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Social Media Engagement and Its Impact on Learning Achievement in Islamic Religious Education

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Abstract. This study examines the impact of social media on the learning outcomes of Islamic Religious Education for grade XI students at SMA Negeri 4 Palopo. The research aims to identify how social media influences the learning process and how its use affects students' academic achievement. This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach using primary and secondary data obtained through observation, interviews, and documentation. Data were analyzed through data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results show that social media provides both positive and negative impacts. Positive impacts include broader access to religious information, increased motivation to learn, and more varied learning experiences aligned with the digital generation. Negative impacts include decreased concentration, the tendency to use social media solely for entertainment, and technical barriers during learning. Overall, social media exerts a dual influence, underscoring the need for digital literacy and appropriate guidance to ensure learning objectives are achieved effectively.

Keywords: Social Media; Student Engagement; Learning Outcomes; Islamic Religious Education**.**

1. Introduction

The development of digital technology in the modern era has reshaped the patterns of interaction in the lives of teenagers, including high school students. Social media is no longer just a trend, but has become part of the lifestyle as well as the main space for teenagers to express themselves, seek information, and interact (Agma, 2025). This phenomenon also occurs among grade XI students at SMA Negeri 4 Palopo, who actively use platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp across various aspects of their lives. On the one hand, social media provides wide access to information, but on the other hand, it brings serious challenges to the learning process, including in the subject of Islamic Religious Education (Putra et al., 2024). This change in student learning orientation, which is more influenced by social media, needs to be critically examined (K. Zhang et al., 2023).

Islamic religious education has distinct characteristics compared to other subjects, as it emphasizes not only cognitive aspects but also the internalization of moral, spiritual, manners, and values for the formation of Islamic character (Komalasari & Yakubu, 2023). These values should ideally be put into practice in real life, not just memorized. However, reality shows that most social media content is entertainment and often displays values contrary to Islam's teachings (Mashudi & Hilman, 2025). According to (Exline et al., 2022; Masturin, 2022), this condition leads some students

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to experience a decrease in interest in exploring formal religious lessons, weaker spiritual reflection, and a growing apathy towards the moral and aqidah materials taught in class.

At SMA Negeri 4 Palopo, Islamic Religious Education teachers began to feel a decrease in students' active participation during the learning process. Students appear less focused, ask fewer questions, and are less able to relate the material to daily life. In fact, some students admitted they understood religion better through TikTok or YouTube content than through teachers' explanations. This phenomenon poses a dilemma: can social media be considered a relevant additional source of learning, or rather as a distraction that disrupts the essence of religious education? This question underscores the need for an in-depth study of how social media use affects the learning outcomes of Islamic Religious Education.

Theoretically, social media is seen as having a double impact. From the perspective of connectivism theory, digital media allows students to access religious information broadly and connect with global communities that share similar interests (Mayer, 2025). However, cognitive load theory warns that excessive exposure to social media can overload students' cognitive capacity, disrupt focus, and impair the ability to comprehend material in depth (Surbakti et al., 2024). Islamic Religious Education, as a subject that requires reflection on the meaning of values, is particularly vulnerable to information overload.

Several recent studies support the view that social media has a dual impact. Research (Minarti et al., 2023) Shows that social media can increase students' motivation to learn and interest in Islamic materials through engaging visual content. Study (Fitriani et al., 2024) Found that short Instagram videos on morality help students understand complex moral concepts. Instead, research (Dontre, 2021) Found that excessive social media use leads to distractions, reduced concentration, and lower learning outcomes. Research (Mursyidi & Darmawan, 2023) Even showing that students who use social media for more than three hours per day tend to have lower academic achievement in Islamic Religious Education subjects. These findings show that social media not only affects the academic aspect, but also the affective realm and student learning behavior.

While many studies have examined the impact of social media on learning, several gaps remain underexplored. First, some studies focus only on the duration of social media use. However, few have specifically analyzed student engagement, namely how they consume, respond to, and interpret religious content on social media. Second, most of the research was conducted in large urban school environments. In contrast, SMA Negeri 4 Palopo has a different social context, where social media use is primarily for entertainment rather than learning. Third, there has been little research on how students perceive the differences between religious content on social media and the formal learning of Islamic Religious Education in the classroom. Fourth, there is still limited research that reviews how the positive and negative impacts of social media arise simultaneously and how teachers can manage them effectively.

This phenomenon is increasingly complex when viewed from a socio-cultural perspective. The role of teachers, parents, and religious leaders as authoritative sources of religious information is now beginning to be challenged by influencers, content creators, and digital figures who do not necessarily have religious competence (L. Zhang, 2025). Students tend to believe more in short 60-second lectures than in the teacher's systematic explanations (Wang & Chen, 2022). This indicates a shift in knowledge authority that educational institutions need to take seriously.

However, social media also has great potential as a learning medium when combined with the right strategy (Greenhow & Galvin, 2020). Several innovative Islamic Religious Education teachers have created religious educational content on Instagram and TikTok that attracts students' interest (Susanti et al., 2024). However, this initiative remains individual and has not yet become part of the

school's systematic learning strategy, including at SMA Negeri 4 Palopo. In fact, integrating digital learning into Islamic Religious Education offers an excellent opportunity to bridge students' digital world with the religious materials taught in the classroom.

Given the prevalence of social media use among students, research on its influence on the learning outcomes of Islamic Religious Education at SMA Negeri 4 Palopo is fundamental. This research aims to answer two main questions: how the use of social media affects the learning process of Islamic Religious Education for grade XI students, and how it affects students' learning outcomes. These two questions are relevant because the study's findings show that social media is not only used as a source of religious information but is also widely used for entertainment, potentially interfering with study concentration.

In line with that, the purpose of this study is to describe the form of social media use carried out by students in relation to PAI learning, as well as to analyze the impact of social media use on the learning outcomes of Islamic Religious Education, including both positive and negative influences that arise in the process of internalizing religious values. By understanding these two aspects, this research is expected to contribute to the formulation of PAI learning strategies that are more adaptive to students' digital culture and can minimize the negative impact of social media on learning outcomes.

Thus, this research is expected to make a theoretical contribution to the study of digital-based religious education, as well as a practical contribution for Islamic Religious Education teachers in designing learning that is relevant to the needs of generation Z. Islamic Religious Education learning can no longer only rely on traditional methods, but must be open to new approaches that can answer the dynamics of students' digital lives. The results of this research are expected to serve as the basis for developing an Islamic Religious Education learning model that can reach students in both the classroom and their digital lives.

2. Method

This study uses a qualitative descriptive research design (Carvalho et al., 2005) This study aims to explore and describe in depth the impact of social media use on the learning outcomes of Islamic Religious Education for grade XI students at SMA Negeri 4 Palopo. The qualitative descriptive approach was chosen because it enables researchers to understand social phenomena holistically and contextually by directly interacting with learners in their natural environment. This design allows researchers to capture students' social media engagement patterns and their relationship to their Islamic Religious Education learning outcomes as they occur naturally in a school context.

The research subjects are school stakeholders directly involved in the learning process, including Islamic Religious Education teachers, grade XI students, and school principals. Students are selected based on their active involvement with social media platforms, while teachers are engaged to provide academic and pedagogical perspectives on changing student learning behaviors. The setting of this study is SMA Negeri 4 Palopo, where initial observations show a high level of social media use both inside and outside the learning environment.

Data was collected using several techniques, namely direct observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observations were made to identify patterns of social media use during learning activities and to capture students' behavioral responses in the classroom. In-depth interviews were conducted with school principals, Islamic Religious Education teachers, and selected students to explore their perceptions of the influence of social media on learning motivation, concentration, and academic achievement. Technical documentation is used to collect supporting data, such as photographs, activity notes, and relevant school documents, to strengthen the analysis.

Data analysis is carried out through an interactive model that involves data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Huberman & Miles, 2002). In the data reduction stage, researchers select, categorize, and simplify the data to focus on information relevant to the research objectives. Data presentation involves organizing findings into narrative descriptions to facilitate pattern recognition. At the same time, conclusions allow researchers to interpret and formulate a final understanding of how social media influences learning outcomes in Islamic Religious Education. To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, this study uses triangulation of sources and techniques by comparing information from multiple informants and using multiple data collection methods, thereby ensuring objectivity, accuracy, and consistency throughout the research process.

3. Results

The Impact of Social Media on the Learning Process of Islamic Religious Education

The study's results show that social media has a significant influence on the learning process of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) at SMA Negeri 4 Palopo. Social media, which was initially used only for communication and entertainment, has now become part of the student learning environment. From observations and interviews, social media has a positive impact by providing easy access to religious information, expanding insights, and supporting religious discussions online. On the other hand, the use of social media also causes attention disorders and a tendency among students to be more interested in entertainment content than in religious materials.

The principal's statement supports the findings:

> "Actually, social media has positive and negative impacts, such as Facebook. There are many accounts worth following, and students sometimes already know about them before their teachers. However, the negative impact is also large; most of the content is not good and far from the positive values that students must inculcate."

The statement shows that social media has two sides: an opportunity to expand access to religious materials, but also a threat to students' concentration and character if not directed appropriately.

Interviews with PAI teachers confirmed that social media can be an additional source of learning, but technical barriers are still often encountered:

> "The shortcoming is usually in the quality of files or cellphones that are inadequate, so children have difficulty following the process. However, from there, it can be seen that the influence of social media on the current generation is indeed huge, including on the student learning environment."

Teachers stated that, with the right direction and supervision, social media has the potential to become an engaging, relevant, and contextually relevant learning medium.

Meanwhile, interviews with students show that social media is used more for entertainment than to support learning:

> "The use of social media among students has greatly increased. The impact is positive and negative. Positively, information about Islamic Religious Education is easier to find. However, it is rarely used, because most students prefer to watch movies, dramas, and other entertainment."

The findings show that although social media provides easy access to PAI materials, most students have not utilized them optimally for academic purposes.

Table 1. Summary of Social Media's Impact on Learning

Aspects	Positive Impact	Negative Impact
Access Information	Facilitate access to PAI materials, broadening religious insight	Instant information without deepening; Potential misinformation
Learning Motivation	Increase interest through visual-audio content	Reduced focus on learning due to entertainment content
Learning Process	Supports digital discussions and self-paced learning	Not all students have adequate devices or internet access
Character Building	Can strengthen religious values through positive content	Moral values can be distorted by harmful content
The Role of the Teacher	Complementary media relevant to the digital age	Requires intense supervision and digital literacy

The Influence of Social Media Use on Islamic Religious Education Learning Outcomes

The study found that social media use significantly influenced the learning outcomes of Islamic Religious Education among grade XI students at SMA Negeri 4 Palopo, leading to changes in students' understanding of religion. The development of digital technology has transformed the educational shutter, through learning Islamic Religious Education. Social media does not function as a means of communication or as a forum for obtaining additional information that can deepen understanding of religious materials. Through platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and Google Classroom, students can access lectures, discussions, and various Islamic educational materials quickly, easily, and interactively. However, social media is also often used for entertainment, so its benefits for learning outcomes are not always optimal. Lack of self-control leads some students to spend more time on non-academic content, reducing focus on learning and learning outcomes.

The Principal of SMA Negeri 4 Palopo emphasized the importance of utilizing the positive side of social media in supporting religious learning:

> "My suggestion is that we should approach positive things in using social media. Like when you open YouTube, it would be nice to see religious lessons on YouTube."

The statement shows that, with effective management, social media through learning facilities can effectively improve student learning outcomes. For example, YouTube can be used to access religious lecture materials, worship tutorials, and visual explanations of Islamic Religious Education materials. If students are directed to access relevant content, social media can strengthen their understanding of the subject matter provided in school. Teachers and parents play an important role in guiding students in choosing and managing applicable content, so that social media can complement traditional learning methods in schools.

Interviews with Islamic Religious Education teachers also reinforce this. Explaining that social media has a direct influence on the learning process of students, both in terms of ease of access to information and in the challenge of controlling learning behavior:

> "The challenge is that students who always use social media are difficult to control, especially if they have engaged in negative things that are far from the learning process, especially in Islamic Religious Education."

Teachers assessed that social media provides students with opportunities to expand access to religious information and deepen their understanding of Islam. However, their excessive and uncontrolled use can distract students from the primary purpose of learning. Therefore, a consistent

mentoring and control strategy is needed from teachers so that students can use social media wisely, stay focused on learning goals, and distinguish between positive content that supports religious understanding and harmful content that can damage Islamic values.

Furthermore, interviews with grade XI students provide a real picture of how social media is used in daily learning life:

> "I have been using social media since junior high school, and some of my friends have started using it since elementary school. In our daily lives, we often use social media to find lesson-related information, especially when doing homework at home. Usually, we use social media to find the right answer or find the formula needed for the task."

This statement is social media through students' learning routines from an early age. Digital platforms serve as a means of communication and the primary source of information for completing schoolwork. Students feel that social media provides easy access to information that helps them understand the subject matter. However, the condition poses a new challenge: the potential for dependence on instant information, which can undermine critical thinking and a deep understanding of Islamic values.

4. Discussion

The Impact of Social Media on the Learning Process of the Islamic Religion

The study's results show that social media clearly influences the learning process of Islamic Religious Education in grade XI at SMA Negeri 4 Palopo. On the positive side, social media serves as a new learning space, making it easier for students to access religious information quickly and in diverse ways. Through platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, students can find additional materials, including short lectures, moral illustrations, and engaging explanations of verses and hadiths. This makes Islamic Religious Education learning feel more contextual and closer to students' daily lives in digital culture. These findings corroborate the research (Arisman et al., 2024) This states that visual religious content can improve students' understanding of abstract moral concepts.

The study also found that social media is often used more as an entertainment medium than as a learning resource. Many students spend time accessing content unrelated to the lesson, thereby reducing study time, disrupting concentration, and weakening their focus during Islamic Religious Education in the classroom. This condition is in line with research (Whelan et al., 2022) This revealed that uncontrolled social media use can reduce study concentration and lower academic achievement. In addition, the constraints of uneven devices and internet networks worsen the effectiveness of using social media as a learning resource, so that not all students get the same digital learning experience.

The results of the study also show that students' orientation towards social media is more inclined towards entertainment content than religious content. Although much Islamic material is available, most students lack the digital literacy skills to select content critically. They are more interested in humor, music, or entertainment videos that are instant in nature than in religious studies that require concentration. These findings are in line with research (Saputra, 2023) This states that entertainment preferences cause students to use social media less productively in religious learning. This phenomenon underscores the importance of character development and strengthening digital literacy so that students can select information in line with Islamic values.

Overall, the results showed that social media had a dual impact on learning: positive in providing access to information and encouraging creative learning, but negative in the form of distractions, decreased focus, and potential abuse. This is consistent with the findings (Hortigüela-

Alcalá et al., 2019) which confirms that social media can reduce learning motivation if not appropriately managed, as well as the results of research (Sugianto, 2024) which shows that Islamic Religious Education teachers need to develop spiritual coaching strategies, such as Qur'an literacy and Rohis activities, to mitigate the negative impact of social media. Thus, the use of social media in learning Islamic Religious Education should be guided by a planned pedagogical approach to ensure the benefits outweigh the risks.

From a theoretical perspective, the findings of this study strengthen the theory of connectivism (Goldie, 2016) Those who view digital technology as a new knowledge network for students. However, this study also confirms the relevance of cognitive load theory. (Sweller, 2011)Where excessive information from social media can overload students' cognitive capacity and reduce their ability to comprehend material, social media can serve as a bridge or even an obstacle to the internalization of religious values, depending on how students use it.

The practical implication of this study is that Islamic Religious Education teachers should integrate social media into learning in targeted ways, for example, by creating educational content, assigning digital literacy-based assignments, or using structured online learning platforms. Teachers also need to assist students in distinguishing between valid and invalid content and in using social media as a means of learning that supports Islamic values. Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of a digital-based Islamic Religious Education learning model that is relevant to the characteristics of Generation Z, while emphasizing the importance of religious digital literacy as a new competency in Islamic education.

The Influence of Social Media Use on Islamic Religious Education Learning Outcomes

The study found that social media use significantly influences students' learning patterns in Islamic Religious Education at SMA Negeri 4 Palopo. Through platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, and Google Classroom, students can quickly and easily access religious materials in a variety of formats. This condition shifts the learning experience from textual to audio-visual, making it more engaging and contextual. This ease of access also encourages students to study independently according to their needs.

However, this study also found several negative impacts of social media use. Many students are more interested in instant information, which makes their understanding shallow and less in-depth. Excessive exposure to entertainment content leads to decreased concentration, weaker critical thinking skills, and an increased risk of distractions during learning. This finding confirms that although social media facilitates access to information, students' understanding of Islamic Religious Education materials can decline if it is not balanced with proper guidance. Therefore, digital literacy skills are important in enabling students to use social media wisely to strengthen their religious understanding.

The influence of social media is also evident in changes in students' learning patterns, which increasingly rely on digital sources rather than conventional teaching materials. Many students use social media as their primary source for completing assignments and understanding the subject matter. While this reflects efficiency and practicality, over-reliance on technology can reduce students' independence and hinder deep thinking. Thus, the use of social media plays a dual role, both as an opportunity and as a challenge, in learning Islamic Religious Education in schools.

The findings of this study are in line with the results of the study (Indriyani & Khadiq, 2023), which show that religious activities such as weekly studies, tahfidz, and da'wah training can be conducted more effectively when supported by digital access as an additional source of Islamic material. Research (Situmorang, 2023) also revealed that the use of social media, such as Facebook, does not always hurt learning achievement, as its effectiveness is greatly influenced by the teacher's

guidance and students' awareness of its use. In addition, the research (Kharismatunisa, 2023) found that learning outcomes in Islamic religious education improved when teachers integrated digital content into classroom instruction. The three studies reinforce the finding that social media can be an important tool for improving the learning outcomes of Islamic Religious Education when managed wisely and in a directed manner.

Practically, this study implies that Islamic Religious Education teachers need to design structured digital-based learning by directing students to valid and relevant religious sources. Teachers can also develop straightforward, digital-friendly learning content to grab students' attention and minimize distractions. Schools need to strengthen digital literacy programs so that students can assess the quality of religious content and use social media productively. Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of the concept of digital-based religious education by showing that student involvement in social media affects the cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects of learning in Islamic Religious Education. (Mashudi & Hilman, 2025). This emphasizes the importance of religious digital literacy as the primary competency for Generation Z, who live in a digital culture.

5. Conclusion

The use of social media plays an important role in learning Islamic Religious Education at SMA Negeri 4 Palopo, as it reflects the adaptation of education to technological developments and the learning needs of the modern generation. Social media provides easy access to religious materials, increases learning motivation, and creates a more interactive, contextual, and student-centered learning environment. However, behind these benefits lie several challenges, including decreased concentration, a tendency to seek instant information, and distractions from entertainment content that degrade students' understanding.

The results of this study confirm that the effectiveness of social media in learning depends heavily on teachers' and students' digital literacy skills. Islamic Religious Education teachers play a strategic role in guiding the use of social media in harmony with Islamic values and learning goals. With wise management, social media can be an effective means of deepening religious understanding, improving learning outcomes, and fostering religious character relevant to the development of the digital world. These findings provide an important foundation for developing Islamic Religious Education learning strategies that are more adaptive, innovative, and responsive to the challenges of the digital era.

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