Dualism of Tiktok's Algorithmic Impact: Disruption of Students' Sexual Identity in Islamic Education at Palangkaraya Universities

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ABSTRACT
Over 62% of Muslim college students report encountering LGBTQ+ content on TikTok-how does Islamic education respond to this digital exposure?. This study explores the dual impact of TikTok's algorithm and its usage intensity on the formation of sexual identity and orientation among Muslim students at State General Universities (PTUN) in Central Kalimantan. It also investigates the role of Islamic education in addressing students' sexual identity challenges. This study used a mixed-method approach with a Concurrent Embedded design, in which combined quantitative regression analysis of Likert-scale questionnaire data (N = 312) and qualitative thematic analysis from in-depth interviews and literature reviews. The sample was determined using stratified random sampling based on students' semester levels. The study results TikTok significantly influences students' sexual identity and orientation (r = 0.583, p < 0.01), while Islamic education has a more modest effect (r = 0.299, p < 0.01). Together, both variables explain 46% of the variation (R² = 0.460). Notably, 70% of respondents reported experiencing value conflict after being exposed to sexual content. Regression results indicate that TikTok and Islamic education together explain 46% of the variance (R² = 0.460) in students' sexual identity orientation. No significant link was found between TikTok usage and internalization of Islamic values (r = -0.079, p = 0.214), suggesting parallel but disconnected development paths. These findings call for urgent integration of digital Islamic literacy to Islamic education curriculum to mitigate the effect of TikTok's algorithm, and use of social media da'wah within Islamic education frameworks to confront algorithmic influences effectively.

1. Introduction

Islamic education in higher education institutions faces significant challenges in addressing the dynamic changes in social behavior and moral values due to the strong effect of social media(Hidayat et al., 2021). Recently, social media has often become the primary source in shaping students' perspectives and behavior, leading to a significant tendency among young people to conform to the standards set by platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, or YouTube (Arifah & Ashidiq, 2024). Unfortunately, these platforms often prioritize viral content, emphasizing popularity, freedom of expression, and trends that may conflict with the norms upheld by families, educational institutions, or religious values(Duan & Qutayan, 2024).

While earlier studies have analyzed the influence of platforms like Instagram and YouTube-primarily focusing on lifestyle aspiration, body image issues, or visual identity formation (McKenna, 2022). They tend to overlook how short-form algorithm-driven platforms like TikTok contribute more intensively and directly to the construction of deeper personal identities, particularly related to sexuality and gender orientation. For instance, TikTok's "For You Page" algorithm is known to rapidly expose users to identity-affirming content(Skinner, 2023), especially for LGBTQ+ youth, facilitating processes of self-exploration and community belonging that differ significantly from the curated, image-centric norms of Instagram (Staroselsky, 2022) .

Initial findings from this study suggest that TikTok not only amplifies visibility of queer narratives but also normalizes identity discourse among young users including those in religiously conservative settings. This highlights a unique dimension of digital identity formation overlooked in prior research. Consequently, a significant research gap remains, especially in the context of Islamic higher education, where digital influence intersects with religious values.

This phenomenon contributes to changes in students' perspectives and attitudes, including the formation of their sexual identity and orientation (Novianti et al., 2024). According to Eccles, sexual identity is an individual's perception of their sexual role, which is affected by personal maturity (Eccles et al., 2004). Sexual identity refers to how a person understands and defines themselves in terms of gender and gender roles (Egan & Perry, 2001). In general, when discussing sexual orientation, three main aspects are considered: heterosexuality, homosexuality, and bisexuality (Igartua et al., 2009). It also involves whether individuals feel more comfortable identifying with masculine traits, feminine traits, or a combination of both.

Meanwhile, sexual orientation refers to an individual's emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction to others, such as attraction to men, women, or both. According to the American Psychological Association (APA), sexual orientation is defined as a long-lasting emotional, romantic, and sexual attraction toward others (men, women, or both) (Mayer & McHugh, 2016). It is also closely related to an individual's self-concept(Alhamdu, 2015). Therefore, how a person perceives and thinks about themselves affects whether their sexual orientation is expressed or not in their behavior.

From the Islamic perspective, sexual identity is defined as the human natural disposition (*fitrah*) that Allah has ordained since birth, designating individuals as male or female (Sholichah et al., 2024). This concept is referenced in Surah Al-Hujurat (49:13), which emphasizes that Allah created human beings as male and female so that they may know and complement one another. Sexual identity in Islam encompasses gender roles that align with biological nature and the guidance of *Shariah* (Muzani & Shofa, 2013).

Meanwhile, in Islam, sexual orientation is directed toward a lawful relationship between a man and a woman through marriage (Zulaiha, 2019), as emphasized in Surah An-Nur (24:32). Islam views sexual relationships outside the framework of marriage or same-sex relationships as behaviors that deviate from the human natural disposition (*fitrah*) and contradict Shariah. This perspective is supported by Surah Al-A'raf (7:80-81), which narrates the story of the people of Prophet Lot (Lut), who strayed from Allah's teachings. This Islamic viewpoint underscores the importance of maintaining ethics and morality in shaping sexual identity and orientation to remain aligned with religious values.

TikTok is one of the most popular and widely used platforms among the younger generation, including university students (Wulandari et al., 2022). The We Are Social report states that TikTok has 1.58 billion users worldwide, predominantly from the 18–24 age group, the majority of whom are university students (We Are Social dan Meltwater, 2025). This platform plays a significant role in shaping students' perceptions, values, and sexual orientation. According to a survey conducted by the Ministry of Education and Culture, approximately 30% of university students in Indonesia admitted to being affected by content they encounter on social media in forming their views on sexual and gender issues.

Furthermore, data from the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection (2023) indicate a 40% increase in cases of sexual norm violations in religious campus environments over the past three years, signaling an urgent concern regarding the effectiveness of moral and religious education. As a group still in the process of identity formation, students are often affected by narratives that are not always based on in-depth principles but rather on what is trending on social media.

TikTok, with its highly personalized algorithm, provides a highly individualized space for self-expression, including sexual orientation. The platform utilizes advanced algorithms to recommend videos based on user preferences, allowing users to receive content that aligns with their interests and desires (Karizat et al., 2021), this can have implications for how they shape their views on sexual identity and orientation. The increasing use of TikTok in students' daily lives presents a challenge for Islamic education in maintaining moral values, ethics, and character (*akhlak*), which are becoming increasingly complex over time (Akhyar et al., 2025).

The intensity of TikTok usage is directly related to shifts in perspectives and the normalization of certain matters that may sometimes contradict the norms taught in the education system (Sagala & Kandedes, 2024), including Islamic education in universities. The Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection has stated that the deviation of sexual orientation, which was previously considered a marginal phenomenon, has now become a more openly discussed issue among the younger generation, particularly among university students who are frequently exposed to LGBT-related content on social media.

These developments reinforce the problem statement of this study: that Islamic education institutions must confront the growing influence of TikTok in shaping students' sexual identity, often in contradiction to foundational religious values. This highlights a gap between the effect of religious education and the increasingly progressive social developments in the digital world.

Islamic education plays a crucial role in shaping students' sexual identity in higher education institutions (N. Ali & Noor, 2019). However, the growing effect of social

media introduces more progressive and inclusive values regarding various forms of sexual orientation(Laka et al., 2024). Islamic education is challenged to address the tension between Islamic values and the effect of TikTok's social media content (Silvana, 2024), particularly in relation to the formation of students' sexual identity and orientation. This study attempts to bridge the research gap by exploring TikTok's specific impact which has been understudied in comparison to older platforms like Instagram on the construction of students' sexual orientation in the context of Islamic higher education.

Building on this issue, this study aims to explore the extent to which TikTok's algorithm and the intensity of its usage affect the formation of students' sexual identity and orientation while considering Islamic educational values as a control variable. Additionally, it examines how Islamic education in universities can play a role in guiding the formation of sexual identity and orientation in a way that remains aligned with religious principles.

Through this approach, this study is expected to provide a deeper understanding of the effect of each factor and its contribution to the formation of students' sexual orientation. Additionally, this research aims to offer insights for the development of Islamic education policies that are more responsive to social and digital dynamics, as well as to provide recommendations for designing educational programs that balance the effect of social media with the moral values embedded in religious teachings.

2. Method

This study employed a concurrent embedded mixed-methods design, with quantitative analysis as the dominant approach and qualitative analysis serving a supportive role(Creamer, 2017). This model was chosen to enable the researchers to gather robust statistical evidence while also capturing contextual and interpretative insights through qualitative data. Quantitative data was collected through electronic questionnaires designed using a Likert scale (1–5), while qualitative data was gathered through interviews and literature reviews (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

The study population consists of Muslim students actively enrolled in State General Universities (PTUN) in Central Kalimantan, and the sample was selected using the stratified random sampling technique, considering semester level as the stratum to ensure proportional representation of each group. Stratified random sampling is a type of probability sampling that divides the population into homogeneous subgroups (strata) before randomly selecting samples from each stratum. This technique enhances the representativeness of the sample and reduces sampling bias compared to simple random sampling (Hazari, 2024).

The sample size was determined based on ISAAC & MICHAEL's sample size determination table, with an error margin of 1%, 5%, and 10% (Usman, 2012). Given that the error margin (x) falls within the range of 1% > x < 5% and the population (N) consists of approximately (N) = 2,800 first-semester Muslim students actively enrolled in State General Universities in Central Kalimantan actively use TikTok frequently. The sample size for this study was set at 247 students.

Data analysis utilized descriptive statistical techniques and inferential statistics, employing correlation tests. Correlation tests to determine the relationship between TikTok's algorithm (X_1), usage intensity (X_2), and Islamic education values (X_3) with the

formation of students' sexual identity and orientation (Y), using the following formula (Priyono, 2021):

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \epsilon \quad (1)$$

This correlation test was used to determine whether there was a significant relationship between TikTok's algorithm, its usage intensity, and Islamic education values with the formation of students' sexual identity and orientation in universities. Furthermore, a multiple linear regression test was conducted. Multiple linear regression analysis to assess the magnitude and significance of the influence of each independent variable (X_1, X_2, X_3) on the dependent variable (Y), using the following formula:

$$r = \frac{n \sum XY - \sum X \sum Y}{\sqrt{(n \sum X^2 - (\sum X)^2)(n \sum Y^2 - (\sum Y)^2)}} \quad (2)$$

This multiple linear regression test was used to measure the extent to which TikTok's algorithm (X1), its usage intensity (X2), and Islamic education values (X3) affect the formation of students' sexual identity and orientation (Y). Additionally, it aimed to determine which variable has the most dominant effect on the formation of students' sexual identity and orientation. In addition to correlation and regression analysis, this study also applied statistical tests such as ANOVA to examine differences between groups when relevant, particularly in relation to variables such as gender, semester level, and duration of TikTok usage.

For the qualitative component, the interview data were first transcribed verbatim, followed by a structured coding process that included open coding (identifying initial categories), axial coding (connecting categories and subcategories), and selective coding (identifying core themes). This sequence was designed to capture recurring patterns and to ensure depth, consistency, and logical coherence in interpreting the data.

Several verification strategies were employed data triangulation to strengthen the validity and reliability of the findings (Meijer et al., 2002), which involved cross-checking information gathered from questionnaires, interviews, and relevant literature; Peer debriefing, where the research methodology and findings were discussed with fellow academic researchers to ensure consistency and reduce bias; and Member checking, in which selected interview participants were asked to verify the accuracy and interpretation of their responses.

3. Finding and Discussion
Finding

This study aimed to investigate the influence of TikTok's algorithm and usage intensity on the formation of students' sexual identity and orientation, particularly in relation to the internalization of Islamic education values. To achieve this objective, a quantitative approach was employed, utilizing both correlation and simple linear regression analyses.

The correlation analysis was conducted to determine the presence and strength of statistically significant relationships between TikTok's algorithm, the frequency and intensity of its usage, and the embedded values of Islamic education with the development of sexual identity and orientation among university students. The results of the correlation test are presented as follows:

Table 1. Pearson Correlation Test Results

		TikTok Usage Intensity TikTok	Islamic Education Values	Formation of Students' Sexual Identity and Orientation
TikTok Usage Intensity	Pearson Correlation	1	-0.079	0.583**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.214	0.000
	N	247	247	247
Islamic Education Values	Pearson Correlation	-0.079	1	0.299**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.214		0.000
	N	247	247	247
Formation of Students' Sexual Identity and Orientation	Pearson Correlation	0.583**	0.299**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	
	N	247	247	247

Source of Data: Processed from e-questionnaire data

From Table 1, it can be observed that TikTok usage intensity has a positive and significant correlation with the formation of students' sexual identity and orientation ($r = 0.583$, $p < 0.01$). This finding indicates that the more frequently students access and interact with content on TikTok, the greater the platform's effect on their sexual identity and orientation formation process. This can be linked to TikTok's algorithm, which dynamically adjusts content based on user preferences (Bachtiar et al., 2024), thereby reinforcing exposure to diverse narratives and representations of sexual identity.

Additionally, Islamic education values also show a positive and significant correlation with the formation of students' sexual identity and orientation ($r = 0.299$, $p < 0.01$). Although its effect is smaller compared to TikTok, this result indicates that Islamic education still plays a role in shaping students' identity aspects, whether through moral values, social norms, or religious doctrines taught in both formal and non-formal educational settings.

However, the relationship between TikTok usage intensity and Islamic education values is not statistically significant ($r = -0.079$, $p = 0.214$). This indicates that high TikTok consumption does not necessarily inversely correlate with the Islamic education values adopted by students. In other words, although students actively use TikTok, it does not automatically diminish the internalization of Islamic education values in their lives.

Next, this study conducted a regression analysis to examine the relationship between TikTok usage intensity and Islamic education values in relation to the formation of students' sexual identity and orientation. The results of the regression test can be seen in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.678a	0.460	0.456	2.787

Source of Data: Processed from e-questionnaire data

The R-value of 0.678 indicates a moderately strong correlation between the independent variables, namely TikTok usage intensity and Islamic education values, and the dependent variable, which is the formation of students' sexual identity and orientation. This suggests that both independent variables have a significant relationship in influencing the dependent variable.

Meanwhile, the R Square value of 0.460 indicates that 46% of the variability in the formation of students' sexual identity and orientation can be explained by TikTok usage intensity and Islamic education values. This means that nearly half of the changes in students' sexual identity and orientation can be predicted based on these two variables. However, the remaining 54% is affected by other factors that were not included in this research model, such as social environment, personal experiences, or cultural factors (Malik, 2020).

Additionally, the Adjusted R Square value of 0.456 indicates that the model remains stable and consistent, even with adjustments to the number of independent variables in the analysis. In other words, despite modifications to the model, the effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable can still be well explained without significant changes in the determination value. Next, the ANOVA test results can be seen in Table 3 below:

Table 3. ANOVA Test Results

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1615.370	2	807.685	103.998	0.000b
	Residual	1894.994	244	7.766		
	Total	3510.364	246			

Source of Data: Processed from e-questionnaire data

From Table 3, it can be observed that the ANOVA test produced an F-value of 103.998 with a significance level of 0.000, indicating that the regression model is statistically significant in explaining the relationship between the examined variables. This means that TikTok usage intensity and Islamic education together have a significant effect on the formation of students' sexual identity and orientation. Next, the regression coefficient test results can be seen in the following table:

Table 4. Regression Coefficients

	Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	-0.624	1.378		-0.453	0.651
	TikTok Usage Intensity	0.606	0.047	0.611	12.942	0.000
	Islamic Education Values	0.389	0.053	0.348	7.369	0.000

Source of Data: Processed from e-questionnaire data

Table 4 shows that the constant (intercept) has a value of -0.624 with a significance level of 0.651 (> 0.05). This indicates that the constant in this regression model is not statistically significant, meaning that when the independent variables (TikTok usage intensity and Islamic education values) are zero, the model cannot accurately predict the dependent variable (the formation of students' sexual identity and orientation).

The TikTok usage intensity variable has a coefficient of 0.606 with a significance level of 0.000 (< 0.05). This indicates that TikTok usage intensity has a positive and significant effect on the formation of students' sexual identity and orientation. In other words, the more frequently students use TikTok, the greater its effect on shaping their sexual identity and orientation. This effect is quite strong, as shown by the standardized beta value of 0.611, which suggests that TikTok is the dominant factor in this model.

Meanwhile, Islamic education values have a coefficient of 0.389 with a significance level of 0.000 (< 0.05), indicating that Islamic education also has a positive and significant effect on the formation of students' sexual identity and orientation.

However, the effect of Islamic education is smaller compared to TikTok, as reflected in the standardized beta value of 0.348. Nonetheless, Islamic education still plays a role in shaping students' understanding of their sexual identity and orientation, although with less intensity than the effect of social media.

Discussion

TikTok Algorithm, Islamic Education, and Their Effect on the Formation of Students' Sexual Identity and Orientation

This finding suggests the possibility that students are capable of navigating multiple value systems simultaneously, adopting various perspectives from social media without necessarily abandoning the values internalized through religious education. This selective internalization highlights a nuanced and dynamic identity negotiation process among university students in the digital age. Rather than viewing media influence and religious instruction as inherently antagonistic, the findings suggest that both can coexist within the same individual, operating in different cognitive and emotional domains.

Overall, this study indicates that TikTok has a more dominant effect in shaping students' sexual identity and orientation compared to Islamic education. This is evident from the stronger correlation and regression coefficients attributed to TikTok usage. The platform's algorithm, which tailors content based on user interaction, can repeatedly expose students to diverse narratives and representations of sexuality, gender identity, and personal expression. Such consistent exposure is likely to influence students' identity construction processes over time, particularly in formative years when identity is still fluid and open to external input.

However, despite the overpowering nature of digital media, Islamic education still plays a significant and complementary role in the identity formation process. Although its effect is not as statistically strong as that of social media, it contributes moral boundaries, ethical reflection, and spiritual grounding that can frame or filter the influence of online content. Religious education, whether through formal curriculum, campus religious programs, or informal spiritual mentoring, continues to offer a counter-narrative to the often relativistic and hyper-individualistic messages prevalent on platforms like TikTok.

A Venn diagram is presented below to illustrate the conceptual overlap and distinction between TikTok content and Islamic values. This visualization clarifies how certain content on TikTok aligns with Islamic moral frameworks, while other content diverges significantly.
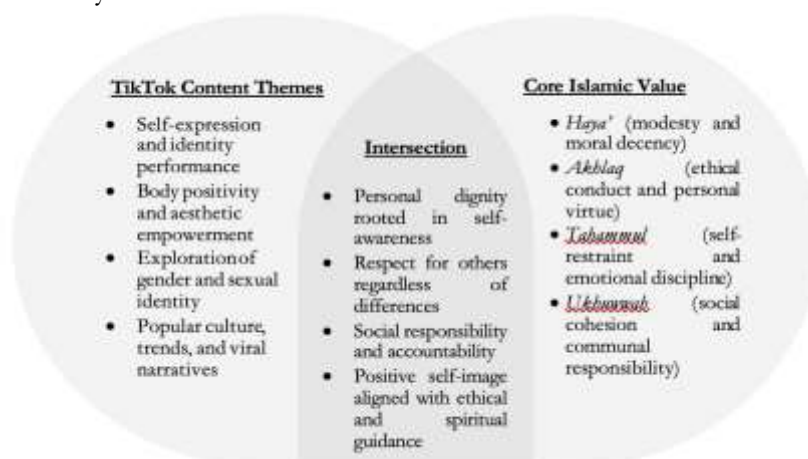

TikTok Content Themes

- Self-expression and identity performance
- Body positivity and aesthetic empowerment
- Exploration of gender and sexual identity
- Popular culture, trends, and viral narratives

Intersection

- Personal dignity rooted in self-awareness
- Respect for others regardless of differences
- Social responsibility and accountability
- Positive self-image aligned with ethical and spiritual guidance

Core Islamic Value

- *Haya'* (modesty and moral decency)
- *Akhlaq* (ethical conduct and personal virtue)
- *Tahammul* (self-restraint and emotional discipline)
- *Ukhuwah* (social cohesion and communal responsibility)

Figure 1. Overlap overlap between TikTok content and Islamic values

This Venn diagram illustrates the intersection between TikTok content and Islamic values that are relevant to the lives of Muslim students. The left circle represents dominant themes commonly found in TikTok content, such as self-expression, gender identity exploration, body positivity, and viral trends from popular culture. Meanwhile, the right circle reflects core values in Islam, including modesty (*haya'*), virtuous character (*akhlaq*), self-restraint (*tahammul*), and social responsibility (*ukhuwwah*). In the center, there is an overlap of shared values, demonstrating that although they originate from two different realms-digital platforms and religious teachings both still have common ground. These include respect for personal dignity, regard for others, social responsibility, and a positive self-image when guided by ethical principles.

Furthermore, no direct relationship was found between TikTok usage intensity and the internalization of Islamic education values, suggesting that both can develop independently in influencing students. In other words, although students actively use TikTok, this does not necessarily diminish the internalization of religious values acquired through Islamic education.

These findings emphasize the importance of Islamic education adapting more effectively to the dynamics of the digital era, particularly in addressing the effect of social media on students' identity and orientation formation. More innovative and technology-based strategies need to be developed to ensure that Islamic education values remain relevant and competitive within the constantly evolving digital ecosystem.

These results indicate that TikTok has a greater effect than Islamic education in shaping students' sexual identity and orientation. However, the presence of Islamic education values still contributes by providing moral and ethical perspectives to students. Therefore, in response to the increasing effect of social media, a strategic approach is needed to strengthen Islamic education so that it remains relevant in shaping students' identity in the digital era.

Islamic Education Strategies in Universities for Navigating the Formation of Students' Sexual Identity and Orientation

Islamic education in universities faces significant challenges in helping students navigate their sexual identity and orientation amid the overwhelming flow of information on social media (Suroso et al., 2021). Platforms such as TikTok and Instagram are not only sources of entertainment but also affect how students perceive religious and social values. Many students experience confusion when encountering content that contradicts Islamic teachings, yet they are uncertain about how to respond to such content.

One students noted that *"TikTok taught me to be more open, but on campus, I have to cover up who I really am,"* In contrast, another student shared, *"I feel that TikTok and Islamic education give me completely different views on sexual orientation."*

These contrasting statements reveal the internal conflict many students face between the freedom of digital spaces and the moral boundaries of their religious education. From the lens of Social Identity Theory by Tajfel (Tajfel et al., 1979), such contradictions reflect a clash between identity groups that the digital peer group offering social validation and the Islamic community providing moral structure. The theory suggests that identity is formed and maintained through group membership indicating the need for Islamic education to serve as a more relevant "in-group" in students' digital lives. This aligns with the Islamic concept of digital fitrah, where individuals are naturally

inclined toward truth and moral clarity, but need guidance to navigate online spaces without losing this intrinsic balance.

The research findings indicate that TikTok has a more dominant influence compared to Islamic education values in shaping students' sexual identity and orientation. This highlights the need for a more adaptive Islamic education strategy to address social changes affected by digital media. Islamic education in universities must adjust its approach to remain relevant and effective in providing students with a balanced understanding. The following strategies are proposed as viable solutions:

1. Islamic Values-Based Digital Literacy Program

Universities can implement digital literacy programs that equip students with a critical understanding of social media algorithms, especially those on platform like TikTok (Low et al., 2025). This program aims to provide students with the tools to critically analyze social media algorithms and how to filter information that aligns with Islamic values. This program could take the form of seminars, workshops, or online courses that focus on how to identify content that contradicts Islamic teachings and understand the impact of social media algorithms on their thought patterns and digital habits.

Based on interviews with students, one respondent shared, "*I often encounter content that contradicts Islamic values on TikTok, so it's important to have a program that can help me filter the right information.*" This indicates that students need guidance in understanding and filtering the information they consume daily. With the implementation of this digital literacy program, students will not only learn about Islamic concepts but also understand how technology affects the way they interact with those values.

In Malaysia, universities have implemented structured e-learning modules that integrate Islamic ethical teachings with digital media literacy, equipping students to critically engage with online content through a values-based lens (Iswandi & Prasetyoningsih, 2020). These initiatives are often centralized and embedded in institutional policies, providing a systematic framework for addressing moral and technological challenges simultaneously. In contrast, similar programs in Indonesia tend to be more fragmented and localized. This comparative insight highlights the potential for Indonesia to develop more holistic and integrated approaches to digital literacy grounded in Islamic ethics (Fitri et al., 2024), thereby fostering the protection and reinforcement of students' digital fitrah—the innate disposition toward moral consciousness and truth.

2. Development of a Critical Discussion-Based Curriculum

Islamic education in universities can adopt a curriculum based on interactive discussions that address contemporary issues related to sexual identity and orientation from an Islamic perspective (Masturin, 2022). Many students feel that religious education on campus is still too theoretical and does not adequately address the challenges they face in their daily lives. Therefore, strengthening a curriculum focused on critical discussions can be a solution, allowing students to actively participate in understanding how Islam responds to various social challenges, including those related to sexual identity and orientation. The development of a curriculum that encourages critical and creative thinking is essential in shaping resilient students' characters (Fathoni, 2022). One student stated that:

"*We need more discussion spaces to understand how Islam addresses modern issues without feeling judged.*" Another added, "*Universities should integrate digital literacy into religious education, host relevant discussions, and offer practical guidelines for how we engage with social media in line with Islamic values.*"

Therefore, case study-based classes and interactive discussion forums should be increased to give students the opportunity to engage in open discussions about issues relevant to their lives. This approach supports students' identity formation through open, inclusive dialogue, where they feel safe to explore difficult questions without judgment. It also aligns with Tajfel's theory, which emphasizes the role of perceived group acceptance in identity development. When students feel included and respected within the Islamic discourse community, they are more likely to align with its norms.

3. Utilizing Social Media as a Digital Da'wah Tool

In response to the dominance of social media, universities can develop engaging and easily accessible digital *da'wah* (Islamic practice of inviting or calling others to Islam) content for students (Rachmawati et al., 2019). Creating short video content, podcasts, or blog articles can serve as strategies to convey Islamic messages in a more engaging and comprehensible way for students. This content could include short videos on TikTok, podcasts, or blog articles discussing issues of identity from an inclusive Islamic perspective, relevant to the students' current lives.

One student shared, "*I prefer learning through engaging short videos rather than reading long texts.*" This highlights that the da'wah approach through social media is more relevant for the younger generation. Digital da'wah content can include discussions on Islamic identity, ethics in social media, and how to address sensitive issues while staying true to Islamic values. With this strategy, Islamic da'wah can more easily reach students and become an integral part of their daily lives.

To strengthen the impact of this initiative, universities can collaborate with Muslim social media influencers to co-produce alternative Islamic content that is both authentic and digitally resonant. This model has already been implemented in some Southeast Asian contexts, where influencers with formal religious training partner with institutions to promote positive content around identity, modesty, and ethical behavior online (Zaid et al., 2022). Such collaborations can help bridge the gap between formal religious knowledge and the informal learning that occurs on digital platforms (Venter, 2020).

Moreover, integrating contemporary fatwa perspectives into digital content could further enhance credibility. For instance, several ulama in Indonesia and Malaysia have issued fatwa regarding the ethical use of social media, including the importance of upholding adab (*Islamic etiquette*), avoiding ghibah (*backbiting*), and preserving personal modesty online. These fatwa, when translated into digital da'wah formats, can guide students in making morally informed choices in the virtual realm.

4. Optimization of Campus Religious Programs

In addition to enhancing digital literacy and critical discussions, universities also need to optimize existing religious programs to make them more engaging and relevant to student's needs (Santoso et al., 2020). Some students have mentioned that activities such as Islamic study sessions, religious ethics courses, and Islamic value-based communities have been very helpful in dealing with the negative effects of social media. However, many of them hope that these activities can be packaged in a more appealing way to encourage more students to participate.

One student shared, "*I feel more at ease after joining the Islamic discussion community on campus because I can ask questions without fear of being judged.*" Therefore, the formation of more inclusive Islamic mentoring communities can serve as a solution, providing students with a space to ask questions and discuss the issues they face. Thematic Islamic studies, such as those discussing gender, sexual orientation, and digital identity from an Islamic perspective, could also be a way to show that Islam remains relevant in addressing the challenges of the modern age (Z. Z. Ali & Puspita, 2023). These themes can be addressed through mentoring circles, open forums, or collaborative workshops with trained facilitators. In this context, fatwa such as those from the Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI) on digital behavior and youth morality can serve as foundational references, ensuring discussions remain both grounded and progressive

5. Evaluation and Adaptation of Religious Education Strategies

To ensure the effectiveness of Islamic education strategies, universities need to conduct regular evaluations and adapt to the changing needs of students. This evaluation can be carried out by collecting feedback from students regarding the effectiveness of campus religious programs and the topics they need to make the content more relevant to their lives. One student suggested, "*The university should provide a feedback system so that students can provide input on the topics of Islamic studies they want to discuss.*" With this feedback system, universities can ensure that the programs they offer remain relevant and effectively address students' needs. Additionally, the development of an online consultation platform could also serve as a solution for students who wish to engage in more personal discussions about issues of identity and morality from an Islamic perspective.

As a consideration, several countries have implemented innovative approaches in Islamic education in the digital era, such as in Malaysia. Universities in Malaysia have developed Islamic-based e-learning modules that integrate Islamic ethics studies with social media literacy to help students navigate issues of identity and morality in the digital world (M. M. Ali & Zulkifli, 2024), enabling students to critically engage with digital content without compromising their religious values. These programs are often centralized, well-funded, and supported by national educational policie (Smalley, 2020).

In Turkey, some Islamic universities have launched digital mentoring programs, where students receive guidance from ulama and academics to understand social issues from an Islamic perspective through online platforms. In Saudi Arabia, several universities have adopted a gamification approach in Islamic education (Afendi & Khojir, 2024), where students can learn about Islamic values through interactive digital applications and platforms.

Drawing from these models, Indonesian universities could initiate similar collaborative frameworks, involving religious authorities, digital creators, and educators. These efforts should aim to protect and nurture what Islamic pedagogy calls the "digital fitrah"-the natural human inclination toward truth and moral balance-even amidst algorithmic distractions. Interview data confirms that students are seeking a more interactive and empathetic religious education, one that responds to the dilemmas they face in navigating modern identity within a digitalized environment.

Therefore, Islamic education in universities needs to adapt to the development of digital technology to remain relevant in shaping students' identities. By implementing innovative strategies, such as Islamic-based digital literacy, the development of interactive curricula, and the use of social media as a tool for da'wah (Agustin, 2024),

universities can be more effective in providing students with a balanced understanding. Interview data also reveals that students expect a more interactive religious education that can address the challenges of social media more concretely. Lessons learned from other countries also show that integrating technology into Islamic education can be a solution for addressing the challenges of sexual identity and orientation in the digital era.

4. Conclusion

This study shows that TikTok has a dominant effect in shaping students' sexual identity and orientation, with a significant correlation ($r = 0.583$, $p < 0.01$). Meanwhile, Islamic education also plays a role in this process, albeit with a smaller effect ($r = 0.299$, $p < 0.01$). Regression analysis reveals that 46% of the variability in students' sexual identity and orientation formation is explained by TikTok usage intensity and Islamic education ($R^2 = 0.460$). However, no direct relationship was found between TikTok consumption and the internalization of Islamic education values ($r = -0.079$, $p = 0.214$), indicating that both factors can develop independently. Therefore, there is a need for more adaptive and innovative Islamic education strategies to address the effect of social media in shaping students' identity in the digital era.

TikTok has a dominant effect on shaping students' sexual identity and orientation, which means that Islamic education in universities needs to be more adaptive to social changes in the digital era. Strategies that can be implemented include (1) developing Islamic values-based digital literacy programs; (2) fostering a critical, discussion-based curriculum; (3) utilizing social media as a tool for digital da'wah; (4) optimizing inclusive campus religious programs eg. collaboration with Muslim influencers; and (5) conducting continuous evaluation and adaptation of religious education strategies. These strategies are designed not only to protect but also to nurture students' digital fitrah, their innate moral compass, amidst the influence of digital media. Additionally, integrating contemporary fatwas and ulama perspectives can strengthen the alignment of Islamic values with students' digital experiences.

However, this research has several limitations. First, it focuses on qualitative data from a limited number of students, which may not fully represent the diverse experiences across universities. Second, while comparative insights from other countries offer valuable lessons, contextual differences may limit direct applicability. Future research should adopt mixed-methods approaches, broaden participant demographics, and conduct longitudinal studies to evaluate the lasting effects of integrated digital-Islamic education on identity formation.

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