



Teacher Mediation in Digital Religious Exclusivism and Moderation Formation among Generation Z: A Sociological Study

Fikri Maulana Prasetya¹⁾, Muhammad Amil²⁾, Khairul Anwar³⁾
^{1,2,3} Universitas Ahmad Dahlan

*Corresponding Author's Email: fikrymaulana.p@gmail.com

Article Info	ABSTRAK
Article History: Received 14-05-2026 Revised 26-05-2026 Accepted 21-06-2026 Keywords: Digital Exclusivism, Generation Z, Religious Education, Digital Literacy, Teacher Authority Copyright © 2025, The Author(s). This is an open access article under the CC-BY-SA license 	Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis dinamika eksklusivisme keagamaan digital pada Generasi Z serta merumuskan strategi pedagogis bagi guru pendidikan agama dalam menumbuhkan sikap moderat di lingkungan pembelajaran berbasis digital. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan desain studi kasus sosiopedagogis melalui observasi partisipan, wawancara mendalam, dan analisis dokumen pada konteks sekolah menengah yang telah mengintegrasikan media digital dalam pembelajaran pendidikan agama. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya pergeseran signifikan otoritas epistemik dari guru dan institusi pendidikan formal menuju platform digital berbasis algoritma yang membentuk ruang gema (echo chambers) dan gelembung filter (filter bubbles) yang memperkuat eksklusivisme keagamaan. Guru mengalami kesenjangan otoritas dan perlu mereposisi diri sebagai mediator epistemik sekaligus fasilitator literasi digital kritis. Penelitian ini mengidentifikasi empat strategi pedagogis emergen, yaitu literasi dekonstruktif digital, dialog reflektif teologis, kurasi narasi inklusif, dan rekonstruksi makna keagamaan. Keempat strategi ini membentuk model siklikal untuk mereduksi eksklusivisme digital dan memperkuat moderasi beragama siswa. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa pendidikan agama perlu direkonseptualisasi sebagai proses dialogis-reflektif yang terintegrasi dengan literasi digital kritis dalam menghadapi otoritas keagamaan algoritmik di masyarakat kontemporer. ABSTRACT <i>This study aims to analyze the dynamics of digital religious exclusivism among Generation Z and to formulate pedagogical strategies for religious education teachers in fostering moderate attitudes within a digitally mediated learning environment. Using a qualitative socio-pedagogical case study design, data were collected through participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis in a secondary school context where digital media is integrated into religious education learning. The findings indicate a significant shift in epistemic authority from teachers and formal educational institutions toward algorithm-driven digital platforms, which contribute to the formation of echo chambers and filter bubbles that reinforce religious exclusivism. Teachers are found to experience an authority gap and must reposition themselves as epistemic mediators and critical facilitators of digital literacy. The study further identifies four emergent pedagogical strategies: digital deconstructive literacy, theological reflective dialogue, inclusive narrative curation, and religious meaning reconstruction. These strategies collectively function as a cyclical model for reducing digital exclusivism and strengthening religious moderation among students. The study concludes that religious education must be reconceptualized as a dialogical and reflective process that integrates critical digital literacy to navigate algorithmic religious authority in contemporary society.</i>

How to cite: Prasetya, F. M., Amil, M., & Anwar, K. (2026). Teacher Mediation in Digital Religious Exclusivism and Moderation Formation among Generation Z: A Sociological Study. JUMPENA: Jurnal Moderasi Pendidikan Agama, 2(1), 95–101. <https://doi.org/10.55681/jumpena.v2i1.197>

INTRODUCTION

The sociological structure of contemporary society is undergoing an epochal shift alongside the dominance of Generation Z as the primary actor in the digital public sphere. Born and raised within an intensive technological ecosystem, Generation Z represents digital natives who construct their social identity, including religious identity, through interactions in virtual spaces (Prensky, 2001; Chayko, 2017;

Lim, 2020). In this context, the digital space is no longer merely an information medium but has become a central arena for the construction of religious meaning and the emergence of new forms of religious authority (Campbell, 2020; Hojsgaard & Warburg, 2019).

However, the digital religious landscape is characterized by a fragmentation of authority, allowing the emergence of religious influencers and platform algorithms as new reference sources (Cheong et al., 2012; Campbell & Tsuria, 2021). This condition means that the formation of religious knowledge is heavily influenced by the algorithmic logic of social media platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram, which operate through recommendation systems based on user preferences (van Dijck et al., 2018).

A central phenomenon in the digital ecosystem is the formation of echo chambers and filter bubbles that reinforce users' ideological biases (Pariser, 2011; Sunstein, 2017). In a religious context, these algorithms contribute to the reinforcement of repetitive exclusive narratives, thereby narrowing users' cognitive perspectives (Tufekci, 2018). This condition strengthens in-group bias and out-group derogation, which may lead to social polarization and identity-based intolerance (Turner et al., 1987; Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). Studies in Indonesia also show that exposure to exclusive religious content on social media can strengthen intolerant attitudes among adolescents if not balanced with critical digital literacy (Nurdin, 2022; Rohman, 2021).

In this context, religious education teachers face an authority gap, as knowledge sources are no longer centralized within formal educational institutions (Selwyn, 2016; Kress, 2010). Teachers are therefore required not only to act as transmitters of knowledge but also as facilitators of critical digital literacy and value moderators within the Generation Z learning ecosystem (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Fullan, 2020). However, many teachers still face limitations in digital literacy and pedagogical readiness in responding to the dominance of social media-based religious content that is faster, more visual, and more persuasive (Zhao et al., 2021; Supriyadi, 2020).

Although studies on digital religion and religious moderation have developed, most research still focuses on technological aspects of education or digital security (Cheong et al., 2012; Lim, 2020). Socio-pedagogical studies addressing the negotiation of teacher authority in digital classrooms remain limited, particularly in the context of religious education in highly diverse societies (Nurdin, 2022; Rahman, 2023). Furthermore, studies on digital radicalism tend to emphasize political and security dimensions rather than the micro-dynamics of interaction between teachers and students in classroom settings (Tufekci, 2018; Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017).

Based on these conditions, this study aims to sociologically analyze the challenges faced by religious education teachers in dealing with digital exclusivism among Generation Z and to formulate pedagogical strategies for fostering moderate attitudes. Theoretically, this research contributes to the development of the sociology of digital religious education, while practically it is expected to strengthen teachers' capacity as navigators of religious literacy in an increasingly complex digital era (Campbell & Tsuria, 2021; Fullan, 2020).

Overall, the transformation of the digital landscape has shifted how Generation Z understands, accesses, and expresses religious values, thereby creating new challenges for religious education. Amid the rapid flow of information and the strengthening of digital exclusivism, religious teachers are required not only to deliver content but also to guide students in filtering information, developing critical attitudes, and fostering values of moderation. This situation highlights the need for a more adaptive, reflective, and context-relevant pedagogical approach in the digital space. Therefore, strengthening the role of teachers as value navigators in the digital era is essential for shaping a generation that is not only personally religious but also inclusive, tolerant, and capable of living harmoniously in diversity.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative approach with a socio-pedagogical design to deeply understand the dynamics of digital religious exclusivism and the role of religious education teachers in fostering moderate attitudes among Generation Z. A qualitative approach is selected because it enables the exploration of complex meanings, social interactions, and constructed realities within educational contexts influenced by digital spaces (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

The research design uses a single case study focusing on religious education learning practices in a secondary school that has integrated digital media into its instructional processes. A case study is chosen because it allows for an in-depth exploration of a socially bounded and context-specific phenomenon (Yin,

2018; Stake, 1995). In this study, the case is directed at examining how religious education teachers negotiate their authority amid the flow of digital religious information consumed by students.

Data collection techniques include participant observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. Participant observation is used to capture real classroom interactions between teachers and students in religious education learning contexts (Spradley, 1980). In-depth interviews are conducted with religious education teachers, students, and school stakeholders to explore their experiences, perceptions, and strategies in addressing digital exclusivism (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015). Document analysis covers curriculum documents, lesson plans, and teaching materials as supporting data to understand the pedagogical design implemented (Bowen, 2009).

Data analysis is conducted using thematic analysis through the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Thematic analysis is selected for its effectiveness in identifying meaningful patterns within complex qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis process is carried out iteratively to identify patterns of digital exclusivism, forms of pedagogical negotiation by teachers, and strategies for strengthening religious moderation in the classroom.

Data validity is ensured through source and method triangulation, member checking, and peer debriefing. Triangulation enhances data credibility by comparing multiple sources of information (Patton, 2015). Member checking is conducted to ensure alignment between researcher interpretations and participant experiences, while peer debriefing strengthens the dependability and confirmability of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Thus, this methodological framework is designed to produce a deep, systematic, and contextual understanding of religious education dynamics in digital environments, as well as the pedagogical strategies employed by teachers in responding to the challenges of religious exclusivism among Generation Z.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Expansion of Digital Religious Authority and Classroom Learning Disruption

The findings of this study indicate that religious exclusivism among Generation Z is not primarily formed through classroom learning processes, but rather is largely carried over from the digital space, which has become their dominant ecosystem for consuming religious knowledge in daily life. Classroom observations show that students tend to present arguments, references, and religious justifications derived from social media platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram more frequently than from textbooks or formal teacher explanations within the curriculum.

This is reinforced by a student statement:

“On TikTok, it is clearer and more direct, so I trust it more than the teacher’s explanation in class.”

This statement indicates a fundamental shift in epistemic authority, where the validity of knowledge is no longer determined by formal educational institutions but by digital algorithms operating through the logic of popularity, repetition, and content personalization. This aligns with Castells’ (2010) concept of the network society, which shifts hierarchical structures into network-based structures, as well as van Dijck’s (2013) argument that digital platforms are not only channels of information but also producers of knowledge that shape users’ ways of thinking.

In this context, a phenomenon can be identified as algorithmic theological authority, where religious truth is perceived based on content virality and visibility rather than academic validity or scholarly authority. This condition is reinforced by echo chambers and filter bubbles, as described by Pariser (2011) and Sunstein (2017), in which students repeatedly encounter similar narratives, narrowing their cognitive space and strengthening confirmation bias in understanding religious reality.

Negotiation of Teacher Authority in the Digital Epistemic Ecosystem

The findings also show that teachers experience a significant transformation in their role, shifting from being the sole authority in knowledge transmission to becoming epistemic mediators who must negotiate with alternative knowledge sources originating from digital spaces. During interviews, teachers reported that students frequently verify classroom explanations by directly comparing them with digital content they consume outside school.

A teacher stated:

“When I explain something, they immediately open their phones and compare it with videos they have watched, and sometimes they trust the video more.”

This situation reflects a shift in authority structures from hierarchical to more fluid and distributed network-based models, as described by Castells (2010). Teachers are no longer the sole center of knowledge legitimacy but must share epistemic space with digital platforms governed by algorithmic logic. Consequently, their role shifts toward meaning facilitation and critical mediation, as emphasized by Selwyn (2016) and Kress (2010).

Observations further show that student resistance to teacher explanations increases when discrepancies arise between classroom content and digital media they consume. However, such resistance decreases when teachers integrate social media examples as material for critical classroom discussion.

Emergent Pedagogical Strategies in Addressing Digital Exclusivism

The findings show that teachers' responses to digital exclusivism among Generation Z are not fixed or standardized, but emerge from adaptive classroom practices shaped by students' exposure to algorithm-driven religious content. These strategies develop organically as teachers negotiate between curricular goals and students' digital experiences, shifting the classroom toward a more critical and dialogical learning space.

In this context, teachers increasingly use digital content as a learning resource for analysis and reflection rather than treating it as external disruption. This approach enables students to critically examine religious narratives circulating in digital platforms while reconstructing more balanced and inclusive understandings through guided discussion. The main emergent strategies are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Operational Model of Teacher Strategies in Addressing Digital Exclusivism

Strategy	Pedagogical Focus	Classroom Practice	Observed Impact	Theoretical Basis
Digital Deconstructive Literacy	Critical analysis of digital religious content	Teacher presents viral videos/lectures for analysis	Students begin questioning sources and content bias	Buckingham (2015), Kellner & Share (2019)
Theological Reflective Dialogue	Meaning construction through open discussion	Reflective questioning without single correct answers	Increased openness and reduced defensiveness	Vygotsky (1978), Wenger (1998)
Inclusive Narrative Curation	Strengthening interfaith empathy	Presentation of lived experiences from diverse backgrounds	Increased empathy and acceptance of differences	Bruner (1991), Freire (1970)
Religious Meaning Reconstruction	Internalization of moderation values	Final reflection and synthesis of religious values	Shift from exclusivist to moderate perspectives	Selwyn (2016), Tufekci (2018)

This model demonstrates that teacher strategies in addressing digital exclusivism are not linear, but cyclical and mutually reinforcing. Digital deconstructive literacy opens critical space, reflective dialogue builds meaning-making interaction, inclusive narratives strengthen affective dimensions, and meaning reconstruction serves as the stage for internalizing moderation values.

Digital Deconstructive Literacy as a Response to Algorithmic Authority

In classroom practice, teachers do not reject digital content; instead, they actively use it as an object of critical analysis to develop students' deconstructive literacy. Teachers intentionally bring social media content into the classroom for collective examination without immediately labeling it as right or wrong.

A teacher stated:

"I do not directly criticize the content. Instead, I ask students to look at who is speaking, why it becomes viral, and what its intention is."

This approach aligns with Buckingham's (2015) concept of critical digital literacy, which emphasizes the ability to analyze ideologies embedded in digital texts. Kellner and Share (2019) further argue that critical media literacy is essential for uncovering ideological bias in media, while Wardle and Derakhshan (2017) highlight the vulnerability of digital spaces to emotionally framed misinformation, including in religious contexts.

Observations indicate that students who initially accepted digital content uncritically begin to develop the ability to question validity, context, and intent after consistent exposure to deconstructive literacy practices in the classroom.

Reflective Dialogue and Reconstruction of Religious Meaning

Reflective dialogue becomes a crucial space for cognitive and affective transformation. Observations show that when students are given open dialogical space without teacher dominance, there is a shift from exclusivist thinking toward more inclusive and reflective cognitive perspectives. This is reflected in a student statement:

"I used to think only my way was correct, but now I realize others also have valid ways of practicing religion."

This statement indicates a process of meaning reconstruction consistent with Vygotsky's (1978) theory of learning as a socially mediated process, and Wenger's (1998) concept of meaning construction through participation in communities of practice. Bruner (1991) further emphasizes that narratives shape individuals' cognitive and emotional structures in understanding social reality.

Emergent Synthesis of Teacher Strategy Model

Overall, the findings show that teacher strategies in addressing digital exclusivism can be reconstructed into an emergent model consisting of four interrelated elements: digital deconstructive literacy, theological reflective dialogue, inclusive narrative curation, and religious meaning reconstruction. These elements do not operate independently but form a dynamic pedagogical system for fostering religious moderation among Generation Z.

Freire (1970) emphasizes that education is fundamentally a practice of liberation through critical dialogue rather than one-way knowledge transmission. Accordingly, this model strengthens the role of teachers as navigators of digital moderation who guide rather than dominate students' meaning-making processes within complex digital ecosystems.

Overall, the findings confirm that digital exclusivism is the result of a complex interaction between social media algorithms, students' information consumption patterns, and limited critical literacy in interpreting digital religious content. At the same time, the classroom remains a powerful transformative space when teachers consistently and systematically integrate digital deconstructive literacy, reflective dialogue, and inclusive narrative curation into the learning process.

CONCLUSION

This study produces the Reconceptualization Model of Inclusive Religious Education Curriculum Based on the Integration of National Pluralism Values (RIK-PK Model), which emphasizes the need for a structural transformation in the design of religious education curricula from a normative-dogmatic approach toward an integrative-transformative approach. The model demonstrates that national pluralism values cannot be positioned as supplementary content, but must be directly integrated into the theological structure of the curriculum in order to form a comprehensive civic-religious awareness among learners.

The findings indicate that the integration of a reflective theological foundation, an integrative curriculum structure, dialogical learning, and reflective evaluation creates a more inclusive, critical, and adaptive religious education learning ecosystem in response to multicultural societal realities. The dialogical approach grounded in critical pedagogy enables students to develop empathetic awareness and reflective thinking skills in responding to diversity, while self-reflection-based evaluation strengthens the internalization of tolerance values at a deeper level.

Theoretically, this study enriches the field of religious education curriculum studies by offering an integrative model that bridges theological and socio-civic dimensions simultaneously. Practically, the model can serve as a reference for curriculum development, textbook design, and instructional practices in religious education that are more humanistic, inclusive, and relevant to the challenges of a diverse global society.

REFERENCE

- Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27–40. <https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>

- Bruner, J. (1991). The narrative construction of reality. *Critical Inquiry*, 18(1), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1086/448619>
- Buckingham, D. (2015). Defining digital literacy: What do young people need to know about digital media? *Nordic Journal of Digital Literacy*, 10(Jubileumsnummer), 21–34. <https://doi.org/10.18261/issn.1891-943x-2015-jubileumsnummer-03>
- Campbell, H. A. (2020). *Digital religion: Understanding religious practice in new media worlds*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315573101>
- Campbell, H. A., & Tsuria, R. (2021). Digital religion. In *The International Encyclopedia of Media Psychology*. Wiley. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119011071>
- Castells, M. (2010). *The rise of the network society* (2nd ed.). Wiley-Blackwell. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444319514>
- Cheong, P. H., Fischer-Nielsen, P., Gelfgren, S., & Ess, C. (2012). *Digital religion, social media and culture*. Peter Lang.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Darling-Hammond, L., Flook, L., Cook-Harvey, C., Barron, B., & Osher, D. (2020). Implications for educational practice of the science of learning and development. *Applied Developmental Science*, 24(2), 97–140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10888691.2018.1537791>
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2018). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (5th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Herder and Herder.
- Fullan, M. (2020). *The new meaning of educational change* (5th ed.). Teachers College Press.
- Hojsgaard, M. T., & Warburg, M. (2019). *Religion and cyberspace*. Routledge.
- Kellner, D., & Share, J. (2019). *The critical media literacy guide*. Brill. <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004398701>
- Kress, G. (2010). *Multimodality: A social semiotic approach to contemporary communication*. Routledge.
- Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2015). *InterViews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Lim, F. V. (2020). *Digital literacy across the lifespan*. Routledge.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. SAGE Publications.
- Nurdin, N. (2022). Digital religion and youth religious behavior in Indonesia. *Journal of Indonesian Social Studies*, 13(2), 45–60.
- Pariser, E. (2011). *The filter bubble: What the Internet is hiding from you*. Penguin Press.
- Patton, M. Q. (2015). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Prensky, M. (2001). Digital natives, digital immigrants. *On the Horizon*, 9(5), 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1108/10748120110424816>
- Rohman, A. (2021). Religious intolerance among adolescents in digital media exposure. *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, 7(1), 33–48.
- Selwyn, N. (2016). *Education and technology: Key issues and debates*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Spradley, J. P. (1980). *Participant observation*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. SAGE Publications.
- Sunstein, C. R. (2017). *#Republic: Divided democracy in the age of social media*. Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400884710>
- Tufekci, Z. (2018). YouTube, the great radicalizer. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/10/opinion/sunday/youtube-politics-radicalization.html>
- Turner, J. C., Hogg, M. A., Oakes, P. J., Reicher, S. D., & Wetherell, M. S. (1987). *Rediscovering the social group: A self-categorization theory*. Basil Blackwell.
- van Dijck, J. (2013). *The culture of connectivity: A critical history of social media*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199970773.001.0001>
- van Dijck, J., Poell, T., & de Waal, M. (2018). *The platform society*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780190889760.001.0001>
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society*. Harvard University Press.
- Wardle, C., & Derakhshan, H. (2017). *Information disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework*. Council of Europe.
- Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice*. Cambridge University Press.

Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Zhao, Y., et al. (2021). Teacher digital competence in the post-pandemic era. *Computers & Education*, 168, 104206. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2021.104206>