Ayyad, 2022; Parveen,

2025). Genç similarly argues that digital Qur'anic education increases accessibility and flexibility, although it faces limitations in face-to-face interaction and the teaching of tajwid (Genç & Yilmaz, 2025). The Indonesian data support these observations but point to a broader socioreligious function: digital Qur'anic pedagogy does not simply help users learn the Qur'an more efficiently; it helps them translate Qur'anic messages into ethical vocabularies for everyday life. In this sense, the pedagogical value of digital tafsir lies less in instructional optimization than in moral contextualization.

The findings also speak to debates on popular exegesis. The digital circulation of Tafsir Al-Mishbah illustrates how authoritative tafsir can be made accessible to wider publics without entirely severing its connection to scholarly authority (Ali & Isnaini, 2024). Quraish Shihab's digital explanations often transform textual interpretation into ethical reflection, while Ustadz Adi Hidayat's lectures frequently connect Qur'anic verses with worship discipline and normative Muslim conduct (Shihab, 2022; Hidayat, 2024). Buya Yahya's digital preaching similarly turns Qur'anic explanation into guidance for akhlak and practical religious life (Yahya, 2024). These patterns resonate with studies of oral and socially reformist tafsir, including Gus Baha's interpretive style, which connects Qur'anic teachings to social realities and contemporary moral problems (Adim & Isnaini, 2024). They also echo Ayyāzī's broader conception of social tafsir as an interpretive orientation that addresses material, ethical, and communal challenges (Ayyāzī et al., 2011) Yet the Indonesian digital case adds an important dimension: popular tafsir is not only simplified tafsir; it is a mediated moral genre shaped by platform format, audience expectation, and the demand for immediate relevance.

This development confirms Living Qur'an scholarship while also extending its analytical range. Rafiq argues that the Qur'an lives through reception, transmission, transformation, and social practice (Rafiq, 2021). The present findings demonstrate that such reception increasingly takes the form of practical and affective pedagogy. When Qur'anic verses are mobilized to address anxiety, family tension, ethical work, social responsibility, or digital communication, the Qur'an is not merely interpreted but activated as a moral resource in ordinary life. This is consistent with studies showing that Qur'anic values shape everyday social behavior, gendered interaction, ritual practice, and community aesthetics in diverse Muslim contexts (Göknar, 2018; Supriadi et al., 2022). However, the Indonesian digital case differs because the pedagogical mediation occurs through short videos, thematic articles, quotations, captions, and shareable religious messages rather than through stable ritual communities alone.

At the same time, the findings complicate overly celebratory accounts of digital Qur'anic pedagogy. The mediatization of tafsir may increase accessibility, but it can also compress interpretive complexity. Hjarvard's theory of mediatization is useful here because it explains how media reshape religion according to genre, emotional appeal, and communicative efficiency (Hjarvard, 2008). In digital tafsir, Qur'anic explanation is often formatted as advice, motivation, storytelling, or moral reassurance. Such forms can be pedagogically powerful, but they may weaken attention to *asbāb al-nuzūl*, Arabic semantics, *munāsabah*, *qirā'āt*, legal reasoning, and the plurality of exegetical traditions. The issue is not that popular digital tafsir is inherently superficial, but that its platform conditions encourage selectivity, compression, and affective framing.

This tension is especially important in relation to digital morality. Hartwig argues that Qur'anic communication ethics, including truthful transmission and moral responsibility, are highly relevant for confronting misinformation and disinformation in digital spaces (Hartwig & Akhtar, 2026). Akilah similarly develops Qur'anic work ethics around justice, trust, and social responsibility in response to dehumanizing trends in digital labor (Akilah et al., 2026). These studies help clarify why digital Qur'anic pedagogy cannot be reduced to devotional advice. It also functions as an ethical framework for navigating technologically mediated life. Yet this ethical promise depends on interpretive accountability. Without adequate literacy, Qur'anic moral messages may be detached from context and turned into generalized slogans.

The findings therefore refine contemporary scholarship on Qur'anic reception. Saeed and Tottoli show that Qur'anic interpretation has historically adapted to new social needs while maintaining continuity with core scriptural principles (Saeed & Akbar, 2021; Tottoli, 2023). Ichwan further demonstrates how Sufi-inflected Qur'anic interpretations shape cultural narratives of tolerance and social justice (Ichwan et al., 2024). The Indonesian digital case supports this adaptive view but emphasizes that mediation now occurs through platform temporality, audience engagement, and digital

affect. Qur'anic knowledge becomes persuasive not only because it is textually grounded, but because it is experientially resonant and digitally shareable. Thus, this study positions digital Qur'anic pedagogy as a distinctive form of contemporary Qur'anic reception: neither merely classical tafsir in a new medium nor generic online motivation, but a platform-mediated moral pedagogy through which Indonesian Muslims connect scripture to everyday ethical, emotional, and social life.

Digital Audiences and the Social Construction of Qur'anic Reception

Digital audiences have become constitutive agents in the contemporary reception of the Qur'an, transforming Qur'anic meaning from a scholar-centered interpretive product into a socially negotiated, platform-mediated, and participatory process. This finding carries broader implications for Qur'anic studies because it challenges the assumption that reception occurs primarily after interpretation has been completed by authorized exegetes. In digital environments, reception is not a secondary stage of meaning-making; it is part of the process through which Qur'anic knowledge becomes visible, credible, affectively resonant, and socially actionable. Audience practices such as commenting, questioning, liking, sharing, subscribing, participating in live chats, and redistributing short clips demonstrate that Qur'anic interpretation is continuously reworked through digital interaction (Shihab, 2022; Hidayat, 2024; Yahya, 2024; Ja'far, 2024).

This implication is significant for Living Qur'an studies. Classical and contemporary studies of Qur'anic reception have often examined how the Qur'an is embodied in rituals, recitation, memorization, healing, education, social ethics, and local cultural practices. The present findings expand that field by showing that Qur'anic reception now also occurs through dispersed digital publics. YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and online tafsir platforms do not merely transmit Qur'anic content; they produce spaces in which audiences attach Qur'anic messages to personal experience, moral anxiety, legal questions, spiritual aspiration, and collective identity (Genç & Yilmaz, 2025; Ghozali et al., 2022; Zohdi et al., 2024). The digitization of Tafsir Al-Mishbah, for instance, allows users to study Qur'anic interpretation independently while remaining connected to an authoritative exegetical tradition (Ali & Isnaini, 2024). This indicates that digital reception is neither fully autonomous nor wholly dependent on traditional authority; it operates through a negotiated relationship between inherited scholarship and participatory engagement.

The findings also contribute to hermeneutical debates by showing that digital reception intensifies the plurality of Qur'anic meaning. Hall's encoding/decoding model helps explain why a single Qur'anic video or tafsir post may generate multiple forms of reception: moral reassurance, doctrinal affirmation, legal questioning, emotional identification, or even critical disagreement (Hall, 1980). Yet the Indonesian case goes beyond conventional audience reception theory because digital platforms make these interpretive responses publicly visible, searchable, and socially consequential. Comments and shares do not simply reflect reception; they participate in the circulation and validation of meaning. Salma's study of narrative-based Qur'anic interpretation on Instagram similarly shows that audience responses are often emotional, spiritual, and educational, revealing the participatory structure of digital religious discourse (Salma et al., 2025). TikTok-based Qur'anic learning further demonstrates how comments, questions, and shared experiences can shift religious authority toward more dynamic, user-responsive models (Ghozali et al., 2022).

At a methodological level, this finding suggests that Qur'anic studies must treat digital traces as legitimate empirical materials. Audience comments, reposts, interaction patterns, and platform-based responses are not merely supplementary data; they are evidence of how Qur'anic meaning is socially constructed. This supports Berger and Luckmann's theory that knowledge becomes socially real through externalization, objectivation, and internalization (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). In digital Qur'anic discourse, preachers externalize tafsir through audiovisual content, platforms objectify it through visibility metrics and recommendation systems, and audiences internalize or contest it through interaction. The social construction of Qur'anic discourse is therefore shaped by users, algorithms, and the blending of traditional and modern hermeneutics (Güler, 2026; Kayikci & D'Haenens, 2017; Lukman, 2018).

These findings also speak to wider debates in Islamic legal studies and religious authority. When audiences ask legal questions in comment sections or apply Qur'anic content to practical matters, digital reception becomes a space where normative reasoning is informally negotiated. This does not mean that

audiences become mufassir or jurists in the formal sense. Rather, they participate in what may be called vernacular normativity: the everyday appropriation of Qur'anic discourse to guide conduct, evaluate moral choices, and negotiate religious identity. Such participation democratizes Qur'anic interpretation, but it also raises concerns about oversimplification, misinformation, and weakened face-to-face pedagogical depth (Genç & Yilmaz, 2025; Zeki et al., 2014). Yilmaz similarly notes that concerns over credibility and misinformation shape how audiences engage with online Islamic resources (Yilmaz, 2026).

The broader social implication is that digital Qur'anic reception creates new religious publics that are fluid, cross-regional, and sometimes anonymous. Sari's notion of digital virtual villages is useful here, as online platforms connect users across geographical and cultural boundaries for Qur'anic Arabic learning and religious practice (Sari & Moore, 2024). These publics are not equivalent to pesantren, majelis taklim, or mosque communities, yet they perform some comparable functions: learning, affirmation, correction, belonging, and moral formation. Digital hermeneutics may therefore introduce greater equality and participation into Qur'anic discourse while also challenging traditional authority structures and interpretive gatekeeping (Ghozali et al., 2022; Zuhri & Pabbajah, 2026)

This does not imply that digital participation is inherently emancipatory. Platform algorithms can amplify some voices while marginalizing others, and popular engagement may favor emotionally compelling interpretations over careful hermeneutical reasoning. For this reason, hybrid models that combine digital accessibility with traditional scholarly depth remain essential for sustainable Qur'anic education (Genç & Yilmaz, 2025). The principal contribution of this finding is therefore conceptual: it proposes participatory Qur'anic reception as a framework for understanding how digital audiences help shape the authority, circulation, and everyday meaning of Qur'anic knowledge. In broader scholarly terms, the study shows that the Living Qur'an in the digital age must be analyzed not only through texts and interpreters, but also through audiences, platforms, and the social infrastructures that make reception visible.

CONCLUSION

This study has shown that the digitalization of the Living Qur'an in Indonesia is not merely a technological shift in the medium of Qur'anic communication, but a deeper transformation in the production, circulation, authorization, and reception of Qur'anic knowledge. The first objective of this study was to examine how Qur'anic knowledge is produced and circulated through digital platforms. The findings indicate that platforms such as Qur'anic websites, social media channels, tafsir portals, and mobile applications have become new infrastructures of Qur'anic knowledge. They make the Qur'an more accessible, searchable, portable, and shareable, while also shaping how users encounter, classify, and engage with Qur'anic meanings in everyday life.

The second objective was to analyze how religious authority is negotiated in Indonesia's digital Qur'anic sphere. The study demonstrates that Qur'anic authority is no longer determined solely by sanad, scholarly credentials, pesantren affiliation, or institutional recognition. These sources of legitimacy remain important, but they now interact with media visibility, communicative style, affective proximity, audience trust, and algorithmic circulation. Digitalization therefore does not simply replace traditional ulama with online influencers; rather, it produces a hybrid field of authority in which classical scholarship, institutional legitimacy, charismatic performance, and platform logic operate simultaneously.

The third objective was to explain how digital mediation transforms the reception and practice of the Living Qur'an. The study found that Qur'anic knowledge in digital spaces increasingly moves from formal textual tafsir toward practical moral pedagogy. Qur'anic verses are not only explained as textual meanings but are also mobilized as ethical guidance for daily concerns such as worship, family life, anxiety, repentance, social conduct, and personal spirituality. At the same time, digital audiences participate actively in constructing Qur'anic reception through comments, questions, sharing, emotional responses, and public engagement. This shows that Qur'anic meaning in digital environments is not completed by the preacher or platform alone, but is socially negotiated through interaction among texts, religious actors, technologies, and audiences.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in extending Living Qur'an studies into the domain of digital religious life. The findings suggest that the Qur'an is lived not only through ritual, recitation,

memorization, local tradition, or face-to-face religious communities, but also through platforms, interfaces, algorithms, digital archives, and participatory audiences. This study therefore proposes that the digital Living Qur'an should be understood as a mediated socio-religious formation in which scripture, authority, technology, and everyday practice are mutually constitutive. It also contributes to digital religion scholarship by showing that online Qur'anic engagement is not merely a case of religious communication, but a transformation of epistemic authority and interpretive practice.

Academically, this study is significant because it bridges Qur'anic studies, digital religion, religious authority studies, and the sociology of Indonesian Islam. It offers an integrated framework for understanding how sacred knowledge adapts to platform-based environments while retaining its role as a source of moral and religious meaning. The broader implication is that contemporary Qur'anic studies must take digital infrastructures seriously as sites of interpretation, reception, and authority formation. Ignoring digital platforms would overlook one of the most influential arenas in which Indonesian Muslims now encounter and negotiate Qur'anic knowledge.

Future research may develop this study in several directions. Comparative studies could examine differences between platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and tafsir websites in shaping Qur'anic authority and reception. Further research could also investigate audience interpretation more deeply through interviews, digital participant observation, or mixed-method analysis of comments and engagement patterns. In addition, future studies may explore how gender, generation, religious affiliation, class, and regional background influence the reception of digital Qur'anic knowledge. Such research would strengthen understanding of how the Living Qur'an continues to evolve within increasingly complex digital Muslim publics. The digitalization of the Living Qur'an in Indonesia reveals that the Qur'an remains a living source of religious meaning, but its modes of circulation, authority, pedagogy, and reception are being reshaped by the social and technological logic of the digital age. This transformation does not diminish the Qur'an's significance in Muslim life; rather, it reconfigures the ways Qur'anic knowledge is accessed, authorized, practiced, and socially lived in contemporary Indonesia.

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