SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF RELIGIOUS IDENTITY AMONG MUSLIM ADOLESCENTS: A QUALITATIVE LITERATURE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the role of social media in the construction of religious identity among Muslim adolescents. The research employs a qualitative approach using a literature study method. Data were collected through documentation techniques from various academic sources such as books, journal articles, and relevant publications. The data were analyzed through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. The findings show that social media functions as an important platform that enables adolescents to access religious information, communicate, and interact with broader religious communities. Social media also contributes to the formation of religious identity by facilitating discussions, sharing religious experiences, and strengthening adolescents' connection with religious values. However, the study also finds negative impacts, including the risk of excessive dependency on social media and the potential for misunderstanding or misinterpreting religious teachings due to the uncontrolled flow of information. In conclusion, social media plays a significant role in shaping the religious identity of Muslim adolescents by providing both opportunities and challenges. Therefore, guidance and digital literacy are necessary to help adolescents use social media wisely and develop a balanced understanding of religious values.

Keyword: Social Media, Religious Identity, Adolescents, Muslims

INTRODUCTION

The formation of identity during adolescence is a critical psychosocial developmental process, as individuals begin to question who they are and the roles they wish to adopt within their social environment. Adolescents actively explore values, life goals, and beliefs that shape their self-concept within society (Hidayah & Huriati, 2016). This process is influenced by various internal factors, including personality traits associated with the meta-traits of the Big Five model, namely plasticity and stability. Plasticity relates to openness to new experiences and an individual's ability to explore alternative identities, whereas stability pertains to the consistency in maintaining commitments to an established identity (Topolewska-Siedzik & Cieciuch, 2018). In addition to personality factors, sociodemographic conditions such as family socioeconomic status and life experiences also contribute to the trajectory of adolescent identity development (Cappa & Giulivi, 2019; Kaltiala et al., 2023). Other psychosocial factors, including the dynamics of identity commitment over time and the exploration of social roles, are also integral to adolescent identity formation (Becht et al., 2016; Jourdain & Choy, 2025).

Beyond internal factors, adolescent identity formation is strongly influenced by social, cultural, and educational environments. Schools serve as social spaces where adolescents can develop social and emotional skills while exploring various social roles that help them understand their self-identity (Haag et al., 2022). Cultural contexts shape how adolescents interpret values, norms, and the identities they construct in daily life (Crocetti, 2018). Peer relationships also play a crucial role, particularly in the development of ethnic-racial and gender identities through intensive socialization and interaction (Jugert et al., 2020; Kornienko et al., 2016). Mental health conditions, such as social anxiety, can affect identity formation by reducing commitment to one's identity and increasing self-doubt (Levy Kardash, 2026). Therefore, social support and the reinforcement of psychological resilience are essential for adolescents to navigate the dynamics of identity development (Wu et al., 2025; Klimstra & van Doeselaar, 2017).

Social media influences how adolescents perceive themselves and construct social identities. Digital interactions, comments, and consumed content can both reinforce and disrupt adolescent identity development during the exploration of selfhood (Pasenrigading et al., 2025). Digital media serve as a platform for religious outreach, influencing adolescents' social identity formation. Religious values conveyed through social media can strengthen moral development, although the impact depends on how adolescents interpret religious messages (Padil & Lessy, 2024). Studies have shown that social media significantly affects how students express themselves, build self-image, and interact with their social environment (Ayunda et al., 2025). In Indonesia, adolescents frequently use digital platforms to present self-image, engage socially, and seek validation, thereby influencing their psychological development and social identity (Regita et al., 2024).

A notable phenomenon is observed among Muslim adolescent girls, whose identities are shaped through the intersection of popular culture, religion, and social media. Religious and cultural identities often compete in shaping how adolescents present themselves in public spaces (Murlayani et al., 2025). Social changes driven by digitalization influence adolescents' identity construction, as digital environments create new spaces for interaction that shape values, behaviors, and their understanding of social positions in modern society (Hilalludin et al., 2025). Identity crises regarding religion among adolescents can be triggered by social environments, the internet, and digital media. Adolescence represents a crucial period for the search for life meaning, during which value conflicts may provoke confusion regarding religious identity (Putri, 2023).

Religion plays a pivotal role in shaping the self-identity of Muslim adolescents from the perspective of the psychology of religion. Understanding spiritual values and engaging in religious practices are believed to strengthen character and provide moral direction in identity development (Febriansyah & Hariry, 2025). Platforms such as TikTok influence identity formation among Generation Z adolescents; through trends, creative content, and online interactions, adolescents construct self-image and express their personalities in digital spaces (Yuri, 2023).

This study aims to describe and analyze the impact of social media on the formation of religious identity among Muslim adolescents. A qualitative literature review approach was employed, with data collected through documentation and analyzed using data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. Findings indicate that social media serves as a communication and information-seeking tool that influences adolescents' search for religious identity. Positive impacts include strengthening religious community networks, providing spaces for discussion, and facilitating the sharing of religious knowledge. However, research gaps remain in analyzing the balance between the positive and negative effects of social media on adolescents' religious identity. The novelty of this study lies in its comprehensive analysis of both positive and negative impacts within the context of Muslim adolescents' religious identity formation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted using a qualitative approach through a literature review. The primary objective of the research was to provide a narrative explanation and description of the main topics under investigation, namely social media, religious identity, and the impact of social media on the religious identity of adolescents. The study aimed to systematically present findings by synthesizing existing knowledge and scholarly discussions on these subjects.

Data collection was carried out through documentation, which involved gathering relevant information, studies, and discussions from books, journal articles, and other credible academic sources. This method ensured that the data obtained were comprehensive and representative of the current state of research related to the study's focal topics. By utilizing secondary sources, the researcher was able to access a wide range of perspectives and empirical evidence without conducting primary fieldwork.

The data analysis process involved several stages, beginning with the reduction of literature findings. This step entailed identifying and extracting the most relevant information from books and scholarly articles that directly addressed social media, religious identity, and the influence of digital media on adolescents' religious development. Irrelevant or redundant information was systematically filtered out to maintain focus on the research objectives.

Following data reduction, the results were organized and presented in a narrative form. Presenting the data in structured sentences facilitated readers' understanding of the qualitative findings, ensuring clarity and coherence in conveying the insights obtained from the literature. This narrative presentation allowed for the synthesis of various studies, providing a holistic view of the interplay between social media usage and the development of religious identity among adolescents.

Finally, the study concluded with data interpretation and synthesis. The researcher provided supporting statements and critical reflections to summarize the main findings and highlight the significance of the relationships between social media and religious identity formation. This process enabled the study to offer well-founded conclusions based on the accumulated literature, demonstrating the complex dynamics of digital engagement and identity development in the adolescent population.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Social Media

Social media is an online medium where users can easily utilize it to fulfill their communication needs (Widada, 2018). Social media refers to platforms or websites that allow users to create, share, and exchange information, ideas, images, and videos within virtual networks. It enables users to connect with one another, interact, and establish online relationships. Popular examples of social media include Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and many others. Social media provides easy access for communication without geographical limitations. Users can connect with friends, family, or even strangers with ease. They can share various types of content such as text, photos, videos, and links quickly and efficiently, facilitating the exchange of information and ideas among users.

Social media provides a space for two-way interaction, where users can respond to or comment on others' posts. This creates dialogue and enhances user engagement. Many social media platforms allow the formation of groups or communities based on interests, hobbies, or specific goals, enabling users to connect with like-minded individuals. Users can obtain real-time updates, allowing them to stay informed about the latest developments in friends' lives, news, or specific topics. Most social media platforms are accessible via mobile devices, allowing users to stay connected anytime and anywhere. Engaging content can spread rapidly through social media via a process known as virality, which can exert a significant influence on public opinion.

Social media is an online medium that supports social interaction. In practice, it employs web-based technology that transforms communication into interactive dialogue (Yusuf et al., 2023). Social media platforms allow users to participate, share content, and interact virtually with others. The fundamental concept of social media is to create online spaces where users can engage in social activities, such as communicating, sharing information, and building networks. Common implementations of social media include websites and applications that facilitate various types of interactions and communication. Each social media user typically maintains a personal profile containing information about themselves, such as their name, profile picture, brief biography, and other shareable details. Users can share different types of content including text, images, videos, and links with their followers or publicly, enabling them to express ideas, experiences, or information creatively.

Social media allows two-way interaction among users. Users can respond to, comment on, or like others' content, fostering dialogue and active engagement within the user community. It helps individuals connect with friends, family, and people with similar interests or goals, enabling the formation of broad social networks and supporting communication across geographical boundaries. Many platforms allow the creation of groups or communities based on interests, professions, or specific topics, providing opportunities for more focused and in-depth discussions. Additionally, numerous social media platforms use algorithms to present content that is more relevant to users, including friend suggestions, potentially interesting content, or advertisements tailored to users' preferences. Social media can be accessed via websites, mobile applications, and desktop applications, offering flexibility for users to connect and interact wherever they are. Through the implementation of web-based technology, social media has fundamentally transformed human communication. Dynamic interaction, easily shareable content, and the ability to build and maintain relationships online are key aspects that make social media an integral part of modern digital life.

The social media platforms used by Muslim adolescents may vary depending on individual preferences and geographical location. Common platforms include: Instagram, which many Muslim adolescents use to share photos, videos, and daily stories, as well as to follow accounts that share Islamic content; Twitter, where they often participate in public conversations, share thoughts, and stay informed about current issues; WhatsApp, primarily a private messaging application, but also used for communication with friends and discussion groups; TikTok, increasingly popular among adolescents, including Muslim youth, as a platform for sharing short creative videos; Facebook, still used by many Muslim adolescents to connect with friends and family despite its popularity among older age groups; and Telegram, a secure and private messaging app frequently used to participate in community groups or access Islamic content.

Religious Identity

Bell explains that religious identity is both a neurological and social branch that shapes individuals to possess a coherent narrative of themselves, in which religion is manifested across various aspects of human life and integrated through practice and adherence with attitudes and self-conception (Putri, 2023). The description of religious identity as a neurological and social branch refers to the idea that religious identity encompasses not only individual beliefs but also results from a complex interaction between neurological factors (the brain and cognitive processes) and social factors (culture, environment, and personal experiences). Thus, religious identity shapes individuals to maintain a coherent self-narrative through neurological processes and social interactions.

Religion has neurological effects that influence the formation of perception, reasoning, and emotions related to beliefs and religious practices. Meanwhile, social factors affect how individuals practice their religious beliefs, particularly through interactions with their religious community and existing social norms. Religion is also manifested in various aspects of human life, such as social relationships, moral attitudes, health behaviors, and political decisions. Integrated in these ways, individuals express their religious identity through practice and adherence to religious teachings, while simultaneously reinforcing their identity within the social sphere. Therefore, religious identity is the outcome of a complex interaction between neurological and social factors that shapes individuals to possess a coherent self-narrative, where religion is manifested across multiple aspects of life and integrated with practice, adherence, and personal attitudes.

Religious identity as a neurological and social branch can be further understood through the concept that religion profoundly affects individuals in terms of identity cohesion, worldview, as well as actions and attitudes in daily life. From a neurological perspective, an individual's religious beliefs and practices can influence brain activity, particularly in emotional processing, risk perception, and moral judgment. Additionally, religious belief can provide a sense of meaning and purpose, which in turn impacts mental and emotional well-being. From a social perspective, religion becomes an integral part of an individual's cultural and community identity. Every individual engages in social interactions that shape their views on religion and influence social and political decisions. Religious practices such as prayer, worship, and rituals also play a critical role in reinforcing an individual's religious identity within society.

Religious identity concerns a person's view of themselves, reflecting their self-concept through the way they experience and understand their religious life (Risbayana, 2022). It involves how individuals perceive themselves as expressed in their engagement with and understanding of their religious experiences. In this context, religious identity can be described as the outcome of an individual's acceptance and interpretation of religious teachings and values, as well as how they

integrate life experiences with beliefs and religious practices. Religious engagement includes the ways in which individuals perform religious duties in daily life, ranging from worship and rituals to attitudes toward morality and justice. This reflects how individuals internalize their religious beliefs to shape their identity and behavior.

An individual's understanding of their religious life experiences also plays a significant role in forming religious identity. People may interpret life experiences through a religious lens, seeking meaning and purpose from a religious perspective and integrating diverse aspects of life with their religious values. Consequently, religious identity involves the way individuals view themselves through profound engagement and understanding of their religious teachings, as well as how they integrate life experiences with religious values and beliefs. Religious identity is not only reflected in the practice of religion but also in how individuals interpret and respond to life experiences within a religious context.

The formation of religious identity involves a psychosocial developmental process, representing a blend of childhood experiences through which an individual develops their religious identity (Imanina & Akhyar, 2018). The development of religious identity involves psychosocial stages as described in Erik Erikson's theory of identity development. According to this theory, individuals progress through a series of psychosocial conflicts that shape their identity. The stage most relevant to religious identity formation is adolescence, known as "Identity vs. Role Confusion," during which adolescents attempt to understand who they are and the values they hold. During this stage, individuals align their childhood experiences with the religious values they encounter, contemplating whether to continue their family's beliefs or explore different religious paths. This process allows individuals to develop their religious identity by reflecting on childhood experiences and familial religious values. It is a complex process that may involve deep consideration and reflection. Ultimately, these psychosocial stages play a crucial role in helping individuals develop their religious identity based on early experiences and religious values encountered in adulthood.

The formation of religious identity follows psychosocial stages according to Erik Erikson's theory of identity development, which can be summarized as follows: First, the childhood stage (Trust vs. Mistrust), in which basic trust in the world and others is established, and early religious experiences may shape one's worldview; second, toddlerhood (Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt), during which children learn to control aspects of their lives and are introduced to religious rules and norms; third, preschool (Initiative vs. Guilt) and early school age (Industry vs. Inferiority), where religious experiences may foster initiative in practicing religion or induce guilt when failing to adhere to religious expectations; and fourth, adolescence (Identity vs. Role Confusion), during which individuals search for self-identity, including religious identity. Adolescents may begin to question the beliefs they inherited in childhood and start forming their own religious convictions.

The Impact of Social Media on Adolescent Religious Identity

The impact of social media on adolescent religious identity can vary from individual to individual. Parents, educators, and society play an important role in guiding adolescents to use social media wisely and helping them develop a deeper understanding of their religious identity. Social media provides a platform for adolescents to present themselves online, and their religious identity may be reflected in how they construct their profiles, upload content, or participate in online discussions. Social media allows adolescents to connect with people from diverse backgrounds and religious beliefs, which can broaden their perspectives, facilitate the exchange of

ideas, and enhance understanding of religious diversity. The positive and negative impacts of each social media platform are as follows:

1. Instagram

Positive Impacts: Instagram enables adolescents to connect with fellow adherents locally and globally, reinforcing a sense of community and supporting religious identity. Some Instagram accounts provide informative religious education content, which adolescents can access to deepen their understanding of religious teachings and practices. Through images, quotes, and personal stories, Instagram can serve as a source of inspiration and motivation for adolescents to uphold their religious values amidst daily challenges. Instagram also allows adolescents to acknowledge and celebrate their religious identity, creating an environment where they feel accepted by users with similar values and beliefs. Accounts and communities dedicated to religious education offer opportunities to learn more about history, teachings, and religious practices.

Negative Impacts: Instagram often portrays idealized versions of life, which can cause adolescents to feel pressured or dissatisfied with their religious identity if they compare themselves to others. Popular cultural trends on Instagram may not align with religious values, and adolescents may feel tempted to follow these trends without considering their impact on religious identity. Adolescents may experience bullying or criticism related to their religious identity, especially when differences in beliefs exist, undermining self-confidence. Excessive Instagram use may lead to time mismanagement, reducing engagement in religious or productive activities. Exposure to conflicting values or idealized images can create internal conflict, challenge adolescents' understanding of their faith, and contribute to social isolation.

2. Twitter

Positive Impacts: Twitter provides a platform for adolescents to learn more about their own beliefs and those of others. They can share experiences, expand knowledge, and discuss religious ideas. Twitter allows adolescents to connect with religious communities locally and globally, reinforcing their religious identity through a sense of support and camaraderie. Interaction with diverse religious viewpoints can help adolescents develop a deeper understanding of their own religious values.

Negative Impacts: Twitter can also be a platform for religious controversy and debate, exposing adolescents to extremist or radical ideas that may compromise moderate views. Adolescents may experience bullying or discrimination based on their religious identity, potentially leading to identity conflicts. Exposure to harmful or misleading content can negatively influence their understanding of religion. Social norms and trends on Twitter may pressure adolescents to adopt behaviors inconsistent with their religious values.

3. WhatsApp

Positive Impacts: WhatsApp allows adolescents to connect easily with members of their religious community, reinforcing solidarity and support in maintaining religious identity. They can share religious information, articles, and sermons via group or private chats, enriching their understanding of teachings and strengthening faith. Interaction with peers from diverse religious backgrounds offers insights into religious diversity. WhatsApp also facilitates emotional support, coordination of religious events, and collaborative learning among adolescents, promoting a positive environment for religious development.

Negative Impacts: WhatsApp groups may share controversial or extremist content, causing confusion about personal religious values. Exposure to conflicting views can generate identity conflicts or pressure to conform to group norms. Misuse of the platform can spread false

information, facilitate online bullying, and undermine self-image and religious identity. Over-involvement in WhatsApp groups may lead to isolation from broader social engagement and expose adolescents to radical or harmful ideas.

4. TikTok

Positive Impacts: TikTok enables adolescents to express religious beliefs creatively through short videos, dances, music, or storytelling that reflect religious values. It provides an engaging, creative way to learn about religion and deepen understanding. TikTok fosters virtual communities sharing similar religious values, offering support and friendship in a digital context. Adolescents may feel empowered to express and affirm their religious identity through creative content. Educational content on TikTok can also provide enjoyable learning experiences and global exposure to religious and cultural diversity.

Negative Impacts: TikTok content can sometimes create stereotypes or generalizations about religious groups, influencing adolescents' perceptions of their own religious identity. Adolescents may encounter controversial or harmful content, trends that pressure them to adopt certain visual styles inconsistent with their beliefs, or online bullying. Privacy concerns and exposure to risky behavior trends may negatively affect religious identity and adolescent well-being.

5. Facebook

Positive Impacts: Facebook allows adolescents to connect with fellow believers, reinforcing a sense of religious solidarity and social support. Religious groups and pages provide access to information, discussion, and learning, facilitating interactive participation in religious activities. For adolescents who may be isolated in their local communities, Facebook enables connection with geographically distant adherents and broader insights into diverse religious interpretations, fostering tolerance.

Negative Impacts: Facebook can be a platform for controversy and polarization, exposing adolescents to extreme or intolerant views that may undermine pluralism and tolerance. Peer pressure to conform to specific religious images, exposure to inappropriate content, and excessive online activity may reduce engagement in offline religious practice, negatively affecting religious identity development.

6. Telegram

Positive Impacts: Telegram provides access to discussion groups and channels focused on religious topics, allowing adolescents to deepen knowledge and understanding. It enables connection with religious communities locally and globally, providing social support and opportunities to share experiences. Educational channels and groups offer in-depth learning, reinforcing religious identity and emotional support. Telegram facilitates access to religious texts, writings, and spiritual resources.

Negative Impacts: Some Telegram groups may spread extremist or intolerant content, potentially influencing adolescents' views or promoting harmful behaviors. Excessive focus on religious communities in Telegram can lead to social isolation and hinder appreciation for broader diversity. The platform carries risks related to online security, misinformation, and exposure to radical ideologies. Unsupervised use can increase vulnerability to harmful content and online harassment, negatively impacting religious identity.

Social media has a significant influence on the formation of Christian adolescent identity, particularly through the digital content they consume and interactions with online communities (Hura, 2026). Social media platforms not only provide a space for adolescents to express their beliefs but also reshape their religious perceptions and practices through exposure to cultural and

moral content (Shamim, 2024). The use of social media offers opportunities for religious communities to guide adolescents in the development of self-identity while simultaneously presenting challenges related to consistency in values and religious practices (Ogibi, 2015). Social factors such as gender, family influence, peer interaction, and patterns of media communication also affect the development of religious and spiritual identity during post-adolescence, including the utilization of religious media for learning and engagement (Mullikin, 2006). Research on the Muslim community in Pontianak indicates that the typology of social media users determines how adolescents construct their religious identity, while also navigating the challenges of aligning online practices with the religious values they uphold (Prasojo & Masri, 2020).

Moreover, social media presents new challenges for adolescents in understanding their religious identity online, including the use of religious symbols to express faith (Lövheim, 2013). The relationship between computer and media usage and adolescent identity formation, particularly among females, demonstrates that digital experiences influence religious values and self-understanding (Dinter, 2006). The digital era also enables adolescents to creatively develop religious practices through peer interactions and faith symbolization, while simultaneously confronting conflicts between online expression and religious modesty, especially for hijab-wearing adolescents (Golan, 2023; Kavakci & Kraeplin, 2017). General principles regarding religious and cyber identity highlight the importance of understanding online interactions in shaping adolescent self-concept and their impact on reinforcing beliefs and community engagement (Mousawi, 2024). Overall, the literature suggests that social media can serve as both a positive and negative tool in shaping adolescents' religious identity, depending on how it is utilized and guided within the context of religious education.

CONCLUSION

Overall, social media has a significant impact on adolescents' lives, including the formation of their religious identity. Social media serves as a vast source of information, allowing adolescents to access diverse perspectives, experiences, and religious values that can either reinforce or challenge their beliefs. Platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Telegram, and TikTok provide opportunities for adolescents to construct and express their religious identity through interactions with communities, educational content, and participation in online discussions. Religious identity during adolescence is a crucial aspect of personal development, as adolescents seek meaning in life, understand guiding values, and align their beliefs with social and digital experiences. Positive impacts of social media include strengthening community belonging, access to religious knowledge, and creative expression of faith, while negative impacts involve exposure to biased or extreme content, trends conflicting with religious values, and potential harassment or discrimination, which can affect adolescents' self-confidence and religious identity.

The contribution of this research lies in providing a deeper understanding of the role of social media in shaping Muslim adolescents' religious identity and how interactions with various platforms influence their religious understanding and practices. These findings can inform parents, educators, and policymakers in designing effective digital guidance strategies and developing educational content that strengthens adolescents' religious identity. Future research is recommended to explore the long-term effects of social media on adolescents' spiritual and moral development, compare platform-specific impacts in more detail, and examine moderating factors such as family support, digital literacy, and community engagement in mediating the effects of social media on religious identity.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Author 1	:	Contributed to a deeper understanding of adolescent behavior and online interactions
Author 2	:	Gained experience in analyzing the relationship between digital media and religious development
Author 3	:	Exploring methodological approaches in studying social and psychological aspects of media use
Author 4	:	Drawing conclusions and preparing an article report based on collected data, analysis results, and reliable sources to present clear information.
Author 5	:	Translator and exploring methodological

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