The Impact of Social Media on the Formation of Religious Patterns Among Millennial Students in Ponorogo

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This study investigates the impact of social media, specifically YouTube, on the religious practices of millennial students in Ponorogo. The increasing reliance of millennials on YouTube as a primary source of religious content indicates a shift from traditional religious education to digital platforms, driven by YouTube's diverse content offerings. The research aims to explore this phenomenon by employing a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical method. Using the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the study examines the factors influencing the acceptance and use of YouTube for religious learning. At the same time, Social Construction Theory was applied to understand how social interactions and media influence students' religious practices. The findings reveal that YouTube facilitates religious engagement without time or location limitations, offering a flexible, innovative platform for spreading religious messages. Millennial students in Ponorogo construct their religious practices through externalization, objectivation, and internalization, with YouTube as a central medium. This study presents new insights into the shift in religious patterns among millennials, where YouTube content broadens their religious understanding and influences beliefs, encompassing both moderate and conservative perspectives.

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INTRODUCTION

Religious patterns are formed through various factors, including education and religious practices from friends, family, groups, and role models.[1] Additionally, religious patterns are influenced by reading materials and other information sources. For example, social media has emerged as a key platform for sharing information in today's digital age. Education plays an essential role in shaping an individual's religious patterns by providing a deep understanding of religion, religious values, and worship practices.[2] The knowledge gained through religious education enables individuals to develop strong religious patterns rooted in their beliefs. Religious education also contributes to developing a person's spiritual and moral dimensions.[3] Through understanding ethical values and religious teachings, individuals can apply them in daily life, which can deepen their connection to God or something considered sacred in their religion.

In Ponorogo, the community is predominantly Muslim, with many educational institutions focused on Islamic teachings, such as Islamic boarding schools *(pondok pesantren)* and *madrasah diniyah*, which are spread across various regions. These institutions provide opportunities for children to receive religious education from an early age. Additionally, Ponorogo is home to higher religious education institutions such as IAIN Ponorogo, INSURI, IARM Ngabar, and UNMUH Ponorogo, which offer more advanced religious studies for students who wish to deepen their understanding of Islam. The presence of these diverse institutions demonstrates the commitment of the Ponorogo community to preserving and developing religious values in everyday life.[4]

However, since the millennial era, students in Ponorogo have been learning about Islam through formal education and social media. Social media has become a dominant platform for disseminating religious information, often exceeding the influence traditionally held by families and schools. Today's millennials have easy access to online religious content, which allows their beliefs and behaviors to be influenced by preaching delivered via the internet, especially YouTube. They often refer to preachers or ulama who actively preach on YouTube and apply the teachings they receive daily. This shows that social media has become an essential channel for students in Ponorogo to acquire religious knowledge and shape their religious patterns in new and unique ways.

This new style of religious learning has led to different expressions and religious patterns among Muslim students in Ponorogo. For example, more female students are adopting the hijab or niqab, while male students are growing beards and engaging in other symbolic practices. This phenomenon is often influenced by YouTube preachers who serve as role models, such as Oki Setiana Dewi discussing the hijab,[5] Felix Siauw talking about

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[1] Zekiye Demir and A. Ömer Toprak, "Changes in Religious Attitudes and Behaviors of Euro-Turk Students with Theology Education," *Teaching Theology & Religion* 26, no. 1 (March 1, 2023): 29–43.

[2] Suyatno et al., "Strategy of Values Education in the Indonesian Education System," *International Journal of Instruction* 12, no. 1 (January 2019): 607–24.

[3] Muhamad Taufik, "Strategic Role of Islamic Religious Education in Strengthening Character Education in the Era of Industrial Revolution 4.0," *Jurnal Ilmiah Islam Futura* 20, no. 1 (2020): 86–104.

[4] Winantu Kurnianingtyas Sri Agung, "Case Study: The Optimization of the Functions of Islamic Religious Education in Ponorogo" (International Conference on Islamic Education (ICIE 2018), Atlantis Press, 2018), 169–74.

[5] Oki Setianad Dewi and Ahmad Khoirul Fata, "Salafi Da'wah Among Hijrah Celebrities," *Penamas* 36,

dating[6], and Ustadz Hanan Attaki discussing marriage.[7] Other preachers also target millennials in their sermons. The phenomena observed among students in Ponorogo are frequently inspired by and referenced by these YouTube preachers.

Historically, Ponorogo has a strong religious background, with most of its population adhering to Islam. This is evident in research by Mohammad Syafii Mudhofir Hanifah on the role of Raden Bathoro Katong in spreading Islam in Ponorogo from 1486 to 1517 AD through art and culture. Similarly, Fuad Fitriawan's research explores how Islam was disseminated in Ponorogo through local customs, making it widely accepted.[8]

These aspects position Ponorogo as an ideal setting for examining the influence of social media, particularly YouTube, on the religious practices of the millennial generation. This study aims to offer detailed insights into how social media usage shapes religious patterns in a predominantly Muslim community.

In education, students' use of social media as a source of religious information can influence their religious patterns. There has been a shift from reliance on formal education in conventional religious institutions to using social media as the primary source of religious knowledge and influence. Formal religious education still plays a vital role in shaping students' religious patterns by deeply understanding religion, its values, and worship practices. However, the influence of social media, mainly through platforms like YouTube, has provided easy access and a significant impact on shaping students' religious patterns.

According to Berger, social construction occurs through the interaction between individuals and society.[9] Humans actively participate in this process and play a role in shaping and maintaining social reality. Social reality, including concepts of religion, beliefs, and norms, is produced through continuous social interactions. Meanwhile, social media platforms like YouTube provide a vast space for individuals to interact, share ideas, and influence each other.[10] Through YouTube, people can acquire and disseminate information, views, and specific values that shape their thoughts and behaviors.

By understanding the background of social changes and the influence of social media in shaping students' religious patterns in Ponorogo, this research aims to analyze how the millennial generation uses YouTube to construct their religious knowledge and how social media significantly contributes to religious education and shapes students' religious behaviors.

The research underscores the significant influence of social media platforms, especially YouTube, in shaping students' religious practices and choices. These insights could inform

no. 2 (2023): 180–98.

[6] Jajang Jahroni and Andi M. Faisal Bakti, "Contestation and Representation," *Epistemé: Jurnal Pengembangan Ilmu Keislaman* 17, no. 2 (2022): 167–96.

[7] Tutik Hamidah, "An Analysis of The Contents of Da'wah Attaki in You Tube Media with The Title of 'The Most Beautiful Love" in The Perspective of Religious Moderation," in *The 1st International Conference on Engineering, Technology and Social Science*, 2020, 29–33.

[8] Fuad Fitriawan, "Peran Kiai Muhammad Hasan Dalam Proses Penyebaran Agama Islam di Desa Karanggebang," *Dialogia* 15, no. 2 (2017): 309–32.

[9] Peter L Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* (USA: Anchor, 1967), 49.

[10] Peter L Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Open Road Media, 2011), 65.

educational institutions in Ponorogo and similar contexts on integrating social media content into formal religious curricula, creating a blended approach that resonates with millennial learning styles. Educators could leverage these platforms to reinforce religious teachings and bridge the gap between traditional education and modern digital habits by incorporating credible YouTube content. Additionally, this approach could help religious educators address the challenges and opportunities presented by social media, providing guidance on critical engagement with online content, promoting discernment, and supporting students in constructing well-rounded religious identities in the digital era.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employed a field study. It used a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical thinking method. The aim is to analyze the influence of social media, specifically YouTube, on forming religious patterns among millennial students in Ponorogo. Therefore, this research will combine the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) Theory[11] and Social Construction Theory.[12]

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is utilized to explore the factors affecting technology adoption and usage, focusing on social media platforms like YouTube as a source of religious knowledge. Key TAM constructs, including perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, were applied to examine how students in Ponorogo embrace and engage with social media to access religious information.

On the other hand, the Social Construction Theory is used to understand how the religious patterns of students in Ponorogo are formed through social interactions and the influence of social media. This theory recognizes the role of individuals in creating their social reality through interactions and collective construction processes. In the context of this research, the social construction theory helps analyze how individuals and the community in Ponorogo collectively shape religious patterns through social interactions and the use of social media.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The religious patterns of individuals are the result of various influences, including formal education, social interactions, and access to information sources.[13] In the digital era, social media, particularly platforms like YouTube, have played a significant role in shaping the religious patterns of millennial students in Ponorogo, who are predominantly Muslim.[14] Social media has emerged as a central platform for acquiring religious knowledge, revolutionizing traditional approaches to religious education. Beyond formal instruction in settings like Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), madrasahs, and religious universities,

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[11] Ahmad Samed Al-Adwan et al., "Extending the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) to Predict University Students' Intentions to Use Metaverse-Based Learning Platforms," *Education and Information Technologies*, 2023, 1–33.

[12] Berger and Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge,* 49.

[13] Dindin Solahudin and Moch Fakhruroji, "Internet and Islamic Learning Practices in Indonesia: Social Media, Religious Populism, and Religious Authority," *Religions* 11, no. 1 (2019): 19.

[14] Winarto Winarto, Ahmad Syahid, and Fatimah Saguni, "Effectiveness the Use of Audio Visual Media in Teaching Islamic Religious Education," *International Journal of Contemporary Islamic Education* 2, no. 1 (2020): 81–107.

students increasingly develop and refine their religious understanding through social media. This process is influenced by technological accessibility, content quality, and social dynamics.

The Role of YouTube as a Source of Religious Knowledge

In the constantly evolving digital age, YouTube has emerged as a prominent platform for obtaining information, entertainment, and social interaction globally, particularly among millennials (individuals born between 1981 and 1996).[15] In the region of Ponorogo, a significant number of millennials rely on YouTube to access religious content.

This field study encompassed 149 millennial participants from various higher education institutions in Ponorogo, including IAIN Ponorogo, INSURI Ponorogo, Unmuh Ponorogo, and IAIRM Ngabar.[16] These participants willingly engaged in an online questionnaire that examined their religious behavioral patterns, previous religious education experiences, motivations for utilizing YouTube, frequency of usage, types of content consumed, and the impact of such consumption on their religious understanding and practices. The questionnaire is instrumental in comprehending the prevailing trends about using YouTube as a source of religious information among millennials in Ponorogo, with motivations such as content availability and ease of access as key factors. The analysis also draws upon the TAM (Technology Acceptance Model) Theory, which elucidates the factors influencing the acceptance and intention to employ YouTube as a religious education.

The Influence of YouTube on the Religious Patterns of the Millennial Generation in Ponorogo: Analysis of Perceptions and Intentions Based on TAM Theory

First, the millennial generation in Ponorogo positively perceives YouTube's usefulness. They view YouTube as an easily accessible and beneficial source for fulfilling their spiritual needs and religious practices.[17] The availability of diverse content and ease of access play essential roles in this understanding, aligning with the constructs in TAM Theory, which states that the perceived usefulness of technology influences attitudes and intentions to use it.[18]

Secondly, the millennial generation in Ponorogo has a positive perception of the user-friendly nature of YouTube.[19] They view the platform as easily accessible and flexible regarding time, learning opportunities, goal attainment, clarity, and access flexibility. This perception also influences their acceptance and intention to utilize YouTube based on the

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[15] Diana-Maria Buf and Oana Ştefăniță, "Uses and Gratifications of YouTube: A Comparative Analysis of Users and Content Creators," *Romanian Journal of Communication and Public Relations* 22, no. 2 (2020): 75–89. WM Westenberg, "The Influence of YouTubers on Teenagers: A Descriptive Research about the Role YouTubers Play in the Life of Their Teenage Viewers," 2016.

[16] Data from the questionnaire results distributed to 149 Ponorogo student correspondents on July 20, 2023.

[17] Data from the questionnaire results distributed to 149 Ponorogo student correspondents on July 20, 2023.

[18] Denny Indra Prastiawan, Siti Aisjah, and Rofiaty Rofiaty, "The Effect of Perceived Usefulness, Perceived Ease of Use, and Social Influence on the Use of Mobile Banking through the Mediation of Attitude toward Use," *APMBA (Asia Pacific Management and Business Application)* 9, no. 3 (2021): 243–60.

[19] Data from the questionnaire results distributed to 149 Ponorogo student correspondents on July 20, 2023.

tenets of the TAM Theory.[20]

Thirdly, the millennial generation in Ponorogo holds a favorable attitude toward utilizing YouTube as a source of religious content. They appreciate YouTube as an engaging platform with diverse content and the innovative approaches employed by religious preachers and speakers when conveying religious messages.[21] This positive attitude significantly impacts their intention to use YouTube, aligning with the constructs of the TAM Theory.

Fourthly, their objective is to utilize YouTube as a reliable source of religious content actively, and the data demonstrates that they are successful in achieving this objective.[22] They watch religious videos, participate in discussions, subscribe to religious channels, and interact with religious communities on the platform. The construct outlined in TAM Theory, which posits that intention influences the actual usage of technology, is observable in this case.

Therefore, this analysis suggests that YouTube is an effective tool for the millennial generation in Ponorogo to meet their spiritual needs and engage in religious practices. Factors influencing the acceptance and intention to use YouTube include the perceived usefulness, ease of use, attitude towards usage, and intention. YouTube has effectively played a significant role in disseminating religious knowledge and fostering stronger religious connections among the millennial generation in Ponorogo.

Social Construction of Religious Patterns Through Social Media

The religious patterns of students in Ponorogo, as observed through religious education on YouTube, indicate a significant shift in how students access and comprehend religion. With the rapid advancement of information technology and the internet, YouTube has emerged as a widely used platform with significant influence, providing students with diverse and easily accessible religious content.[23]

This research reveals that religious education via YouTube positively impacts the religious understanding of students in Ponorogo. 49% of respondents reported experiencing great benefits, 29.5% felt significantly aided, and 20.8% felt moderately assisted in enhancing their religious understanding through online courses and consuming religious content on YouTube. Before the program, only 40% of students had a satisfactory knowledge of religion, but after six months of participation, approximately 70% reported a more profound comprehension.[24] In conclusion, engagement in religious education on YouTube significantly improves religious understanding.

The observed improvement in religious understanding among students after engaging

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[20] Antonio V Martín-García, Rosa Redolat, and Sacramento Pinazo-Hernandis, "Factors Influencing Intention to Technological Use in Older Adults. The TAM Model Aplication," *Research on Aging* 44, no. 7–8 (2022): 573–88.

[21] Data from the questionnaire results distributed to 149 Ponorogo student correspondents on July 20, 2023.

[22] Data from the questionnaire results distributed to 149 Ponorogo student correspondents on July 20, 2023.

[23] Sabil Mokodenseho et al., "Revitalizing Da'wah through YouTube: Toward a Digitally Literate Society," *West Science Islamic Studies* 2, no. 02 (2024): 129–35.

[24] Data from the questionnaire results distributed to 149 Ponorogo student correspondents on July 20, 2023.

in religious education through YouTube indicates that YouTube can effectively enhance religious knowledge.[25] This has positive implications for increasing accessibility and student engagement in religious learning. With the rapid development of information technology and the internet, YouTube has opened doors to more inclusive and diverse religious education.[26]

In religious education through YouTube in Ponorogo, two critical aspects need to be considered. Firstly, YouTube provides broad access to various sources of religious education, allowing students to gain global insights into religious traditions. Secondly, religious patterns through YouTube facilitate social engagement, enriching understanding through exchanging ideas.

However, the outcomes of improved religious understanding through YouTube are influenced by individual motivations and the quality of learning. Motivations and the quality of content and instructors play significant roles. In Berger and Luckmann's social construction theory, students' understanding of religion involves externalization, objectification, and internalization, depending on how this understanding is internalized within individual perspectives and values.

Externalization Stage

The externalization stage among students in Ponorogo occurs through participation in social interactions on the YouTube platform related to religious content. They can explore various religious videos, such as lectures, religious gatherings, discussions, and worship tutorials. While watching and interacting with this content, students actively express their initial understanding of religion through various forms of expression.

Comments become one of the main ways for students to convey their views, questions, or reflections on the religious content they observe.[27] In these comments, they express their initial understanding of the religious topics discussed in the video, provide responses to arguments or views presented, or share their views on a religious issue.[28] These comments reflect their understanding that is not yet fully structured or mature, as forming a more profound understanding requires time and ongoing interaction with different religious content.

Additionally, the "like and dislike" feature on YouTube plays a significant role in externalizing students' understanding of religion. Giving a "like" to a video indicates that the content is relevant and beneficial to them and may reflect approval of the views or messages conveyed. Conversely, when giving a "dislike," it indicates disagreement or possibly objection to the content of the video.[29] Both "like" and "dislike" actions reflect how students respond to and feel connected with the religious content they encounter on this platform.

In addition to interacting through comments and "likes and dislikes," students can also

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[25] Andrew M Henry, "Religious Literacy in Social Media: A Need for Strategic Amplification," *Religion & Education* 48, no. 1 (2021): 89–101.

[26] Jean Burgess and Joshua Green, *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture* (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2018), 100-120.

[27] Ilana Dubovi and Iris Tabak, "An Empirical Analysis of Knowledge Co-Construction in YouTube Comments," *Computers & Education* 156 (2020): 103939.

[28] Daniel Zimmermann et al., "Influencers on YouTube: A Quantitative Study on Young People's Use and Perception of Videos about Political and Societal Topics," *Current Psychology*, 2020, 1–17.

[29] Zhewen Huang, "Engagement Prediction in YouTube Educational Videos," 2023, 1-39.

share videos they consider necessary or interesting through the sharing feature on YouTube. They indirectly introduce and broaden their understanding of religion to their friends or other online communities by sharing videos.[30] This sharing action can also reflect their urge to contribute to spreading religious information they deem relevant and potentially beneficial to others.

Overall, the externalization stage in religious patterns through religious education on YouTube allows students to engage with religious content actively, and through various forms of expression such as comments, "likes and dislikes," and sharing videos, they can articulate their initial understanding of religion that is not yet fully structured. This interaction is an initial step in forming a deeper and more mature understanding of religion and influences how students participate in a broader religious environment.

Objectification Stage

At the objectification stage, the religious understanding expressed by students through interactions on YouTube becomes an observable object for the broader public. The platform reflects students' religious understanding and meanings through symbolic forms such as comments, video sharing, and other interactions.

The comments made by students on religious content videos are a form of objectification of their understanding. These comments represent the students' perspectives on the religious topics or material discussed in the videos. The YouTube community can read these comments and comprehend the students' diverse religious understandings.[31] This facilitates the exchange of ideas and views between students and other viewers, enriching collective religious understanding.

Additionally, sharing videos is part of objectifying students' religious understanding.[32] When students share a particular video they find beneficial or interesting, it becomes part of the social reality on YouTube and can be accessed by a wider audience. The videos students share reflect how they want to contribute to spreading the religious understanding they have found on the platform to others.

Objectification is also reflected through the "like and dislike" feature. The number of "likes" on a video indicates that the video has received positive feedback from viewers, including students. In contrast, the number of "dislikes" indicates disagreement or criticism of the video's content.[33] These two forms of interaction depict how students' religious understanding is reflected in their reactions to the religious content they encounter.

At the objectification stage, the social reality related to students' religious understanding on the YouTube platform becomes more tangible through symbols that the wider public can observe. Religious understanding is externalized through comments, video sharing, and other interactions, becoming part of the YouTube content accessed and

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[30] Quan Gao et al., "Lived Religion in a Digital Age: Technology, Affect and the Pervasive Space-Times of 'New'Religious Praxis," *Social & Cultural Geography*, 2022, 1–20.

[31] Dubovi and Tabak, "An Empirical Analysis of Knowledge Co-Construction in YouTube Comments."

[32] Heidi A. Campbell and Giulia Evolvi, "Contextualizing Current Digital Religion Research on Emerging Technologies," *Human Behavior and Emerging Technologies* 2, no. 1 (2020): 5–17.

[33] Lala Nur Pratiwi and Hafied Cangara, "Netizens' Responses to a Famous Indonesian Youtuber Video of Changing Religious Beliefs on YouTube Social Media" (2nd International Conference on Science, Technology, and Modern Society (ICSTMS 2020), Atlantis Press, 2021), 248–53.

considered by other users. This process expands students' religious understanding in Ponorogo through social media interactions and influences their broader perception of religion.

Internalization Stage

In the internalization stage, the process of shaping students' religious understanding through interactions with content on YouTube reaches a deeper level. Students begin to adopt and acquire an understanding of religion from various perspectives on the platform. The internalization process transforms the initial understanding externalized through comments, "likes and dislikes," and video sharing into an integral part of their personal comprehension and identity. Students actively translate concepts and views on religion into knowledge they understand and believe, integrating insights from various religious content sources they explore, including lectures, commentary views, and reflections on personal experiences.[34]

In this process, students also recognize differences and variations in religious understanding among their various perspectives. They learn to accept and appreciate diversity in religious beliefs and practices and understand that religion can be interpreted and practiced in multiple legitimate ways.

As they engage more deeply with interactions on the YouTube platform, students begin to strengthen and solidify the religious understanding they choose. This theoretical understanding can influence their daily attitudes and behaviors related to religion. For example, they start to apply the religious teachings they have learned in real life, such as enhancing worship practices, reinforcing moral values, and striving to be more tolerant of religious differences.[35]

This internalization stage can also strengthen students' religious identity. Through this process, students become increasingly aware of how religion forms an essential part of themselves, and their understanding of religion shapes how they interact with the world around them.[36] A strong religious identity can give them a deep moral and spiritual foundation and become a source of strength in facing life's challenges.[37]

Similarly, in this internalization process, Ponorogo students begin to adopt and apply Islamic teachings daily. They become more diligent in performing the five daily prayers and reflect on the meanings of Quranic verses they have heard in various interpretations on YouTube. Additionally, they strive to practice Islamic ethical and moral values in their interactions with others and in their social lives.[38]

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[34] Ahmad Hayyan Najikh, "Social Media Construction Towards Da'wah Activities: A Perspective From Peter L. Berger's Social Construction Theory," *LANGGAR: Journal of Social, Humanities, and Islamic Study* 2, no. 1 (2023): 1–14.

[35] Caitlyn Davis, "YouTube's Flat-Earth Discourse Community," *Lucerna Undergraduate Research Journal*, 2024, 118.

[36] Michalinos Zembylas, "Reframing Phenomenological Approaches in Religious Education: Insights from Affect Theory and the Aesthetics of Religion," *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 44, no. 2 (April 3, 2023): 215–28.

[37] Agustinus Hadi Nugroho and Tito Briyan Diputra, "Religious Fanatic Subjects in the Postmodernism Era: The Meta-Theory of the Sociology of Religion Peter L. Berger," *BELIEF: Sociology of Religion Journal* 1, no. 1 (2023): 1–10.

[38] Data from the questionnaire results distributed to 149 Ponorogo student correspondents on July 20,

They also begin to deepen their understanding of Islamic laws and strive to make decisions based on Islamic guidelines. They learn to be more patient in facing life's challenges and grateful for the blessings given by Allah. In this internalization process, Islam becomes an integral part of themselves and not just something they study externally. Islamic teachings shape the students' values, attitudes, and behaviors, enabling them to live according to Islamic teachings and face life with sincerity and strong faith.[39]

However, it should be understood that factors beyond YouTube can also influence the internalization of religious understanding. Family environment, friends, and formal educational institutions also significantly shape students' religious understanding. In Jean Piaget's view, environmental factors, including influences from family and friends, play a crucial role in how children assimilate and accommodate religious concepts in their cognitive development. Experiences and interactions in these environments shape how children understand and practice their religion as they progress through different developmental stages. Piaget emphasizes the importance of understanding children's religious comprehension in the context of their developmental evolution.[40] Therefore, YouTube is just one of the contributing factors in the internalization process, and the role of other social environments should also be considered.

Thus, the internalization stage in religious patterns through religious education on YouTube significantly impacts the formation of students' religious understanding and identity in Ponorogo. Students can enrich and consolidate their religious understanding more deeply by adopting and acquiring an understanding of religion from various perspectives on this platform. This internalization affects their knowledge level and can influence their attitudes, behaviors, and broader religious identity.

Implications of Changing Religious Patterns

The influence of YouTube on the changes in religious patterns among students in Ponorogo can be observed in transforming their religious knowledge and beliefs. Students gain wider access to different dimensions of religion and belief through various educational and religious materials on the platform. They can enhance their understanding of religious teachings, history, and practices that might have been unfamiliar. YouTube provides comprehensive insights and knowledge about various religions and beliefs, which likely has changed their perspectives on religious aspects.[41]

In addition to knowledge, YouTube also has the potential to influence students' religious beliefs. The religious content presented on this platform is often highly persuasive in conveying religious messages.[42] Students exposed to this type of content experience changes in their beliefs. They become more steadfast in their beliefs or even completely

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[39] Nugroho and Diputra, "Religious Fanatic Subjects in the Postmodernism Era: The Meta-Theory of the Sociology of Religion Peter L. Berger", 1-10.

[40] Hannah Quinn, "Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky," *IU South Bend Undergraduate Research Journal* 19 (2019): 71–91.

[41] Dea Aulita et al., "Social Media As Source Study Generation Millennials," *Journal of Economics and Economic Education* 1, no. 1 (2024): 36–40.

[42] Tedi Supriyadi and Julia Julia, "Religious Songs on Youtube: The Impact on Students," *Sekolah Dasar* 5, no. 3 (2018): 138–44.

transform their religious beliefs.[43] This reflects YouTube's significant influence in shaping individuals' religious views and beliefs in the digital era.

For instance, when Ustadz Abdul Somad's sermons discuss the concept of sincerity in worship, he explains that sincerity means performing worship solely for Allah, without seeking praise from others. Similarly, after hearing his lectures, Ponorogo students feel inspired to delve into this concept in their religious practices. Additionally, Ustadz Adi Hidayat's sermons address daily religious practices, including the correct procedures for worship, such as performing prayers properly and punctually. These lectures serve as a guide for religious practice for Ponorogo students.[44]

Moreover, some Ponorogo students also listen to sermons by Gus Baha. Gus Baha discusses the importance of critically understanding religious teachings rather than just following them without deep comprehension. His sermons encourage these students to think critically about their religion, prompting them to approach Islam more profoundly and clearly.[45] These examples reflect how various preachers on YouTube have contributed to the changes in these students' religious understanding and beliefs.

The changes in religious knowledge and beliefs among individuals who respond to the moderate Islamic preaching from Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) figures like Gus Baha on YouTube reflect a deep transformation in their understanding of Islamic teachings. Similarly, individuals who respond to conservative preaching experience similar changes as a response to conservative religious teachings. These two groups exhibit different approaches and beliefs in religion, reflected in the changes in their understanding.

Furthermore, the more profound changes in religious knowledge among the group responding to moderate Islamic preaching reflect their efforts to understand better the roots of religious teachings, including Quranic verses, hadith, and religious concepts. They aim to deepen their commitment to moderate Islamic values and provide a stronger foundation for daily religious practice. Meanwhile, individuals engaged in conservative preaching also experience increased religious knowledge but with a different focus. They strive to understand more literal interpretations of religion better and emphasize a strict understanding of sacred texts. This understanding aims to return to religious teachings' purer and more fundamental roots.

Shifts in religious understanding involve incorporating religious values into everyday life practices.[46] The group that responds to moderate Islamic preaching focuses on practicing religion with values of tolerance, inclusivity, and harmony, reflecting the moderate Islamic teachings emphasized by NU.[47] In contrast, individuals who engage in conservative preaching

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[43] Lala Nur Pratiwi, "Analisis Sikap Dan Pendapat Netizen Terhadap Video Perubahan Keyakinan Beragama Oleh Lima Mualaf: Analisis Isi Kualitatif Pada Media Sosial Channel YouTube," 2021.

[44] Abdul Basit Atamimi, Abdul Muaz, and Afni Handayani, "Hijrah in the Sufisme Perspective: Study of Religious Phenomenology on the Role and Activities of Da'wah of Youth Hijrah in Cirebon," *JOUSIP: Journal of Sufism and Psychotherapy* 4, no. 1 (2024): 1–24.

[45] Aishah Khoirunnisa and Ahmad Atabik, "Ngaji Bandongan: Tafsīr Jalālyn Gus Baha Study As A Paradigm Of Online Acculturation Of Turats And Social Media," *Jurnal At-Tibyan: Jurnal Ilmu Alqur'an Dan Tafsir* 9, no. 1 (2024): 72–86.

[46] Campbell and Evolvi, "Contextualizing Current Digital Religion Research on Emerging Technologies," 5-17.

[47] Mohammad Ahyan Yusuf Sya'bani, "Culture of Religious Moderation Through the Actualization of

emphasize stricter and more conservative religious practices, striving to live their daily lives according to more rigid religious principles and emphasizing ethical, moral, and virtuous values in their religious teachings.

Both groups experience an increase in religious belief and more profound spiritual experiences. Individuals who respond to moderate Islamic preaching feel closer to God through spiritual experiences that strengthen their faith. Conversely, those who engage in conservative preaching also feel profound spiritual experiences that motivate them to reinforce their religious beliefs.

These changes in religious knowledge and beliefs reflect changes in individuals' understanding of religion and a deeper appreciation and strong commitment to religious values in their religious context. Although their approaches differ, both groups strive to integrate their religious beliefs into their daily lives and positively impact their communities and society. These changes are reflected in their efforts to draw closer to God, live lives more aligned with their religious beliefs, and deepen their understanding of religion.

In the context of YouTube's influence on the changes in religious knowledge and beliefs among students in Ponorogo, James S. Coleman's rational choice theory can provide valuable insights.[48] Firstly, the students in Ponorogo act as primary agents in their search for religious information on this platform. They deliberately use YouTube to achieve their personal goals, enhance their knowledge, and strengthen their religious beliefs. Students with high rationality select content and preachers that align with their preferences and values.

In this case, YouTube serves as a primary resource that offers broad access to various religious educational materials. It provides easy and convenient access for students to explore dimensions of religion and beliefs previously unfamiliar to them. Thus, YouTube meets students' interests in improving their understanding of religious teachings and practices.

Preachers on YouTube, such as Ustadz Abdul Somad, Ustadz Adi Hidayat, and Gus Baha, play a key role in influencing the changes in students' religious knowledge and beliefs. They deliver persuasive and profound religious messages through their content. Students exposed to this type of content experience changes in their beliefs, reflecting YouTube's significant influence in shaping individuals' religious views in the digital era.

Moreover, students choose between moderate and conservative religious approaches according to their preferences. This reflects Coleman's concept of rational choice, where individuals act according to their values and personal preferences. Students who respond to the moderate Islamic preaching from Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) represent their efforts to better understand the roots of their religious teachings. They seek more profound knowledge about their religious teachings and strive to practice religion with values of tolerance, inclusivity, and harmony. On the other hand, individuals who respond to conservative preaching also seek increased religious knowledge but with a different focus, namely a more literal interpretation of religion and a strict understanding of sacred texts.

Therefore, the changes in religious knowledge and beliefs observed among students in

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[48] Thomas Voss, "James S. Coleman: Foundations of Social Theory," *Schlüsselwerke Der Wirtschaftssoziologie*, 2021, 223–34.

Ponorogo reflect their rational actions in achieving their religious goals through YouTube. They select resources matching their preferences and are exposed to preachers and content influencing their understanding and beliefs. Along with these changes, students choose a religious approach that aligns with their values, illustrating how Coleman's rational choice theory can be applied to understanding religious changes in the digital era through social media like YouTube.

The evolving religious patterns among students in Ponorogo, driven by the influence of platforms like YouTube, underscore the need for a more flexible and contemporary approach to religious education in the digital age. Advancing religious education in Ponorogo should integrate digital media as a teaching tool, utilizing interactive and engaging methods to connect with students effectively. As conveyed by moderate religious figures, religious education that combines values of tolerance, inclusivity, and deep understanding can inspire students to practice their faith with a more harmonious and open approach. On the other hand, teaching that emphasizes in-depth study and literal interpretation of religious teachings should also be strengthened for students inclined toward a conservative approach. In this way, the religious education curriculum can be developed to be more comprehensive, accommodating the diverse needs of students and leveraging the influence of social media to positively shape their understanding and beliefs.

CONCLUSION

Millennials in Ponorogo prefer YouTube as their primary source of religious knowledge and influence over conventional learning because they see it as a helpful platform with diverse religious content. The ease of access and time flexibility on YouTube provide the freedom to practice religion without being tied to a specific location or schedule while viewing it as a place of innovation and creativity in delivering religious messages. Students shape their religious patterns through three stages: externalization, objectivation, and internalization, with YouTube as the primary tool. YouTube influences changes in religious patterns by expanding religious knowledge and influencing beliefs in moderate or conservative streams.

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