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Reimagining Islamic Rituals: Online Khatmil Qur'an among Muslim Youth in Digital Times

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Abstract

This study explores the transformation of religious practices among Muslim youth through the lens of Khatmil Qur'an conducted online. In response to the increasing digitization of religious life, this research examines how online Khatmil Qur'an functions not only as a ritual activity but also as a means of religious education, spiritual enrichment, and social integration. Employing the Living Qur'an framework and Talal Asad's discursive approach to religion, the study highlights how digital platforms reshape traditional Islamic rituals. Using qualitative methods, this research identifies significant differences between offline and online practices in terms of structure, experience, and meaning-making. The findings indicate that online Khatmil Qur'an is actively shaping new forms of religious engagement by integrating technology as an essential medium for spiritual expression. This integration reflects a broader trend in digital religion, where technology does not merely replace traditional methods but becomes embedded in the daily religious lives of believers. The study contributes to the growing body of scholarship on Islam and digital media by offering insights into how young Muslims reconstruct religious meaning in technologically mediated spaces.

Keywords: Digital religion; Discursive tradition, Muslim youth; Social transformation

INTRODUCTION

With the advancement of technology, the recitation of the Qur'an as a religious practice has undergone significant transformation (SuKarman, 2021). In this context, Muslim youth in Indonesia have adopted this practice as a new norm since the COVID-19 pandemic. This phenomenon has significantly altered the ways Muslims worship, reshaping both the perception and enactment of religious rituals (Campbell & Løvheim, 2011). This study focuses on how online Qur'anic recitation gatherings influence religious experience and social transformation among Muslim youth (Ellyda & Muna, 2021), particularly within the framework of the Living Qur'an Study, a concept that emphasizes the Qur'an's lived meaning in daily life (Ellyda & Muna, 2021).

Investigating the impact of virtual Qur'anic recitation gatherings is essential to better understand how religious habits evolve in response to modern technological advances (O'Brien, 2020). Online Qur'anic gatherings have the potential to significantly influence the social, cultural, and religious dimensions of community life. This research aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of this phenomenon in order to enhance our knowledge of how religion adapts within increasingly digitally connected societies.

Studies on Qur'anic completion (*khatam al-Qur'an*) can generally be categorized into four major themes. First, *khatam al-Qur'an* is a subject of educational studies in Islamic learning contexts. For instance, research conducted at Salafiyah Riyadul Awamil in Serang reveals that *khatam al-Qur'an* is not only a religious ritual but also an essential part of cultivating love for the Qur'an (Junhaya, 2021). This analysis provides insight into how *khatam* practices may nurture devotion to the Qur'an and enhance participation in religious life.

The second theme concerns the role of *khotmil Qur'an* in motivating students to learn Qur'anic recitation. A study at Darul Faizin Assalafiyah in Mojowarno, Jombang, found that this activity—though considered extracurricular—enhanced student engagement with the Qur'an. The study emphasizes a structured two-session weekly schedule aimed at improving recitation quality and reinforcing religious commitment (Mustofa, 2019).

The third theme focuses on the social function of *khotmil Qur'an* gatherings in rural communities. In Jenangan, Ponorogo, *khotmil Qur'an* forums serve as catalysts for social

integration. Rituals such as prayer, dhikr, Qur'anic recitation, and *tawassul* strengthen communal ties in these settings. The findings contribute to our understanding of religion's role in rural societal dynamics (Ikhwan & Ahrori, 2020).

Lastly, some studies explore participants' beliefs regarding the spiritual essence of *khatmil al-Qur'an*, including food, water, and associated blessings. Wahyudi's study in the Jantiko Mantab al-Qur'an community in East Lampung illustrates how subjective, symbolic, and objective realities interact in the practice of collecting "blessed water" (*banyu barokah*) during *khatmil*, applying the theoretical lens of Berger and Luckmann (Wahyudi, 2020).

Building on this typology, the current study adopts Talal Asad's discursive approach to analyze online *khatmil Qur'an* among Muslim youth, offering a unique perspective on religious behavior in the digital age. It first investigates how participants engage and construct religious meaning through online interactions. Discursive analysis in Asad's framework reveals how religious discourse is maintained or reshaped in digital spaces, where online dynamics significantly influence norms and interpretations. This digital setting contrasts sharply with earlier studies focused on offline *khatmil* practices in physical contexts.

A key distinction lies in how digital dynamics affect religious traditions. Technology and digital platforms facilitate transformations in *khatmil* practices that may rapidly reshape religious discursive traditions (Campbell & Tsuria, 2021). Through Asad's discursive lens, this study demonstrates how digital religiosity involves both continuity and reconfiguration of tradition, allowing more flexibility for interpretation and exchange. This stands in contrast to previous research that emphasized the stability of religious discourse in offline settings. By applying Talal Asad's discursive approach, this research deepens our understanding of variation in online *khatmil* practices, recognizing how digital space, context, and identity collectively shape contemporary religious life.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research methodology employed to examine the impact of online Khatmil Qur'an gatherings among Muslim youth adopts a qualitative design, comprising two primary components: online interviews and participatory observation (Ciesielska, 2018). The interview method was the initial approach, targeting group leaders and participating members involved

in the online Khatmil Qur'an activities. The interview questions were constructed with reference to findings from prior research, particularly emphasizing the effectiveness of qualitative approaches in uncovering in-depth understandings of individual religious experiences.

The second approach involved participatory observation, in which the researcher directly engaged in the online Khatmil Qur'an gatherings. This method draws inspiration from Geertz's interpretive tradition, which highlights the value of participant observation (Stausberg & Engler, 2014) in exploring the evolving nature of religious practices. This strategy enabled the researcher to gain contextual and real-time insights into group interactions, social dynamics, and potential transformations occurring within the framework of online religious gatherings.

The integration of both methods aimed to yield a holistic and nuanced understanding of the phenomenon, capturing the richness of qualitative perspectives. By employing this dual-method approach, the research seeks to articulate the meanings and implications of religious practices in digital contexts, in alignment with Talal Asad's discursive theoretical framework, which emphasizes the role of interpretation and representation in the construction of religious realities.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The Transformation of Islamic Worship Practices in the Digital Age

The transformation of religious practices has become an increasingly significant phenomenon in today's rapidly evolving digital era (Rifat, 2023). Investigating how technology has influenced Muslim modes of worship is essential to understanding how religious practices have shifted within contemporary societies. This context provides a foundation for analyzing significant changes in worship methods and the ways in which Muslims have adapted to modern advancements. Various aspects of religious life today reflect a broader shift in worship practices influenced by digital technology (Grant, 2019). The use of digital devices—such as smartphones and specialized religious applications—has reshaped the ways in which Muslims access the Qur'anic text, religious information, and daily worship guidance. This technological shift has

significantly affected new patterns of understanding, interpreting, and practicing Islam (Campbell & Tsuria, 2021).

The growing trend of conducting religious activities online, such as virtual Qur'anic recitations and religious lectures, exemplifies how technological advancement has altered religious engagement (Solahudin & Fakhruroji, 2020). It reflects how Muslims are adapting to modern life, utilizing technology as a medium for sustaining religious practices and fostering spiritual interaction. Bunt (2018) notes that the emergence of Islamic cyberspace has created new arenas for learning, preaching, and community-building beyond traditional geographical boundaries.

Consequently, understanding how technology influences the religious experiences of individuals and communities is vital for interpreting the evolving dynamics of worship. Muslim adaptation to digital technologies not only alters worship methods but also shapes how religious doctrines are perceived and internalized. As Campbell (2012) explains, the use of digital media does not merely replicate traditional rituals in a new format; rather, it generates new ritual forms distinctive to virtual environments. Digital media and internet platforms facilitate diverse interpretations and practices of Islam, thus reshaping religious understanding.

In confronting these transformations, it is crucial to recognize that Muslim adaptation to digital technology is not only a practical change but also a shift in how religious identity and spirituality are constructed. As Lorne (2020) highlights, religious individuals shape their spiritual identities through symbolically mediated interactions with technology, turning worship experiences into reflective digital processes. Therefore, a comprehensive understanding of the shifting landscape of Islamic worship practices in the digital age is essential for formulating relevant religious approaches in increasingly digitally connected societies.

Online Khatmil Qur'an: Practice and Religious Discourse among Muslim Youth

The Online Khatmil Qur'an community is composed of Muslim youth aged between 17 and 30. Most members are undergraduate and postgraduate students from various academic disciplines, both religious and secular. While participants come from different regions of Indonesia, the majority are based in Java. This digital religious practice is carried out in a structured and scheduled manner on a daily basis. Each member is assigned a specific *juz'*

(section) of the Qur'an, listed in a dedicated WhatsApp group. Upon completing their assigned reading, members mark their participation by writing *kholas* on the list. On Saturday evenings, the group gathers via Google Meet to perform the closing *khatmil Qur'an* prayer led by a designated coordinator. This ritual closure on Saturday nights illustrates the evolving nature of religious discourse in the digital age. The integration of digital platforms into religious rituals signals a transformation in how Muslims engage with Islamic teachings. This aligns with Talal Asad's discursive approach, which emphasizes the social and cultural construction of religion through interpretation and representation.

The Online Khatmil Qur'an practice is not merely a ritualistic preservation of Qur'anic recitation; it also serves as a spiritual refuge. The foundational Hadiths associated with *khatmil Qur'an* emphasize the notions of divine blessing (*barakah*) and mercy that are believed to be embedded in the act. This reflects how Muslims construct and internalize the significance and spiritual benefits of the *khatmil Qur'an* within their religious discourse. The regularity of the practice reinforces dynamic religious values and understandings among participants. The virtues associated with completing the Qur'an—both spiritual and communal—demonstrate how norms are cultivated through devotional acts. The belief in the blessings and sacredness of the *khatmil Qur'an* becomes an integral part of religious discourse, shaping individual religious perceptions and practices. Understanding the importance of this practice in everyday Muslim life underscores how Islamic teachings are continually reconstructed through social interaction and devotional engagement. These observations resonate with Talal Asad's discursive theory, which sees religious practices such as the *Online Khatmil Qur'an* not merely as rituals, but as processes of meaning-making, influenced by interpretation, values, and the socio-cultural norms of non-Arab Muslim communities.

The interpretation and practice of the Online *Khatmil Qur'an* among Muslim youth reflect the sacrality of the Qur'an as an inseparable element of Islamic doctrine. In the Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah tradition, the Qur'an is regarded as a holy and preserved divine revelation. Whether practiced offline or online, *khatmil Qur'an* is viewed as a means of drawing closer to God, emulating divine teachings, and seeking spiritual blessings. The act of reading the Qur'an in full, including through digital means, is aimed at both understanding and living by its message in daily life. This aligns with the views of young Muslims who stress the importance of applying religious teachings in accordance with the guidance of the Qur'an. From the perspective of

Qur'anic sanctity, the routine of *khatmah* is perceived as a form of reverence and devotion to divine revelation. Completing a *khatmah* brings about spiritual benefits such as inner peace and a deeper connection with God. This understanding aligns with Islamic teachings that place the Qur'an at the center of spiritual and moral life (Afrouz, 2019).

The core Hadiths related to *khatmil Qur'an*—which describe it as “a complete and blessed favor from Allah”—reinforce the belief that this practice brings divine grace and mercy. Such perspectives are consistent with the views of young Muslims who regard the Qur'an as sacred, as a source of knowledge, guidance, and worship. The exalted status of the Qur'an as a perfect and blessed revelation affirms its centrality and sanctity in Islamic tradition. These convictions reflect the belief that the Qur'an must be honored, preserved, and practiced as the ultimate guide in life. Thus, the Online *Khatmil Qur'an* practice can be seen not only as a form of devotion but also as an effort to comprehend and uphold the sanctity of the Qur'an (Bahruddin, 2019). This reverence is reflected in their worship routines, from regular *khatmah* recitations to the internalization of the values and life guidance embedded in the Qur'anic message.

Discursive Analysis: Technology, Religious Authority, and the Construction of Piety

The transformation of religious practices in the age of social media is closely intertwined with the dynamics of religious discourse shaped by the development of communication technologies. In the context of *Khatmil Qur'an Online* among Muslim youth, religious practices are not only technically mediated but also reconstruct the relationship between technology, religious authority, and the concept of piety. This section employs Talal Asad's discursive approach to explain how online religious practices are outcomes of social, historical, and political processes involving the interpretation and regulation of religious meanings (Asad, 2009).

Technology as a Mediator of Religious Discourse

Within Asad's framework, religion is not seen as a fixed or closed entity, but as a construct shaped by practices, power relations, and socio-cultural contexts. The use of technology by Muslim youth in *Khatmil Qur'an* practices is not merely instrumental, but has become an integral part of the religious act itself. Digital platforms such as WhatsApp, Google Meet, and Qur'an apps serve as spaces where rituals are performed, religious norms are

negotiated, and spiritual communities are collectively and virtually constructed (Campbell, 2012; Echchaibi, 2013).

Technology here functions as a discursive agent, opening up new spaces for the articulation of religious values, norms, and authority. This transformation does not simply provide alternative methods of performing worship, but also reshapes the way piety is understood and practiced beyond traditional religious institutions.

From Media Shift to Religious Transformation

The practice of Khatmil Qur'an Online serves as a tangible example of religious transformation within the framework of digital religion. It is not merely a substitution of space or medium, but a deeper change in how Muslims engage with religious texts and rituals through digital technologies. This resonates with the concept of digital religion, understood as the integration of religious values and media practices into one hybrid domain (Campbell, 2022). Online platforms, beyond their practicality in overcoming geographic and temporal barriers, offer sacred spaces that are disembedded from physical locations, allowing for new forms of spiritual intimacy (Echchaibi, 2011).

More than a logistical solution, this practice embodies a new performative mode of religious identity. Engagement in digital rituals such as Khatmil Qur'an becomes an expression of dynamic and participatory Muslim identity (Grieve, 2013). This is not simply about digitizing rituals, but about co-creating new collective religious authority through active participation, interpersonal connection, and the shared construction of spiritual meanings within digital networks.

In this light, Khatmil Qur'an Online among young Muslims represents a shift not only in the media of religious expression but also in the modes of worship and community formation. Its successful integration of technology into devotional life demonstrates that digital religion is not a mere replacement of traditional methods, but a transformation of how religious life is conceptualized, experienced, and sustained in an increasingly digital world.

Authority Relations: Religious Teachers, Group Admins, and Digital Legitimacy

A key aspect of online religious discourse is the emergence of new configurations of religious authority. In *Khatmil Qur'an Online* groups, authority is not solely held by traditional religious scholars (*ustadz*), but also by group administrators and activity coordinators. These figures are responsible for scheduling recitations, sending religious reminders, and leading collective prayers. Their roles indicate a shift from conventional authority to digital authority—grounded in community trust, technological competence, and consistent participation (Bunt, 2018; Peterson, 2020).

This reflects how online religious discourse tends to operate less hierarchically compared to formal institutions, and instead privileges horizontal, participatory, and flexible interactions. However, legitimacy is still sustained through reference to authoritative sources such as Hadith, the Qur'an, and *fiqh* tradition, revealing efforts to maintain continuity with normative Islamic frameworks.

The Social Construction of Religious Practice and Adaptation in Digital Spaces

First, the daily implementation of *Khatmil Qur'an Online*, especially the structured Saturday-night recitation, illustrates the presence of shared rules and norms that govern this religious activity. Instructions from the group admin and the use of the *kholas* marker as an indicator of completed recitations point to the ritualization and codification of digital religious behavior. This highlights how religious actions are shaped not only by individual intent but also by prevailing social and cultural norms.

Second, a statement from Nia, one of the participants, reveals that her motivation for joining the *Khatmil Qur'an* group lies in achieving inner peace. This offers insight into how individuals construct personal meaning from religious practice—not only through its ritual dimension but also via emotional and spiritual experiences. This aligns with the discursive approach that underscores meaning-making and interpretative processes within specific social contexts.

Third, the foundational Hadiths and Qur'anic verses related to *khatmah*, particularly Surah Al-An'am verse 92, emphasize the Qur'an as a blessed book revealed by Allah. In this context, the religious authority of sacred texts plays a central role in legitimizing the practice. Belief in the divine blessing and mercy derived from the *khatmil Qur'an* is internalized as a

normative religious value, further reinforcing the construction of piety as both a ritual and moral endeavor.

Fourth, participants' reflections on gathering in *majelis taklim* and engaging in collective religious learning with pious individuals illustrate how social interaction and communal religious experiences shape both religious practices and understanding. From Talal Asad's discursive perspective, these gatherings represent evolving socio-cultural constructions of religion, where meanings are negotiated and ritual practices are recontextualized within new communal settings.

Fifth, the emphasis on the merits of reading the Qur'an—particularly among young Muslims—highlights how religious values and norms are actively constructed within contemporary contexts. The belief in intercessory rewards (*syafaat*) for Qur'anic recitation reflects an interpretation of *barakah* (divine blessing) associated with *Khatmil Qur'an* and is indicative of a communal hermeneutic framework that shapes religious meaning-making. Through this comprehensive discursive analysis, *Khatmil Qur'an Online* emerges as a practice embedded within ongoing negotiations of religious discourse. This negotiation involves the interplay between religious norms, scriptural interpretation, and sociocultural change, all of which coalesce to shape how Muslims interpret and enact their faith in the digital age (Peterson, 2020).

Discursive Complexity and Digital Worship Practices

Within Talal Asad's theoretical lens, the *Khatmil Qur'an Online* practice among Muslim youth can be read as a reflection of the complex formation and reproduction of religious discourse in contemporary society. A coordinator of the *Khatmil Qur'an* program among youth emphasized that this practice serves two primary purposes: as a form of worship through Qur'anic recitation and as an effort to create communal religious space for members dispersed across vast geographical distances. This illustrates how ritual becomes not only a spiritual obligation but also a means of sustaining social and emotional connectedness.

The significance of ritual procedures and religious propriety in *Khatmil Qur'an Online* is further underlined by participants like Hana, who emphasized the obligation of performing *wudhu* before recitation. This understanding, reinforced by religious teachers, reveals how

traditional norms continue to inform and structure digital practices. However, the flexibility shown in cases such as menstruation—where a female participant’s recitation quota is delegated to a family member—demonstrates adaptive strategies in religious practice. This suggests a responsiveness to individual conditions while maintaining ritual integrity (Jubba, 2021).

The decision to adopt digital Qur’anic recitation as an alternative to in-person gatherings reflects not only religious devotion but also strategic adaptation to socio-geographical constraints. From a discursive standpoint, this adaptation signifies a dynamic reconfiguration of religious values and practices, accommodating technological advancement and social realities. In this light, digital religious participation represents an evolving modality in the manifestation of Islamic piety.

Ritual Norms and Flexible Embodiment of Piety

One of the emergent products of discursive dynamics in online religious spaces is a performative and socially-oriented form of piety. In this context, piety is not measured solely by religious knowledge or formal ritual performance, but also by the consistency of completing daily *juz’* recitations, responsiveness in group communication, and active engagement in *khatmah* sessions. Such practices indicate that piety is not only a personal expression but also a collective construction shaped by digital interaction (Grieve, 2013; Campbell & Tsuria, 2021).

Active participation in online religious activities fosters a new identity: the “digital Muslim,” who cultivates both vertical relationships with God and horizontal solidarity with fellow believers through digital networks. Within this framework, the practice of *Khatmil Qur’an Online* does not merely replicate traditional rituals in new media, but also redefines the meaning of piety in accordance with the digital life-world of contemporary Muslim youth.

Ritual elements remain central in digital Qur’anic recitation. Nia’s emphasis on performing *wudhu* before reciting the Qur’an signals a conscious adherence to normative religious codes. Religious teachers reinforce such views, framing ritual purity as an essential component of Qur’anic engagement. Flexibility in response to individual circumstances—such as menstruation—underscores how religious norms can be reinterpreted in light of situational demands. This adaptability points to a living religious discourse capable of responding to both doctrinal integrity and personal experience.

The implementation of *Khatmil Qur'an Online* as an alternative to physical *pengajian* (religious study groups) highlights how religious communities leverage digital tools to overcome spatial limitations and maintain religious solidarity. From a discursive perspective, such practices reflect how religious cultures evolve through their interaction with technology and social transformation. Technology here functions not merely as a tool, but as a medium enabling Muslims to sustain and reimagine their religious commitments in novel forms. This dynamic interaction between tradition and innovation exemplifies the discursive production of religious meaning in contemporary Muslim life (Heraningtyas, 2020).

Benefits and Challenges

The practice of *Khatmil Qur'an* conducted online by Muslim youth represents a significant transformation of religious life in the digital era. This phenomenon illustrates how Muslims adapt to technological advancements to engage in devotional acts—particularly in collectively reading and completing the Qur'an through digital platforms. Within this practice, technology plays a central role, signifying a paradigm shift in how worship is enacted. Such transformation is a response to the growing demands of a digital society, in which accessibility and flexibility are critical to sustaining religious observance. This also reflects the dynamic nature of religious culture, where traditional values become integrated with technological developments (Campbell, 2012; Campbell & Tsuria, 2021).

One notable benefit of online *Khatmil Qur'an* practices is increased accessibility. Muslim youth can engage in religious rituals without being constrained by geographic or temporal limitations. This creates opportunities for individuals with physical limitations or demanding schedules to remain actively involved in religious activities. As Bunt (2018) notes, digital spaces in Islam open pathways for more inclusive participation, particularly for groups previously marginalized or less engaged in religious communities. The ritual structure and procedural aspects of these practices are also preserved, as reflected in the maintained requirement of *wudhu* (ablution) before reciting the Qur'an. This norm, emphasized by religious teachers, indicates the continued relevance of Islamic rituals even in digital contexts. In specific circumstances—such as menstruation—the norms are adapted, with individuals reallocating their reading portions to family members, highlighting the flexibility embedded in digital religious practice (Jubba, 2021).

However, alongside these benefits, online *Khatmil Qur'an* practices also encounter a number of challenges. One key concern involves maintaining spiritual quality and ritual integrity within a digital environment. Emphasis on ritual elements, such as *wudhu*, demonstrates efforts to uphold religious authenticity in virtual settings. Nonetheless, as Campbell and Lövheim (2011) argue, digital religious practices are susceptible to *mediatization*, wherein spiritual experiences risk being reduced to media-mediated interactions, lacking the embodied presence and shared physical space characteristic of traditional gatherings.

Another challenge lies in the limited physical and social interaction afforded by virtual meetings. While technology enables long-distance solidarity, the absence of face-to-face encounters may reduce the depth of religious experience and pose risks of fragmentation in interpretation and understanding. This resonates with Echchaibi's (2013) observation that digital religion generates alternative spaces that are flexible but also vulnerable to the decontextualization of values. Recognizing both the benefits and challenges, online *Khatmil Qur'an* among Muslim youth should not be viewed merely as a religious ritual, but rather as the outcome of a complex interplay between customary values, technological advancement, and sociocultural adaptation. In academic terms, this underscores the importance of understanding religious evolution in the digital age, where technology functions not only as a tool but also as a shaping force in Muslim piety and practice.

CONCLUSION

The practice of online *Khatmil Qur'an* offers temporal flexibility, allowing individuals to participate according to their personal schedules and convenience. Beyond accessibility, it reflects a broader attempt to maintain religious solidarity across vast territorial distances. The use of digital technologies as a medium for religious gathering enables participants to remain connected and preserve communal bonds despite physical separation. This is particularly significant in sustaining social and spiritual cohesion in a digitally mediated world.

At the same time, such transformations prompt important questions regarding the depth of individual religious experience. Does participating in online Qur'anic recitation yield the same spiritual resonance as engaging in a physical *majelis taklim* (religious study group)? This question invites further inquiry into how digital environments affect the meaning and quality of religious

engagement. Overall, online *Khatmil Qur'an* among Muslim youth illustrates a transformation in devotional practice shaped by the exigencies of the digital era. By harnessing digital technology, Muslim youth continue to participate in religious life effectively, construct inclusive religious spaces, and foster solidarity within the digital public sphere.

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