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Utilizing TikTok as a Means of Religious Learning at the Salafiyah Dawuhan Islamic Boarding School

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ABSTRACT

The rapid development of digital technology has encouraged Islamic educational institutions, including Islamic boarding schools, to adapt their learning and da'wah strategies through social media platforms. This study aims to examine how TikTok is utilized as a medium for Islamic religious learning at the Salafiyah Dawuhan Islamic Boarding School and to explore the meanings constructed by participants in its use. This research employs a qualitative approach with a phenomenological method to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' experiences. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation, and analyzed using data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing, supported by triangulation techniques. The findings reveal that TikTok is utilized through live streaming of religious study sessions and short religious videos, enabling continuous and flexible access to learning beyond the physical classroom. Participants perceive TikTok not only as a communication platform but also as an extension of the pesantren learning environment. In addition, TikTok expands the reach of da'wah to a wider audience, although challenges such as limited digital literacy and the risk of misinformation remain. This study concludes that TikTok functions as a complementary learning medium that supports traditional learning practices while enhancing accessibility and engagement in religious education.

1. Introduction

Technological advances in information and communication have progressed at a rapid pace alongside the era of globalization (Feni et al., 2025). Social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok, as part of digital media, have played a strategic role in the process of transforming Islamic da'wah, including in the context of basic education and the boarding school environment (Laelatul & Nita, 2024). Islamic boarding schools, as religious educational

institutions, tend to have traditional learning characteristics, especially in rural areas, yet they continue to play a vital role in reaching and nurturing the broader Muslim community (Lathifatul & Anwari, 2023). Therefore, the utilization of social media presents a new opportunity for boarding schools to adapt their methods of Islamic da'wah and religious education to align with advancements in digital technology.

In line with these developments, social media now plays a significant role in daily life (Anas et al., 2024), particularly among the younger generation the primary users who have grown up amidst advancements in digital technology (Lia et al., 2022). Various social media platforms are utilized by preachers and religious educators as a means of conveying Islamic values and religious educational materials in a more interactive, engaging, and easily accessible manner to the general public (Arnisa et al., 2025). The use of social media in da'wah and religious education allows for a more flexible delivery of content and reaches a wider audience without the constraints of time and space (Vyqi et al., 2023).

Although it offers various conveniences, the use of social media as a means of da'wah also raises a number of issues. The rapid and widespread flow of information makes it difficult to verify the accuracy and validity of the religious content being disseminated, potentially leading to misunderstandings, distortions of teachings, and even the spread of deviant religious ideologies (Fujianti, 2025). Furthermore, the lack of direct interaction between preachers and their audience means that da'wah messages particularly among the younger generation risk being misinterpreted due to a lack of understanding of the context of Islamic teachings conveyed through social media (Darwin et al., 2025).

Salafiyah Dawuhan Islamic Boarding School, an educational institution in East Java, utilizes the TikTok platform as a means of da'wah and for disseminating Islamic content and religious education. This is achieved through live streams of religious study sessions led by one of the teachers at the boarding school, as well as the sharing of short religious-themed videos. Initially, these activities were intended for male students, but over time, some alumni and the general public have also joined online. The use of TikTok has opened up broader access to religious education, although it still presents challenges such as the potential for oversimplification of teachings, the risk of misinformation, and issues of digital ethics (Annisa & Mukaromah, 2025).

Recent research shows that the use of digital technology has driven the transformation of Islamic education and da'wah. (Muhammad et al., 2025) states that the integration of multimedia in Islamic boarding schools has a positive impact on the quality of learning and the effectiveness of da'wah. In line with this, (Athik, 2023) explains that the use of digital media in Islamic da'wah plays a crucial role in developing adaptive religious communication strategies that keep pace with technological advancements and can reach a broader global audience. Meanwhile, (Siti et al., 2026) found that social media, particularly TikTok, can enhance students' religiosity in Islamic Religious Education learning when accompanied by educator guidance. However, previous studies have not specifically examined the

use of TikTok as a tool for religious education in Islamic boarding schools. Based on this, this study focuses on the use of the TikTok platform as a medium for religious learning at the Salafiyah Dawuhan Islamic Boarding School (Ainol et al., 2025). These findings show that digital media has become an integral part of the transformation of learning, including in the context of pesantren-based Islamic education (Tika et al., 2026).

This study was conducted to examine how the social media platform TikTok is utilized as a medium for Islamic religious education at the Salafiyah Dawuhan Islamic Boarding School. Specifically, this study examines the ways in which TikTok is utilized in religious study sessions and the delivery of religious content, explores its role in supporting the religious learning process for students and the community, and identifies emerging challenges, such as the potential for oversimplification of teachings, the risk of misinformation, and issues of digital ethics within the context of Salafiyah Islamic boarding school education (Liyana, 2024).

2. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative approach using phenomenological methods to examine the research problem, focusing on a deep understanding of the meanings and experiences of the research subjects regarding the phenomenon of using the social media platform TikTok as a tool for religious education at the Salafiyah Dawuhan Islamic Boarding School. Qualitative research is a research method that focuses on efforts to understand the experiences or phenomena occurring among research subjects in their entirety through descriptive presentation in the form of language and words in natural situations, using various data collection techniques (F. N. Abdul, 2023). Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the researcher seeks to depict the research conditions as they are, based on data obtained in the form of narratives and visual documentation.

The research subjects were selected through purposive sampling, specifically individuals deemed to possess experience and understanding relevant to the phenomenon under study. In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the primary instrument, directly involved in the entire research process, from data collection to interpretation. To support this process, interview guidelines, observation sheets, and field notes were used as supporting instruments (Zuchri, 2021).

The research data collection process was conducted through in-depth interviews and direct observation of the research subjects within the boarding school environment. In-depth interviews were used to obtain detailed information regarding the informants' perspectives, experiences, and interpretations of the use of the social media platform TikTok as a tool for religious outreach within the boarding school environment (Syafri, 2022). In addition, observations were conducted to directly observe the activities and processes involved in the use of social media in a natural setting (Mukhlash, 2024). As a scientific method,

observation allows researchers to gain a direct understanding of behaviors and phenomena in a natural setting, resulting in data that is more comprehensive and reflective of the actual situation (Sandra & Fathana, 2022). In addition, documentation techniques were used to provide supporting data in the form of archives, field notes, screenshots of TikTok content, photos of activities, and other relevant documents to strengthen the research findings. In qualitative research, documentation serves to supplement data from interviews and observations and acts as a written data source that can reinforce the validity of the research findings (Amtai et al., 2023).

Data analysis was conducted qualitatively through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and systematic conclusion drawing. To ensure the validity of the data, this study employed triangulation techniques, specifically by comparing data obtained from various data collection methods such as interviews, observations, and documentation. Triangulation in qualitative research serves to enhance the validity, credibility, and reliability of research findings through the systematic use of various sources and methods (Bambang, 2024). Thus, the phenomenon under study can be understood more comprehensively from various perspectives.

3. Results and Discussion

Based on an interview with one of the religious teachers who uses social media, particularly TikTok, he stated that “We use TikTok as a platform for religious study sessions and da’wah so that students, alumni, and the general public can participate in these sessions even when they are outside the boarding school.” (Interview, February 1, 2026). This statement reflects the pesantren’s awareness of the need to expand the reach of religious learning beyond physical boundaries. More importantly, these narratives indicate that TikTok is perceived by participants not merely as a communication platform but as an extension of the pesantren learning environment that enables continuous engagement with religious teachings beyond the physical classroom. In this sense, digital space is not separate from traditional learning, but becomes an integral part of the religious educational experience.

In addition, one of the students who actively participates in religious study sessions via TikTok said “When I’m on leave or have activities outside the boarding school, I can still follow the study sessions via TikTok Live. And I can replay them if I don’t understand something.” (Student Interview, February 3, 2026). This experience reveals that students interpret TikTok as a medium that supports self-directed learning, allowing them to regulate their own pace of understanding. These narratives suggest a shift in learning experience from a rigid teacher-centered model toward a more flexible and personalized learning environment, where students actively construct their understanding through repeated access and reflection.

Meanwhile, one of the boarding school’s alumni stated “Since graduating, I’ve rarely been able to visit the boarding school in person. Thanks to TikTok Live, I can still follow the scripture study sessions just like before.” (Alumni Interview, February 5, 2026). This finding indicates that TikTok is experienced as a medium

that sustains emotional and intellectual connectedness with the pesantren. For alumni, participation in online study sessions is not merely about accessing knowledge, but also about maintaining a sense of belonging to the pesantren's religious and intellectual tradition. In line with this, the narratives of participants suggest that TikTok is understood not simply as a communication platform, but as an extension of the pesantren learning environment that enables continuous engagement with religious teachings beyond the physical classroom. This interpretation highlights the meaning of participants' lived experiences in using TikTok for religious learning, thereby strengthening the analysis in accordance with a phenomenological approach that emphasizes how individuals construct and sustain their connection to religious knowledge and community.

The social media manager for the Islamic boarding school also added "We usually take short video clips from religious lectures that we feel are important or relevant to daily life, so that they are easy to understand and appealing to the younger generation." (Interview with the Media Manager, February 6, 2026). This narrative demonstrates a process of pedagogical adaptation in which religious teachings are recontextualized into short-form digital content. Rather than simply transferring conventional material to a new medium, this transformation reflects a conscious effort to reinterpret and present Islamic teachings in a way that resonates with contemporary audiences. In this case, TikTok is used not only as a dissemination tool but also as a space where meaning is negotiated, allowing the essence of the teachings to be preserved while becoming more accessible, relevant, and engaging within the dynamics of digital culture.

Research findings indicate that TikTok is utilized by the Salafiyah Dawuhan Islamic Boarding School in two primary ways: live streaming of religious study sessions and the posting of short religious-themed videos. Live streamed sessions are conducted regularly by religious instructors and attended by students, alumni, and the broader community. The material includes classical text studies, basic fiqh explanations, and practical religious guidance. These findings demonstrate that the pesantren extends its role beyond a physical educational institution into a digital center of da'wah and learning, unconstrained by time and space. This supports previous studies highlighting that digital media enhances learning motivation and accessibility (Tika et al., 2026).

In addition to live streaming, the pesantren also disseminates short videos containing excerpts from lectures, moral reminders, and worship guidance. These are presented using simple language and engaging visuals aligned with TikTok's user characteristics. This indicates a strategic transformation in da'wah delivery, where religious messages are simplified without losing their substantive meaning, positioning TikTok not merely as entertainment media but as a contextual educational tool. For example, on January 28, 2026, a short video titled "*The Importance of Maintaining One's Intentions in Seeking Knowledge*", with a duration of 2 minutes and 15 seconds, was uploaded as an excerpt from the study of the book *Ta'lim Muta'allim*. Within three days, the video received 3,842 views, 512 likes, and 46 comments. In addition, on February 2, 2026, a live streaming session lasting 75 minutes was conducted on the book *Nasoihul Ibad*, attracting 187

active viewers and generating 58 comments containing questions related to the fiqh topics being discussed.

These findings show that TikTok is used not only for content dissemination through short videos but also for interactive learning through live streaming. A religious study session is conducted through the live streaming feature, allowing the ustaz to deliver learning not only to students but also to alumni and the wider community who join the session via the TikTok application. This interactive feature shows that the learning process is not one-way, but enables two-way communication between the ustaz and the audience. The implementation of this activity is presented in Figure 1.



Figure 1. A religious study session led by a cleric at the Salafiyah Dawuhan Islamic Boarding School, broadcast via digital media.

These visual findings reinforce the interview results, showing that TikTok is utilized as a medium for religious outreach and learning that adapts to advancements in digital technology. The interactions that occur during the live streaming session, including audience questions and responses to the presented material, illustrate an active learning process. This activity is presented in Figure 2.

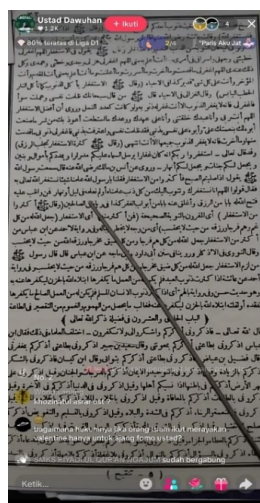


Figure 2. Documentation of audience interaction during a live broadcast of a religious study session via TikTok.

The presence of these comments shows active user participation, meaning that the learning process is not merely one-way but fosters two-way interaction between the religious teacher and the audience. This finding reinforces the notion that TikTok's live streaming feature is utilized as an interactive and context-specific space for religious dialogue to support religious education within the pesantren environment. To clarify how TikTok is used in religious education, the types of activities, target users, and educational functions are systematically identified and analyzed. The findings shows that TikTok is used in a structured manner and tailored to educational needs and user characteristics. The summary of these findings is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Use of TikTok Features in Learning and Da'wah Activities at Islamic Boarding Schools

Forms of Utilization	Activity Description	Target Audience	Learning Functions
Live streaming of religious lectures	Live broadcasts of scripture study sessions and religious guidance by the ustaz	Students, alumni, community members	Presentation of core material and preaching
Short religious videos	Excerpts from religious lectures and reminders about worship	The general public, young people	Reinforcement and review of material
Content archive	Recordings of religious lectures available for replay	Students and alumni	Self-directed learning and reflection on the material

The use of social media as a means of disseminating religious knowledge at the Salafiyah Dawuhan Islamic Boarding School indicates a shift in da'wah patterns from a conventional approach toward a hybrid model that integrates physical and digital spaces. Social media serves not only as a platform for publication but also as a space for interactive learning that allows students and alumni to remain directly connected to the study of religious texts (Rida & Maftuhah, 2024). This finding aligns with previous research stating that social media expands public access to religious information and opens up a space for two-way communication between preachers and their audience (Anis & Khusnul, 2021). However, in the context of this pesantren, the use of TikTok still upholds the authority of the ustaz as the central figure in the transmission of knowledge; thus, the digital adaptation that has taken place is selective and does not alter the traditional system of studying classical texts that has long been a hallmark of the pesantren.

The results of observations and interviews indicate that the use of TikTok makes a tangible contribution to supporting the religious education process in Islamic

boarding schools. For students, TikTok serves as a supplementary learning tool that allows them to revisit lesson materials that have been presented in person, especially when they are unable to attend in person. This flexibility in access helps students deepen their understanding of religious texts that require repetition and step by step explanation (Angelica & Anita, 2021). In this context, digital media does not replace face to face learning, but rather expands the learning environment, making the process of absorbing the material more sustainable.

For alumni and the general public, TikTok serves as a bridge for religious education, reconnecting them with the tradition of pesantren study circles. This expands the reach of da'wah and strengthens the position of pesantren as centers for the transmission of Islamic values in the digital space. This aligns with previous research indicating that TikTok has a relatively high initial audience engagement rate compared to other platforms (Wisnu et al., 2026). The findings of this study show that such engagement can be directed toward systematic religious text study, rather than merely consuming popular religious content. This is supported by research indicating that social media can expand access to learning beyond the formal classroom setting.

Although the use of digital technology offers numerous benefits, its implementation also faces a number of challenges. One of the main challenges is the uneven distribution of information and communication technology (ICT) skills among educators in a national survey shows that only about 65% of Islamic Religious Education teachers are able to use digital platforms independently and effectively (M et al., 2025). In addition, the issue of the validity and credibility of religious content on social media is also a concern, given that some of this content has not been verified scientifically or in accordance with Islamic law. A UNESCO report (2022) reveals that the risk of the spread of hoaxes and defamatory content on social media may increase if not accompanied by adequate oversight (Alwazir, 2024), situation is particularly relevant to the context of the Salafiyah Dawuhan Islamic Boarding School, given that the management of digital media still relies heavily on the individual competencies of the educators and school administrators, These findings are consistent with research that emphasizes the importance of educators' readiness to effectively adopt digital technology in teaching (Ainol et al., 2025).

To address these challenges, it is necessary to improve educators' digital literacy and pedagogical competencies through comprehensive and ongoing training programs. emphasizes that digital training must encompass both the mastery of technological skills and the reinforcement of ethical social media use grounded in Islamic values, so that the religious content shared is not only informative but also reflects noble moral character. Furthermore, the active role of account administrators and the guidance of religious scholars are crucial factors in maintaining the quality, accuracy, and credibility of religious content in the digital space, This is also consistent with research showing that educators play a crucial role in enhancing the effectiveness of religious education through a targeted and structured approach (Fadhilah & Nurul, 2025).

This study provides a contribution to the field of Islamic education, particularly regarding the adaptation of digital media in Salafi Islamic boarding schools (M. Abdul et al., 2025). Unlike previous studies, which generally focused on social media as a tool for general da'wah or institutional promotion, This study shows that TikTok is directly integrated into the teaching of classical texts through interactive live streaming features (Khatipah et al., 2025). This integration forms a tradition-based hybrid learning model, in which digital media serves as an extension of the learning space without displacing the pedagogical structure of the pesantren. Thus, the challenges faced by Pondok Pesantren Salafiyah Dawuhan are not merely technical issues regarding the use of digital media, but also relate to the management of scholarly authority and the ethics of da'wah in the virtual space to ensure they remain in harmony with pesantren traditions, This reinforces previous findings that the integration of technology in education not only improves the quality of learning but also fosters pedagogical innovation (Lia et al., 2022).

Based on the research findings, three main analytical themes can be identified. First, TikTok functions as a complementary learning medium that enhances accessibility to religious materials through flexible time and space, enabling continuous learning beyond the classroom. Second, TikTok expands the reach of da'wah by connecting not only current students but also alumni and the wider community, thereby strengthening the social and educational role of the pesantren in the digital sphere. Third, the use of TikTok also introduces challenges, particularly related to limited digital literacy among educators and the potential risk of oversimplification and misinformation. These findings highlight the dual nature of digital media integration in religious education, offering both opportunities for innovation and challenges that require careful management.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that TikTok is effectively utilized as a complementary medium for Islamic religious learning at the Salafiyah Dawuhan Islamic Boarding School, functioning as an extension of the pesantren learning environment. Through live streaming and short-form video content, the platform enables continuous, flexible, and accessible engagement with religious materials beyond the physical classroom. These findings indicate a shift toward more self-directed and sustained learning experiences while maintaining the authority of traditional religious instruction.

Furthermore, the integration of TikTok expands the reach of da'wah by connecting students, alumni, and the wider community, thereby reinforcing the social and educational role of the pesantren within the digital sphere. This study highlights that digital media, when used strategically, does not replace traditional learning but rather complements and extends it in meaningful ways. However, this study also identifies several critical challenges, including limited digital literacy among educators, the potential oversimplification of religious teachings, and concerns regarding the credibility of online content. Therefore, the effective integration of TikTok in religious education requires continuous development of educators'

digital competencies, strengthened content supervision, and the preservation of ethical and pedagogical values rooted in pesantren traditions.

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