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THE IMPACT OF MEDIA ON THE RELIGIOUS IDENTITY AND MORAL VALUES OF MUSLIM YOUTH

Amna Abdul Sattar
BS Department of English, The Cosmic Degree College (For Women), University of Okara

ABSTRACT

Media has become an important part of modern society and plays a significant role in shaping the beliefs, attitudes, behaviours, and lifestyles of young people. In the contemporary digital age, Muslim youth are continuously exposed to different forms of media, including social networking platforms, television, YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, online educational resources, and digital communication technologies. These platforms provide opportunities for religious learning, cultural awareness, knowledge sharing, and communication with people from different backgrounds. However, the increasing influence of media also creates challenges for the religious identity and moral values of Muslim young people. Exposure to inappropriate content, unrealistic lifestyles, misleading religious information, materialistic thinking, and negative social influences may affect their understanding of Islamic teachings and traditional ethical principles. At the same time, digital platforms can encourage positive religious practices by providing access to Quranic education, Islamic lectures, scholarly discussions, and religious awareness campaigns. This research examines the relationship between media exposure, religious identity, and moral development among Muslim youth. It also explores how family background, educational institutions, religious knowledge, and social environments influence young people's responses to digital media. The study adopts a qualitative research approach to understand the different ways in which media influences religious beliefs, ethical behaviour, personal responsibilities, and social relationships. The research highlights the importance of responsible media consumption, digital literacy, Islamic education, and parental guidance in maintaining a balanced relationship between modern technology and religious values. It concludes that media is neither entirely positive nor entirely negative; its influence largely depends on the type of content consumed, the purpose of media use, and the ability of young people to evaluate information according to Islamic principles and moral responsibilities.

KEYWORDS: *Media Influence, Religious Identity, Muslim Youth, Moral Values, Social Media, Islamic Education, Digital Culture, Ethical Behaviour, Religious Awareness, Digital Literacy.*

INTRODUCTION

The development of modern media has brought significant changes to the social, cultural, educational, and religious lives of individuals across the world. In contemporary society, media is no longer limited to television, newspapers, radio, and traditional communication channels; it has expanded into digital platforms that allow people to communicate, exchange information, express opinions, and participate in global discussions. Social media applications such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and other online platforms have become an important part of everyday life, particularly among young people. Muslim youth are also active users of these platforms, where they encounter different ideas, lifestyles, cultural practices, religious discussions, and social trends. Ahmad, F., Akhtar, K. S., Anam, W., Mushtaq, B., Rasheed, A., Ahmad, S., ... & Nawab, Y. (2023). Found that This continuous exposure to media content creates new opportunities for learning and communication while also influencing their religious understanding, personal identity, and moral development.Religious identity is an important part of an individual's personality because it provides a sense of belonging, spiritual direction, cultural connection, and moral responsibility. For Muslim youth, religious identity is closely connected with Islamic teachings, including faith, prayer, honesty, respect, modesty, patience, kindness, justice, and

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responsibility toward others. These principles guide young people in making personal decisions and developing relationships within society. However, the increasing influence of global media has introduced different cultural values, social expectations, and lifestyles that may sometimes differ from traditional Islamic teachings. As a result, young Muslims may experience challenges while balancing their religious commitments with the expectations and influences of modern digital culture.Social media has become a powerful source of information and communication through which Muslim youth develop opinions about religion, society, education, fashion, relationships, Faizilla, R., & Zahrati, W. (2026).explaind and personal success. Digital platforms provide access to Islamic lectures, Quranic explanations, religious discussions, and educational materials that can increase religious awareness and encourage positive behaviour. Young people can follow qualified Islamic scholars, participate in online religious programmes, and learn about Islamic history and ethical teachings without geographical limitations. Nevertheless, the availability of unverified religious information and misleading interpretations can create confusion among users who do not possess sufficient religious knowledge or critical thinking skills. Therefore, the quality and reliability of media content are important factors in understanding its influence on religious identity.

Moral values are another important dimension of human development that can be influenced by media exposure. Islamic moral principles encourage honesty, respect, tolerance, kindness, modesty, forgiveness, justice, and responsibility. These values help individuals develop positive relationships and contribute to a peaceful society. However, certain forms of media content may promote materialism, disrespectful communication, unrealistic beauty standards, excessive competition, and irresponsible behaviour. When young people repeatedly consume such content without critical evaluation, their attitudes and perceptions about acceptable social behaviour may gradually change. On the other hand, positive media content can promote charity, social cooperation, educational development, respect for parents, and awareness of ethical responsibilities.The relationship between media and religious identity is particularly important because young people are developing their personal beliefs, values, and social understanding during this stage of life. They often use digital platforms to explore different viewpoints, communicate with others, and search for answers to religious and personal questions. Although this process can increase knowledge and confidence, it can also expose them to conflicting opinions and information that may challenge their existing beliefs. Muslim youth therefore need the ability to distinguish between authentic religious knowledge, personal opinions, Jumadewi, A., Darmawati, D., Erlinawati, E., & Pratiwi, A. S. (2026).revealed cultural traditions, and misleading online information. Islamic education and guidance from knowledgeable individuals can help them develop a balanced understanding of religion while participating in modern digital society.Family, educational institutions, religious scholars, and communities also play important roles in shaping the relationship between media and Muslim youth.

Parents can encourage responsible internet use, discuss the importance of Islamic values, and help young people identify inappropriate or unreliable content. Educational institutions can introduce digital literacy and ethical awareness programmes that teach students how to evaluate online information and communicate respectfully. Religious scholars can use modern media to explain Islamic teachings in understandable ways and address the questions of younger generations. Through cooperation among families, schools, religious institutions,

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and digital communities, Muslim youth can develop the knowledge and confidence required to benefit from modern media without neglecting their religious responsibilities.The present research focuses on the impact of media on the religious identity and moral values of Muslim youth by examining both its positive opportunities and potential challenges. It investigates how digital communication, online religious content, entertainment platforms, and social networking influence religious awareness, ethical behaviour, personal beliefs, and social relationships. The study also considers the importance of Islamic education, family guidance, critical thinking, and responsible media consumption in maintaining religious identity in a rapidly changing digital environment. By exploring these dimensions, the research aims to develop a deeper understanding of the relationship between modern media and the moral development of Muslim young people. It emphasizes that technological progress and religious commitment can exist together when media is used with knowledge, responsibility, and awareness of Islamic ethical principles.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

1. To examine the impact of modern media on the religious identity and moral values of Muslim youth, with particular attention to religious awareness, ethical behaviour, Islamic beliefs, and responsible digital media consumption.

RESEARCH QUESTION

1. How does modern media influence the religious identity, Islamic beliefs, and moral values of Muslim youth in contemporary society?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The relationship between media and religious identity has become an important subject of contemporary academic research because digital communication platforms increasingly influence how young people understand religion, culture, and personal values. Previous studies suggest that social media has transformed the traditional ways through which religious knowledge is communicated and received. In the past, Hotait, N., & El Sayed, F. (2025). Elobraled on young Muslims generally depended on family members, teachers, religious scholars, mosques, and educational institutions for religious guidance. Today, they can access Islamic lectures, Quranic explanations, religious discussions, and scholarly opinions through digital platforms. This development has expanded opportunities for religious learning and participation. However, it has also introduced questions about the reliability of online religious information and the authority of individuals who share religious messages without appropriate knowledge or qualifications.Research conducted by Inanoglu (2025) examines how Muslim college students use social media to construct and negotiate their religious identities. The study is particularly important because it explores the relationship between personal religious beliefs, online self-presentation, and community expectations. Its findings indicate that social media can become a space where young Muslims express their religious identities while managing their public image and relationships with others. This suggests that religious identity is not only influenced by personal beliefs and family backgrounds but can also be shaped by online interactions and digital communities.

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Young Muslims may use religious posts, educational videos, and discussions to express their faith, develop confidence, and connect with people who share similar values. The influence of media on religious identity is also connected with the types of entertainment and information consumed by young people. A longitudinal study by Inanoglu and colleagues' research area Inanoglu, H., Lynch, D., & Modig, Z. (2025).explaind that, published in Human Communication Research in 2025, investigated the relationship between media consumption and Muslim American adolescents' social identity. The study examined 220 adolescents over three years and found that media consumption was associated with certain dimensions of identity, including identity centrality and private identity esteem. It also highlighted that the influence of media may differ according to language and content genre. This research demonstrates that media exposure should not be understood as a single uniform influence because different types of content may produce different experiences among young Muslims. Another important dimension of the literature concerns the role of TikTok, Instagram, and other visual platforms in religious expression. Hotait and El Sayed (2025), in their study Beyond the Hijab: Performing Religious Identity on TikTok, examined how Muslim female content creators in Germany express and negotiate their religious identities through online videos. Their research highlights that religious identity can be communicated through different forms of self-expression rather than through a single religious symbol or appearance. Digital platforms allow Muslim creators to communicate with Muslim and non-Muslim audiences, explain their experiences, and participate in discussions about religion and society. Nevertheless, online popularity and audience expectations may also influence how individuals present their religious beliefs publicly. Moral values represent another significant area of research concerning the influence of media on Muslim youth. Islamic moral principles emphasize honesty, modesty, respect, kindness, patience, justice, and responsibility. These values provide ethical guidance for personal and social behaviour. Ahmad and Akhtar (2023),

Ikasatya, R. A., Apriliani, C., Firdaus, F. J., & Pratama, G. Y. (2026). Found that in their research on social media and Islamic ethics, discuss how digital platforms influence the character formation of Muslim youth. Their study highlights both the educational opportunities of social media and the challenges associated with inappropriate content, online interactions, and changing social attitudes. The research emphasizes that responsible media use and Islamic ethical awareness are important for protecting positive moral behaviour in the digital environment. Research on Islamic ethics in digital environments also emphasizes the importance of truthfulness, privacy, self-control, and accountability. Sohail (2025) examines the impact of social media on the ethical values of Muslims in the light of Islamic teachings. The study discusses how online communication can create challenges involving misinformation, backbiting, boastfulness, excessive self-expression, and irresponsible use of time. It also recognizes that social media can support religious education, community building, and Islamic awareness. These findings suggest that moral development in the digital age requires more than limiting media exposure; it also requires developing the ability to communicate respectfully, verify information, protect privacy, and consider the consequences of online actions. Recent research has also explored the importance of social media in the religious practices of Pakistani youth. Sagheer and Hussain (2026) investigated the impact of social media use on religious practices and religious identity among Pakistani young people. Their study included 400 respondents and reported positive associations between social media use, online religious practices, and the expression of religious identity. The research identified Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok as important platforms for accessing religious

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content. These findings are relevant to the present study because they demonstrate that digital media can provide opportunities for religious engagement within the Pakistani social context. However, the results also indicate the importance of examining whether online religious activities are accompanied by meaningful understanding and consistent ethical behaviour in everyday life. The available literature indicates that media can influence Muslim youth through several interconnected dimensions, including religious learning, identity expression, moral awareness, social relationships, and personal behaviour. Darmawati (2026), in a systematic review of Islamic learning through social media among Muslim youth, highlights the importance of digital access, interactive learning, and the credibility of religious sources. The review explains that online religious learning can complement traditional religious education rather than necessarily replacing established religious authorities. This perspective is particularly important because young people need to combine the convenience of digital learning with guidance from authentic Islamic scholarship. Therefore, the present research considers media influence as a complex process in which positive educational opportunities and potential moral challenges exist together.

METHODOLOGY

The present research adopts a systematic and descriptive methodology to examine the impact of media on the religious identity and moral values of Muslim youth. The study focuses on understanding how different forms of media, particularly social networking websites, digital entertainment platforms, online educational resources, television, and religious communication channels, influence the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour of young Muslims. The methodological framework considers both positive and negative dimensions of media exposure, including religious awareness, Islamic knowledge, ethical understanding, social relationships, personal discipline, and cultural influences. Relevant academic literature, published research articles, scholarly discussions, and studies related to digital religion and Islamic moral development provide the foundation for the investigation. The research also considers the role of family guidance, educational institutions, religious scholars, and digital literacy in helping young people make responsible decisions about online content. A qualitative descriptive method is used to organize the available information into meaningful themes and examine the relationship between media consumption and religious development. Special attention is given to the credibility of sources, relevance of published research, and connection between the selected literature and the research objectives. The methodology aims to provide a balanced understanding of how modern media creates opportunities for Islamic learning while also introducing challenges for the preservation of religious identity and moral values. Since this article is designed as a literature-based study, its findings are based on the analysis of existing research rather than newly collected survey responses.This study follows a qualitative research approach because the subject involves beliefs, religious experiences, moral understanding,. personal attitudes, and social behaviour that require detailed interpretation. A qualitative approach is appropriate for examining how Muslim youth understand their religious identity while interacting with modern media and how digital content may influence their ethical decisions. The research examines different academic perspectives concerning the relationship between social media, Islamic education, religious practices, and moral development. It gives particular attention to the meanings young people attach to religious content, the ways they express their beliefs online, and the challenges they experience when encountering different cultural and social influences. The approach also

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considers the relationship between traditional Islamic values and contemporary digital lifestyles.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The research uses a descriptive and analytical research design to investigate the relationship between media exposure, religious identity, and moral values among Muslim youth. The descriptive component explains the different forms of media used by young people and identifies the major religious, educational, cultural, and social influences associated with these platforms. It considers how digital content provides access to Islamic knowledge, religious discussions, motivational messages, and educational opportunities. The analytical component examines how these media experiences may influence religious awareness, ethical understanding, personal discipline, and social behaviour. Existing academic studies and scholarly publications are reviewed to identify similarities, differences, and important findings related to the research topic. The design also considers the influence of different social environments, including family, educational institutions, religious communities, and online networks. Particular attention is given to the distinction between online religious expression and the practical application of Islamic values in everyday life. The research does not assume that all media exposure produces the same outcomes; instead, it recognizes that the influence of media may depend on content quality, frequency of use, personal beliefs, and the availability of reliable guidance. This research design provides a structured framework for understanding both the opportunities and challenges associated with digital media and Muslim youth development.

DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis of the available literature indicates that media has become an influential factor in shaping the religious identity and moral values of Muslim youth. Different studies demonstrate that social networking platforms provide opportunities for religious education, Islamic awareness, communication, and personal development. Young Muslims increasingly use YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok to access religious lectures, Quranic explanations, Islamic discussions, and educational programmes. These platforms make religious information more accessible and allow young people to learn about their religion beyond traditional educational environments. However, the analysis also indicates that the availability of religious information does not automatically guarantee accurate religious understanding. Unverified statements, misleading interpretations, and incomplete religious explanations may create confusion among users. Another important aspect identified in the literature is the influence of entertainment and lifestyle content on moral attitudes. Continuous exposure to inappropriate material, materialistic lifestyles, unrealistic expectations, and disrespectful communication may challenge Islamic ethical principles. In contrast, positive digital content can encourage honesty, kindness, charity, respect, and social responsibility. The literature further suggests that family guidance, religious education, and critical thinking play important roles in determining how young people respond to media influences. The overall analysis therefore demonstrates that the relationship between media and Muslim youth is multidimensional and depends on the nature of online content, individual awareness, and the social environment in which media is consumed.

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FINDINGS

The research finds that modern media plays an important role in shaping the religious identity of Muslim youth by providing continuous access to religious information, Islamic educational materials, and online religious communities. Digital platforms allow young people to explore Islamic teachings, listen to religious scholars, and participate in discussions about faith and religious practices. This accessibility can strengthen religious awareness and create opportunities for personal spiritual development.The study identifies that social media has both positive and negative influences on the moral values of Muslim youth. Positive content can encourage honesty, respect, kindness, patience, modesty, and social responsibility. However, inappropriate online material, misleading information, disrespectful communication, and excessive entertainment may negatively influence ethical attitudes and personal behaviour. The effects depend considerably on the content consumed and the user's ability to evaluate it.The findings indicate that online religious information has become an important source of knowledge for young Muslims. However, not every individual who shares religious content online possesses appropriate religious qualifications. Consequently, young people may encounter inaccurate explanations, conflicting opinions, and misleading religious messages. The study highlights the importance of verifying information through authentic Islamic sources and consulting qualified religious scholars before accepting or sharing religious claims.The research further finds that family guidance and Islamic education remain important influences on the religious and moral development of Muslim youth. Parents, teachers, and religious scholars can help young people understand the difference between beneficial and harmful media content. Open communication, ethical education, and responsible digital habits can support the development of strong religious identities while allowing young people to benefit from modern technology.Another important finding is that digital media can influence how Muslim youth express their religious identities in public and private environments. Religious posts, Islamic videos, online discussions, and digital communities provide opportunities for expressing faith and connecting with other Muslims. Nevertheless, the study recognizes that online religious expression should be supported by genuine understanding, sincerity, and practical application of Islamic teachings in everyday life.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that modern media has become an influential part of the religious, social, and moral development of Muslim youth. Digital communication platforms have transformed the ways young people receive information, develop opinions, express religious beliefs, and interact with different cultural environments. Media provides valuable opportunities for Islamic education, religious awareness, scholarly communication, and community participation. Through online lectures, Quranic resources, Islamic educational videos, and religious discussions, young Muslims can increase their knowledge and strengthen their connection with Islamic teachings. However, the influence of media is not always beneficial because inappropriate content, misinformation, materialistic lifestyles, and irresponsible online behaviour may challenge traditional moral principles. The findings also emphasize that religious identity involves more than outward religious expression or participation in online discussions; it requires understanding, sincerity, ethical responsibility, and the practical application of Islamic teachings. Family guidance, educational institutions,

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religious scholars, and digital literacy programmes can help young people develop responsible media habits and distinguish reliable information from misleading content. Therefore, Muslim youth should be encouraged to use modern media as a source of knowledge, positive communication, and social development while maintaining their religious commitments and moral responsibilities. The study ultimately suggests that a balanced relationship between technological advancement and Islamic values is essential for developing knowledgeable, responsible, and ethically conscious Muslim generations.

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