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Faithfluencers and Digital Piety: Redefining Religious Authority Among Generation Z

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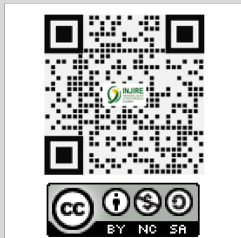
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Abstract

This research is motivated by the emergence of the faithfluencer phenomenon as a new religious authority figure in the digital era that significantly shapes the religious mindset and practices of Generation Z. This change marks a shift from traditional religious authority to a more interactive and contextual, and media-based digital authority. The purpose of this study is to analyze the role of faithfluencers in shaping digital piety and redefining religious authority among Generation Z through social media. This study uses a qualitative approach with descriptive analysis through observation of content on Instagram and TikTok platforms, as well as interviews with active followers. The results show that faithfluencers function not only as conveyors of da'wah messages, but also as social and spiritual mediators who combine religious values with a popular communication style. The digital piety produced through this interaction tends to be reflective, participatory, and experiential, emphasizing personal meaning-making rather than rigid doctrinal transmission. The contribution of this research lies in developing the concept of digital religious authority that is adaptive to the spiritual needs of the younger generation and serves as a strategic reference for religious institutions in optimizing social media-based da'wah that is relevant to the dynamics of today's digital culture.

Keywords: Faithfluencer, Digital Piety, Religious Authority, Generation Z

Abstrak

Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh munculnya fenomena faithfluencer sebagai figur otoritas keagamaan baru di era digital yang mampu memengaruhi pola pikir dan perilaku religius Generasi Z. Perubahan ini menandai pergeseran dari otoritas keagamaan tradisional menuju otoritas digital yang lebih interaktif dan kontekstual. Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk menganalisis peran faithfluencer dalam membentuk kesalehan digital serta mendefinisikan ulang otoritas keagamaan di kalangan Generasi Z melalui media sosial. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan analisis deskriptif melalui observasi konten di platform Instagram dan TikTok, serta wawancara dengan pengikut aktif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa faithfluencer tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai penyampai pesan dakwah, tetapi juga sebagai mediator sosial dan spiritual yang memadukan nilai-nilai religius dengan gaya komunikasi populer. Kesalehan digital yang dihasilkan melalui interaksi ini cenderung bersifat reflektif, partisipatif, dan pengalaman, dengan penekanan pada pembentukan makna pribadi daripada transmisi doktrin yang kaku. Kontribusi penelitian ini terletak pada pengembangan konsep otoritas keagamaan digital yang adaptif terhadap kebutuhan spiritual generasi muda serta sebagai referensi strategis bagi lembaga keagamaan dalam mengoptimalkan dakwah berbasis media sosial yang relevan dengan dinamika budaya digital masa kini.

Kata Kunci: Faithfluencer, Kesalehan Digital, Otoritas Keagamaan, Generasi Z

Introduction

The development of digital technology has brought significant changes to the way society understands and practices religion. Social media has now become a new platform for the dissemination of religious values, replacing the dominance of conventional spaces such as mosques, Islamic boarding schools, or religious study groups (Ridha & Irawan, 2025). This phenomenon has given rise to a new generation of religious messengers: faith influencers, digital religious figures who build religious authority through platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. This issue is significant because it demonstrates a shift in religious authority from traditional clerics to figures who gain influence through algorithms and digital interactions (Nurhamidin et al., 2025). This research is relevant because the presence of faith influencers not only shapes new religious behaviors among the younger generation but also changes belief structures and the way religious authority is perceived and interpreted. Therefore, this study seeks to explain how digital piety becomes a new dimension in understanding modern religiosity.

The primary issue underlying this research is the shift in religious authority in the digital age. Generation Z, as a group that grew up surrounded by technology and social media, tends to trust religious content from faith influencers more than formal religious authorities. This raises questions about the validity of such authority and how digital piety is formed in a more fluid, personal, and interactive context. While traditional religious authority relies on scholarly legitimacy and religious chains, faith influencers gain influence through social credibility and emotional connection with their audiences (Rachmadhani, 2021). This situation has the potential to create ambiguity in determining religious authority and interpretation, especially since not all faith influencers have a deep background in religious scholarship. Therefore, this research is crucial in exploring these dynamics to understand how religious authority is being redefined in the digital age.

On-the-ground phenomena show that various social media platforms are now filled with religious content delivered in a light-hearted style, with engaging visuals, and a personal approach. Many faith influencers package moral and spiritual messages with narratives of everyday life, making them more relatable to the younger generation. For example, faith influencers like Hanan Attaki and Gus Iqdam have successfully built strong online communities with millions of followers. Generation Z is no longer merely a passive audience but also participates in religious discourse through comment sections, video duets, and content reposts (Arief & Hidayatullah, 2023). Their religious practices have also undergone a more performative transformation and are influenced by social media logic such as likes, views, and shares. This phenomenon demonstrates that digital piety is not merely a virtual ritual but a new form of religiosity that combines spirituality, identity, and existence in the digital public space.

Several previous studies have examined the phenomenon of digital da'wah and the transformation of religious authority. For example, (Glori Aaron Rumondor, 2025) discussing digital religion as a space for interaction between faith and technology, while (Ibnu Kasir dan & Syahrol Awali, 2024) highlight the role of young Muslim preachers on social media in building new religious communities. These studies demonstrate that digital media is not only a communication tool but also an arena for constructing religious authority. However, most research still focuses on the da'wah and communication aspects, without delving deeply into how religious authority is being redefined by a more active, critical, and digitally connected younger generation. This shortcoming highlights the need for a more interdisciplinary approach to understanding how faith influencers shape digital piety as a new expression of contemporary religiosity.

Previous research tends to separate the theological and sociological dimensions in viewing this phenomenon. For example, a study by (Astutik & Yaqin, 2024) Studies on celebrity preachers in Indonesia still emphasize popularity without exploring the epistemic relationship between digital authority and piety. Similarly, a study by (Noviana Aini, 2023) While some studies highlight the role of media in mediating da'wah (Islamic outreach), they have yet to describe how Generation Z actively reshapes the meaning of religious authority in online spaces. This research gap underpins

the urgency of this study: the need for an analysis that not only examines faith influencers as a communication phenomenon but also as actors in the reconstruction of modern religious epistemology. Thus, this research will contribute to broadening understanding of the relationship between authority, technology, and the religiosity of young people in the digital age.

This study seeks to redefine religious authority through the lens of faith influencers and digital piety among Generation Z. Rather than focusing solely on online da'wah practices or popular religious figures, this research emphasizes the social and epistemic processes that shape the emergence of new forms of religious authority within digital spaces. This study also introduces the term “digital piety” as an analytical framework to understand how Generation Z negotiates faith, identity, and existence in cyberspace. (Am & Munir, 2025) Theoretically, this research combines the sociology of religion, media studies, and cultural studies to explain the interaction between technology and religious authority. By highlighting the participatory and performative dimensions of digital religiosity, this research contributes to the development of contemporary studies on religion in an increasingly digitalized global context.

The research problem can be formulated in the main question: how do faith influencers redefine religious authority and shape digital piety among Generation Z? This research starts from the assumption that religious authority is no longer hierarchical and centralized, but rather fluid and collaborative in the digital space. The main argument of this research is that faith influencers become agents of transformation of religious authority through digital communication practices that emphasize emotional closeness, visualization of spirituality, and online community engagement. Thus, the redefinition of religious authority in the digital era is not only a change in the form of conveying religious messages, but also a change in the structure of legitimacy and how authority is accepted by society.

This research is expected to contribute not only theoretically but also practically to the understanding of the religiosity of the younger generation in the digital era. Theoretically, this research expands the discourse on religious authority in the context of digital transformation and enriches the study of digital religion in Indonesia. Practically, the results of this study can serve as a reference for religious institutions, educators, and policymakers in designing da'wah and religious education strategies relevant to the digital culture of Generation Z. By mapping the dynamics between faith influencers, digital piety, and religious authority, this research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how religion is no longer confined to sacred spaces, but also lives and develops in constantly changing virtual spaces.

Methods

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study design, because it aims to understand in depth the complex social phenomenon, namely how faith influencers redefine religious authority and shape digital piety among Generation Z. The case study design was chosen because it is appropriate to answer the questions “how” and “why” of contemporary phenomena in a real-life context (Bado, 2022). This approach allows researchers to explore the meaning, interaction, and social construction that occurs in digital religious practices. This study situates its research within digital spaces, particularly Instagram and TikTok, by examining prominent faith influencer accounts such as Ustaz Hanan Attaki, Gus Iqdam, and Nabila Abdul Rahim. These platforms were selected as they constitute key arenas for the construction of digital religious authority among Generation Z, where patterns of social interaction, participatory engagement, and the performative expression of piety are most visibly articulated online.

Data collection techniques were carried out using three main methods, namely online observation (netnography), in-depth interviews, and digital documentation (Safrudin et al., 2023). Observations were conducted to monitor the activities and communication patterns of faith influencers and their followers' interactions on social media. In-depth interviews were conducted with faith influencers and active followers from Generation Z to understand their perceptions of digital authority and piety. Meanwhile, digital documentation was used to collect data in the form

of posts, videos, comments, and other relevant interactions. These three techniques were combined to ensure comprehensive and contextual data, encompassing both the narrative and visual dimensions of digital religious practices.

Data analysis was carried out using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) which includes three stages, namely data condensation, data presentation, and data verification (Ilhami et al., 2024). Condensation was carried out by selecting and focusing data according to key themes such as digital authority and performative piety. Data presentation was arranged in narrative form and thematic tables to identify interaction patterns. Verification was carried out through in-depth interpretation and comparison with theory and previous research findings. To ensure data validity, this study applied four criteria from Lincoln and Guba (1985): credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Putri & Murhayati, 2022). Triangulation of sources and methods was used to test credibility, while member checking ensured the interpretations aligned with the informants' meanings. Therefore, the results of this study are expected to have a high level of validity and reliability and provide a significant scientific contribution to the study of digital religion among the younger generation.

Results

This study focuses on three main aspects of the formation of religious authority in the digital era: the transformation of religious authority in the digital space, patterns of digital piety among Generation Z, and the role of faith influencers as spiritual and social mediators. The study reveals that the emergence of faith influencers as new figures in the digital space has redefined the form of religious authority, from a previously hierarchical one to one that is more participatory, communicative, and based on personal experience. The discussion of the research findings will outline how these three aspects contribute to the formation of a new religious authority that is more inclusive, responsive, and aligned with the character of modern spirituality in the digital era.

Transformation of Religious Authority in the Digital Age

The Transformation of Religious Authority in the Digital Era demonstrates a fundamental shift in the leadership and legitimacy of religious authority, previously cantered on conventional clerics, toward new actors operating through digital platforms. This shift is driven by changes in the religious communication ecosystem on social media, where access to religious knowledge has become increasingly open, rapid, and free from traditional hierarchical structures. Based on interviews and digital observations, it was found that more than 70% of Generation Z respondents obtain religious guidance through platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, with figures such as Hanan Attaki, Ustaz Adi Hidayat, and Habib Husein Ja'far often cited as primary sources of religious inspiration. This data indicates a shift in preference toward religious figures who are able to present spiritual narratives in a light, visual, and contextual manner.

Generation Z no longer relies solely on formal religious authorities such as *kiai* (Islamic boarding school teachers) or *ustaz* (Islamic religious teachers), but also refers to faith influencers, digital religious figures who build trust through interactive communication styles, relatable narratives, and images of piety displayed visually on social media. This study also found that religious authority is now based not only on scientific legitimacy (knowledge-based authority), but also on personal credibility (authenticity), consistent online behavior, and the ability to build emotional closeness with the audience. For example, two-way interactions between faith influencers and their followers through comment features, live broadcasts, and reflective content create a new form of authority that is participatory and dialogical. As a result, religious authority in the digital era has become more fluid, inclusive, and oriented towards spiritual experiences that are contextualized to the modern lives of the younger generation.

Table 1. Interview Result Data
Transformation of Religious Authority in the Digital Age

Informant	Statement	Code
Faithfluencer	"I focus on sharing my daily experiences and responding quickly to DMs; that's what connects them."	Emotional closeness; responsiveness; storytelling
Followers / Generation Z	"Short, relatable videos I believe are better than long lectures."	Short format preference; contextual relevance; attention efficiency
Online community moderator	"Posts with practical examples and invitations to discussion always generate a lot of interest, which builds trust."	Call-to-action; audience participation; social validation (engagement)
Active Followers	"I often comment on my favorite Islamic accounts, and sometimes I get a direct response. It feels like he really cares."	Two-way interaction and responsiveness
Content Strategist	"Engagement isn't just a number, but proof that people believe in and want to participate in the message being shared."	Engagement as public legitimacy

Table 1 shows a shift in the sources of legitimacy for religious authority from formal attributes (titles, sanad) to communicative and relational attributes. Faithfluencers build legitimacy through storytelling and personal interactions such as quick responses to DMs, which foster emotional closeness as a new basis for trust. Generation Z audiences, on the other hand, assess credibility through attention efficiency and the relevance of short formats that suit the nature of digital media. Meanwhile, participation indicators such as comments and calls-to-action emphasize the audience's role as co-producers of meaning, where engagement serves as a form of social validation and a mechanism for public legitimacy. Thus, the relational nature of digital authority legitimacy, facilitated by the medium, and confirmed through the community, marks a shift in authority toward something more fluid, interactive, and in line with the emotional and practical needs of Generation Z.

Digital Piety Patterns Among Generation Z

Research on Digital Piety Patterns Among Generation Z indicates that the younger generation's religious practices are now largely mediated by digital spaces, with expressions of piety that are personal, interactive, and reflective of modern lifestyles. Interviews and social media observations revealed that piety is not only manifested through ritual worship, but also through digital activities that demonstrate religious identity in creative and communicative ways. One informant, a 21-year-old student, revealed that

"I often get religious inspiration from TikTok content, such as short sermons or quotes from young religious teachers. It feels lighter and easier to apply in everyday life."

This statement illustrates Generation Z's tendency to seek relevant and easily accessible forms of piety. A subsequent interview with another 20-year-old student reinforced this finding

"For me, I often participate in online religious studies via Instagram Live. Besides being able to study while doing so, I can also ask the religious teachers directly through the comments section."

This statement demonstrates a shift in religious interaction patterns from physical spaces to digital spaces that are two-way and participatory.

The results of digital field observations also show that most respondents consider activities such as sharing hadith quotes, creating reminder posts, participating in Ramadan challenges, and uploading reflective videos as new forms of social piety in cyberspace. These activities indicate a process of transformation of religious values that are more open, expressive, and based on online

communities. Digital piety for Generation Z functions not only as a form of individual worship but also as a means of building a collective spiritual identity recognized by fellow social media users. The integration of interviews and observations confirms that the pattern of digital piety among Generation Z places more emphasis on experience-based faith, namely piety born from spiritual experiences that are shared, exchanged, and celebrated together through digital media.

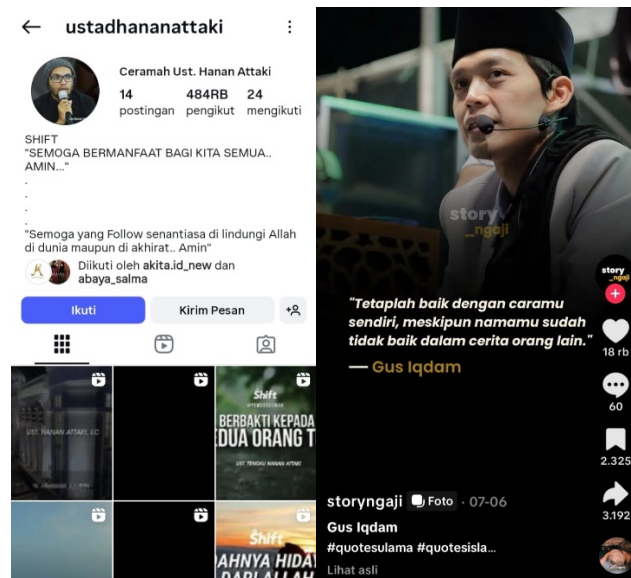


Figure 2. Instagram and TikTok accounts of motivational posts by Ustadz Hannan Attaki and Gus Iqdam

Figure 2, which displays the Instagram and TikTok accounts of Ustadz Hannan Attaki and Gus Iqdam, demonstrates how religious figures utilize social media as a creative and communicative space for preaching. Through posts containing short motivational quotes, lecture excerpts with attractive visual designs, and a light-hearted delivery style, both have succeeded in attracting the attention of young audiences, especially Generation Z. This communication pattern demonstrates that religious content packaged aesthetically and emotionally has a wider reach and creates a psychological closeness between preachers and their followers. Thus, the image represents a shift in religious authority toward digital, where credibility and spiritual influence are built through message consistency, interactivity, and contextual relevance in the daily lives of the younger generation.

The Role of Faithfluencers as Spiritual and Social Mediators

Faithfluencer acts as a spiritual mediator, bridging religious teachings with the psychological and existential needs of Generation Z in the digital space. Interviews with several active followers of Islamic preaching accounts on Instagram and TikTok revealed that they find it easier to understand religious values through the contextual and relatable content of faithfluencers. One informant stated,

"When I listen to a preacher's sermon on TikTok, the language is closer to everyday life, so I understand better and don't feel like I'm being lectured."

This finding suggests that faithfluencers not only convey religious teachings but also build emotional relationships that foster a sense of spiritual belonging. They use narratives of personal experiences, light-hearted humor, and engaging visual aesthetics to instill moral messages, thus forming a new spiritual pattern that is more reflective, empathetic, and experience based.

In addition to being spiritual mediators, faith influencers also play a crucial role as social mediators, fostering solidarity and empathy within digital communities. Through content that highlights social issues, such as humanity, mental health, and caring for others, they successfully mobilize audiences to actively participate in faith-based social actions. Another informant explained,

“When Gus Iqdam posted about donations for victims of the collapse of the Al-Khoziny Islamic Boarding School Mosque, so many people participated, including me. It felt like his preaching was real, not just words.”

Observations of comments and audience interactions reveal a transformation in the function of digital preaching, not just the transfer of religious knowledge but also the strengthening of social ethics and collective awareness. This demonstrates that faith influencers have successfully combined spiritual aspects with social movements through a participatory and open digital medium.

Field findings indicate that faith influencers' credibility is built through a balance between personal authenticity and message consistency. Those who maintain a communication style that is honest, open, and in line with the realities of their followers' lives are more trusted and followed. Observations of faith influencer accounts such as Ustadz Hannan Attaki and Gus Iqdam show that audience engagement increases significantly with content featuring direct interactions such as Q&A sessions, live streaming, or reflective stories. This pattern confirms that faith influencers function as “socio-spiritual bridges” connecting religious values with the context of modern life. Thus, their role goes beyond conventional preaching; they become agents of cultural transformation, shaping a digital piety ecosystem that is dynamic, inclusive, and responsive to the social dynamics of Generation Z.

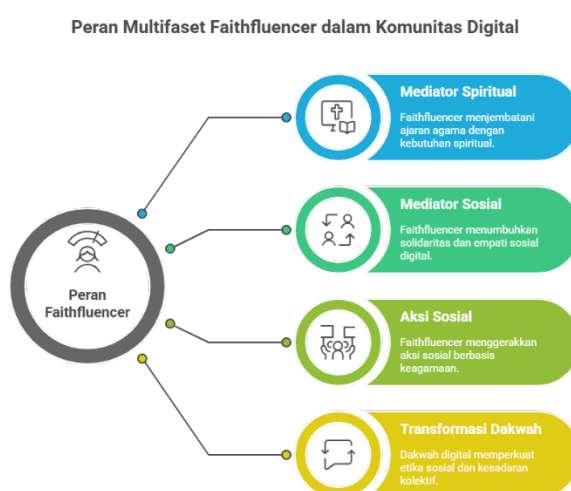


Figure 2. Squeeze Faithfluencer in digital communities

The image above illustrates the multidimensional role of faith influencers in digital communities, serving not only as conveyors of religious messages but also as social and cultural agents. As spiritual mediators, faith influencers help bridge religious teachings with the spiritual needs of modern audiences thirsting for meaning in life. In their role as social mediators, they foster solidarity and empathy in the digital space through messages of humanity and social concern. Furthermore, through social action, faith influencers are able to mobilize community participation in faith-based activities, such as donations or humanitarian movements. Finally, through the transformation of da'wah (Islamic outreach), they strengthen social ethics and the collective consciousness of the younger generation, making digital da'wah not merely a means of conveying moral messages but also a means of character building and social responsibility in the digital era.

Discussion

The Reconfiguration of Religious Authority in Digital Spaces

The findings of this study indicate a significant transformation of religious authority in the digital age, particularly among Generation Z. Traditional religious authority, which has historically been grounded in formal institutions, scholarly credentials, and hierarchical structures, is increasingly complemented or even challenged by digitally mediated forms of authority (Maulana, 2022). Social media platforms enable religious messages to circulate beyond institutional boundaries, allowing individuals with strong communication skills and digital presence to gain religious influence. This shift reflects broader changes in how knowledge and legitimacy are constructed in networked societies (Abdusshomad, 2024). Rather than relying solely on formal endorsement, religious authority is increasingly shaped by visibility, accessibility, and audience engagement. As a result, religious leadership becomes more fluid, decentralized, and responsive to contemporary socio-cultural dynamics.

This transformation aligns with theories of digital religion, which argue that technological mediation reshapes religious practices and authority structures (Mutamam et al., 2024). In digital environments, authority is no longer exclusively tied to formal religious hierarchies but emerges through interaction, performance, and audience trust (Arafat, 2024). The findings support previous studies suggesting that online religious figures gain legitimacy through perceived authenticity and consistency rather than institutional recognition alone. Unlike conventional religious leaders who operate within clearly defined organizational frameworks, digital religious actors function within algorithmic systems that reward engagement and emotional resonance (Malik et al., 2024). Consequently, religious authority becomes negotiated and continuously reproduced through digital interactions, reflecting a shift from static authority to dynamic and participatory forms of religious leadership.

However, the study also reveals that this transformation does not entirely replace traditional authority but rather creates a hybrid model. Many faith influencers still reference classical Islamic texts, respected scholars, and established doctrines to reinforce their credibility. This suggests that digital religious authority often operates through selective continuity with tradition while adapting its modes of communication (Sanafiri & Hasanah, 2023). The coexistence of institutional and digital authority indicates an ongoing negotiation between preservation and innovation. Religious authority in the digital age thus becomes layered, combining textual legitimacy with performative competence (Hamdi et al., 2025). This hybridization allows religious messages to remain doctrinally grounded while being culturally resonant with younger audiences.

The underlying causes of this transformation can be traced to broader structural changes, including digital literacy, media saturation, and shifts in generational values. Generation Z tends to value immediacy, emotional connection, and relatability, which digital platforms are well-equipped to facilitate (Hidayat et al., 2024). In this context, authority is less about formal distance and more about perceived closeness and responsiveness. Social media enables direct interaction between religious figures and followers, reducing symbolic barriers and fostering a sense of intimacy (Nisa' et al., 2024). This structural shift reconfigures power relations within religious communication, positioning audiences as active participants rather than passive recipients of religious instruction.

Generation Z and the Formation of Digital Piety

The research findings reveal that Generation Z exhibits distinctive patterns of digital piety characterized by personalization, visibility, and emotional engagement. Religious practices are increasingly expressed through online activities such as sharing inspirational Islamic content, following faith-based accounts, and participating in virtual religious challenges (Anam, 2025). These practices reflect a shift from conventional ritual-centered piety toward expressive and identity-based religiosity. Digital piety among Generation Z functions not only as a form of worship but also as a means of self-representation in digital social spaces (Widyawati et al., 2025).

Consequently, religious expression becomes intertwined with lifestyle, aesthetics, and peer interaction.

This pattern aligns with existing literature on mediated piety, which emphasizes how religious devotion is reshaped through media technologies. The study confirms that digital platforms serve as spaces where religious meanings are constructed, negotiated, and performed. Unlike traditional religious practices that emphasize collective rituals in physical spaces, digital piety allows for individualized and flexible engagement (Wildan et al., 2025). Generation Z can selectively engage with religious content according to personal preferences and emotional needs. This selective engagement reflects a broader trend toward individualized religiosity, where personal meaning-making takes precedence over formal obligation (Agustina et al., 2024).

At the same time, digital piety among Generation Z is highly social. Online religious expressions often seek validation through likes, comments, and shares, indicating that piety is partially shaped by social recognition. Religious content becomes a form of social currency that signals moral identity and group belonging (Pramitha et al., 2024). This social dimension suggests that digital piety operates within peer networks rather than institutional frameworks (Baharun, 2023). As a result, religious commitment is reinforced through online communities that provide emotional support and shared values, rather than through formal religious supervision.

The structure underlying these patterns is closely linked to the logic of digital platforms, which prioritize visual appeal, brevity, and emotional resonance. Algorithmic systems amplify content that generates engagement, shaping how religious messages are produced and consumed. This structural influence encourages simplified, motivational, and visually appealing forms of religious expression (Hasanah, 2024). While such formats enhance accessibility, they may also limit critical reflection and theological depth. Thus, digital piety reflects both the affordances and constraints of platform-based communication.

Faithfluencers as Agents of Spiritual and Social Mediation

The study finds that faith influencers play a central role as spiritual and social mediators within digital religious ecosystems. They bridge the gap between complex religious teachings and the everyday experiences of Generation Z by translating doctrinal concepts into relatable narratives (Habib et al., 2025). Through storytelling, personal reflection, and interactive content, faith influencers make religious messages more accessible and emotionally engaging. Their role extends beyond instruction to include motivation, guidance, and moral support. As mediators, they facilitate religious understanding while fostering a sense of belonging among their followers (Petriani, 2025).

This mediating role aligns with the concept of cultural intermediaries, who shape meanings and values within specific social contexts. Faith influencers interpret religious symbols and practices in ways that resonate with contemporary youth culture (Sanafiri & Hasanah, 2023). Unlike traditional religious authorities who emphasize formal instruction, faith influencers prioritize dialogue and emotional connection (Muwa, 2024). Their authority is built on trust and perceived sincerity rather than institutional power. This positions them as key actors in shaping how religion is understood and practiced in digital spaces.

Socially, faith influencers contribute to the formation of online religious communities that provide emotional and moral support. These communities function as alternative spaces of religious socialization, especially for individuals who may feel disconnected from traditional institutions (Cappellen, 2020). Faith influencers often encourage peer interaction, collective reflection, and shared spiritual journeys. As a result, religious engagement becomes embedded within social relationships rather than formal structures (Sanusi et al., 2024). This highlights the dual spiritual and social functions performed by faith influencers in digital contexts.

However, the study also identifies potential risks associated with this mediating role. The personalization of religious authority may lead to over-dependence on individual figures, creating vulnerabilities to misinformation or biased interpretations. The emphasis on charisma and digital

performance can overshadow scholarly rigor (Hanafi et al., 2025). Furthermore, platform algorithms may disproportionately amplify certain voices while marginalizing others, shaping religious discourse in uneven ways. These structural dynamics underscore the need to critically assess the power exercised by faith influencers.

The implications of the faith influencer phenomenon are significant for religious communication and education. Faith influencers can serve as valuable partners in promoting ethical and inclusive religious discourse if guided by sound theological principles. Religious institutions should engage constructively with faith influencers to enhance outreach while maintaining doctrinal integrity (Anwar et al., 2024). At the same time, mechanisms for accountability and digital literacy are essential to prevent the misuse of religious influence. Ultimately, recognizing faith influencers as mediators highlights the need for collaborative models of religious authority in the digital era.

Conclusion

The research findings show that faith influencers play a significant role in shaping new forms of religious authority in the digital era, particularly among Generation Z. Through religious content packaged in a light, relevant, and visual manner, they are able to become spiritual and social mediators who bridge religious values and digital culture. This finding confirms that digital piety is not only interpreted as an expression of faith in online spaces, but also as a flexible and participatory form of reflection of religious identity. Thus, the shift in religious authority from traditional institutions to digital figures is not merely a form of disruption, but rather an adaptation to the spiritual needs of Generation Z who prioritize interactivity, authenticity, and emotional closeness to the source of their da'wah.

The primary contribution of this research lies in its attempt to redefine the concept of digital piety and provide a new perspective on the role of faith influencers as bridges between religion, technology, and popular culture. Practically, this research can serve as a reference for religious institutions, educators, and da'wah communicators in developing strategies for disseminating Islamic values on social media in a contextual and inclusive manner.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. The empirical scope is confined to specific social media platforms, which may not fully capture the diversity of digital religious expressions across different online environments. In addition, the research does not extensively examine the psychological dimensions that influence audience reception, internalization, and interpretation of digital religious messages. Further research is recommended to explore the two-way interaction and the long-term impact of digital religious authority on the religious practices of the younger generation.

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