

## Digital Hermeneutics and Islamic Psychology in Qur'anic Interpretation: TikTok Da'wah Content in Indonesia

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**Abstract:** *This research examines how digital hermeneutics and Islamic psychology operate in the interpretation of the Qur'an within TikTok-based da'wah content in Indonesia. It addresses four key aspects, namely: the distinctive features of Qur'anic interpretation on TikTok, the influence of platform algorithms in shaping interpretive patterns, the psychological mechanisms through which audiences receive and internalize Qur'anic messages, and the broader epistemological, psychological, and social consequences of this trend. A qualitative design is employed, combining digital content analysis, direct observation, interviews with da'wah content creators, and surveys of TikTok users. The study draws on critical hermeneutics, mediatization of religion theory, and Islamic psychology to explore the dynamic relationship between sacred text, technological systems, and human psychological processes. The findings indicate that interpretations circulating on TikTok tend to be fragmented, context-driven, and closely tied to algorithmic preferences. Qur'anic messages are often framed as motivational or emotionally engaging narratives that resonate with everyday life, placing greater emphasis on the affective dimension (qalb) rather than deeper cognitive reflection ('aql). In addition, there is a noticeable shift in religious authority, moving away from traditionally recognized scholars toward digital creators whose influence is largely shaped by popularity. The interaction between creators and audiences also fosters a more participatory and dialogical form of interpretation. However, this openness can lead to oversimplification and potential misinterpretation, especially in contexts where digital literacy remains limited. Overall, the study suggests that integrating digital hermeneutics with Islamic psychology creates new opportunities to broaden access to religious knowledge and experience, while at the same time raising concerns about interpretive depth, the reliability of knowledge, and the tendency toward instant meaning-making. Consequently, a more balanced approach is required one that integrates the richness of classical exegesis, psychological insight, and effective digital communication strategies in contemporary da'wah practices.*

**Keywords:** Digital Hermeneutics; Islamic Psychology; Quranic Interpretation; TikTok Da'wah; Social Media

**Abstrak:** *Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana hermeneutika digital dan psikologi Islam beroperasi dalam penafsiran Al-Qur'an melalui konten dakwah berbasis TikTok di Indonesia. Kajian ini berfokus pada empat aspek utama, yaitu: karakteristik khas penafsiran Al-Qur'an di TikTok, pengaruh algoritma platform dalam membentuk pola penafsiran, mekanisme psikologis yang memengaruhi cara audiens menerima dan menginternalisasi pesan-pesan Al-Qur'an, serta implikasi epistemologis, psikologis, dan sosial yang ditimbulkan oleh fenomena tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan memadukan analisis konten digital, observasi langsung, wawancara dengan kreator konten dakwah, serta survei terhadap pengguna TikTok. Analisis didasarkan pada perspektif hermeneutika kritis, teori mediatasi agama (mediatization of religion), dan psikologi Islam untuk menjelaskan relasi dinamis antara teks suci, sistem teknologi digital, dan proses psikologis manusia. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa penafsiran Al-Qur'an yang berkembang di TikTok cenderung bersifat terfragmentasi, berorientasi pada konteks, dan sangat dipengaruhi oleh preferensi algoritma platform. Pesan-pesan Al-Qur'an umumnya dikemas dalam bentuk narasi motivasi atau emosional yang dekat dengan pengalaman kehidupan sehari-hari, sehingga lebih menonjolkan dimensi afektif (qalb) dibandingkan refleksi kognitif yang lebih mendalam ('aql). Selain itu, penelitian ini menemukan adanya pergeseran otoritas keagamaan, dari ulama yang secara tradisional diakui menuju kreator konten digital yang pengaruhnya lebih banyak ditentukan oleh tingkat popularitas. Interaksi antara kreator dan audiens juga mendorong terbentuknya model penafsiran yang lebih partisipatif dan dialogis. Namun demikian, keterbukaan tersebut berpotensi menimbulkan penyederhanaan makna serta kesalahan penafsiran, terutama dalam masyarakat yang tingkat literasi digitalnya masih terbatas. Secara keseluruhan, penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa integrasi hermeneutika digital dengan psikologi Islam membuka peluang baru dalam memperluas akses masyarakat terhadap pengetahuan dan pengalaman keagamaan. Pada saat yang sama, integrasi tersebut juga menghadirkan*

*tantangan terkait kedalaman penafsiran, validitas pengetahuan keagamaan, serta kecenderungan terbentuknya pemaknaan yang bersifat instan. Oleh karena itu, diperlukan pendekatan yang lebih seimbang dengan mengintegrasikan kekayaan tradisi tafsir klasik, wawasan psikologi Islam, dan strategi komunikasi digital yang efektif dalam praktik dakwah kontemporer.*

**Kata kunci:** *Hermeneutika Digital; Psikologi Islam; Penafsiran Al-Qur'an; Dakwah TikTok; Media Sosial.*

## **Introduction**

The development of digital technology over the past decade has significantly transformed the production, distribution, and consumption of religious knowledge. Social media platforms, particularly TikTok, have become not only a medium for communication but also a new space for visual, fast-paced, algorithm-based da'wah practices. In this context, the phenomenon of "digital hermeneutics" has emerged, namely the process of interpreting sacred texts that takes place in a digital ecosystem characterized by high interactivity, fragmentation of meaning, and technological mediation. This transformation has impacted how the Quran is understood and internalized by Muslim communities, particularly in Indonesia, the country with the largest Muslim population (Campbell, 2012; Evolvi, 2022).

This phenomenon can be understood as a form of adaptation of da'wah to the changing times. The Qur'an itself encourages the delivery of teachings with a contextual approach, as Allah's word in Surah An-Nahl [16]: 125 concerning the importance of wisdom in da'wah. However, amidst the ease of access and accelerated distribution of information, epistemological issues have emerged regarding the validity, depth, and authority of interpretations circulating in digital media. This is reinforced by the finding that social media has given rise to a new form of religious authority that is no longer entirely based on scientific authority, but rather on popularity and digital communication capabilities (Febrian, 2024; Bunt, 2004)

Within the tradition of Qur'anic studies ('ulum al-Qur'an), the question of who may legitimately interpret sacred texts has long been a matter of scholarly debate. Classical tafsir methodology, as codified by scholars such as al-Suyuti and Ibn Kathir, presupposes that valid interpretation requires mastery of Arabic linguistics, knowledge of asbab al-nuzul (occasions of revelation), familiarity with the chain of transmission (isnad), and formal authorization (ijazah) granted by a recognized scholar (Saeed, 2005). Tafsir bi al-ra'yi, or interpretation based solely on personal opinion without grounding in classical sources, has traditionally been regarded with suspicion or outright prohibition in mainstream Sunni jurisprudence. These epistemological gatekeeping mechanisms functioned to preserve interpretive integrity and protect the Qur'an from arbitrary or contextually decontextualized readings.

Contemporary scholarship has challenged these classical frameworks by advocating for

more contextual and reader-responsive approaches. Oprimuriandy T.D. Putra et al.'s double movement theory, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd's hermeneutical turn, and Amina Wadud's gender-inclusive readings have collectively expanded the boundaries of legitimate interpretation, emphasizing historical context, sociolinguistic analysis, and the lived experience of Muslim communities. These revisionist approaches, while contested within traditional circles, opened space for non-specialist engagement with the Qur'an (Saeed, 2005). Digital platforms have now radically accelerated this democratization of interpretation, effectively dismantling the institutional gatekeeping mechanisms of classical scholarship. On TikTok, where any user can produce and disseminate Qur'anic content to millions, the distinction between authorized tafsir and personal opinion collapses entirely, raising urgent questions about interpretive accountability that existing frameworks in Qur'anic studies have yet to fully address (Bunt, 2004)

In practice, the short video format on TikTok encourages the simplification of religious messages, including the interpretation of verses from the Koran. In line with what was explained by Nisa (2018), "digital da'wah content tends to ignore the complexity of classical interpretation in order to attract the attention of the audience" (p. 305). Oprimuriandy T.D. Putra et al. (2025) also emphasized that digital da'wah predominantly uses an emotional approach rather than an argumentative one. This condition shows a shift from in-depth interpretation to pragmatic and contextual meaning.

On the other hand, the Qur'an emphasizes the importance of caution in receiving information, as stated in QS. Al-Hujurat [49]: 6. This principle is very relevant in the digital era, where religious information can be widely disseminated without adequate verification processes. Furthermore, the concept of tadabbur in QS. Shad [38]: 29 emphasizes that understanding the Qur'an should ideally be done through deep reflection, not just quick consumption. However, the instant logic of social media often does not align with these reflective demands.

Theoretically, classical hermeneutics emphasizes the importance of historical context, language, and tradition in understanding texts (Thiselton, 2010). However, in the digital era, the interpretation process has transformed into a more multimodal one, influenced by algorithms and user interaction patterns (Wartella et al., 2016). Lövheim and Lynchb (2011) explains that the mediatization of religion has caused religion to undergo changes in form and authority due to media intervention. Thus, the interpretation of the Quran on TikTok cannot be separated from the technological structures that frame it.

Furthermore, this study integrates an Islamic psychology perspective to understand how Quranic verses are not only interpreted but also internalized by the audience. In Islamic psychology, the process of understanding revelation involves the cognitive (aql), affective (qalb), and internal drive (nafs), which simultaneously influence an individual's response to religious messages (Rothman & Coyle, 2018). The predominance of motivational da'wah content suggests that digital hermeneutics operates more in the emotional realm, which in some cases serves as a religious coping mechanism for psychological distress (Keshavarzi & Haque, 2013). However, without in-depth interpretation, this phenomenon has the potential to reduce the function of the Quran to merely a source of momentary motivation.

Previous research has generally focused on the effectiveness of digital da'wah and the role of social media in disseminating religious messages (Rulli Nasrullah, 2017; ruslinar et al., 2024). Meanwhile, global studies show that digital media has created a hybrid and participatory "digital religion" space (Evolvi, 2022). However, studies specifically integrating digital hermeneutics with Islamic psychology in the context of Quranic interpretation on TikTok are still limited. Therefore, this study aims to fill this gap by offering a more integrative approach.

Based on this background, this study aims to analyze the practice of digital hermeneutics in interpreting the Quran through TikTok da'wah content in Indonesia, taking into account the psychological dimensions of the audience. The focus of this research includes the characteristics of interpretation, the role of algorithms in shaping meaning, and the process of internalizing verses within the user's psychological structure. Thus, this study examines not only the text and media but also the accompanying psychospiritual experiences.

The method used is a qualitative approach with digital content analysis and critical hermeneutics, enriched with an Islamic psychology perspective. Data were obtained through systematic observation, in-depth interviews, and content analysis of TikTok Islamic preaching accounts, then analyzed by considering the relationship between text, media, and user experience (Nyre, 2018). Specifically, data collection was conducted between January and April 2024 and focused on five high-follower Islamic da'wah accounts on TikTok Indonesia, namely @hanan\_attaki\_, @felix.siauw, @oemar\_mita, @syam\_elmarusy, and @hiyung\_agam, selected on the basis of three criteria: (1) a minimum of 100,000 followers, (2) regular publication of content containing direct Qur'anic verse citations, and (3) active audience engagement (average likes and comments per post above the platform median). A total of 150 videos containing Qur'anic verse citations were analyzed, interviews were

conducted with 10 content creators recruited through purposive sampling, and a structured survey was administered to 120 TikTok users aged 18–30 residing in urban areas of Indonesia. This approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of interpretation in the digital space.

This research offers a novelty in the form of an integration of digital hermeneutics and Islamic psychology as an analytical framework in contemporary interpretation studies. While previous research has tended to emphasize the communication aspect, this study positions interpretation as a multidimensional process involving text, technology, and the human psyche. As explained by Lukman (2018), interpretation in the digital age is the result of a complex interaction between text, reader, and medium, which in this study is expanded to include psychospiritual dimensions.

The research findings are expected to provide theoretical contributions to the development of digital-based Quranic studies and practical contributions to Islamic preachers in developing content that is not only engaging but also epistemologically and psychologically responsible. Furthermore, this research is also relevant for strengthening digital religious literacy so that the public can critically understand, sort, and internalize religious messages (Ulyan, 2023).

Thus, this research is positioned to bridge the tension between interpretive traditionalism and modern digital dynamics. On the one hand, there are concerns about the shallowing of meaning due to digital simplification, but on the other hand, there are significant opportunities to expand public access to and experience of religion. Campbell (2012) emphasizes, "Digital media reshape how religious authority is constructed and negotiated" (p. 45). Therefore, this study is crucial for understanding how the Qur'an is interpreted, perceived, and revived in contemporary digital realities.

To situate the empirical findings of this study within a coherent scholarly context, this section elaborates the three theoretical pillars that underpin the analysis, namely the mediatization of religion in digital hermeneutics, the emergence of TikTok as a site of Islamic learning and da'wah, and the tripartite Islamic-psychological framework of *qalb*, *'aql*, and *nafs*, before turning to the broader question of digital religious authority and literacy. Reviewing these strands together clarifies both the conceptual gap this research addresses and the interpretive lens applied to the data presented in the subsequent findings sections.

### **Digital Hermeneutics and the Mediatization of Religion**

The concept of mediatization describes a long-term process through which media

logics increasingly shape the form, content, and authority structures of social institutions, including religion (Lövheim & Lynch, 2011). Within this process, religious meaning is no longer produced solely within traditional institutional settings but is continuously reconfigured through the affordances and constraints of the media through which it travels. (Hjarvard, 2011) argues that digital modernity intensifies this dynamic by compressing the distance between sacred text and everyday consumption, so that scriptural meaning becomes entangled with the visual grammar, pacing, and virality logics of the platform itself. Campbell (2012) further contends that the digital public sphere reconfigures religious communication into a decentralized and performative space, in which the credibility of a message is judged as much by its resonance and shareability as by its doctrinal accuracy. Miller (2020) situates these shifts within a broader theory of digital culture, noting that platforms do not merely transmit content but actively structure the categories through which users perceive, sort, and evaluate information, including religious information. In the Indonesian context, Lubis (2023) demonstrates that digital media has accelerated the pluralization of religious authority, allowing new actors to claim legitimacy through visibility rather than formal scholarly credentials, a pattern that closely parallels the dynamics observed on TikTok da'wah accounts. Karim (2023) adds a psychological dimension to this mediatization thesis, suggesting that Muslim digital publics increasingly engage with religious content through emotionally resonant, affect-laden framings rather than argumentative exposition, a proposition that is directly tested in this study's analysis of TikTok interpretation. Taken together, these perspectives suggest that digital hermeneutics cannot be reduced to a simple change of medium; rather, it constitutes a structural transformation in how sacred meaning is authorized, circulated, and experienced.

### **TikTok as an Emerging Space for Islamic Da'wah and Learning**

Empirical scholarship on TikTok as a religious platform has grown rapidly in recent years, documenting both its pedagogical potential and its interpretive risks. Jaza and Makrufi (2025) show that TikTok functions as a viable platform for Islamic learning among youth audiences, particularly through short, visually engaging explanations of everyday religious practice, while in a related study the same authors demonstrate that TikTok-based content is frequently mobilized as an Islamic coping resource, helping young users manage anxiety and uncertainty through verse-based motivational messaging (Jaza & Makrufi, 2025). This dual function, as both an informal learning space and a coping mechanism, is consistent with the pattern of affective engagement identified in the present study's survey data. Kholili et al.

(2024) similarly find that digital da'wah strategies across Southeast Asia increasingly privilege brevity, visual storytelling, and algorithmic optimization over sustained doctrinal exposition, a trend that closely mirrors the fragmentation observed among the TikTok accounts analyzed here. Daswin (2025) focus specifically on the Indonesian context, arguing that TikTok preaching among youth constitutes a distinct genre of da'wah communication shaped as much by platform vernacular, such as trending audio, captions, and duet formats, as by religious content itself. Complementing this, Toyyib et al. (2026) show that youth identity construction on social media is deeply intertwined with religious content consumption, such that Islamic identity is negotiated through participation in digital religious communities rather than through solitary textual study. Zaid et al. (2022) extend this line of inquiry by demonstrating that psychological engagement with digital da'wah content, measured through indicators such as perceived relevance and emotional resonance, is a stronger predictor of content sharing than perceived doctrinal depth. These findings collectively support the characterization of TikTok da'wah as a genre optimized for affective accessibility, a characterization that this study's content analysis and survey data substantiate in the specific context of Qur'anic verse interpretation.

### **The Tripartite Framework of Islamic Psychology: Qalb, 'Aql, and Nafs**

Islamic psychology offers a distinctive anthropology of the self that is particularly well-suited to analyzing how digital religious content is received and internalized. Badri (2018) reconstructs the classical Islamic psychospiritual model, arguing that human responsiveness to revelation cannot be reduced to cognitive processing alone but must be understood as an integrated movement of the heart (qalb), intellect ('aql), and lower self (nafs), each of which is activated differently depending on the mode of address used in religious communication. Jamaluddin et al. (2026), in a systematic review of the Islamic worldview and mental health literature, similarly emphasize that contemporary applications of Islamic psychology increasingly draw on this tripartite model to explain variation in religious coping styles, including the preference for emotionally resonant over analytically demanding forms of religious content. Skinner (2019) traces the historical development of this framework across classical and contemporary Islamic psychological traditions, noting that the qalb has consistently been theorized as the primary locus of spiritual receptivity, which helps explain why affect-laden TikTok content may achieve deeper immediate resonance than text-heavy exegetical material, even if it does not engage the 'aql to the same degree. Haque (2025) applies this framework clinically, showing that psychotherapeutic interventions grounded in

Islamic psychology deliberately engage the qalb before the 'aql in order to build therapeutic rapport, a sequencing logic that appears structurally analogous to the affective-first pattern observed in TikTok da'wah content. Read together with Rothman & Coyle (2018) integrative framework for Islamic psychology and psychotherapy, these sources justify treating the qalb-'aql-nafs triad not merely as a descriptive metaphor but as an analytically productive framework for interpreting why digital audiences report predominantly emotional rather than reflective engagement with Qur'anic content, as documented in the findings of this study.

### **Digital Religious Authority and Literacy**

A recurring theme across recent scholarship is the erosion of centralized religious authority in digital environments and the corresponding rise of literacy-based concerns. Lukman (2018) argues that digital Islam produces a form of online authority that is inherently unstable, contingent on algorithmic visibility rather than institutional endorsement, such that religious credibility must be continuously renegotiated through engagement metrics. Ashfiya' (2024) document a parallel dynamic specifically in Qur'anic interpretation, finding that digital exegetical content increasingly bypasses traditional scholarly review processes, raising concerns about the verifiability of interpretive claims circulating on social media. Zaid et al. (2022) frame this development in terms of knowledge dissemination, suggesting that while social media democratizes access to Islamic knowledge, it simultaneously weakens the quality-control mechanisms that traditionally accompanied that knowledge's transmission. Lukman (2018) examine Qur'anic interpretation in social media more directly, concluding that interpretive validity is increasingly judged by audiences based on relatability rather than methodological rigor. Pujiono & Khotimah (2025) situate these dynamics within a broader theory of religious communication in the digital era, arguing that the compression of message length characteristic of platforms like TikTok necessarily privileges simplified, decontextualized renderings of complex religious concepts. Mubarok et al. (2025) provide converging evidence from an algorithmic perspective, showing that platform recommendation systems systematically amplify emotionally charged religious content over more measured or analytically dense material, thereby reinforcing the interpretive patterns identified in this study. Finally, Moroojo et al. (2025) demonstrate that algorithmic curation directly shapes the emotional register of religious content consumption, a finding that lends further empirical support to this study's argument that platform architecture, and not merely creator intent, actively participates in shaping how the Qur'an is interpreted and experienced on TikTok. Collectively, this body of literature underscores the urgency of strengthening

digital religious literacy, understood not merely as technical competence but as the capacity to critically evaluate the epistemic conditions under which religious meaning is produced and circulated online.

This study employs a qualitative research design that integrates digital content analysis, critical hermeneutics, and an Islamic psychology lens, supplemented by a structured survey component to provide descriptive quantitative context for the qualitative findings. This mixed-strategy qualitative design was chosen because the research questions require simultaneous attention to textual features of interpretation (what verses are used and how they are framed), platform-level dynamics (how algorithms shape visibility), and audience-level psychological processes (how meaning is internalized), none of which could be adequately captured through a single data source or a purely textual method (Nyre, 2018). The design is exploratory and interpretive rather than confirmatory, consistent with the relatively underexplored status of digital hermeneutics research grounded in Islamic psychology.

Data collection was conducted between January and April 2024 and focused on five high-follower Islamic da'wah accounts on TikTok Indonesia, namely @hanan\_attaki\_, @felix.siau, @oemar\_mita, @syam\_elmarusy, and @hiyung\_agam. These accounts were purposively selected based on three criteria: a minimum of 100,000 followers, regular publication of content containing direct Qur'anic verse citations, and above-median audience engagement measured by average likes and comments per post. From these accounts, 150 videos containing explicit Qur'anic verse citations were selected for content analysis. In addition, ten content creators affiliated with these and comparable accounts were recruited through purposive sampling for in-depth interviews, and a structured survey was administered to 120 TikTok users aged 18-30 residing in urban centers across Indonesia, namely Jakarta, Bandung, Surabaya, and Makassar. This combination of account-level, creator-level, and audience-level data sources was intended to triangulate findings across the production, distribution, and reception stages of digital Qur'anic interpretation.

Three data collection procedures were employed in parallel. First, systematic content analysis was conducted on the 150 selected videos, coding each for the specific verse cited, the interpretive frame applied (motivational, normative, or narrative), the presence or absence of reference to classical exegetical sources, and indicators of audience engagement. Second, semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with the ten recruited content creators, exploring their interpretive rationale, awareness of classical tafsir methodology, and

perception of algorithmic influence on content choices; interviews lasted between forty and sixty minutes and were conducted either in person or via video call, then transcribed verbatim for analysis. Third, a structured survey was administered to the 120 TikTok users to capture patterns of content consumption, self-reported psychological response (affective versus reflective engagement), frequency of exposure to Qur'anic content on the platform, and the extent to which respondents cross-checked TikTok-based interpretations against classical tafsir literature or consulted a religious teacher. Direct observation of account activity, including comment sections and creator-audience interaction patterns, supplemented these three primary procedures and provided contextual data on the participatory dimension of digital interpretation .

Data analysis proceeded through an iterative, thematic process. Video content and interview transcripts were first coded openly to identify recurring interpretive patterns, then organized into broader thematic categories corresponding to the four research foci of this study, namely interpretive characteristics, algorithmic influence, psychological internalization, and epistemological-social implications. Survey data were analyzed descriptively to generate frequency distributions of respondents' self-reported patterns of exposure, emotional response, and verification behavior, which were then read alongside the qualitative themes to assess convergence or divergence between creator intent, textual features, and audience reception. Throughout this process, the analysis was guided by the theoretical framework elaborated in the literature review, namely mediatization theory, critical hermeneutics, and the *qalb-'aql-nafs* model of Islamic psychology, which functioned as sensitizing concepts rather than fixed coding categories, allowing patterns to emerge inductively from the data while remaining interpretable within a coherent theoretical vocabulary.

### **Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations**

Several measures were undertaken to strengthen the trustworthiness of the findings. Data triangulation across content analysis, interviews, and survey responses allowed patterns identified in one data source to be cross-checked against the others, reducing the risk that findings reflected artifacts of a single method. Interview transcripts were shared with a subset of participants for member checking to confirm that their views had been accurately represented. All participants, including content creators and survey respondents, provided informed consent prior to data collection, were informed of their right to withdraw at any time, and were assured of confidentiality in the reporting of findings; account handles analyzed for content are publicly available public-facing data and are reported here consistent

with standard practice in digital media research. Despite these measures, as elaborated in the following discussion, several methodological limitations remain and are addressed transparently in the dedicated limitations section of this article.

### **Characteristics of Digital Hermeneutics in TikTok's Islamic Content**

Based on observations of several TikTok Islamic preaching accounts in Indonesia, it was found that interpretations of the Quran on this platform tend to be fragmented, contextual-pragmatic, and oriented toward audience engagement. Data were obtained through an analysis of 150 Islamic preaching videos containing Quranic verses, interviews with 10 content creators, and a survey of 120 TikTok users aged 18–30.

In general, the verses of the Qur'an are presented in short pieces with an emphasis on moral messages relevant to everyday life, such as anxiety, social relationships, and life motivation. For example, QS. Al-Insyirah [94]: 5–6 is often used in content with motivational narratives:

فَإِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا إِنَّ مَعَ الْعُسْرِ يُسْرًا

*“So, indeed, with hardship there is ease. Indeed, with hardship there is ease.”*

This verse is interpreted practically without elaboration on the context in which it was revealed (asbab al-nuzūl) or classical exegetical explanations. This aligns with Wartella et al. (2016) findings that the digital generation prefers concise, emotional, and easy-to-understand content. In this context, digital hermeneutics tends to prioritize relevance over depth.

This finding is also supported by research by Nisa (2018), which states that digital da'wah undergoes a process of "decontextualization," namely the separation of texts from their historical context. However, this approach actually increases the reach of religious messages, as demonstrated by the high level of interaction (likes, shares, comments) on simplistic content (Daswin, 2025).

### **The Role of Algorithms in Shaping Interpretations**

Interviews with content creators indicate that TikTok's algorithm significantly influences the type of content produced. Creators tend to choose "viral-friendly" verses, meaning verses that are easily associated with popular issues and have high emotional appeal. This suggests that the interpretation process is no longer solely text-based but is also influenced by algorithmic logic (Bucher, 2018).

From the perspective of mediatization theory, this phenomenon demonstrates that media are not merely channels but also actors shaping meaning (Lövheim & Lynchb, 2011). Algorithms function as new "gatekeepers" that determine which verses appear most

frequently in the digital public sphere.

For example, QS. Al-Baqarah [2]: 286 is often used in content about mental health:

لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا<sup>٢٨٦</sup> لَهَا مَا كَسَبَتْ وَعَلَيْهَا مَا اكْتَسَبَتْ<sup>٢٨٦</sup> رَبَّنَا لَا تُؤَاخِذْنَا إِنْ نَسِينَا أَوْ  
أَخْطَأْنَا<sup>٢٨٦</sup> رَبَّنَا وَلَا تَحْمِلْ عَلَيْنَا إصْرًا كَمَا حَمَلْتَهُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِنَا<sup>٢٨٦</sup> رَبَّنَا وَلَا تُحَمِّلْنَا مَا لَا  
طَاقَةَ لَنَا بِهِ<sup>٢٨٦</sup> وَاعْفُ عَنَّا<sup>٢٨٦</sup> وَارْحَمْنَا<sup>٢٨٦</sup> أَنْتَ مَوْلَانَا فَانصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ<sup>٢٨٦</sup>

*"Allah does not burden a person except according to his ability. For him there is something (reward) for the (virtue) he strives for and for him there is (also) something (torment) for the (crime) he commits. (They prayed,) "O our Lord, do not punish us if we forget or we are wrong. O our Lord, do not burden us with a heavy burden as You imposed on those before us. O our Lord, do not carry on us what we cannot bear. Forgive us, forgive us, and have mercy on us. You are our protector. So, help us in facing the disbelievers."*

Interpretations of this verse on TikTok are often linked to concepts of self-healing and resilience without connecting it to broader theological dimensions. This suggests a process of reinterpretation influenced by digital popular culture (Oprimuriandy T.D. Putra et al., 2025)

### Religious Authority in the Digital Space

Research findings indicate a shift in religious authority from traditional clerics to digital creators. Survey results (n = 120; 58% female, 42% male; ages 18–30; domiciled in Jakarta, Bandung, Surabaya, and Makassar) showed that 68% of respondents stated they gained religious understanding more often from TikTok than from scriptures or formal studies: 54% reported encountering Qur'anic verse content on TikTok at least once daily; and only 22% indicated they cross-checked TikTok-based Qur'anic interpretations against classical tafsir literature or consulted a religious teacher. These findings indicate that religious authority is now substantially decentralized and popularity-based (Febrian, 2024).

However, not all creators have adequate scientific backgrounds. This raises the risk of misinterpretation. As reminded in QS. Ali Imran [3]: 7:

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخَرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ فَأَمَّا الَّذِينَ فِي  
قُلُوبِهِمْ زَيْغٌ فَيَتَّبِعُونَ مَا تَشَابَهَ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْوِيلِهِ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَالرَّسُخُونَ  
فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ آمَنَّا بِهِ كُلٌّ مِنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّنَا<sup>٧</sup> وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ<sup>٧</sup>

*"It is He (Allah) who revealed the Book (Al-Qur'an) to you (Prophet Muhammad). Among the verses there are those that are muhkamat, 84) those are the main contents of the Book (Al-Qur'an) and others that are mutasyabihat. 85) As for those people who in their hearts have a tendency towards error, they follow the mutasyabihat verses to cause fitnah (chaos and doubt) and to seek tawil. In fact, no one knows the takwil, except Allah. People with deep knowledge say, "We believe in it (the Koran), everything is from our Lord." No one can learn a lesson, except ululalbab."*

This verse is relevant in a digital context, where interpretations can be made without a strong methodological foundation. Research by Bunt (2004) also shows that digital Islam opens up space for the emergence of alternative authorities that are not always academically verified.

### **Typology of Interpretation in TikTok Content**

Content analysis shows that there are three main typologies of Quranic interpretation on TikTok. First, motivational interpretation, which emphasizes psychological and emotional aspects. Second, normative interpretation, which contains simple moral and legal exhortations. Third, narrative interpretation, which connects verses to personal stories or experiences.

This typology demonstrates that digital hermeneutics is adaptive to audience needs. This aligns with Hoover (2006) concept of "lived religion," where religion is practiced in everyday life through media.

However, this approach often ignores the complexities of classical interpretation. For example, QS. An-Nisa [4]: 34 is often simplified in the context of gender relations without considering the debates between classical and contemporary scholars. This indicates a significant reduction in meaning (Evolvi, 2022).

### **Islamic Psychology and the Internalization of Qur'anic Meaning in Digital Contexts**

The practice of Qur'anic interpretation in TikTok da'wah content is not only a linguistic and theological activity, but also a psychological process involving the audience's affective, cognitive, and spiritual dimensions. The justification for integrating Islamic psychology into the analysis of digital hermeneutics is grounded in empirical observation: interview data from content creators and survey responses from users consistently revealed that audiences engage with Qur'anic content primarily on an emotional level, reporting feelings of calm, hope, and reduced anxiety after encountering motivational verse-based content. This emotional engagement pattern corresponds directly to the tripartite psychological framework within Islamic psychology, which conceptualizes human responsiveness to revelation through the interrelated faculties of the heart (qalb), the mind (aql), and the soul (nafs), as elaborated by Abu Hamid al-Ghazali in *Ihya' Ulum al-Din*. The heart (qalb) is the center of spiritual awareness that plays a role in accepting the truth, while the mind (aql) functions as a tool for rational thought, and the soul (nafs) is related to emotional and instinctive drives. The observed dominance of affective responses in the survey data with 73% of respondents describing their primary reaction to TikTok Qur'anic content as emotional rather than

reflective or analytical, provides an empirical basis for the claim that digital hermeneutics on this platform predominantly activates the qalb and nafs rather than the aql (Rothman & Coyle, 2018). The integration of Islamic psychology is therefore not a theoretical imposition but a framework that best accounts for the observed data.

TikTok's preaching content, which uses Quranic verses as motivational messages, such as those on patience, anxiety, and hope, demonstrates that the verses are not only interpreted textually but also internalized as a mechanism for emotional regulation. This aligns with the concept of religious coping in Islamic psychology, namely the use of spiritual values to deal with psychological stress (Keshavarzi & Haque, 2013). For example, the use of Surah Al-Baqarah [2]: 286 in TikTok content demonstrates how the verse functions as a source of psychological calm, although often without a deeper exploration of its interpretive meaning.

Furthermore, this phenomenon can be explained through the concept of tazkiyatun nafs, a process of purifying the soul that, in Islamic tradition, requires stages of reflection, self-control, and ongoing spiritual development. However, research shows that digital hermeneutics tends to produce a form of instant religiosity, where the interpretation of verses is directed more toward short-term emotional effects than profound spiritual transformation (Haque & Keshavarzi, 2014). This suggests a tension between the spiritual depth of Islamic psychology and the fleeting nature of TikTok.

Furthermore, the interactivity on TikTok also creates a collective psychological dynamic. Audiences not only receive messages but also participate in constructing meaning through comments and emotional responses. From an Islamic social psychology perspective, this can be linked to the concepts of ta'awun (mutual assistance) and laughter. *ṣāu bil-ḥaqq* (advising each other in the truth), although in practice it is often mixed with subjective opinions that are not based on science (Soedjiwo et al., 2025).

From a cognitive perspective, the dominance of short video formats has led to a reduction in the process of tadabbur (deep contemplation of verses). Yet, the Quran explicitly encourages the use of reason in understanding revelation. In this context, digital hermeneutics exhibits a tendency toward "cognitive reduction," where the complexity of interpretation is simplified to suit the rapid consumption patterns of social media users (Saeed, 2005). As Al-Ghazali explained, "Knowledge without contemplation will not produce true understanding" (Haque, 2004).

Thus, the integration of Islamic psychology into digital hermeneutics analysis demonstrates that the process of interpreting the Quran on TikTok cannot be separated from

the psychological state of the audience. Digital hermeneutics is not only a process of interpreting texts, but also a process of internalizing meaning influenced by emotional needs, psychological structure, and the digital social environment. Therefore, a more integrative approach between classical interpretation and Islamic psychology is needed so that digital da'wah is not only communicatively effective but also impacts authentic spiritual transformation.

This study is subject to several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the sample of TikTok accounts was purposively selected and limited to five major Indonesian da'wah accounts, which may not fully represent the heterogeneity of Islamic digital content across the archipelago, including regional-language content, women-led accounts, or pesantren-affiliated channels. Second, the survey sample of 120 respondents, while appropriate for the exploratory nature of this study, is relatively small and concentrated in urban centers; findings may therefore not generalize to rural or semi-urban Muslim communities with different levels of digital literacy. Third, while this study employs multiple data sources, the video content analysis relied on researcher interpretation of meaning without inter-rater reliability testing, which introduces the possibility of interpretive bias. Fourth, the rapidly evolving nature of TikTok's algorithm means that the content dynamics observed between January and April 2024 may not reflect current conditions.

Several rival explanations for the findings should also be considered. The emotional orientation of TikTok da'wah content could be explained not primarily by algorithmic pressure, as this study argues, but rather by longstanding traditions of popular Islamic preaching in Indonesia that have always favored affective over argumentative styles, predating social media entirely (Ulyan, 2023). Additionally, the reported shift away from traditional scholarly authority may reflect a broader generational disenchantment with formal religious institutions rather than a specifically digital phenomenon. Future research should employ longitudinal designs, larger and more geographically diverse samples, computational methods for large-scale content analysis, and controlled experiments to test the causal role of algorithmic recommendation in shaping interpretive patterns.

### **Digital Hermeneutics Based on Islamic Psychology: A New Analytical Framework for Contemporary Qur'anic Studies**

This research confirms that digital hermeneutics in the interpretation of the Qur'an cannot be understood solely as a phenomenon of religious communication, but rather as an epistemological transformation involving a complex interaction between text, technology,

and human psychological structures. By integrating the approaches of digital hermeneutics and Islamic psychology, this research presents a new perspective that not only examines how verses are interpreted in the digital space, but also how these verses are received, interpreted, and internalized in the dimensions of the *qalb*, *'aql*, and *nafs* of the audience.

Unlike previous research that generally focused on the effectiveness of digital da'wah, audience reach, or media communication strategies, this study positions the interpretation process as a multidimensional phenomenon with both epistemological and psychospiritual dimensions. In this context, digital hermeneutics is understood not only as a technology-based interpretation method but also as a process of meaning-making influenced by emotional states, personal experiences, and the algorithmic logic of digital platforms.

The main novelty of this research lies in the conceptual integration of Quranic exegesis, digital media theory, and Islamic psychology within a single, cohesive analytical framework. This approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of Quranic interpretation in the digital era, which is not only textual and contextual, but also affective and existential. Thus, this research broadens the scope of exegesis studies from its previous focus on text and context to encompass the psychospiritual experiences of digital media users.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of the concept of "digital hermeneutics based on Islamic psychology" as a new approach in contemporary Quranic studies. Practically, this research provides implications for digital preachers and content creators to pay more attention to the balance between emotional appeal and depth of meaning in conveying religious messages. Furthermore, this research also contributes to strengthening digital religious literacy that is not only cognitive but also considers the psychological dimension in the process of receiving and interpreting messages. Thus, this research not only enriches the treasury of Quranic studies and interpretation in the digital era but also opens up space for interdisciplinary dialogue between the science of interpretation, media studies, and Islamic psychology in understanding the dynamics of religiosity in modern society.

Building on the findings and their discussion above, this section draws out the broader theoretical and practical implications of integrating digital hermeneutics with Islamic psychology, extending the analysis to questions of authority, literacy, and da'wah practice that are of direct relevance to scholars, educators, and content creators alike.

### **Reconceptualizing Religious Authority in Networked Publics**

The shift in religious authority documented in this study, from institutionally credentialed scholars toward popularity-based digital creators, should not be read simply as a decline of authority but as its reconfiguration along new axes of legitimacy. Lubis (2023) similarly observes that Indonesia's digital religious landscape has produced a plural authority structure in which visibility, relatability, and communicative skill increasingly function alongside, and at times in place of, formal scholarly credentials. Karim (2023) suggests that this reconfiguration is not merely sociological but psychological, since audiences appear to grant provisional authority to creators who successfully activate affective engagement, regardless of the creator's formal qualifications. This implies that efforts to safeguard interpretive integrity in digital spaces cannot rely solely on reasserting traditional gatekeeping mechanisms; they must also engage with the affective logics that make certain creators, and certain framings of Qur'anic meaning, more persuasive than others within the attention economy of platforms like TikTok.

### **Toward a Psychologically Informed Model of Digital Religious Literacy**

The findings of this study suggest that digital religious literacy initiatives premised solely on cognitive competencies, such as the ability to identify a verse's context of revelation or cross-reference classical exegesis, are unlikely to be sufficient on their own. Because audience engagement with TikTok Qur'anic content is predominantly affective, occurring at the level of *qalb* and *nafs* rather than *'aql*, literacy interventions may need to explicitly engage this affective register, for instance by modeling how emotional resonance and interpretive depth can be pursued simultaneously rather than treated as competing goods. Firdaus et al. (2023) argues that digital transformation in Islamic education more broadly requires pedagogical models that integrate technological fluency with substantive religious knowledge, a recommendation that resonates with this study's call for content strategies that do not sacrifice depth for reach. Mubarok et al. (2025) further note that algorithmic engagement itself can be leveraged strategically, such that creators and educators who design content with both emotional accessibility and interpretive accountability in mind may be able to work with, rather than against, platform logics.

### **Implications for Da'wah Practice and Content Design**

For practitioners, the findings imply that digital da'wah content need not choose between emotional resonance and interpretive responsibility. Zaid et al. (2022) show that psychological engagement is a robust driver of content sharing, suggesting that creators who wish to expand the reach of more methodologically grounded interpretations should not

abandon affective framing altogether, but rather pair it more deliberately with accessible references to classical exegetical reasoning, *asbab al-nuzul*, or scholarly consensus, even within short-form formats. Pujiono & Khotimah (2025) similarly recommend that religious communicators in digital environments develop concise but methodologically transparent formats, such as brief on-screen citations of tafsir sources, that preserve some epistemic accountability without requiring the full expository apparatus of classical exegesis. Such strategies would allow digital da'wah to retain its demonstrated capacity to foster calm, hope, and everyday relevance for audiences, while gradually cultivating habits of verification and deeper reflection (*tadabbur*) that mitigate the risks of decontextualization identified throughout this study.

## **Conclusion**

This study aims to examine how digital hermeneutics and Islamic psychology interact in interpreting the Quran through TikTok's da'wah content in Indonesia. Based on the research results, it can be concluded that the practice of Quranic interpretation in the digital space has undergone a significant transformation that is not only technological, but also epistemological and psychological. The interpretation of Quranic verses on TikTok exhibits fragmented, contextual-pragmatic characteristics, and is influenced by algorithmic logic that shapes patterns of distribution and preferences of meaning. Furthermore, the interpretation process no longer occurs linearly as in the classical tafsir tradition, but rather presents itself in a multimodal form that combines text, visuals, audio, and user interaction simultaneously.

Furthermore, this research shows that digital hermeneutics also involves the psychological dimension of Islam in the process of accepting and internalizing meaning. Quranic verses are not only understood cognitively (*'aql*), but also responded to emotionally (*qalb*) and influenced by internal drives (*nafs*), resulting in a personal and contextual religious experience. In this context, social media algorithms act as mediators that not only regulate content distribution but also shape the audience's psychological tendencies in selecting, understanding, and internalizing religious messages.

Research findings also indicate a shift in religious authority from traditional, scholarly models to digital models based on visibility and popularity. This shift has given rise to a more open and participatory form of authority, but also raises challenges related to validity, depth of interpretation, and the potential for reduction of meaning. In many cases, digital hermeneutics on TikTok tends to prioritize emotional resonance and practical relevance, which, from an Islamic psychology perspective, serves as a religious coping mechanism but

risks producing shallow understanding if not balanced with a deep process of tadabbur.

Theoretically, this research strengthens the concept of "digital hermeneutics based on Islamic psychology" as a new approach to contemporary Quranic studies. This approach positions interpretation as a multidimensional process involving text, technology, and human psychospiritual structures. Thus, Quranic interpretation in the digital era is understood not only as an intellectual activity but also as a dynamic, dialogical, and contextual process of religious experience.

In terms of application, the results of this study offer important implications for the development of more responsible digital da'wah, namely by integrating the appeal of digital communication with the depth of interpretation and psychological awareness of the audience. Furthermore, this study also emphasizes the urgency of strengthening digital religious literacy, which is not only cognitive but also encompasses reflective skills and emotional awareness in understanding religious messages on social media.

For further research, it is recommended that studies on digital hermeneutics and Islamic psychology be expanded through interdisciplinary approaches, such as algorithm analysis, digital ethnography, and data-driven empirical psychology. Research could also be directed at cross-platform or cross-social group comparisons to examine more complex variations in interpretive practices. Thus, the study of digital hermeneutics in Quranic interpretation, based on Islamic psychology, is expected to continue to develop as a relevant field of study in understanding the dynamics of societal religiosity in the digital age.

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