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## Exploring the Phenomenon of Using Social Media on Students' Religious Understanding in Polewali Mandar and Majene Regency (Alfred Schutz's Motive Perspective)

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**Abstract:** This article examines Exploring the Phenomenom of Using Social Media on Student' Religious Understanding in Polewali Mandar dan Majene Regency, West Sulawesi. This study collected data through participant observation techniques and in-depth interviews with twenty students who became critical informants. This study used a qualitative method with Alfred Schutz's motive theory. The results of the study indicate that the use of social media among students has become a lifestyle. The use of social media has positive and negative aspects, as well as social media platforms (such as YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok) to learn and understand religious and religious education. Using Alfred Schutz's motive theory, it was found that the reasons students use social media (*because of motive*) include seeking additional information about religious issues, finding out which religious lectures are popular, accessing religious lectures that are explained clearly and accurately on social media, and obtaining content quickly by clicking and listening to it satisfactorily. Students aim to achieve goals (*in order to motive*) by using social media, including using it as a source of self-introspection, understanding Islamic teachings in depth and detail, aspiring to become famous preachers, and listening to religious lectures as a necessity and entertainment in their free time.

**Keyword:** Social Media, Religious Education, Student, Motive Theory

### INTRODUCTION

Social media has become an integral part of daily life in the digital age, particularly for Generation Z, the cohort born in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Juwita, 2015), (Aprilia, 2020). These young individuals have grown up surrounded by advanced technology and have access to unprecedented information at their fingertips (Ayun, 2015),

(Ainiyah, 2018). Unlike previous generations, who acquired religious knowledge through formal education in religious schools (pesantren) or by attending religious gatherings (Zuhri, 2021), Generation Z increasingly turns to social media platforms, such as Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook, for spiritual and religious guidance (Slama, 2018), (Nisa, 2018)

The ease with which information can be accessed through smartphones has drastically changed how religious knowledge is consumed and understood (Alimi, 2018), (Masrukhin, 2020). Religious lectures, Quranic interpretations, and spiritual advice, once obtained from scholars in structured settings, are now available through social media, reshaping how young people interact with religious content (Halim, 2018), (Fitriansyah, 2023). However, this shift also presents challenges, including difficulty filtering credible information from misinformation or extremist views (Weng, 2018), (Sorgenfrei, 2022).

Students are active social media users in West Sulawesi, particularly in the Polewali Mandar and Majene regions. The rapid adoption of these platforms for religious learning reflects a broader trend in which social media influences the formation of religious identity and understanding. Despite its convenience, social media can expose students to moderate and radical religious ideas, underscoring the need for critical media literacy and proper guidance in navigating the complexities of online religious content (Imamah, 2018), (Hatta, 2018), (Hosen, 2019).

This article explores the impact of social media on students' religious understanding in West Sulawesi, focusing on how platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and WhatsApp shape their perceptions of Islam. The study uses Alfred Schutz's theory of motives to investigate why students rely on social media for religious learning and what drives them to engage with specific religious content online.

The relationship between social media usage and religious understanding has been a growing area of interest, particularly as the digital age continues to evolve. Social media, a pervasive part of daily life, has reshaped how individuals interact with, perceive, and practice religion. This literature review explores the influence of social media on religious understanding, particularly within Generation Z, by discussing the most relevant studies and highlighting gaps that the current study addresses.

Moh. Yasir Alimi, in his work "Mediatisasi Agama, Post-Truth, and Ketahanan Nasional" underscores the significant shift in religious practices due to the influence of the Internet and social media. Alimi argues that the mediatization of religion has redefined how people engage with spiritual teachings, turning social media into a primary source of religious information. This shift has raised concerns about how deeply media logic shapes religious experiences, leaving a gap in understanding the full impact of this transformation on the human condition. Alimi's observations align with the current study, as both explore how religious knowledge and practice are being mediated through new forms of communication, particularly among younger generations (Alimi, 2018).

The role of social media in shaping the religious identity of Generation Z has also been examined by Didin Syarifuddin and Ismatu Ropi. Their study, "Gen Z: Kegagalan Identitas Keagamaan", highlights the growing influence of the Internet in fostering radicalism and intolerance among students. According to the PPIM survey, students with internet access exhibit more radical attitudes than those without, underscoring the role of social media in shaping not just religious understanding but also political and ideological views. This observation is particularly relevant to the current study's focus on West Sulawesi students, emphasizing the need to investigate how social media can simultaneously influence positive and negative religious behaviors (Syafuddin, 2018).

In the context of Indonesian religious practices, Martin Slama's "Practicing Islam Through Social Media in Indonesia" discusses how social media platforms have facilitated the emergence of new religious communities. Communities such as Great Muslimah, Pejuang Subuh, and One Day One Juz (ODOJ) demonstrate how religious engagement has shifted from traditional offline spaces to semi-virtual environments. These communities, which use WhatsApp to encourage religious practices like collective dawn prayers or daily Quran readings, illustrate how technology can preserve and adapt religious traditions in the digital era. Slama's findings suggest that religious communities are not only adopting social media but are using it to foster new forms of spiritual connection, a critical concept that the current study aims to explore further (Slama, 2018). The use of social media within Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) is another critical area of study.

Wahyuddin Halim's research into the As'adiyah Pesantren in South Sulawesi shows how Facebook and other platforms have expanded the reach of Pesantren and their young preachers. Halim highlights how social media allows preachers to gain recognition beyond their local communities, affecting how students learn about religious authorities and express their religiosity. This influence of social media on religious education parallels the current study's focus on West Sulawesi students, where social media usage has become intertwined with religious learning (Halim, 2018).

Dayana Langeuer's study, "Sharing Semangat Taqwa: Social Media and Digital Socialities in Bandung," further explores social media's role in fostering religious communities. Langeuer found that social media maintains continuous communication and interaction within dawah communities in Bandung, promoting spiritual growth among its members. This aligns with the broader theme of social media being a tool for religious engagement and community building, further reinforcing the need to explore its impact on students' religious understanding (Lengauer, 2018).

More focused on educational settings, Sabara's research, "Media Online Dalam Membentuk Pemahaman dan Praktek Keagamaan Siswa Madrasah Aliyah Di Kota Palu", applies McQuail's audience theory to examine how online media influences students' religious practices. Sabara's study finds that students actively use online media as a source of spiritual information, directly affecting their understanding of Islamic practices (Sabara, 2021).

Hew Wai Weng further explores the use of social media for spreading religious ideologies in "The ART OF DAKWAH: Social Media, Visual Persuasion and The Islamist Propagation of Felix Siauw." Weng's study sheds light on how radical Islamist ideas are subtly packaged through engaging and visually appealing content, making them accessible to younger audiences. This highlights a potential danger in the unregulated consumption of religious content, where students may unknowingly be exposed to radical ideas, an issue the current study seeks to address by examining how students in West Sulawesi navigate religious information on social media (Weng, 2018).

Similarly, Simon Sorgenfrei's research, "Branding Salafism: Salafi Missionaries as Social Media Influencers," discusses how Salafi communities leverage social media to build influence and authority. Sorgenfrei explains that Salafi preachers use platforms like Instagram and YouTube to engage followers and disseminate ideologies, which resonates with the broader theme of social media's role in marketing religious ideas (Sorgenfrei, 2022). The influence of social media influencers on religious thought provides a compelling parallel to the current study, which investigates how similar online figures might affect students in West Sulawesi.

Despite the overwhelming evidence of social media's impact on religious understanding, some studies suggest that online media has a limited effect on specific student populations. Muhammad Ali Saputra's qualitative study in Samarinda found that students prefer traditional methods of religious learning, such as mosque study groups or guidance from religious scholars. Saputra's findings contrast with the predominant view that social media plays a pivotal role in shaping religious understanding, suggesting that the extent of social media's influence may vary across different regions and communities (Saputra, 2020). This divergence in findings emphasizes the importance of the current research in providing localized insights into how social media affects students in West Sulawesi.

## **METHOD**

This research uses qualitative research methods with field research types. The data in this research are presented with descriptive writing to explain the use of social media and its influence on shaping the religious understanding of students in Polewali Mandar and Majene regencies. Data collection techniques are systematic observation investigation and recording of the investigated phenomena. In addition, data collection techniques also involve interviews, which are a process of questioning and answering with the interviewee to gather information (Moleong, 2001). The researcher used unplanned and open interviews. Data collection also involved personal documents and autobiographies. This research was conducted from March to September 2022. The researcher interviewed students from several schools: MAN 1 Polman, SMA 1 Wonomulyo, SMA 1 Campalagian, MAN 1 Majene, Madrasah Aliyah DDI Majene, and SMAN 2 Majene.

The researcher also used Alfred Schutz's motive theory to understand the drives and purposes of social media in gaining religious knowledge and understanding. Alfred Schutz was born in Vienna, Austria, on 13 April 1899. He received his education at a classical Gymnasium in Vienna (Makruf, 2021). He became the head of the Sociology Department and a professor. At this institution, Schutz developed and expanded his work in social phenomenology. His thinking was greatly influenced by Edmund Husserl's phenomenology and Max Weber's social action theory (Tumangkeng, 2022). In 1932, Schutz wrote "The Phenomenology of the Social World," one of his most influential works (Anshori, 2018). Alfred Schutz died in New York, USA, on May 20, 1959. Some renowned sociologists influenced by his ideas include Peter L. Berger, Thomas Luckmann, Harold Garfinkel, and Jürgen Habermas.

One of the key concepts developed by Schutz is the theory of motives. This theory explains the reasons and goals behind human actions (Sari, 2020). It provides deep insights into how individuals assign meaning to their actions and relate to the social context. Schutz divided motives into Because of Motive and In Order to Motive. Because motive is based on the historical reasons or causes behind an individual's actions, In Order to motive refers to the goals or expected outcomes of the individual's actions. One must consider past experiences, social conditions, and psychological factors to understand the motive behind a person's actions. On the other hand, to understand the In Order to Motive, one must look at the individual's short-term goals, long-term aspirations, and external factors driving their actions.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Technological developments cannot be avoided, including in mass media, which has transformed into social media. Social media provides choices for everyone. This is in line with what was stated by Asrul, a student at MAN 1 Majene:

*".. In the digital era, everyone has a smartphone and can surf anywhere and anytime. Almost every student has social media accounts like Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram. I have these three accounts, but I usually watch YouTube videos or snippets on Instagram. For religious advice, because I rarely attend lectures at the mosque, I usually watch videos from Ustaz Das'ad Latif and Ustaz Abdul Samad because they are funny and entertaining..."* (Interview Asrul, 2022)

What Asrul said provides an overview of how students must be kept from social media. Social media has become an indispensable need in daily life. Human needs differ from time to time. Humans living in the 18th century would have different needs from now, especially secondary needs. This aligns with Abraham Maslow's opinion that human needs are divided into primary and secondary. The primary needs are air, water, food, and sex, while secondary needs include security, belonging, love, respect, self-actualization, and cognitive needs.

The benefits of smartphones have changed over time. In the past, smartphones were used primarily for phone calls and social interactions. Still, they have evolved into tools for enhancing religious knowledge for those who seldom attend religious studies in prayer rooms and mosques. This aligns with Asrul's assertion that smartphones and social media applications are a demand of the times that cannot be ignored. We can increase our knowledge through applications like Instagram and YouTube with smartphones. In line with what Miftah Farid (SMA 2 Majene) said, YouTube is a favorite application for adding religious knowledge. Miftah Farid explains that social media can quickly and easily answer religious questions. We do not have to wait long; we only need to write the keywords we want to search for. Within seconds, we can get the desired answers. Without YouTube, it would not be possible for us to listen to spiritual advice from Ustadz Abdul Somad.

Thus, there is a gap that preachers and *Mubaligh* in today's era should pay attention to utilizing social media to spread their da'wah. Moderate preachers can use social media to strengthen moderate views among students who are vulnerable to radical and extremist influences. As we know, 82 million internet users are currently, and 80 percent are teenagers. Eighty percent of these 82 million users actively use the Internet and social media daily. Students' hands and eyes are on their smartphones and social media every few seconds and minutes.

Social media has several functions for information, whether viral or according to daily needs. This last function is widely used by students, making social media a means to obtain information, especially religious views, by "peeking" at Facebook and Instagram. As expressed by Aulia Kartika (MA DDI Majene). Aulia Kartika provides information that she usually opens da'wah content during her free time between Maghrib and Isha prayers. She spends about 30-40 minutes listening to clips of lectures by Ustaz Adi Hidayat on Instagram or other media while exchanging messages with her friends. Opening da'wah content and choosing which Ustaz to listen to is an individual choice according to personal interest.

The same is found among students of MAN 1 Polman, such as Andi Afifah and Donna Aisyah. These students admit to having their smartphones always connected to the Internet. In their view, the Internet and smartphones are essential. Therefore, classroom

learning is now proactive in exploring and digging up information sources from the Internet. Additionally, with smartphones, they can listen to religious lectures from various popular preachers in Indonesia.

In addition to using smartphones as learning tools outside the classroom, students also use the Internet to listen to religious lectures available online. Listening to religious lectures is only a tiny part of their daily social media usage. Only about 10 minutes daily is spent listening to spiritual advice. Interviews also revealed that every student has social media accounts for social interaction. They also acknowledge that phones and social media are inseparable from daily life. Without the internet and social media scrolling, a person would seem strange and miss out on information. Therefore, phones and social media save them from loneliness and solitude, as stated by Deriawan, Serli Amalia, and Siti Nurfadilah (SMAN 1 Campalagian).

The descriptions above show that high school students use smartphones to obtain learning references through the Internet, which is considered more accessible and more efficient, or to interact through social media accounts. Phones and social media are two inseparable things in today's youth activities. This shows that teenagers may form their understanding through the social media they see daily.

Moreover, the emergence of new professions like content creators makes the public more interested in social media. With their skills, content creators polish videos to be saleable and watched by the public. Similarly, in religious lecture videos, popular preachers use teams to popularize their lectures on social media. Content creators play a role in forming religious understanding through the information they create and share. Content creators in a preacher's team are responsible for spreading ideas and lectures through videos or written quotes with religious content, making the public interested and absorbed in their souls. This was expressed by several students, namely Afifah, Mahmud, and Salfah Atika.

This interview result illustrates that students are familiar with religious content on social media. They often follow viral preachers on social media. Social media has become the right choice when people have problems requiring long answers. Students see and hear the advice and religious studies and internalize what they have heard in their daily lives.

For students, social media and phones are teenage life, and teenage life is social media and phones. They open social media until they fall asleep. Upon waking up, they immediately open social media. Today, social media is addictive for students. It feels incomplete to go anywhere without a phone and opening applications. However, looking at and following religious content must be addressed. At the very least, they listen to some religious content from viral preachers or religious-themed music from social media. As mentioned by Serli Amalia, Deriawan, Muhammad Ansar, and Nurfadilah. Based on the explanations above, students' understanding can be influenced by the religious advice and knowledge provided by social media through their smartphones. The more active they are in exploring social media, the more content about religion they will see, and vice versa. This implies that social media greatly influences students' knowledge and understanding. Using social media like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp for positive and valuable things, such as listening to religious lectures, is commendable. For students, social media content is often a reference to fill knowledge gaps. Therefore, the influence of the Internet and social media is unavoidable. They may accept positive things from social media, such as learning and obtaining valuable information, but they must also be careful about its negative influences. The Government, especially the Ministry of

Religious Affairs, can use the technology trend among students to convey religious advice. This effort aims to safeguard students' religious understanding from being tainted with radical and extreme views, preventing intolerance and fanaticism among students.

Additionally, many students and young people utilize YouTube as a medium and means to gain religious understanding. This is exemplified by Nur Hidayah (MAN 1 Majene), Fatir (SMAN 2 Majene), and Nur Fadiah (MAN 1 Majene). As individuals still in the learning and developmental stages of understanding religious values, almost all types of social media with spiritual content and information are generally followed by high school/MA students. This includes religious content from Ustaz Adi Hidayat, Ustaz Abdul Somad, Ustaz Dasad Latif, Sheikh Ali Jabir, Ustaz Luqmanul Hakim, Ustaz Hannan Attaki, Ustaz Felix, Buya Yahya, and Ustazah Oky Setiana Dewi.

In addition to following the content on their social media accounts, students also access social media in daily life to follow religious content from the accounts of the content creators they follow. They watch, listen to, and share the content with others through WhatsApp or Facebook. Researchers found that among students who share the content they receive, there is an awareness to filter or select the content, even verifying its authenticity and truth by asking their teachers. As Andi Afifah stated:

*"For me, first, I browse the video I opened. Then, I searched for information on Google or Ustaz's social media. My mother often sends sermons about how to pray and news about this or that law. So, I confirmed the information and asked my mother where she got it from. I ask politely because parents usually receive information as it is. I also search for the information myself to ensure its accuracy. If the information is correct, I share it with friends or close family. However, if the information is incorrect, I stop it there. I tell my mother kindly that this information is not accurate or not suitable to be shared with others ..."* (Interview Afifah, 2022)

Afifah said she has Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter accounts. She often searches the Internet for information about teenage social interactions, education, and religious knowledge. Opening YouTube is usually done because it is cheap and only requires a little internet quota. On YouTube, we can get complete information about spiritual knowledge. Many young preachers give sermons through YouTube, which can be accessed directly. I often open Ustaz Adi Hidayat's channel because he explains in detail and is not complicated. I often open Ustaz Abdul Samad's videos to search for religious issues if I still need to ask my spiritual teacher.

Besides having negative impacts, social media also positively impacts social life. Social media has become an educational medium, providing information and knowledge through its freedom and flexibility. Essentially, students only follow da'wah content that is easy to understand, delivered and explained interestingly and humorously, and with da'wah messages relevant to their age. Dudung Abdul Rohman stated that these preachers succeed in their da'wah activities on social media by paying attention to the social interaction patterns between preachers and making persuasive patterns that can change the opinions, attitudes, and behavior of man; preachers also consider ethos, which is credibility, attraction, and power. By considering these factors, preachers gain sympathy from the Muslim community, especially among students.

The social media content they follow also tends towards moderate religious attitudes, although some religious da'wah content tends to be fundamental and conservative. Researchers observe that some of the da'wah figures' content they follow is considered by the media as fundamental and conservative, such as Ustaz Abdul Somad (UAS) being rejected in some areas in Indonesia because some of his content is

provocative and anti-diversity. The label of fundamental and conservative given to UAS and other religious preachers tends to have political nuances due to the competition for power during the 2019 election.

This media-created polarization becomes a problem in society, especially for students who reduce all the information they receive. Students still need guidance and direction from parents, teachers at school, or adults around them. Because adolescence is a transitional period, it is essential to filter various forms of information they receive from print and social media. This is crucial in forming an excellent religious understanding in every young generation individual, especially at the student age.

As hoped by teachers in schools or madrasahs, who are the objects of this research, the presence of teachers, parents, and adults accompanying students when using social media is very necessary, especially in selecting and sorting out information or content shared on their social media accounts, which becomes a balance and a place for discussion and clarification of content that negatively influences their religious understanding and may continue to be ingrained in the future.

Technological advances that have brought high connectivity in internet networks have opened the eyes of modern society and provided ease in communicating and obtaining information from various parts of the world in real-time, without barriers and filters. The presence of new media with connectivity, unlimited audience access, open utility diversity, interactivity, and its omnipresent nature has caused shifts and changes in social interaction and communication patterns. This media has produced access to communication and influence in forming specific understandings and perceptions.

However, high school students in Majene still feel that their understanding of religion is lacking because adults still dominate religious studies in mosques. Alwi (MAN 1 Majene) and Imam Fatih Janjang (SMA 2 Majene) conveyed that religious studies do not accommodate students with various problems, so students turn to social media as an alternative. Similarly, he said in an interview that he often watches and listens to social media, particularly YouTube and Instagram. He usually listens to short lectures and the Salawat of Prophet Muhammad on YouTube when relaxing. He also frequently uses other applications to enhance his school knowledge, such as when given homework.

Additionally, if he needs help understanding a subject, YouTube is his best solution. For religious matters, he often watches YouTube videos of Habib Rizieq, whose lectures are widely circulated on social media. He likes Habib Rizieq's brief lectures because he is a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad, and his delivery style is firm and suitable for current conditions. On Instagram, he often follows Ustaz Bahar Smith.

The statements of these two students from different schools show that students use social media daily. The Internet and social media cannot be denied in this digital era. With the help of the Internet, all information can be known in the shortest possible time. Social media broadcasts cannot be controlled; they only allow watching and listening to whatever is broadcasted. As the two students mentioned above stated, they often listen to religious lectures from the YouTube channels of Ustaz Adi Hidayat, Ustaz Bahar Smith, and Habib Rizieq Shihab. Students also need guidance in navigating their lives. However, only a few mosques offer religious studies or assemblies based on students and youth.

Having social media accounts is customary in the digital era. People can have Facebook accounts, YouTube channels, and Instagram accounts as a means of social interaction; with them, their social networking is broad. A Facebook account allows access to a lot of information and friends from other regions. Likewise, with a YouTube channel, you can even earn money, although I still need to get a YouTube channel. For



religious knowledge, I often peek at Facebook groups like the Hijrah Community or YouTube channels like Shift Media. The topics frequently discussed relate to current youth issues like love and respect.

Siti Sarah and Indah's statements indicate that students also need spiritual nourishment in their spiritual journey. Mosque administrators only provide extensive facilities and media for adults to fill their spiritual dryness. However, teenagers also need spiritual nourishment, albeit less than adults. These statements seem to criticize mosque administrators, urging them to provide a "student-friendly mosque" slogan so that teenagers can remain creative and behave Islamically. Mosque administrators can create religious studies with themes and content relevant to youth problems so teenagers do not stray from religious paths.

The lack of study institutions for students and youth provides an opportunity to switch to online discussion platforms. The Internet allows everyone to access according to their heart's choice. Accessing any online media is common, but it requires initial knowledge by investigating the community and the affiliated organizations and whether the online media provides moderate, liberal, or extreme knowledge. As stated by Nur Alim Subur (MAN 1 Majene):

*"... In my daily life, I have a hobby of listening to Quran recitations or murottal, so I often listen to murottal on YouTube. I also frequently listen to religious studies and lectures on YouTube. I like listening to Ustaz Das'ad Latif's lectures. My religious knowledge is mostly obtained from social media because it is an easy thing to do compared to attending weekly religious studies. The need for religious knowledge is critical in daily life. Religious knowledge is also obtained from teachers and Ustaz at school but only related to subjects. If there is a problem with religion, I first look it up on social media; then I ask my teachers and Ustaz at school again. Alternatively, I often ask the Ustaz at An-Nabhani religious assembly. For websites, I rarely open them, usually just YouTube. Or I usually look for snippets of advice or lectures from certain Ustaz admired by teenagers ..."* (Interview Nur Alim Subur, 2022).

Alfred Schutz is a phenomenologist who explains that this theory provides a framework for analyzing how individuals give meaning to their actions and how they relate to the social context. With this theory, we can understand the Because of Motive (the reason for using social media) and the In Order to Motive (the goals to be achieved) and better understand the complexity of human behavior and the factors that influence it. The Because of Motive for someone using social media includes: Seeking additional information: Every individual is driven by curiosity. Informants use social media to fulfill their need for correct information about understanding Islam. YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok are used as additional sources of information because few mosques offer religious studies. Knowing popular da'wah messages: Some informants access social media to learn about popular da'wah messages and the content of famous Ustaz's sermons. The next Motivation is to get brief, concise, and precise information. Listening to religious teachings and sermons: Informants are interested in using social media to listen to religious teachings and sermons because the posted content can clearly and accurately explain the message. Religious teachings and sermons on social media can be listened to repeatedly as desired by the informants.

Ease of access: Informants listen to religious teachings, sermons, and studies through social media because they are easy to access. Sermons on specific themes can be found by simply searching and clicking. Likewise, short posts, videos, and images with simple captions make it easy for someone to understand the message directly. By

analyzing these motives, we can understand how social media fulfills individuals' spiritual and informational needs within their social contexts. From the interviews, it was found that the In Order to Motives for using social media are as follows: As a Source of Self-Introspection: The informants use social media to strengthen their faith as pious and devout Muslims. In life's journey, every individual must have principles and guidelines to follow to succeed in this world and the hereafter. Therefore, social media is often used to listen to religious reflections that can serve as material for self-reflection and introspection. Understanding Islamic Teachings More Deeply: Another goal is to gain a deeper understanding of Islamic teachings so that I can practice the religion better in the future. For example, how should one pray properly? What prayers should be recited during the five daily prayers? Why should Zakat Fitrah be given as money instead of rice? Informants often seek such information through social media.

Aspiring to Become Famous Preachers: Some informants also desire to become famous preachers, like Ustaz Adi Hidayat, Ustaz Abdul Somad, and Ustaz Das'ad Latif. Therefore, they are interested in watching every sermon these preachers deliver, hoping to learn and emulate their preaching styles.

As a Necessity and Entertainment: Some informants listen to religious sermons in their spare time as both a necessity and entertainment. Sermons that contain humor and the preacher's engaging style also become a source of entertainment for them. Sermons delivered excitingly and humorously are often more accessible for the listeners to digest and remember. By understanding these motives, we can see how individuals use social media to fulfill their spiritual needs, religious education, and entertainment within their social context.

## CONCLUSION

Based on research entitled Exploring the Phenomenon of Social Media Use on Students' Religious Understanding in West Sulawesi. This research highlights the widespread use of social media to access religious knowledge among SMA/MA students in Polewali Mandar and Majene, West Sulawesi. Students often use platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok to listen to religious lectures and teachings. The convenience, accessibility, and ease of social media offer play an important role in shaping their religious understanding. However, while social media helps students fill gaps in religious education and understanding, this study also reveals that students often need clarification due to conflicting religious information found online.

This study applied Alfred Schutz's motive theory to explore why students rely on social media for religious knowledge. "The Motive of Because" includes students' desire to seek additional information, understand popular religious teachings, and obtain clear and accessible content. "In Order to Motive" refers to deeper spiritual introspection, better understanding of Islamic teachings, and aspiring to follow in the footsteps of famous preachers. This theoretical framework effectively reveals how students use social media for education and self-actualization within their social and religious contexts.

One limitation of this study is that it mainly focuses on the perspectives of high school students in two regions, which may only partially represent the broader student Population in West Sulawesi or Indonesia. In addition, while exploring the impact of social media, this study did not delve deeply into the content analysis of materials consumed, which could have provided further insight into the nuances of religious teachings accessed through these platforms.

Moreover, recommendations (1). Schools and madrasahs should incorporate media literacy into their curriculum, teaching students how to critically evaluate religious content on social media. This will help students distinguish between credible sources and potentially misleading or radical ideologies. (2) Religious preachers should be encouraged to create balanced and moderate content and engage young people on social media platforms where they are most active. Religious authorities should utilize social media to guide students toward authentic and tolerant interpretations of religious texts. (3) The Government and regulatory agencies need more robust regulation and filtering of online religious content to protect young students from radical and intolerant views. The Ministry of Religious Affairs can play a more proactive role in promoting moderate and grounded religious content on social media. (4) Further research: Future research should be expanded to cover a broader range of demographics and incorporate content analysis to better understand the type and quality of religious knowledge students acquire on social media platforms. This will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of social media on religious formation. By addressing these areas, educational institutions and religious authorities can better support students in navigating the complex landscape of religious knowledge in the digital age.

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