Exploring adolescents' digital information-seeking patterns and religious behavior

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Abstract

Generation Z adolescents' religious information-seeking behavior has undergone significant transformations in understanding and studying the patterns of searching, processing, and using religious information. Research gaps exist in local cultural variations on transforming Generazion Z adolescents' religious information-seeking behavior in the digital era, which also occurs in information access patterns, social media platform preferences, and responses to religious content. This study focused on information access using the Ellis Model to analyze the behavior of information search stages: browsing, chaining, filtering, monitoring, and understanding adolescents' religious preferences. This study used a qualitative approach with a case study method involving *Rohis* activists from six high schools in three cities, Medan, Yogyakarta, and Makassar, as research samples. Data were collected through observation and FGD. Study results showed that Generation Z accessed religious information digitally through social media due to its accessibility and interactivity. However, they still referred to local and popular religious figures to clarify and validate religious information. Social media played an important role in shaping religious views despite the challenges of spreading misinformation and disinformation. Their information-seeking behavior reflected a combination of digital exploration and conventional references; adolescents actively utilized, created, and shared religious information. The Ellis Model's relevance in understanding information-seeking behavior in the digital era and cultural variations contributes to information behavior study by highlighting the dynamics of technology use in meeting the younger generation's spiritual needs. Practical implications include recommendations for improving digital literacy through technology-based education and partnerships with religious authorities to provide credible and moderate content.

Keywords: Information seeking behavior; Adolescents; Digital era; Religious information; Islam Indonesia

Mengeksplorasi pola pencarian informasi digital remaja dan perilaku keagamaan

Abstrak

Perilaku pencarian informasi keagamaan remaja, khususnya Generasi Z, telah mengalami transformasi yang signifikan dalam memahami dan mempelajari pola pencarian, pemrosesan, dan penggunaan informasi keagamaan. Kesenjangan penelitian dalam variasi budaya lokal pada transformasi perilaku pencarian informasi keagamaan remaja pada Generasi Z di era digital. Pola ketersediaan informasi, preferensi platform media sosial, dan respon terhadap konten keagamaan. Menganalisis tahapan perilaku pencarian informasi tentang pemahaman dan preferensi spiritual remaja dengan menggunakan Model Ellis, yaitu browsing, chaining, filtering, dan monitoring. Pendekatan kualitatif dengan metode studi kasus, melibatkan aktivis Rohis sebagai sampel dari enam SMA di masing-masing kota, yaitu Medan, Yogyakarta, dan Makassar. Teknik pengumpulan data melalui FGD dan observasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Generasi Z mengakses informasi keagamaan secara digital melalui media sosial karena sifatnya yang mudah diakses dan interaktivitasnya. Namun, Generasi Z masih merujuk pada tokoh agama lokal dan populer untuk klarifikasi dan validasi. Media sosial memainkan peran penting dalam membentuk pandangan keagamaan, meskipun memiliki tantangan berupa risiko penyebaran informasi yang tidak kredibel. Perilaku pencarian informasi mencerminkan kombinasi eksplorasi digital dan referensi konvensional; generasi Z mengonsumsi dan secara aktif membuat dan membagikan detail keagamaan. Relevansi Model Ellis dalam memahami perilaku pencarian informasi di era digital dan variasi budaya berkontribusi pada studi perilaku informasi melalui dinamika penggunaan teknologi dalam memenuhi kebutuhan spiritual generasi muda. Implikasi pada penelitian ini untuk meningkatkan literasi digital melalui pendidikan berbasis teknologi dan kolaborasi dengan para tokoh agama untuk memberikan konten yang kredibel dan moderat.

Kata Kunci: Perilaku pencarian informasi; Remaja; Era digital; Informasi keagamaan; Islam Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

Generation Z is known as the digital generation, born between 1997 and 2012, and grew up with digital technology since adolescence, aged between 12 to 18 years. They have a high propensity to utilize technology, including for spiritual needs, as an integral part of their lives. The digital age plays an important role, with social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok being the primary sources of access to religious information.

Social media has become a means of entertainment and fulfillment of cognitive, social, and identity needs, including religious understanding. Unlike the previous generation, who relied more on books or direct lectures, today's adolescents prefer interactive and fast methods, such as watching short *da'wah* videos on TikTok, following online studies on YouTube, or discussing through virtual communities about religion in WhatsApp groups (Febriani & Ritonga, 2022; Prasojo & Yuliana, 2021). This phenomenon marks a shift from a conventional to a more interactive and accessible digital approach. The aspects that shape adolescents' religious information behavior are family, social environment, religious education, and media (Vaterlaus & Winter, 2021). Gen Z actively uses search features for information about inspirational quotes, religious figures, religious reviews, and sermons. Information behavior is not only just passive consumption. Generation Z also actively shares information and conducts discussions online, creating a digital ecosystem to deepen individual and collective religious understanding.

Adolescents' religious information seeking behavior within the uses and gratifications theory framework.

Information behavior is the act of using and fulfilling needs in adolescent spirituality. The concept of uses and gratifications explains that adolescents use social media to fulfill cognitive needs (increasing religious knowledge), social needs (a community with people who share the same interests), and identity needs (expressing their faith online) (Pelletier et al., 2020; Widjaya & Komara, 2023). Fulfillment of cognitive needs for relevant and easy-to-understand religious knowledge, such as watching short lectures, reading inspirational quotes, or seeking guidance on religious practices through social media. Fulfilling social needs by providing space to interact with communities with similar religious values can be seen from the increasing trend of adolescent participation in online religious discussions, such as following famous ustadz accounts on Instagram and interacting with interactive da'wah content. Adolescents articulate their religious identity through uploads, comments, or the dissemination of religious content, which fortifies their spiritual identity inwardly and socially, even generating their religious content to inspire others (Freeman et al., 2023).

Information technology facilitates internet access and social media to obtain religious knowledge; however, there are considerable issues in determining the credibility of the sources one encounters. Information and digital literacy are crucial because only a small portion of the information circulating in the digital world is reliable and accurate. The religious information behavior of adolescents can choose religious details on social media according to their interests and relevance. Ease of access is the advantage of social media, where information can be accessed

anytime and anywhere without time or location restrictions. Besides, it allows adolescents to obtain religious information according to their needs, whether for worship, learning, or to deepen spiritual understanding. Social media offers interactivity, where adolescents can participate in discussions or interact directly with religious figures or related communities that enrich religious experiences, support deeper understanding, and strengthen social relationships in the context of adolescent spirituality (Marsh & Hoff, 2019).

Ellis's model in adolescents' access to religious information. Ellis' information behavior model is an approach that outlines the stages that individuals go through when seeking, filtering and using information (Prijana et al., 2023; Yangyuen et al., 2020). This model can be used to understand how information technology, such as social media, becomes a means to meet adolescents' needs for religious information. The browsing phase (local search) delineates how adolescents seek out familiar sources, such as religious figures' social media accounts or online forums.

The chaining phase occurs when an adolescent links information from one source to another, for example, by linking profiles from YouTube to Instagram. The targeted search phase includes using technologies to search for specific materials, such as prayer guides or explanations of specific religious topics. In the differentiating phase, adolescents differentiate between relevant and reliable sources of information and select those from respected religious leaders or credible institutions. The second stage means monitoring and following the sources of information to stay up to date,

for example, by subscribing to YouTube or following social media, such as Instagram or TikTok. Extraction involves collecting valuable materials, writing down inspirational quotes, or watching short lectures. Another essential stage is filtering, which involves evaluating the relevance and credibility of information, especially in the context of the abundance of biased or extreme information on social media. The final stage ends with completing the information search process by applying the results in worship practices, discussions with friends, or sharing on social media (Case, 2012; Cho et al., 2022).

Furthermore, Ellis' model highlights the importance of digital literacy in helping adolescents access, understand, and use religious information critically and moderately. Several previous studies have been conducted to understand further the survey conducted by the Center for Islamic and Community Studies (PPIM) UIN Jakarta. Many Indonesian adolescents, especially from the Millennial Generation born between 1981 and 1996 and Generation Z, use social media as their primary source of religious information. The survey results show that although the younger generation is not very devout or routine in religious rituals, their views on religion tend to be more conservative than previous generations. Social media plays a vital role in shaping views and is most active in accessing religious information through various media (PPIM UIN Jakarta, 2021). This indicates that social media plays a significant role in shaping religious understanding and views among adolescents. The use of social media is closely related to the level of maturity and religious commitment among adolescents. Differences in social media usage affect

variations in the level of maturity and religious commitment among adolescents. Adolescents try to fulfill their religious information needs from external sources through social media (Retpitasari & Oktavia, 2020). Social media provides extensive access to religious information from various external sources, making their religious information more flexible and diverse. The platform can impact how they form and strengthen their religious beliefs and practices.

Access to religious information among high school students who join religious communities, such as *Rohis*, is essential in organizing religious activities, disseminating religious values, and forming a religious community among students. *Rohis* provides access to religious information and shapes the way students understand and apply religious teachings in their lives. Access to religious information includes various aspects, namely sources of information, methods of obtaining information and the process of internalizing these values in everyday life, thus forming religious views among adolescents, for example, views on relationships with friends of different religions, understanding of tolerance, the meaning of jihad, terrorism, Islamic law, nationalism, and the concept of state and nation (Dalimunthe & Purwaningtyas, 2020).

Access to and quality of religious information plays a significant role in shaping students' attitudes toward tolerance. A recent survey by the Setara Institute for Democracy and Peace pointed to concerns about the increasing number of actively intolerant high school students in five cities in Indonesian. The number of actively intolerant students has increased since the 2016 survey. In the previous survey, 2.4% of students were categorized as actively intolerant; now, this number has increased (Wardah, 2023). Students with limited internet access tend to have more moderate views compared to students with unlimited internet access (PPIM UIN Jakarta, 2017). This can happen because, without internet access, students cannot understand various information, especially about extremist or radical content, as it is mostly found online. Without access to the Internet, people rely more on tailored sources, such as textbooks or at least materials provided directly by educators, which usually show a more measured and organized approach.

According to research by the Maarif Institute, high school students are considered the most vulnerable to being influenced by radical ideology. One factor that supports this vulnerability is the history of these cities, which are known as the origin of a number of terrorists. In addition, radicalism also enters adolescents through religious activities at Islamic religious schools or *Rohis*, which often become a means of spreading this ideology (Suyanto et al., 2022). Radical ideas can infiltrate the school environment through various factors such as teacher teaching methods in the classroom, textbooks that may contain intolerant views that obscure understanding of the material, alumni intervention and influence in extracurricular activities, and weak school policies (Rahmawati et al., 2023). Previous research has been conducted by Yani (2014) who stated that *Rohis* activists are one of the extracurricular activities favored by teenagers in high schools. This study was conducted as a policy study at SMA Negeri 3 and 4 in Medan City, North Sumatra. The results of the study revealed

that teenage students participating in *Rohis* preferred light and easy-to-understand religious readings, although they tended not to know the names of the authors and the reading (including the intellectual background and personal life of the authors) and did not know the reference sources used in the reading (Yani, 2014). The acceptance of Islamic spiritual activists on religious literature in Jakarta shows that most students have limited understanding and narrow perspectives. This causes their preference for religious literature to lean more towards religious – themed novels that support obligatory and *sunnah* adolescent worship practices (Yani, 2014).

Reading materials found in the field for *Rohis* groups include books, magazines, bulletins, mentoring materials, and video CDs and DVDs. In addition, news from the internet and social media are also included in the category of reading materials. Some of these reading materials, such as old texts inherited from seniors before 2010, tend to be less popular and rarely accessed by *Rohis* teenagers and other teenagers. On the other hand, religious readings that are more frequently accessed are those that do not only focus on dogmatic teachings (such as Salafi) but also include more moderate readings. In addition, *Rohis* students access reading sources more from online media and social media (Maknun et al., 2022). Previous studies have shown that social media, such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and WhatsApp, have become the main tools for adolescents to seek religious information, especially to access lectures, inspirational quotes, and spiritual discussions (Dalimunthe & Purwaningtyas, 2020; Maknun et al., 2022; Vaterlaus & Winter, 2021). In addition, local religious leaders and religious

communities such as *Rohis* also play an important role in shaping adolescents' religious understanding through conventional approaches through direct lectures and digital content (Rahmawati et al., 2021; Suyanto et al., 2022; Yani, 2014). However, several gaps still need to be addressed in this study. First, there is still a need for studies that discuss how adolescents integrate conventional and digital approaches in shaping their religious understanding. Second, previous studies have yet to explore how cultural variations, urbanization levels, and access to technology in regions such as Medan, Yogyakarta, and Makassar affect social media platform preferences and responses to religious content. Third, applying the Ellis Model in the context of religious information-seeking behavior has not been discussed explicitly in analyzing stages such as browsing, chaining, filtering, and monitoring. Finally, few comparative studies across cultures and regions still hamper a deeper understanding of the influence of social and cultural factors on religious information-seeking behavior.

This study aims to explore how adolescents integrate conventional and digital approaches in seeking and understanding religious information. It further aims to identify cultural variations in social media platform preferences and responses to religious content by applying the Ellis Model to analyze adolescents' religious information-seeking stages. In addition, this study serves as a cross-cultural and regional comparative study to understand the influence of cultural characteristics, level of urbanization, and access to technology on religious information-seeking behavior. It also seeks to evaluate the influence of access and quality of religious information on

religious maturity, religious commitment, and attitudes toward tolerance and moderation of religious ideology. The contribution of this research lies in three main aspects. Theoretically, this research will develop an understanding of the application of the Ellis Model in the context of religious information seeking in the digital era and enrich the literature on integrating conventional and digital approaches. Practically, this research will provide recommendations for educators, policymakers, and religious figures to design technology-based *da'wah* strategies that are relevant and responsive to cultural contexts, as well as improve digital literacy among adolescents so that they can critically evaluate the credibility of information. Empirically, this study provides comparative data across cultures and regions that can support the development of more inclusive and relevant *da'wah* strategies. This study can make a significant contribution to understanding religious information-seeking behavior in the digital era, supporting efforts to improve the quality of digital literacy, and strengthening moderate technology-based *da'wah*.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study used a case study method, using qualitative data from *Rohis* (Islamic Spirituality Organization) adolescents collected through field observations to understand how adolescents gained access to religious information. The researcher takes a direct approach by following events chronologically, assessing causal relationships, obtaining informative explanations, and uncovering unexpected findings so that the explanations are informative and systematic and go beyond initial assumptions (Bazen et al., 2021; Davidson et al., 2019).

This case study analyzed *Rohis* activities in public high schools in three major cities in Indonesia, namely Medan, Yogyakarta, and Makassar. The cities were selected based on demographic and cultural geography factors, with the following characteristics: 1) The age range of the informants was between 15 and 17 years; 2) Informants were Muslim and were active members of *Rohis*; 3) Schools with Indonesian curriculum, religious education as a compulsory subject; 4) Relatively high urbanization rates and higher mobility of young people in accessing religious information; 5) The presence of a significant educated middle class, which provided access to educational and technological resources; and 6) Adolescents were actively involved in formal and informal religious activities. The research involved informants from six schools representing each city, with five participants per school: three *Rohis* students, one *Rohis* instructor, and one Islamic religious education teacher.

The data collection methods used were Focus Group Discussion and observation. FGDs are conducted to gain an in-depth understanding of the information behavior and religious perceptions of *Rohis* students who actively participate in religious activities (Akyıldız & Ahmed, 2021). Interview questions covered motivations for using social media, platform preferences, reliability assessments, and stages taken in seeking religious information through digital and conventional media. *Rohis* instructors as mentors and Islamic religious education teachers in participating schools provide perspectives and contributions in shaping *Rohis* religious characteristics. FGD data in

three cities provided insights into the various social and educational factors influencing adolescents' access to and perceptions of religious information. Some of the questions asked were: 1) What is your primary motivation for using social media to seek religious information?; 2) Which platform do you use most often and why; 3) How do you ensure that the information you access is reliable; 4) What steps do you take in searching for your religious information through digital and conventional media? The next method was direct observation of *Rohis* extracurricular activities carried out by high school students. This approach analyzed religious education education practices, religious views, and how students access religious information and readings through conventional and digital media.

The data analysis technique used was data reduction, namely by simplifying, selecting, and focusing the collected data, then categorizing it based on relevant and meaningful information and focusing on the core aspects of the research. Next was data presentation; the reduced data was continued with data presentation, where the summarized data was arranged and condensed in tables or other appropriate formats to see the patterns and relationships between digital and conventional access to religious information. Finally, data validation involved repeated reflection on the data and ensuring that conclusions were supported by sufficient and accountable evidence through member checking and data triangulation. Data triangulation was conducted by comparing findings from FGDs, observations, and additional documents (such as participants' social media posts or religious activities records). Combining multiple data sources can increase the accuracy and consistency of findings (Miles et al., 2018). This study outlined the stages of Ellis' Model of religious information behavior. It began with identifying needs and motivations, such as uncertainty about religious concepts encountered on TikTok or Instagram. Engagement with known and familiar sources while browsing, including popular content creators and religious profiles on Instagram. The next step was chaining, searching for links or recommendations to research similar topics more in-depth. By filtering, adolescents should critically evaluate the credibility of sources through local religious figures or prominent religious institutions. Extraction transfers vital key reference points to different long-term/emergency storage formats in the monitoring. In the monitoring stage, adolescents consistently tracked developments from reliable sources, such as subscribing to YouTube channels or reviewing Instagram Stories. The final stage was using information for individual practice, group discourse, or dissemination on social media.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It is important to first understand individuals' information needs, especially in the context of a highly information-consumptive global society to understand how information access works. The need for information often arises from a strong desire to acquire knowledge or understanding. In an information society characterized by the creation, dissemination, processing, and use of information, the impact of globalization is profound. This society has further evolved into a digital society, where almost half of the information needs are met through

digital networks, underscoring the centrality of technology in meeting contemporary information demands (Lee et al., 2018; Soong et al., 2020). Information needs consist of three groups: 1) physiological needs, which are the basic needs that must be met to sustain physical life, such as the need for food and drinks; 2) affective, namely, needs that are related to feelings and emotions, such as the need to fulfill personal ambitions and seek emotional satisfaction; 3) cognitive needs, or needs derived from the wish to comprehend, for example, the need for more profound details and refreshing knowledge. The need for information in today's cyber and global society often interacts with these three categories, showing how important information is in fulfilling various aspects of human life (Mowbray et al., 2018; Santos & Caldas, 2016; Yu & Liu, 2022).

Information needs shape information behavior that includes the processes and methods used by individuals to fulfill them. Global information exchange and dissemination have become a digital culture with an information society connected to the network using technological devices. Global Village is a concept about the internet that connects distance and time so that information exchange occurs instantly without geographical limitations. Through the Internet, users can access various sources of information, ranging from simple to very complex, tailored to the specific needs of each individual. Sources are not limited to text-based content but also include multimedia, scientific research, and digital data that can be stored locally or printed for offline use (Hura & Singhal, 2001; Jauhiainen et al., 2022; Saura et al., 2022).

The Internet has created a new culture that is integral and interactive, creating new media. It offers advanced features such as digitization, convergence, interactivity, and network development in the creation and dissemination of messages or information. Individuals can choose the information they want to consume, control the output of information, and adjust choices to individual preferences. Interactivity is a key concept in understanding new media, making it a more personal and flexible device compared to traditional media (Albadri, 2023; Noh, 2015).
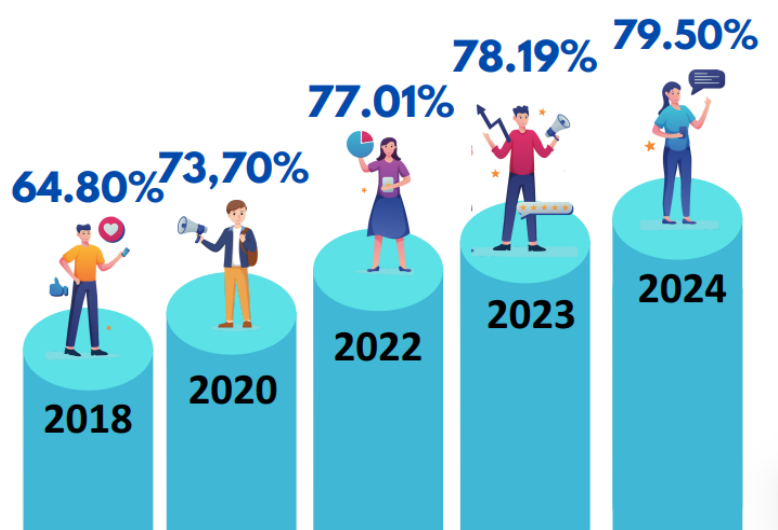

Figure 1. Internet Penetration in Indonesia
Source: (APJII, 2024)

Figure 1 shows internet penetration over the past 5 years, from 2018 to 2024, and there has been a significant increase in internet penetration in Indonesia. This growth has significantly impacted people's digital information search and management behavior. Internet dependence increases in obtaining information through social media, search engines, or news websites. There is a shift in information behavior driven by the ease and speed of access. As internet penetration expands, more and more individuals can access various information through digital devices such as smartphones and computers. This trend has fostered a habit of relying on digital sources such as Google, YouTube, social media platforms, and news websites as primary sources of information. This evolution underscores the pivotal role of internet access in shaping modern information-seeking behaviors, as one informant stated:

> "... I usually access it for religious purposes when I come across something I do not understand. When I do, it is often random and does not take too much time; once I am done, that is it. Usually, I use YouTube and social media platforms like TikTok or Instagram. I enjoy listening to content like self-reflection or religious sermons, which are the ones I often revisit" (Informant 1, Interviewed, February 18, 2023).

The diversity of information media in digital form changes individual information behavior involving a series of access methods, media use, information processing, and application of search results in everyday life (Purwaningtyas, 2018; Rachinger et al., 2019; Reed, 2018). The increasing dependence on digital media such as social media platforms TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter (X) has become a primary source for obtaining news, views, and information related to religion. The tendency to choose online media is considered more updated, engaging, and interactive. In addition to social media, religious information can be obtained through official news sites, discussion groups, and online communities. Changes in information consumption patterns have caused people to consume information in more varied formats, namely text, images, videos, podcasts, and others. The video format is one of the most dominant in the digital era. Various internal and external factors influence information behavior, which affects information users and consists of activities such as active search, passive search, discovery, use, and evaluation of information based on specific needs. Digital information has changed the way individuals access and interact with information to be dynamic and adaptive.

Religious information access patterns of adolescents using the Ellis model. Information behavior is an individual action that reaches a certain stage in achieving relevant information needs. David Ellis' information behavior model is a descriptive framework that describes the stages individuals go through when seeking and using information without investigating the reasons behind their behavior. These stages include Starting (starting a search), Chaining (connecting information), Browsing (exploring), Differentiating (distinguishing between sources), Extracting (collecting relevant information), Verifying (ensuring accuracy), Monitoring (tracking information), and Ending (closing the search). The Ellis model can be developed

as a stage of digital information search (Arma & Nelisa, 2013; Hidayat et al., 2023; Prijana et al., 2023).

The digital information search described in Ellis' model involves several key stages that are highly relevant in the digital context, such as browsing, chaining, and verification. In the Browsing stage, individuals explore websites or social media platforms to find relevant information or follow current trends and issues. In the Chaining stage, individuals follow links or references embedded in digital sources, such as news articles citing academic studies or blog posts linking to additional resources. The Verifying stage emphasizes the importance of validating information by assessing the reliability of sources or comparing data from various digital platforms. In the context of religious information behavior, access to information can be categorized into two distinct forms: conventional and digital. Conventional access involves traditional methods, such as consulting religious leaders or physical texts, while digital access leverages online platforms, including social media, websites, and digital libraries, to meet religious information needs. Overall, these access methods illustrate the evolving dynamics of how individuals seek and engage with religious content in the modern era. The application of the Ellis model in the adolescents' search for religious information has several stages.

The first stage is starting a search for religious information based on specific triggers, such as questions that arise in everyday life or the need to understand religious practices. One participant revealed that they often started searching after seeing religious content that they did not understand on TikTok or YouTube.

The second stage is browsing and exploring known and familiar sources, for example, following religious content creators on Instagram or TikTok and actively searching for inspiring and engaging content, for example, short sermons or quotes from popular or local religious figures. The third stage is Chaining; after finding something relevant, adolescents connect the information to other sources through related links or recommendations for digital platform information. For example, adolescents who watch one video lecture on YouTube are often directed to other videos by the same speaker or on similar topics. The fourth stage is filtering, which is emitting the relevance of information by considering the source's credibility. The tendency is to trust content from well-known religious figures or reputable institutions more while ignoring sources that are considered less trustworthy. The fifth stage is extracting, which takes the essential parts based on the adolescents' religious information needs. One of the things that adolescents do is record prayer guides or save inspirational quotes for later use. The sixth stage is monitoring updates from trusted sources, such as following social media accounts or subscribing to YouTube channels. Many participants mentioned actively tracking new uploads through Instagram stories, reels, TikTok videos, and YouTube notifications. The seventh stage is Ending; the search process ends when adolescents apply the information obtained, such as using it in worship, sharing it with peers, or reflecting on it personally. Adolescents' access to information in Ellis' model can be divided into two categories, namely access using conventional and digital media, as

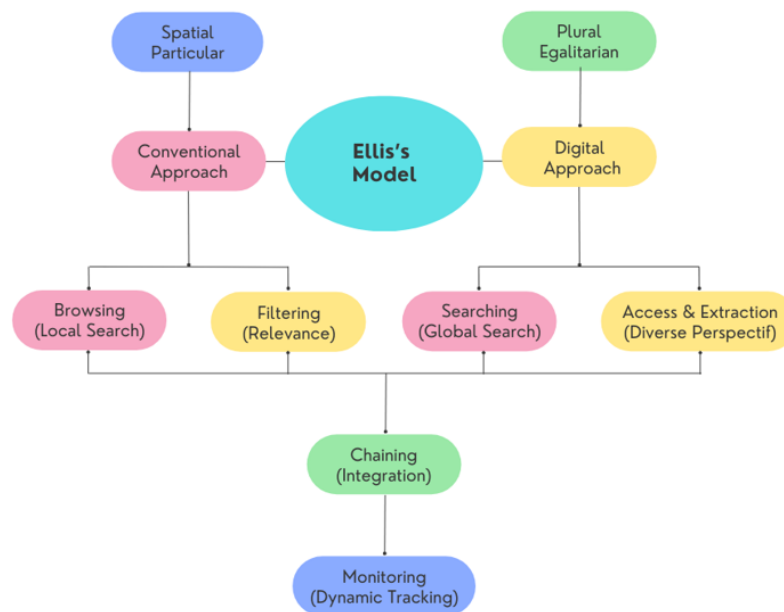seen in Figure 2, which forms the   following pattern:

Figure 2. Adaptation of the Ellis Model on Religious Information Behavior of Adolescents
Source: Research FGD (February 2023)

Figure 2 illustrates the pattern of *Rohis*'s access to religious information that adapts the Ellis model, showing a systematic pattern for analyzing information access behavior in conventional and digital approaches, with fundamental differences that reflect the dynamics of individual interactions with information sources. Both approaches based on the stages of the Ellis Model (browsing, filtering, searching, access and extraction, chaining, and monitoring) show how adolescents manage information according to social, cultural, and technological contexts. The conventional spatial approach refers to the limited access to information by geographic space, while the particular emphasizes the context of local culture and norms. The plural digital approach refers to access to wider sources of information through online platforms. Plural refers to various global religious perspectives, while egalitarianism describes open access regardless of hierarchy or authority.

Conventional approach to accessing religious information. Religious information access behavior, in the conventional approach, the information search process tends to be done locally through social networks such as religious communities, religious leaders, or group discussions. Emphasizing local, traditional, and structured sources as the leading media in the search for religious knowledge. In the *Rohis* community, this approach utilizes direct interaction with religious figures, such as local ustadz or through community activities, such as group studies at the mosque.

The first stage in the Ellis model relevant to this approach is the browsing stage, where individuals seek information through previously known local sources. This process allows individuals to access information specific and relevant to their cultural values or local context, and fiqh teachings are adapted to local traditions. A high level of trust in local authorities is the primary source, although the information

obtained is often limited to specific perspectives and less exposed to global or plural views. Traditional methods of obtaining religious information using physical media and traditional methods of accessing religious information through religious-themed books.

> "...the ones I read most often are religious books, about why people are like that, then I refer to biographical books like Buya Hamka and other great religious figures" (Informant 2, Interviewed, February 21, 2023).

Informants have specific needs regarding why people can think or behave in a certain way in the context of religion. This indicates the need for evaluative information, where they seek explanations or understanding of human behavior from a religious perspective. Informants choose authoritative sources that offer normative guidance and biographies of figures that provide real examples of religious life. In addition, biographies of figures used as references are not only to find theoretical information but also practical information that can be taken from the true story of the religious figures.

The approach to preaching developed by Hamka is personal and dialogical and closely related to searching, disseminating and receiving information in a religious context. The dialogical method of preaching reflects two-way interaction in the dissemination of information. Searching for information is similar to searching for information that actively communicates with human and written sources to deepen understanding. Dialogic in preaching allows people to exchange knowledge actively, ask questions they do not understand, and get direct clarification. In the modern era, the personal approach to preaching is still very relevant because society faces various complex social, cultural and technological problems. Along with social change and globalization, Hamka's method of preaching that focuses on dialogue and a personal approach remains relevant because it provides space for people to continue to search and process information amidst the rapid flow of global information.

Hamkah's da'wah has succeeded in increasing the people's acceptance and understanding of Islamic teachings, which aligns with the principle that information that is well understood tends to be adopted more strongly, in fulfilling the information needs of personal life seekers, where seekers are more likely to accept information that is considered relevant to their conditions. The success of Hamka's method can connect religion with social reality, thus making preaching more meaningful and acceptable to various groups, which is the key to effective information search (Ulfa & Efrina, 2024). The persuasive preaching method makes teenagers access conventional information on specific things relevant to cultural values or local contexts, and fiqh teachings are adapted to local traditions. "...I am also inclined towards Islamic jurisprudence..." (Informant 3, Interviewed, February 25, 2023).

Teenagers' curiosity about religion reflects an important phase of their development in seeking identity, meaning in life, and answers to profound questions. Their active search for religious information extends beyond literary texts to include *fiqh*, demonstrating a structured, authoritative, and directed approach to addressing their religious inquiries. This phase highlights integrating theoretical

knowledge with practical and ethical considerations in shaping their religious understanding.

> "...the first is the first book by Ust Abd Somad, 70 Madzhab Abu Dhabi, the second is 99 questions and answers about prayer, Islamic brotherhood, Islamic madhhab..." (Informant 4, Interviewed, February 18, 2023).

The informant conveyed how information seekers seek clear and authoritative answers about how to worship and how fiqh provides guidance in various life activities. Information-seeking behavior: Individuals seek information from trusted sources who are considered able to provide accurate explanations based on the teachings of the religion they adhere to. Fiqh focuses on the legalistic aspects of Islamic teachings, namely what is permitted and prohibited and how to apply it in everyday life. Conventional access to information through literature, such as in the works of Ustadz Abdul Somad, emphasizes the importance of written sources and valid references. Books such as "70 Madzhab Abu Dhabi," "99 Questions and Answers About Prayer," and "Ukhuwah Islamiyah" provide in-depth views based on Islamic teachings based on classical literature and understandings developed by previous scholars (Fatayan et al., 2018). These written sources underscore the importance of validated references and structured knowledge in disseminating religious teachings.

Novels can serve as valuable sources of religious information by integrating moral values and religious teachings into engaging narratives that are accessible to readers. One notable example is the novel Ayat-Ayat Cinta (Verses of Love) by Habiburrahman El Shirazy, which underscores the significance of key Islamic principles. The text highlights the importance of performing prayer (shalat) as a central obligation for Muslims. This is illustrated through the actions and reflections of the characters, who frequently express gratitude for the blessings bestowed by Allah, embodying an attitude encouraged in Islamic teachings.

Furthermore, the novel emphasizes the practice of reading and reflecting upon the Qur'an as an essential component of a Muslim's religious life. By weaving these practices into the storyline, Ayat-Ayat Cinta functions not only as a work of literature but also as an educational medium. It reinforces the reader's understanding of Islamic values and the necessity of integrating these principles into daily life. Thus, this literary work bridges the realms of art and pedagogy, offering insights into Islamic teachings through its moral and religious themes (Hartati & Wulan, 2016).

The following conventional information access perspective, the filtering stage in the conventional approach involves selecting information based on the credibility of sources originating from respected religious figures or certain religious books that are recognized as authoritative. In this context, *Rohis* tends to rely on sources that have been tested for their validity, while information that conflicts with local values is often ignored. This approach helps maintain the purity of religious teachings but can hinder openness to alternative views with a valid scientific basis.

In contrast to instant and digital access to information, conventional literature involves searching, careful

study, critical thinking and careful verification to ensure that the knowledge gained is consistent and accurate with established Islamic religious and historical views. Literature also provides a structure that helps teenagers understand the broader context of the teachings they want to understand comprehensively, relying on writings that are recognized by the academic and religious communities. Making works such as those written by Ustadz Abdul Somad not only as a source of reading but also as a medium for in-depth and authoritative learning.

Information integration occurs at the chaining stage, where adolescents expand their understanding by discussing the results of studies or views obtained with religious figures or local religious discussion groups and connecting new information with previously held understanding, resulting in more prosperous and more contextual knowledge. Due to limited access and resources, this process takes longer than the digital approach. At the monitoring stage, tracking the development of information is carried out through routine activities such as attending religious studies regularly or listening to lectures held repeatedly. The advantage of this approach is that there is continuity in the learning process, including direct dialogue with religious figures so that in-depth clarification of information is obtained. The limitations of this approach lie in its more static nature, making it less responsive to contemporary or urgent religious issues.

The conventional approach, which is spatial and particular, has the advantage of providing locally and contextually relevant information and strengthening social relationships through direct interaction. However, the conventional approach's limitations include the lack of exposure to global and plural perspectives in facing the challenges of the digital era, which demands a quick response to new information.

Digital approach to accessing religious information. The behavior of accessing religious information in a pluralistic and egalitarian digital approach provides broad opportunities for individuals, especially *Rohis* members, to access religious information globally and diversely. Allowing access to broader and more pluralistic sources of information through online platforms and various religious perspectives available globally. Egalitarianism refers to open access without regard to hierarchy or authority through digital platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and online forums or communities. At the searching stage, individuals search for information without geographical or hierarchical boundaries by utilizing search algorithms to provide various content according to the individual's specific needs, such as religious lectures, Islamic discussions, or relevant prayer guides. The ability to explore various religious perspectives, from local figures to international scholars, enriches individuals' understanding of the plurality of religious teachings.

> "If I read a book like Buya Hamka, a figure I admire, I would look at Google more often than ask people around me" (Informant 5, Interviewed, February 21, 2023).

Informants use search engines like Google when reading books by admired figures like Buya Hamka, showing digital information search behavior that is increasingly common in modern society. This shows a preference for utilizing

sophisticated technology to deepen understanding quickly and efficiently. Google indicates informants prefer conducting independent searches precisely and practically through search engines. Information searches prefer a method that gives complete control over what will be found, compared to traditional methods such as asking other people directly. Interest in religious figures such as Buya Hamka indicates a specific need for information related to religious figures who are considered inspiring.

Leveraging search engines and artificial intelligence that can instantly filter, organize, and provide access to relevant sources of information. Passing the stage of asking others, teenagers tend to feel more comfortable and efficient using search engines or artificial intelligence that provide instant information, cover a variety of perspectives, and often update data in real time. Search engines also broaden horizons by presenting various interpretations and additional data that people around them may not have. This behavior reflects a shift in the way individuals access and validate information, where digital technologies such as search engines and one of the tools that have been widely utilized besides search engines are artificial intelligence, which plays a significant role in meeting the cognitive needs of users.

The emergence of the virtual world and cyber society has given rise to various new organizations that operate online, such as the Instagram account *Sahabat Hijrahku Medan*. This religious organization, especially in the context of Islam, utilizes digital platforms to attract a larger audience. It organizes various activities to invite people to experience the goodness and purity of Islamic teachings.

It promotes religious values that refer to relatively enduring beliefs in an object, action, or principle by using digital media to spread messages more effectively and widely.

"...regarding emigration, teenagers who emigrate… Usually join communities on Instagram and watch short videos from TikTok" (Informant 6, Interviewed, February 25, 2023).

Adolescents' increasing interest in the *hijrah* theme reflects a deep need for spiritual transformation. The term *hijrah* signifies a commitment to self-improvement through greater devotion to Islamic teachings among contemporary Muslims. The phenomenon of *hijrah* indicates a deep spiritual search amidst the complexities of modern life (Jati, 2023). Adolescents' motivation to live a life in harmony with Islamic principles highlights the desire for personal growth and fulfillment of faith.

The accessibility of digital da'wah content plays a significant role in facilitating this process, making it easier for adolescents to find inspiration and practical advice. This trend is influenced by the availability of digital da'wah content, including online lectures, podcasts, YouTube channels, short TikTok videos and other social media platforms. Providing adolescents with access to content that aligns with the theme of hijrah offers guidance, motivation and support throughout the adolescent's transformative journey.

While this phenomenon reflects a positive spiritual engagement, it also requires caution. Misinterpretation of the concept of hijrah can lead to extreme attitudes that can be combined with the values of moderation inherent in Islamic

teachings. Efforts to overcome this by fostering an inclusive dialogue space allow for applying contextual and moderate Islamic values to contemporary realities. This approach ensures that the spiritual transformation associated with hijrah remains balanced and constructive within the framework of modern society.

The emergence of cyberspace and the rise of cyber society have led many new organizations to operate boldly. One example is the Instagram account of *Sahabat Hijrahku Medan*, a religious organization that utilizes digital platforms to reach a wider audience. Specifically in Islam, this organization uses social media to organize various activities to guide individuals toward the goodness and purity of Islamic teachings, effectively combining traditional values with modern digital engagement strategies (Nurhayati et al., 2023). The values promoted by these organizations often reflect enduring beliefs in specific objects, actions, or principles. By leveraging digital media, they effectively disseminate these messages to a broader audience, ensuring that their core values and teachings reach individuals more widely and efficiently in the digital era.

Creating a dialogue space that includes the vital role of religious figures as religious authorities, spiritual guides, and trusted sources of information. Adolescents tend to view the teachings of religious figures as more credible than other sources, especially when exploring the complexities of religious interpretation. Religious figures are essential in the spirituality and contextualization of Islamic teachings, helping adolescents understand religion in ways consistent with their developmental and cultural context.

At the access and extraction stage, individuals have the flexibility to select and save information that is considered relevant through features such as bookmarks, screenshots, or video downloads. Allowing quick and efficient access to content that can be reused for personal needs or Rohis discussion groups. This convenience also increases the risk of exposure to less credible or manipulative information, especially if the user's digital literacy is low.

The chaining stage in the digital approach is a form of integration with algorithmic recommendations that connect users with relevant content. For example, after users watch a video lecture, platforms such as YouTube often recommend other videos of similar themes, allowing them to broaden their horizons quickly. Although this process accelerates learning, algorithms can also create a "filter bubble," where users are only exposed to similar views, limiting exploration of alternative views.

Digital access to information for teenagers in the digital era is highly dependent on social media such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. These platforms are used for entertainment and as a source of information, including religious information. Easy and interactive access makes social media an effective means of spreading the message and role of Islam. Various digital platforms, such as TikTok as a mini *da'wah* stage with its short and interesting video format, have become a favorite platform for young content creators to convey Islamic messages. Religious songs, poetry, or inspirational stories have attracted adolescents' interest in studying Islam. The next social media platform, Instagram, is a visualization media platform with various features, such

as reels and Instagram stories, which allows users to share interesting visual content. Many Instagram accounts present religious content such as inspirational quotes, beautiful images related to Islam, or prayer tutorials. Then the next social media platform, YouTube, is a learning platform that offers more in-depth religious content, such as lectures, studies, and religious tutorials. Many YouTube channels are managed by clerics, preachers, or Islamic communities providing various religious content. These platforms collectively highlight the adaptability of Islamic education and da'wah in utilizing digital tools to engage and educate modern youth (Azizah et al., 2023; Bhandari et al., 2020; Ishak et al., 2022).

Through various social media platforms, individual perceptions of understanding religion vary, influenced by environmental, educational, and cultural factors. This includes differences in how to worship, gender roles in Islam, and views on social issues. When students with diverse understandings meet at school, these differences can lead to differences in perception that have the potential to trigger conflict (Jannah, 2023). In addition, the extent to which they internalize religious values in everyday life is also influenced by their respective understandings and interpretations, which can vary depending on their background.

The monitoring stage in the digital approach is very dynamic; users actively follow the latest developments through channel subscriptions, notifications, or the "follow" feature on social media. This activity helps users stay connected with relevant sources of information, such as the latest uploads from certain religious teachers or religious institutions. The dynamic nature also opens up opportunities to spread unverified information, which can lead to misinformation or even extremist narratives.

A pluralistic and egalitarian digital approach offers openness and transparency that conventional approaches lack. Risks such as misinformation and radicalization require increased digital literacy among users. With strong digital literacy, users can maximize the benefits of the digital approach to access credible, diverse, and relevant information while mitigating the potential harms posed by unreliable information.

Access to Religious Information in Local Cultural Variations. Individual access to information independently gives rise to various understandings. Local religious figures play an important role as trusted sources of information to validate religious understanding in the community. Functioning as spiritual leaders, educators, and liaisons between religious teachings and the daily practices of the community (Whyte, 2022). Local figures such as ustadz are often considered authorities with in-depth knowledge of religious teachings. Because their positions are respected, they become the main reference for people seeking answers to religious questions, including matters of worship, morals, and Sharia law. People usually trust religious information conveyed by local figures more because they understand the local cultural and customary context, making it easier for them to convey religious teachings according to the community's needs (Zuhri et al., 2023).

Accessing information based on cultural variations, teenagers in Yogyakarta are enthusiastic about downloading and reading books,

reflecting notable changes and developments in their engagement with religious activities and education. The concept of Rohis has evolved significantly, incorporating a broader and more diverse range of activities. For example, mosque-based youth groups are now actively involved in *Rohis*, with a new name and decisive role. In SMA 3, *Rohis* activities have expanded to their internal community to include outward-focused da'wah efforts, such as providing training on the proper method for slaughtering sacrificial animals.

Learning activities in *Rohis* have also advanced, with young people engaging in religious learning that combines various references, including teaching, training, mentoring, and adaptation to technological developments. Social media influencers, including "gram celebrities," participate in shaping references, highlighting the need for structured guidance, training, and mentoring. The ideological landscape within *Rohis* has also evolved and is in line with current trends, making *Rohis* a significant topic in various organizations. Groups such as NU (Nahdlatul Ulama) and Muhammadiyah have adopted the term Rohis more inclusively, contributing to its wider acceptance. This inclusivity also makes public schools more vulnerable to the influx of ideology, intentionally and unintentionally.

Historically, Islam has been closely linked to the culture of reading and writing, especially in developing Islamic literacy. Islamic literacy has become the foundation for advancing Islamic science and civilization. LPBKI-MUI plays a vital role in this ongoing effort by working with various stakeholders to raise public awareness of the importance of Islamic and national literacy. Beyond its primary function of approving and reviewing Islamic books and content, LPBKI-MUI actively supports initiatives to improve literacy among the younger generation, who are increasingly immersed in technological information. Prof. Endang, a leading figure at LPBKI-MUI, highlighted the institution's practice of engaging the younger generation in discussions and seeking their perspectives on Islamic content. This approach aims to foster a stronger awareness among the youth of the importance of literacy, especially Islamic literacy, in fostering a strong religious identity and a more profound understanding of the digital age.

Hosen (2019) underlined the importance of being careful when consuming information from media platforms and social media. Emphasizing that information from unknown or unclear sources (majhul) should not be trusted or used as a reference. In addition, Hosen encouraged students to enrich social media with appropriate and effective Islamic content actively. Traditional Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) adopt digital platforms that provide authentic and accessible ways to engage audiences with Islamic teachings in the modern era, emphasizing that the primary references should always remain the Qur'an, Hadith, and the teachings of scholars (Hosen, 2019). At the same time, the presentation of these studies should be adjusted to be more attractive and accessible to those without a traditional *pesantren* background. "Anyone who fails to keep up with the times will become a fossil" (Hosen, 2019), highlighting the need to adapt Islamic teachings to the contemporary context to ensure their relevance and effective dissemination.

"For me, I usually find out I am a person who likes to compare things. So, if I do not agree with something, I will try to think about it first, I do not take it straight away. After thinking about it, I might ask several Ustads, not just one. So, I compare which opinion is the most relevant, for example, the one that is most accepted and based on the Qur'an and Sunnah. If, for example, the opinion is limited to egoism, only lust, I do not take it, I do not reject it, but I do not like that opinion" (Informant 7, Interviewed, February 21, 2023).

The search for religious information showed the attitude of using a triangulation strategy by comparing information from various sources, such as different ustadz, to test the validity and suitability of the information with authentic religious teachings. The information obtained was not immediately accepted, primarily if the information was not understood or supported by authoritative sources. The information felt less by religious principles or based on egoism or lust was collected and then retested through discussions with other ustadz. This shows a delay in judgment when the final decision is made after obtaining a more comprehensive view (Aliani et al., 2023).

The influence of cultural background on religious information behavior has been a significant concern, although further exploration is still required to understand its complexity. The findings of this study indicated that cultural differences influence digital platform preferences and the types of religious content consumed by adolescents. Adolescents in urban areas such as Yogyakarta and Medan preferred platforms like Instagram and TikTok that offer visual and engaging content. In contrast, adolescents in rural areas tended to use WhatsApp for religious discussions, as this platform was more data efficient and could be accessed with limited internet connections.

In addition to platform preferences, cultural variations influenced the types of religious information sought. For example, adolescents in Medan showed an interest in inspirational stories and biographies of religious figures such as Buya Hamka, reflecting their need for inspirational models relevant to the local context. On the other hand, adolescents in Yogyakarta sought more practical guidance on Islamic jurisprudence and worship procedures, indicating a more structural and legalistic approach to religion. The role of local religious figures is essential in shaping religious understanding across cultures. For example, in areas such as Makassar, local religious figures have high authority and are often the primary reference for validating religious information found digitally. This suggests that while digitalization has made it easier to access information, trust in local authorities remains a significant element in ensuring the credibility and relevance of religious information and reflecting the importance of personal trust and regional authorities in interpreting religious teachings, which are integral to their religious experience. Variations are also seen in the types of content sought by adolescents.

Cultural variations influence the acceptance of digital content. In some more conservative communities, there is a tendency to prioritize sources of information that come from formal religious institutions or reputable religious figures. Conversely, in communities that

are more open to modernity, there is more room to accept content from independent digital creators as long as it is based on Islamic values. Environmental factors, digital literacy levels, and trust in local authorities are key determinants of religious information behavior in various regions. Understanding variations is essential for creating an inclusive and effective da'wah strategy that can bridge the spiritual needs of the younger generation in different cultural contexts. Integrating digital technology with sensitivity to local culture can be a strategic approach to supporting moderate and relevant religious literacy.

Implications of digital literacy in the concept of misinformation. The rapid flow of public information, including Islamic content received by society and Muslims today, requires wise handling. The rapid development of Islamic content production must be balanced with progressive, accommodating, and solution-oriented regulations and education. The state responded to this by issuing Law No. 3 of 2017 concerning the Legislation System to regulate and support the book industry. Mass communication, which relies on mass media, is a primary function of delivering information to the broader community. Mass media allows information from public institutions to be delivered quickly to the public, achieving an informative function in a short time. Similarly, Law No. 11 of 2008 on Information and Electronic Transactions provides legal guidelines for digital content distribution. Despite these frameworks, significant challenges persist in their implementation, particularly in education, advocacy, and efforts to enhance public digital literacy regarding Islamic content.

The main obstacle is the absence of clear ethical guidelines for disseminating Islamic content, which results in inconsistent practices. The public tends to act more as passive consumers than creative producers of Islamic-based content. There needs to be a collaborative effort to empower the community.

There needs to be a joint initiative from various stakeholders, including religious institutions, educational institutions, and civil society organizations, to resolve this problem. LPBKI-MUI has initiated a collaboration between key stakeholders, including Islamic organizations, universities, Islamic boarding schools, and youth groups. This initiative aims to develop policy synergies that ensure Islamic content benefits producers and contributes to improving the quality of religious and national life in Indonesia. Integrating these efforts can achieve a more comprehensive approach to managing Islamic content, providing a positive and transformative impact on society (Dalimunthe & Purwaningtyas, 2020).

Concerns have emerged regarding attempts by certain groups to undermine Islamic teachings by removing religion from various aspects of Muslim life in Indonesia. One of the strategies employed involves the dissemination of news and books that contradict Islamic principles. Addressing this issue falls under the purview of the Institute for the Review of Islamic Books and Content of the Indonesian Council of Ulama (LPBKI-MUI), which is tasked with reviewing and critiquing the content of books and other informational media. LPBKI-MUI is responsible for ensuring that disseminated content aligns with Islamic teachings and does not negatively influence the mindset

of the community, thereby protecting the public from harmful impacts on their faith and religious practices.

The implications of low digital literacy are significant in increasing the risk of misinformation and extremism, especially in the digital era full of information flows that are not always reliable (Diepeveen & Pinet, 2022). Low digital literacy makes individuals, including *Rohis* members, more vulnerable to consuming unverified information. In the context of misinformation, the lack of ability to evaluate the credibility of digital information sources can lead to the spread of inaccurate content, intentionally or unintentionally. This situation can exacerbate misunderstandings of religious teachings, distort core doctrines, or reinforce myths that lack a solid theological foundation. In addition, individuals with low digital literacy tend to be more easily influenced by radical or extremist narratives often disguised as legitimate religious teachings. Digital propaganda strategies used by extremist groups often exploit social media algorithms to target audiences with low critical thinking skills, thereby increasing the risk of radicalization.

Digital literacy is a strategy needed to overcome the challenge of misinformation. First, digital literacy education must be integrated into the formal curriculum and *Rohis* community activities (Mrah, 2022). These training programs must include the ability to verify sources of information, recognize bias, and distinguish between credible and manipulative content. Second, collaboration with digital platforms is an important strategy to reduce exposure to extremist content and misinformation. Social media can use artificial intelligence technology to label verified content or flag suspicious information. In addition, it can be designed to promote moderate content from trusted religious figures so that users are more exposed to constructive perspectives.

Third, religious figures have a central role in strengthening digital literacy. By being actively involved in the digital world, religious figures can provide valid and relevant guidance for contemporary issues often searched for on social media. Creating a YouTube channel, managing an Instagram account, or hosting a webinar can effectively reach the younger generation with curated information. Fourth, strengthening communities is an important approach to building collective literacy. Discussion activities and joint studies can focus on analyzing and verifying religious information found online. Communities can also act as "social filters" that help mitigate the spread of non-credible content.

Finally, a massive digital literacy awareness campaign should be conducted to increase understanding of the dangers of misinformation and extremism. This campaign can use various social media platforms with an attractive format, such as short videos, infographics, or podcasts. The main message of this campaign should encourage users to think critically, verify information, and not immediately believe every content found on the internet. With this comprehensive digital literacy strategy, the risk of misinformation and radicalization can be minimized, while access to credible and useful information can be maximized. Strong digital literacy will empower individuals to become smart consumers of information and responsible contributors to the digital ecosystem.

CONCLUSION

Adolescents seeking religious information in the digital era tend to be increasingly independent, critical, and interactive in seeking, processing, and disseminating information. Adolescents are increasingly critical in assessing the religious information they find, with a reflective and independent pattern that combines digital technology with references from religious figures as authoritative sources. This behavior reflects that a more open and diverse information landscape makes adolescents adaptive. Implies that the information accessed remains accurate and by the true teachings of religion. This study shows that digital media, especially through platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp, significantly shape religious information-seeking behavior among adolescents. By applying the Ellis Model, this study successfully maps the stages of information seeking, such as starting, browsing, chaining, filtering, and monitoring, which reflect adaptive, reflective, and independent patterns. This pattern illustrates the transformation from traditional methods to a more personal, participatory, and interactive digital approach, where adolescents are not only passive consumers but also critical actors in assessing the quality and credibility of information. The study results highlight that easy access to social media has changed how teenagers understand, internalize, and apply religious principles daily. Although social media offers opportunities for disseminating interesting and relevant *da'wah,* the inconsistent quality of information poses serious challenges, especially the risk of misinformation and exposure to extreme

ideologies. This emphasizes the importance of digital literacy to ensure that the information accessed is credible, relevant, and authentic religious teachings. Further research could investigate the role of digital influencers in shaping religious perspectives, particularly their influence in promoting tolerance or, conversely, in fostering extremism. Cross-cultural studies would offer valuable insights into how local contexts shape religious information-seeking behaviors and the evolving role of religious authorities within the digital ecosystem. Additionally, big data analysis could be employed to identify trends in social media usage related to religious information seeking and to examine its impact on religious values and ideologies. Such approaches could also highlight generational differences in digital religious behavior, opening new avenues for understanding how various age groups engage with and interpret religious content in the digital age. These research directions hold the potential to contribute significantly to the fields of religious studies, digital sociology, and information science. The practical implications of this study highlight the need for collaborative strategies between religious authorities and social media platforms to ensure the credibility of content accessed by users. This partnership can include content verification through official labels, promotion of moderate content by prominent religious figures, and active involvement of clerics in creating relevant educational content. Furthermore, integrating digital literacy into religious education is an important step that can be carried out through various strategies. First, digital literacy in the formal religious education curriculum includes verifying sources of information, recognizing bias,

and critically evaluating content; second, encouraging collaboration with digital platforms to prioritize algorithms that display credible content from trusted religious figures and flag manipulative content; third, empowering religious figures to be active in the digital space by managing YouTube, Instagram, or podcast channels that present moderate and contextual religious views; fourth, strengthening communities through group discussions and joint studies to analyze and verify online religious information and finally, implementing massive digital literacy campaigns using engaging formats, such as short videos, infographics, or podcasts, to raise awareness of the dangers of misinformation and extremism. This study contributes to understanding religious information-seeking behavior, especially through the integration of the Ellis Model. It identifies the stages of conventional and digital information seeking while also revealing the role of social media in shaping tolerance and moderate religiosity. Another unique contribution is mapping the transformation of *da'wah* methodology in the digital context, which shows the adaptation of traditional *da'wah* to the needs of the younger generation in the technological era. Integrating digital literacy into religious education requires a comprehensive and structured strategy to equip the younger generation with critical skills in dealing with religious information in the digital era. One of the main steps is to include digital literacy in the formal curriculum of religious education, with a focus on the ability to verify sources of information, recognize bias, and critically evaluate the credibility of content. In addition, collaboration with digital platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and

Instagram can be utilized to prioritize credible content through algorithms that support moderate and educational preaching. Religious figures also need to be empowered through intensive training to produce digital content that is relevant and interesting for the younger generation, such as webinars, online courses, or short interactive videos. Strengthening learning communities, both online and offline, can function as a collective discussion space to analyze and verify religious information found online. Digital literacy campaigns must also be carried out massively through attractive formats such as infographics, short videos, or podcasts to raise awareness about the dangers of misinformation and the importance of critical thinking. With this strategy, religious education can support the younger generation to become smart, critical digital users committed to a moderate and inclusive understanding of religion.

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