The Influence of Information Technology On Religious Practices In Urban Muslim Communities

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Abstract

Article History

This study aims to analyze the influence of information technology on religious practices in urban Muslim communities. With technological advances such as the internet, religious applications, and social media, access to information and the implementation of worship have become easier and more efficient. This study uses descriptive qualitative methods to delve deeply into how technology affects the way urban Muslims carry out their daily worship. Data is collected from various secondary sources such as articles, books, and related journals. The results of the study show that information technology makes it easier for Muslims to carry out worship and deepen religious knowledge flexibly, but it also poses challenges such as individualization of worship and fragmentation of religious understanding. Therefore, a balance between the use of technology and involvement in religious activities is collectively needed to maintain spiritual and social values in the religious practices of urban Muslim communities.

Keywords:

Introduction

In recent decades, the development of information technology has brought significant changes in various aspects of life, including in the field of religion. In urban Muslim societies, information technology, particularly the internet and social media, plays an important role in facilitating religious interaction and the transformation of religious ways. Easier access to Islamic knowledge, online lectures, worship reminder apps, and religious discussions on social media platforms have affected the way urban Muslims carry out their religious practices.

With online lectures, worship reminder applications, and religious discussion platforms on social media, Muslims can organize their worship more efficiently and get religious guidance without space and time limitations. For example, worship reminder apps play a significant role in increasing religious observance, especially among urban Muslims who have busy schedules and fast lifestyles. These apps, such as prayer time reminders, digital Qur'an, and daily worship guides, help Muslims perform their prayers in a timely and consistent manner, even when they are in a busy situation (Syarif, 2021) With regular notifications, users are reminded to perform five prayers, read the Qur'an, or dhikr, so that worship becomes part of their daily routine. In addition, some applications also provide additional content such as prayer guides, qibla directions, and fasting times, which makes it easier for users to carry out religious guidance. With this convenience, the worship reminder application is able to help urban Muslims maintain their obedience in carrying out worship in the midst of the pressures of modern life which often takes up attention and time.

In addition, lectures and Islamic studies available online allow them to participate in religious studies from various prominent Islamic scholars and thinkers from around the world without having to be physically present. Religious discussions on social media also provide a space for them to share and exchange views with fellow Muslims, enriching their understanding of religious teachings. All of this creates a more flexible, modern, and globally connected religious pattern, while still retaining traditional Islamic values.

However, technological advances not only provide space for urban Muslims to explore religious teachings independently, but also create new dynamics in building virtual communities that cross geographies. This transformation raises questions about the role of technology in shaping the religious experience and Muslim identity in the midst of rapid modernization and urbanization. Therefore, the author will thoroughly discuss the influence of information technology on religious practices in urban Muslim communities

Methods

The descriptive qualitative method is seen as a way to describe and understand a phenomenon or event in depth based on the experiences or views of the participants (Pahleviannur et al., 2022) so that the selection of the descriptive qualitative method is considered the right method to discuss the influence of information technology on religious practices in urban Muslim communities. Because researchers dig deeper into how information technology, such as the internet, religious apps, and social media, affects the way urban Muslims carry out daily worship and religious practices.

The data obtained in this study is by collecting relevant data obtained from articles, books, and journals related to information technology and religious practices will be analyzed to enrich the theoretical perspective of the research (Pringgar & Sujatmiko, 2020) Furthermore, the data that has been collected are then categorized based on the predetermined subjects and sub-subjects which are then clearly explained, especially with the positive and negative impacts of technology on religious practices, such as accessibility, individualization of worship, and fragmentation of religious identity.

With this qualitative descriptive approach, the research is expected to provide a comprehensive picture and knowledge of how the role of technology in shaping the religious experience of urban Muslims, as well as the challenges and opportunities that arise in the context of modernization and urbanization.

Results and Discussion

The Role of Information Technology in Religious Practice in Urban Muslim Communities

Information technology can be defined as the entire device, system, and method used to collect, process, store, and disseminate information (Putri, 2017) In essence, this technology aims to make it easier to access and manage data quickly and efficiently, which plays an important role in today's digital era. The development of information technology has experienced a tremendous acceleration since the invention of computers and the internet, which has fundamentally changed the way humans communicate and exchange information (Rachmadi & Kom, 2020)

Over time, information technology has evolved from a mere tool for processing data to a platform that creates a global communication network, allowing for the real-time exchange of information between individuals in different parts of the world (Fauzi et al., 2023) For example, the internet, which was originally a military network, is now the main means of modern life, from education to business. The development of hardware such as computers and smartphones, as well as software such as social media, applications, and data management systems, has made information easily accessible to anyone, anytime, and anywhere.

Information technology, specifically bridged by the internet, religious applications, and social media, has a significant impact on practical aspects of the religious life of urban Muslim communities (Arivianto, David, Syahputra, & Nur, 2022) The Internet network allows unlimited access to religious information in all aspects, from the interpretation of the Qur'an, fatwas, to lectures from scholars around the world. This makes it easier for urban Muslim communities to learn and deepen their religious knowledge flexibly, without being bound by time and place. Furthermore, the use of religious applications, such as prayer reminders, digital Qur'an, and hijri calendars, allows urban Muslim communities to carry out daily worship more efficiently. For example, prayer time reminder applications send notifications that ensure that people can carry out worship on time, even in a busy environment.

There is another technology that can help convey information, namely social media which creates a new space for Muslims to interact in virtual communities, share experiences, and discuss religious teachings (Zuhri, 2021) Platforms such as YouTube and Instagram allow Muslim clerics or influencers to deliver lectures or provide religious advice to a wide audience, across geographical boundaries. However, although technology makes it easier to carry out worship and enrich religious insights, the impact also needs to be watched out. The risk of individualization of worship increases when people rely more on online applications and lectures, thereby reducing physical interaction and togetherness in the community. Thus, although information technology brings many benefits to the religious life of urban Muslims, it is important to maintain a balance so that social and spiritual values in Islam are maintained (Solich & Ni'am, 2024)

It is undeniable that the existence of information technology plays a major role in the modernization of society, given its wide impact on various sectors of life. In the field of education, information technology allows for online learning and unlimited access to literature. In social life, social media is changing the way humans interact and build communities, while in the economic sector, business digitalization is driving the emergence of a technology-based economy. All of this shows that the development of information technology is not only accelerating the flow of information (Indiarma, 2023) but also redefining the way we live our daily lives in the era of globalization.

The concept of religious practice refers to actions, rituals, and behaviors carried out by individuals or communities as a form of practicing religious teachings. In Islam, religious practices include various forms of worship, such as prayer, fasting, zakat, hajj, and reading the Qur'an, all of which have a clear spiritual and legal foundation (Suryadi & Hayat, 2021) In addition to these formal rituals, religious practices also include daily behavior that is in accordance with Islamic values, such as being honest, maintaining good relations with others, and staying away from religious prohibitions. Religious practices are not only intended as a form of obedience to God, but also as a means of building character, identity, and social connection in society. In urban Muslim societies, religious practices can be influenced by social contexts and modernity, including

the use of technology that facilitates or changes the way people carry out worship and deepens religious understanding (Rosyad, 2021) Thus, religious practices include the ritual, ethical, and social dimensions that shape a person's religious life within his or her community (Ningsih & Zalisman, 2024)

Furthermore, the concept of religious practice does not only focus on the implementation of formal rituals (Setiyani, 2018) but also includes broader spiritual, ethical, and social dimensions. In Islam, every action of a Muslim, whether it is mahdhah worship (worship that is directly related to human relations with Allah, such as prayer, fasting, and zakat) or ghairu mahdhah worship (worship related to human relations with others, such as doing good, helping others, and being honest), is considered part of religious practice. The essence of this practice is not just symbolic obedience, but also an effort to achieve closeness to Allah and reflect the teachings of Islam in daily life.

In modern society, especially in urban areas, religious practices often have to adapt to social changes and dynamic lifestyles. Technology, for example, has played an important role in making it easier for Muslims to continue to carry out their worship in the midst of busyness (Sirajuddin, 2020) Prayer reminder apps, online lectures, and religious discussions on social media are some examples of how technology integrates religious practices with modern life. However, the challenge faced is to maintain the spiritual meaning and quality of worship so that it does not become a superficial formality.

Therefore, religious practices are not only seen as a series of ritual activities, but also as a process of self-transformation and social interaction that continues to evolve along with the changing times. This reflects how important the social context and modernity are in understanding and practicing religion in daily life.

The Influence of Technology on Religious Practice in Urban Communities

The influence of technology on religious practices in urban Muslim societies is significant and diverse. Technology has made it easier for Muslims to access religious information, allowing them to carry out their worship more flexibly. Prayer reminder apps, digital Qur'an, and online lecture platforms allow Muslims to carry out worship in a timely and consistent manner, even in the midst of busy urban lifestyles (Marzuki & Mabrur, 2020) In addition, Muslims can access a wide range of scholarly views and follow religious studies from around the world, which was previously difficult to reach without the presence of technology.

In addition, social media and online discussion platforms open up opportunities to interact and share religious experiences with other Muslims from different parts of the world. This creates a virtual community that expands the dimension of togetherness, although not in physical form (Syarif, 2021) In this context, technology facilitates cross-cultural and cross-geographical dialogue that enriches people's insights into Islam and religious practices. However, technology also brings challenges in religious practice. On the one hand, although it makes it easier to access worship individually (Islamiah, 2018)technology can reduce the social and physical interactions that are important in collective worship, such as congregational prayers in mosques or attending recitations. This has the potential to lead to individualization of worship, where people prefer to carry out religious practices individually rather than together with the community.

Then with the easy dissemination of information on the internet, there is a risk of spreading false or inaccurate religious information, which can affect the understanding of the people of Islam. Furthermore, excessive use of technology can encourage Muslims to become more reliant on digital media and reduce their involvement in religious practices that are collective (Zuhri, 2021) such as attending congregational prayers or social activities in mosques. Religious practices that should have strong social aspects, such as friendship or mutual cooperation in religious activities, can become more individualistic

In addition, the ease of access to various sources of religious information also increases the risk of fragmentation of religious understanding (H. M. R. Lubis, 2021) Muslims can be exposed to a variety of different, even conflicting, interpretations, which can lead to confusion or conflict in the understanding of religious teachings (Bagir, 2005) Therefore, it is important for

urban Muslim communities to remain selective in choosing credible sources of religious information so that the influence of technology remains positive and does not damage the true essence of Islamic teachings.

Thus, while technology provides many benefits in improving access to knowledge and worship, Muslims need to maintain a balance between the use of technology and direct involvement in religious practices that reinforce the values of togetherness and unity within the community.

The impact of technology use on urban Muslim communities

In the modern era dominated by information technology, the religious life of urban Muslim communities has undergone a significant transformation (Islamiah, 2018) Technological advances have not only affected the economic, social, and cultural sectors, but also the way Muslims carry out their religious practices. The presence of internet networks, religious apps, and social media platforms has opened up wider access to religious knowledge, allowing Muslims to more easily obtain spiritual guidance, learn about Islamic teachings, and participate in religious discussions from different parts of the world.

However, this progress not only brings benefits, but also presents new challenges (N. S. Lubis & Nasution, 2023) On the one hand, technology makes it easier for urban Muslims to carry out worship in the midst of an increasingly busy life. On the other hand, the inappropriate use of technology can reduce the quality of spiritual and social interactions that were previously integral to religious practices (Islamiah, 2018) Therefore, to understand the impact of technology more comprehensively, it is important to review how technology has affected the religious life of urban Muslim communities, both in terms of positive and negative impacts. Here the author will elaborate on it in detail

The positive impact of technology use on urban Muslim communities

In today's digital era, which is all connected, internet connections make technology an integral part of human life. The presence of technology, from the internet to smart devices, has changed many aspects of life, including patterns of social interaction, ways of working, and approaches to education and spirituality. For urban Muslim communities, technological developments not only offer convenience in daily life but also open up new opportunities in strengthening Islamic values and building a more inclusive and productive community. With the use of technology, urban Muslims can more easily access religious information, attend virtual studies, and donate online to support social programs. In addition, technology is also a means to develop sharia-based businesses that can answer modern economic challenges. The following are the positive impacts of using technology for urban Muslim communities

1. Easier Access to Religious Information

    When it comes to technology, in the past, before the entry of internet access, people only relied on information, namely from news on television (TV), radios, to newspapers (Langke, 2019) But now, everything is changing, information will very quickly spread to all corners of the world as long as the region has internet access (N. S. Lubis & Nasution, 2023)

    Nowadays everyone feels how fast technology is developing, the exchange of information which is all digital and this requires a bridge between each other, so the existence of the internet allows fast and wide access is very helpful for all aspects of communication, especially in the field of Islamic science (Sulaeman, Darodjat, & Makhrus, 2020). As is known, urban areas are the first priority in the procurement of internet networks so that urban Muslims can more quickly experience the benefits of internet access (Prihatini & Muhid, 2021) namely by learning about religious teachings through online platforms such as websites, applications, video lectures, and podcasts from leading scholars or scholars around the world.

2. Make Worship Easier

    Making Worship Easier carrying out religious obligations (Harwoto, 2023) The existence of technology for urban Muslim communities is its ability to make worship easier in the midst

of a busy and demanding lifestyle (Fauzi et al., 2023) Worship reminder applications such as prayer schedules, fasting reminders, and digital Qur'an applications make it easier for Muslims to carry out worship more regularly and consistently, without having to worry about time or place. So that even if someone is on the road or working, they can still perform their prayers on time.

In addition, the digital Qur'an application allows Muslims to read and study holy verses anywhere, without having to carry a physical mushaf (Afif, 2023) In fact, with features such as integrated translation and interpretation, the app facilitates a deeper understanding of Islamic teachings. Technology also provides access to online religious lectures and studies, so that urban Muslims can continue to deepen their religious knowledge even if they do not always have time to attend face-to-face studies (Setia & Dilawati, 2021) With all these conveniences, technology helps Muslims carry out their religious practices in the midst of stressful urban environments, allowing them to remain obedient to the teachings of religion efficiently and effectively, while balancing the demands of work and daily life (Arivianto et al., 2022).

3. Inclusive Religious Education

    Inclusive religious education refers to more open and equitable access for all individuals (Kusumawati et al., 2023)without being limited by geographical, economic, or social factors. Technology plays an important role in realizing this inclusivity, especially among urban Muslim communities, where access to traditional educational institutions such as Islamic boarding schools or mosques may be limited due to busyness or distance (Hatta, 2018) With digital platforms, people who previously had difficulty attending formal religious education can now learn Islamic teachings more easily through online classes, online lectures, or religious education applications.

    For example, someone who lives in a big city and has a busy work schedule may not always have the opportunity to attend recitation at the mosque. However, through technology, they can take part in studies or lectures from leading scholars online anytime and anywhere. Platforms such as YouTube, podcasts, or religious-specific apps provide a variety of religious content, ranging from the basics of Islam to more in-depth discussions. Technology also allows interaction through discussion forums or social media groups, thus enriching the learning process with dialogue between participants.

4. Virtual Community and Social Support

    Social media and online forums have created new spaces for urban Muslims to interact and strengthen their relationships with fellow Muslims. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, and YouTube allow individuals to participate in religious discussions, share spiritual experiences, and gain moral and religious support from others, even if they are physically separate. This allows urban Muslims to still feel connected to the religious community, although busyness and distance often limit their presence in physical religious activities (Arianto, 2024)

    In these digital spaces, Muslims can discuss various religious topics, delve into the interpretation of the Qur'an, share hadith quotes, or listen to lectures by scholars from various parts of the world. These forums also allow them to ask questions and discuss issues of daily life related to religion, such as halal-haram laws, worship ordinances, or moral challenges in modern society. In addition, religious community groups on social media often provide emotional support, encourage more Islamic behavior, and facilitate social activities such as charity fundraising and humanitarian activities (Pramesti, n.d.).

    This virtual community reinforces religious values by creating a sense of community that is not limited by geographical location. Urban Muslims can support each other in practicing religious teachings, getting advice, and sharing religious inspiration in a safe and family-filled

environment. Although not always meeting in person, this interaction on social media provides an opportunity to foster solidarity and strengthen religious identity in the dynamic modern life.

Negative impact of technology use on urban Muslim communities

Technology has brought great changes in human life, including in urban Muslim communities. Its presence offers various conveniences, ranging from access to information to innovations in various aspects of life. However, behind the perceived benefits, technology also has a negative impact if not used wisely. For urban Muslim communities, the uncontrolled use of technology can affect mindsets, lifestyles, and social interactions. For example, the fragmentation of religious identity is increasing, social interaction is decreasing, the spread of invalid information (hoaxes) is increasing, worship practices are carried out individually and so on. These impacts not only damage spiritual values, but can also weaken the quality of social relations and morality in urban Muslim communities. The following is an explanation of the negative impact of technology use on urban Muslim communities

1. Fragmentation of Religious Identity

   Fragmentation of religious identity is a phenomenon in which religious understandings, beliefs, or practices become fragmented or diverse among individuals or groups within a community (H. M. R. Lubis, 2021) This fragmentation typically occurs when individuals or groups have access to a variety of different sources of information or interpretations of religion, which then results in variations in the way they understand and practice religious teachings. In the context of technology and globalization, the fragmentation of religious identity is increasingly visible because Muslims can easily access various views and interpretations of Islamic teachings from scholars, scholars, or religious figures around the world through the internet.

   For example, through social media and digital platforms, one can be exposed to conservative, moderate, or even liberal views of Islam, which may contradict each other. The various schools of thought and schools of thought in Islam are also easily accessible, thus making an individual's religious identity more complex and may not be uniform with the local community or inherited traditions. This can create confusion or even tension within the Muslim community itself, as people may follow different views on how Islam should be practiced.

   This fragmentation is not always negative, as it can enrich religious understanding and encourage dialogue between various groups. However, in some cases, the fragmentation of religious identity can also lead to social divisions or create a sense of uncertainty in terms of how religious beliefs and values should be practiced, especially when there is no widely recognized religious authority to guide or unify those views (H. M. R. Lubis, 2021)

2. Declining Physical Social Interaction

   In the midst of the busy activities of urban Muslim communities, technology makes it easier for Muslims to participate in online religious discussions without the need to be physically present at mosques, recitations, or religious communities. In fact, if these online activities continue to be carried out, it will increase the individualistic nature of human beings and this is contrary to the character of humans who should be social beings. The existence of activities carried out through online has an impact, according to him, social bonds between fellow human beings so that social values that should be closely intertwined actually decline (Islamiah, 2018).

   For example, a Muslim who is used to watching lectures or attending online recitation may feel less motivated to attend religious events in the neighborhood. As a result, the sense of

community that is usually built through direct interaction with fellow Muslims is reduced, and religious life can become more individualistic. Technology, in this case, tends to make religious practices more isolated and less involved in the important aspects of community in Islam, such as friendship, mutual cooperation, and support between people.

3. Risk of Spreading Misinformation
   One of the main risks of technology use for urban Muslim communities is the spread of misinformation or misinformation related to religious teachings. The internet and social media allow anyone to produce, disseminate, and access religious information quickly. However, not all information available in the digital world comes from trusted or authoritative sources. This can pose a risk to Muslim communities who rely on online platforms as the main source of religious knowledge (N. S. Lubis & Nasution, 2023)
   When urban Muslims search the internet for religious guides or fatwas, they are often exposed to a variety of different interpretations, including extreme, biased, or even factually wrong views. Because this information is easily accessible and often unverified, there is a risk that the Islamic teachings being conveyed are not in accordance with the principles of the authentic religion. In extreme cases, this can trigger deviations in worship practices, erroneous beliefs, or even radicalization (Rahmawati, Astuti, Harun, & Rofiq, 2023)

   For example, some individuals or groups that do not have formal authority in religion can spread false or harmful views through blogs, videos, or social media. People who do not have in-depth knowledge may have difficulty distinguishing between valid information and misleading. This is especially dangerous in situations where erroneous religious guidance can influence important day-to-day decisions, including halal-haram laws, worship ordinances, or attitudes toward others.

   In addition, the spread of misinformation can lead to divisions within the Muslim community, as different or conflicting interpretations can lead to disputes about how to practice religious teachings (N. S. Lubis & Nasution, 2023) This fragmentation can weaken the solidarity of the ummah and create confusion among urban Muslim communities who seek to practice their religion in a complex environment.

   Thus, although technology facilitates access to religious information, the risk of spreading misinformation requires more vigilance. Muslims should be careful in choosing sources of information, by ensuring that they obtain religious guidance from credible sources and have recognized religious authority .

4. A More Individualistic Worship
   In Islam, many worships emphasize the importance of togetherness and community, such as congregational prayers, Friday prayers, and social activities such as recitation and friendship. Technology, with various applications such as prayer reminders, digital Qur'an, and online lectures, allows individuals to continue to carry out this worship on their own without having to attend religious activities in mosques or participate in other joint events (Solich & Ni'am, 2024)

   As technology dominates the way of worship, there is the potential that the essence of collective worship, such as solidarity and togetherness, can be diminished. For example, a person may prefer to watch a lecture online (youtube) rather than attend a mosque. Another example is that a person will use the Qur'an application on their mobile phone more often than following the tadarus of the Qur'an with the community. As a result, social interactions that occur in congregational worship, all of which strengthen the relationship of interaction

between fellow Muslims and build a sense of togetherness, are becoming less and less common.

This tendency of individualism in worship can cause Muslims to focus more on obligatory worship only and reduce the social and spiritual meaning that is usually obtained through togetherness in worship. Furthermore, this can have an impact on weakening attachment to the local Muslim community, as well as reducing the sense of social responsibility that is usually built through shared religious activities. Thus, although technology has made it easier to carry out individual worship, there are concerns that the social dimension of Islam, which emphasizes the importance of togetherness and mutual cooperation, could be eroded (Setiyani, 2018) This challenge requires an awareness that technology must be used as a tool in worship, not as a substitute for social interaction that is at the core of a richer and more meaningful religious life.

Integration of Technology in Religious Practice in Urban Muslim Communities

The integration of technology in religious practices in urban Muslim communities has changed the way Muslims carry out worship and deepen religious teachings. Technology, such as prayer reminder apps, digital Qur'an, and online lecture platforms, has made it easier for Muslims to access religious guidance, both in carrying out daily worship and deepening religious knowledge. With the presence of this technology, busy urban Muslims can remain consistent in carrying out worship even in the midst of dense urban activities. For example, prayer time reminder apps provide precise notifications, allowing them to pray on time even if they are at work or traveling.

In addition, online lectures and religious studies through social media allow Muslims to follow the views of scholars from all over the world without having to be physically present in one place. Religious discussions have also become more inclusive and dynamic with online forums, where people can share spiritual knowledge and experiences. However, on the other hand, the use of technology also brings challenges, such as the potential for reduced physical social interaction in religious activities, as well as the risk of spreading misinformation.

Overall, the integration of technology in religious practice has provided many conveniences, but it also requires a balance so that the values of togetherness and authenticity of religious teachings are maintained. To maintain a balance between the values of togetherness and the authenticity of religious teachings in the midst of the use of technology, it is important for Muslims to continue to prioritize physical social interaction in religious practice.

Technology should be used as a complement, not a substitute, for worship activities that involve togetherness, such as congregational prayers in mosques, recitations, or other socio-religious activities. Attending these activities can strengthen social bonds and solidarity between people, which is the core of religious life. In addition, it is important to ensure that the source of religious information accessed through technology comes from credible scholars or institutions, so that the authenticity of the teachings is maintained.

The community also needs to be wise in managing the time when technology is used for worship, while still providing space for a deeper spiritual experience through togetherness and friendship (Setiyani, 2018) Engaging in direct socio-religious activities not only strengthens the community, but also enriches the spiritual dimension in carrying out religious teachings. In this way, Muslims can make positive use of technology without sacrificing the fundamental values of religion and community life (Syarif, 2021)

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