

# Religious Learning with Social Media and Its Implication for Understanding Religion

Supriadi, Muhammad Roy Purwanto

**Abstract:** This research discusses how the millennial generation learns religion through social media and the implications for its understanding in Indonesia. Over the years, there has been a significant increase in the development of social media in Indonesia, with over 265.4 million users. The number of active users has reached 130 million with 49 percent penetration. This research, therefore, aims to determine the activities of millennial generations in using social media as an inclusivism of religious learning. The data used were acquired through interviews, observation, documentation, and religious literature relevant to this research. The results obtained indicate that the use of social media in religious learning is less effective because many scholars have written books, and recorded books on its traces, without a detailed explanation, thereby, making it very easy for the millennial generation. Finally, this research concludes that in Indonesia, those who use social media as a means of religious learning are most times misguided, thereby, resulting in the emergence of liberalism and radicalism.

**Key Words** Learning Religion, Social Media, Understanding Religion.

## I. INTRODUCTION

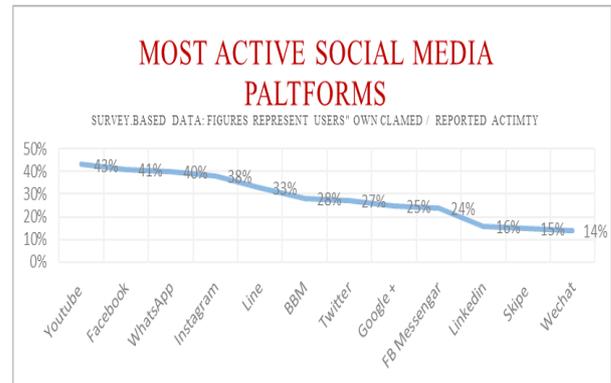
Social media is an online medium used by users to acquire information easily, share content and communicate to all corners of the world. Data from “We Are Social,” a Singapore-based Agency which released “Digital in 2016,” displayed rapid growth in the use of social media in 30 countries including Indonesia. In 2017, social media users in Indonesia culminated in 130 million which is approximately half of the country’s population. Its trend shows that the virtual realm in the hustle and bustle in this life can no longer be released on social media as every year, users continue to increase. Social media enable its, user access to a variety of entertainment content and applications from all over the world. Some of these include Email sites, Twitter, MySpace, Google+, Youtube, Facebook, Instagram, FB Messenger, BBM, Line, Wechat, Skype, Tagged, DeviantART, LinkedIn, Orkud, CafeMom, LiveJournal, Qeone and much More.

Based on the research of the most downloaded application, the companies owned by Mark Zuckerberg dominated the top three (WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram).

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**Supriadi**, Universitas Islam Indonesia, Jl. Kaliurang Km. 14.5 Sleman Yogyakarta 55584 Indonesia, Email: [supriadiofficial13@gmail.com](mailto:supriadiofficial13@gmail.com).

**Muhammad Roy Purwanto**, Universitas Islam Indonesia, Jl. Kaliurang Km. 14.5 Sleman Yogyakarta 55584 Indonesia, Email: [muhammadroy@uii.ac.id](mailto:muhammadroy@uii.ac.id).



**Fig.** percentage of the most actively accessed social media application users in Indonesia as of January 2018 (We Are Social)

As summarized by Kompas Tekno “We are Social” Youtube ranked first with 43 percent, Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram and second, third and to the fourth respectively. About 41 percent of social media users in Indonesia claim to often use Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram used by 40 and 38 percent respectively. Thirty-three percent claimed to use the Line, thereby placing it fifth on the chart. In general, the total number of social media users, rose by 13 percent yearly to reach 3.196 billion.

According to Gary R. Bunt Lampeter in his book “Virtual Islam,” Muslims cannot be eradicated from using social media. The millennial generation in Indonesia, no longer learn religious etiquettes through educational institutions (pesantren), but mostly online. The implications of this is that many religious ideas can be quoted, studied and followed. Other significant consequences include ineffective learning, due to lack of communication between teacher and student. This research, therefore, focuses on the millennial generation in Indonesia who study religion through social media, and its implications associated with this technique.

## II. RESEARCH METHOD

This research is field research with a qualitative approach. The data of this study were obtained from direct observation, interviews as the samples in this research were 35 people randomly taken from various universities and educational institutions in Indonesia. One person was each selected from Al-Azhar University in Egypt, UIN Walisongo Semarang, University of North Sumatra, UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, University of Muhammadiyah Malang, Islamic University of Riau, Post University Indonesian Islam in Yogyakarta, the Institute of Al-Qur'an

Sciences Jakarta, KH Abdul Halim Malang Institute, Riau Pharmacy College, MA Darul Anwar Boarding School Serang Alumni, Maluku High School Alumni, Alumni of Bahrul Ulum Kampar - Riau Ponpes, the double degree University (Yogyakarta Islamic University of Yogyakarta and UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta), Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta), a lawyer by profession, a lecturer of UIN Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, teacher from Tebuireng Jombang Islamic Boarding School, and the medical profession as a supporting informant. Furthermore, two people were selected from Post-UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, Ahmad Dahlan University in Yogyakarta, and Riau State University while four from were selected UIN Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, and the remaining five from Islamic University of Indonesia Yogyakarta.

Data collection techniques were carried out by unstructured random interviews, non-participant observation, and documentation. The data obtained were analyzed using descriptive qualitative by presenting actual information related to the practice of religious learning via Social Media.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### A. Media of Millennial Religious Learning

Graham Brown describes the generation of births from 1983 to 2000 as "Mobile Generation", Don Topscott tags them the "Net Generation", while Strauss-Howe used the term "Millennial Generation". Of the several opinions, the most popular is the 'millennial generation.' This is because it is the most common and appropriate technological word utilized. Learning through this medium certainly has positive and negative values

Results obtained from the interviewed 35 respondents, 9 disagreed with the learning method adopted by the millennial generation (use of social media). Their reason associated was a lack of resource authenticity as in learning religion ethics one must have a credible teacher. Though there are lots of limitations related to its usage, it isn't prohibited as a learning tool.

Twenty-six respondents agreed that social media could be used as a medium of religious learning as it makes it easy for users to locate and obtain information for religious learning. Furthermore, owing to the limitations of one's religious education, it can be used as an innovation tool for religious learning. The reality is many Muslim leaders have approached their da'wah via social media. However, they should strive to ensure readers and listeners do not misunderstand the religion. To avoid these misconceptions, deviations, liberalism, and radicalism, there should be a competent teacher trained to guide learners.

#### B. Positive and Negative Impacts of Learning Religion with Social Media

In the opinion of the author, there is a close balance between positive and negative attributes associated with learning religion via social media based on the results of observations, interviews, and conclusions. The following are some positive impressions: (1) faster access to data and information needed, (2) easy for users, (3) more efficient searching for information (4) simple in working on

assignments and unlimited access to additional references, (5) less expensive to buy a book, (6) saves time, (7) the information quickly spreads, making it easier to manage and obtain it, (8) it's easier to understand compared to reading a book, (9) Diera can now be used by more than one person at a time anytime and anywhere, (10) it's free to repeat it on social media rather than studying in majlis ta'lim directly, (11) its breadth is unlimited, (12) very helpful in terms of sharing religious learning contents, (13) users can easily learn from various online idolized scholars, (14) can study classical books efficiently via social media.

Out of the 35 respondents interviewed from various educational and professional backgrounds, it can be concluded that social media users who make use of online media in learning religion have about 14 positive impacts, thereby, making it an adequate system.

19 negative impacts of inclusivism on religious learning via social media were also obtained from the interviews; (1) many are wrong in understanding religion, (2) Sanad's science did not come to the Prophet, (3) it cannot be thoroughly studied, (4) it can mislead because of the many non-comprehensive videos of religious lectures, (5) not all writing or videos on social media can be used as evidence (legal basis), (6) the study is not a succession, (7) many pornographic advertisements pop up (8) there are numerous numbers of writings on liberalism, radicalism, and extremism, (9) many papers contain lies, hoaxes, and writings that pitted sheep, (10) those lazy to read books, meet teachers or scholars in religious and social learning, (11) lazy to join the Majlis Ta'lim because of online study (12) it's easy to conclude something if you get new knowledge on social media, without asking experts first, (13) the source is sometimes unclear because the author can also use a samara, (14) many found learning on social media without the guidance of a teacher who is well-trained in religious matters, (15) it is difficult to resolve (choose and sort) first for lay people in religious issues, (16) courtesy with parents, teachers, and friends tend to decrease, (17) religious knowledge is not very deep, (18) lots of hoax news and fanatic issues, (19) it can cause division amongst people.

However, some optimal steps must be taken by someone who uses social media to make it a means of religious learning to prevent/reduce misunderstand. Both liberal and radical understanding of religion, are as follows: (1) use social media as well as possible, (2) time allocation and target setting, (3) consider the consequences of actions, (4) avoid opening unclear blog sites, (5) bow down, (6) be careful, (7) be careful when expressing opinions and (8) be proportional in expressing something.

#### Implications of Learning Religion Via Social Media

The implications of learning religion via social media are overgrowing, among children, adolescents, adults to parents. For example, there is limited entertainment, communicating with friends, filling in spare time, however, there are also those who use it to support their career.

However, some writing upload on the internet tends to have negative impacts on the reader, who considers it fun and entertaining. Many



millennials who use social media as a means of religious learning do not know the limitations in reading a blog, articles, journals.

"According to Muhamad Rahman Suhendri, there should be some websites that provide comprehensive or basic studies on social media networks, for example from the Courtesy chapter on taharah prayer so that ordinary people can learn more effectively. Most times studies based on social media are not sequential for example from A to Z. In Malaysia several platforms provide religious learning from the ground up to completion, thereby, making it easier for people to learn. But in Indonesia alone there is no specific platform or comprehensive study site, where Ordinary people can acquire knowledge. Should the government provide such a thing so that our society can learn more efficiently

The reality of social media makes it easy for users if used positively. So, among the implications of studying religion via social media is to make someone better, polite, tawadhu, and broaden one's knowledge. However, this isn't enough because a lot will happen if social media users fail to think smart, and not accept everything. There should be a teacher who is ready to guide towards a positive path.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the research, discussion and results previously, it can be concluded that it is inaccurate for the millennial generation in Indonesia to conduct religious learning via social media as it is not effective. However, if it must be used, a competent teacher should filter out liberal and radical texts related to religion. Furthermore, social media users must be able to think smartly and meticulously, and also avoid accepting unprocessed and deceitful information.

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