

# The Role of Social Media in Improving the Understanding of Quran and Religious Proselytizing: A Study of High School Students in Semarang

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**Abstract:** Social media is an online media that enables its users to easily participate, share and create the content. The most common forms of social media are blog, social network, and wikis. There are more than 140 million Indonesians use internet, and they are so familiar with social media through smartphone or computer. This study aims to examine types of social media students use, how the frequency of social media usage, and the purpose of using social media. This research is an explorative descriptive study which is conducted on high school students in Semarang. The results showed that the types of social media used by students are *line*, *whatsapp*, and *instagram*.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The survey conducted by APJII (Indonesian Internet Service Provider Association) showed that in 2017 there were 143 million people of Indonesia used internet. Of this number, 80% of them are active social media users with an average access of 3 hours per day. The majority of users are those aged 19-34 years, young people who grow up in digital age ([www.kompas.com](http://www.kompas.com), accessed on 25 July 2018).

Social media is an online media that enables its users to easily participate, share and create the content. The most common forms of social media are blog, social network, and wikis. Social media facilitates its users to communicate variously with others, and it even becomes an interactive dialogue. Social Media is a site where everyone may create a personal web, which is then connected to friends to communicate and share information quickly (<https://id.m.wikipedia.org>, accessed on 25 July 2018).

Social Media like *detik* or *okezone* is faster than printed media like newspaper or magazine in giving information. Social Media also provides a lot of news with search engine like *google* or *yahoo* just by typing several words on it. Social Media also provides video service as a means of entertainment and information like *youtube*. Social media makes friendship network more intense and massive, i.e. *facebook*, *twitter*, *line* and *whatsapp*.

Technology is like a double-edged sword, not only providing benefits, but also putting ones in danger. Social media including social networking is beneficial in the field of communication, information and education. In educational field, it can accelerate or assist the learning process (<https://id.m.wikipedia.org>, accessed on 25 July 2018). On the other hand, it might be harmful when used unwisely, i.e. the spread of pornographic issues, addiction to playing games, violence among students, and the spread of hoax news and radicalism that might lead to terror acts.

The problem we face now is how to minimize the negative impacts of technological progress and optimize the positive ones. It is important for teachers and parents to direct and help their children use social media wisely, such as browsing the content to learn, spreading or accessing positive informative content, and limiting the duration of using it. Parents or teachers can direct their children in order to access the social media that can stimulate their creative and innovative abilities, Islamic materials to build character, some links to learn reading Quran or to understand its contents well. The scholars overcome the issues of radicalism by presenting articles which contain good material, building peace to create Islam which is *rahmatan lil'alamin*, in accordance with the understanding of Quran which is based on the rules of quranic interpretation to count on.

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Knowing the important role of understanding the Quran as a basis for Islamic education, how to share Islamic material with others, and the widespread use of social media, the writer is interested in conducting research entitled "The Role of Social Media in Improving the Understanding of Quran and Religious Proselytizing" (Study of High School Students in Semarang). This research is to answer the questions: 1. What types of social media do students use? 2. What is the frequency of using social media among students? 3. What are the students' goals of using social media?

This is an explorative descriptive research. Descriptive research is a study that aims to describe specific object and to relate phenomena with other important aspects. Descriptive research aims to make a systematic, factual and accurate description about facts and their relation among phenomena being investigated (Essential, *Research Method, Phycology*, file.upi.edu/direktori/FIP/JUR.\_PSIKOLOGI, accessed on June 4 2018). In a descriptive study, the data were collected using interview and scheduled questionnaire/interview guide (Goode & Hatt, 1952). The interviews were conducted on 14 high school students in Semarang using social media of *whatsapp* and *line*.

Technique of analyzing data used in this study is inductive-descriptive method. Inductive analysis is carried out by concluding the facts so that the separated facts can be organized into a coherent sequence. Descriptive analysis is conducted by completely describing the results of the inductive analysis through written language which is easy to understand.

These results of study can be used as a reference for technology practitioners, lecturers, Islamic proselytizing activists, Islamic spirituality activists (*rohis*) or campus proselytizing institute to make innovations in terms of learning Quran and Islamic proselytizing.

## 2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 Quran and Motivation to Seek the Knowledge

Quran is revealed by Allah to explain about everything (*tibyanaan likulli syai'*), as a guide, blessing as well as good news for s. All instructions and blessings contained in Al-Quran are expected to lead humans to the path of goodness and avoid them from destruction. To get guidance from the Qur'an, humans must read and actualize it in order to

understand its contents. AL-Quran is the words of Allah revealed to Prophet Muhammad, and reading it is valued as worship (Qaththan, 1973). Thus, reading Quran is the first door to get instruction and guidance from it.

To learn reciting Quran well, one may hear from ones' recording uploaded on *youtube*. To learn its translation and interpretation, one can download it on laptop or smartphone. Interpretation books are also available in *pdf* format which is downloadable for free. These all are convenient ways that can be enjoyed by Quran learners in the digital era.

Learning is a command of Quran. The first revelation is surah al-alaq which begins with the word *iqra'*, which means "read", or "recite". According to Assad, the right one is the first meaning, "read". Reading means catching the point consciously for the purpose of understanding an idea received from a particular source (Assad, 2017). The word *Iqra'* means not only "read", but also "learn". The first revelation indicates the importance of reading to study the verses of Allah both *qauliyah* and *kauniyah*.

## 2.2 Religiosity

### 2.2.1 The Notion of Religiosity

The word "religiosity" is an English word that functions as noun. It is shaped from adjective "religious" which means "pious" (Echols & Shadily, 1995). The word religiosity is a term used to describe those who adhere certain religion. According to Bloodgood et al., religiosity is described as an understanding, commitment, and following the teachings of principles and doctrines of certain religion (Bloodgood et al., 2007). Woodbine et al. state that nearly all religion and belief system have rules for the adherents in order to behave appropriately in all aspect of life including business aspect (Woodbine et al., 2009).

Religiosity can also mean "piety" or "the statement of being religious. The term religiosity is used interchangeably, and it is often defined as an individual's devotion, conviction, and veneration towards a divinity. However, in its most comprehensive use, religiosity can include all dimensions of religion, yet the concept of religiosity can also be used in a narrow perspective to show an extreme view and over dedication to religious tradition and ritual. This rigid form of religiosity is often viewed as a negative side of the religious experience, it can be symbolized by an over involvement in religious practices which are

regarded to be beyond the social norms of one's faith (Gallagher S., Tierney W, 2013).

Religiosity is a term used by muslim and non-muslim to refer to religious activities. In other word, religiosity is a devotion all kinds of activity related to religion. Thus, being religious people means performing Islamic teaching entirely. Allah the almighty said in Al-Qur'an Surah Al-Baqarah verse 208 which means "O ye who believe! Enter into Islam whole-heartedly; and follow not the footsteps of the evil one; for he is to you an avowed enemy."

Based on the elaboration above, it can be concluded that somebody who performs the teaching of religion is called religious people. In other word, religious person is the one who conducts religious teaching entirely.

### 2.2.2 Dimension of Religiosity

There are several dimensions of religiosity as promoted by some researchers. According to Charles and Rodney there are five dimensions of religiosity, namely dimension of belief, dimension of ritual, dimension of devotion, dimension of experience and dimension of knowledge (Glock & Stark, 1965).

**Dimension of Belief.** Dimension of belief is the basis of religiosity. Its content is the expectations of religious people to count on strong doctrine of a certain religion. Every religion has their own teaching that should be obeyed by the adherents. The contents and scope of belief are varied from those of other religions. Islam has its own dimension of belief. Ruthven stated the primary contents of religious belief in Islam are the belief in the existence of Allah, the belief in words of Allah, the belief in the existence of angels, jinn, and other creatures contained in the Quran (Ruthven, 2000).

**Dimension of Ritual.** Dimension of ritual measures the level of obedience, how far people perform their obligation. In Islam the main religious rituals are described by the five pillars of Islam (rukun Islam), namely bearing witness that there is no god but Allah (Syahadat), performing five daily prayers (salat), giving zakat, fasting during the month of Ramadhan and pilgrimage to Mecca for those who are able to perform it once in a lifetime (Waadenburg, 2002). From this dimension can be known that religious people conduct the five pillars of Islam as their obligation.

**Dimension of Devotion.** Having had a strong belief and performing all religious activities, muslim must

have devotion to their god. Dimension of devotion has indicators to measure the practices of religious devotion. In this case, people can be known whether they devote to Allah or not. Devoted muslim usually recite *basmala* before doing every beneficial tasks in their everyday life even though god doesn't see them.

**Dimension of Experience.** Dimension of experience is the feelings and experiences ever gotten by people. This dimension can be viewed like other common life experiences like activities that shape individual's world view. Religious people will experience a religious emotion one day. Thus, people who have felt the presence of Allah may be more likely to show higher levels of behaviour, belief and religious feeling. Religious people who have these experiences will feel like they are close to Allah, afraid of committing sins, feeling like their prayers are granted, etc.

**Dimension of Knowledge.** Some knowledge of religious contents is expected to be held by believers in all religions (Glock, 1962). According to him it is hard to decide which religious contents that matter in every single of religion. This dimension is related with one's knowledge and understanding towards their religious teachings. Those who have religion are necessary to know the primary knowledge about the basis of belief, rituals, holy books and traditions. In Islam Quran is the source of knowledge as well as the life reference.

### 2.2.3 Factors Affecting Religiosity

There are some factors that might affect one's religiosity as promoted by Thouless and Jalaluddun. According to Thouless factor of religiosity is divided into four; social factor, natural factor, needy factor and intellectual factor (Thouless, 2000).

**Social Factor.** Social factor of religiosity includes all social influences such as education, parents' teaching, traditions and social pressures. Social factor in religion consists of various effects on both religious beliefs and behaviours.

**Natural Factor.** Natural factor of religiosity is that religious people realize that everything in this world is due to Allah SWT, for example people admire the beauty of the sea, the forest. Natural factor includes the moral in the form of good experiences of a nature, such as moral conflict and emotional experience.

**Needy Factor.** Needy factor of religiosity emerges because people need guidance in all aspects of life. This factor is very important for human being because they are aware that in living the life they need some right ways according to their religion.

**Intellectual Factor.** Intellectual factor of religiosity is related to the process of verbal thought, especially in the formation of beliefs about religion. This factor is so important that it will develop a positive religious attitude.

Jalaluddin divided the factor of religiosity into two types, namely internal factor and external factor (Jalaluddin, 2008).

#### a. Internal Factor

Like other psychological aspects, the religious psychologists put forward various theories based on their respective approaches. Internal factor of religiosity is categorized into four as follows:

##### 1. Heredity

Religious souls are not directly as innate factors inherited from generation to generation, but are formed from various other psychological elements which include cognitive, affective and psychomotor.

##### 2. Age level

Some religious psychological studies explained about a relationship between the age level and religious awareness. Age level is not the only determining factor in one's religious awareness. This factor can be known from the differences in understanding of religion at different ages.

##### 3. Personality

Personality is one of internal factors of religiosity. Many of us have different personality that indicates distinguish understanding of religion. Under normal conditions, indeed individuals have differences in personality. This difference affects psychological aspects including religious awareness.

##### 4. Psychiatric conditions

There are many unnatural psychiatric conditions such as schizophrenia, paranoia, maniac, and infantile autism. The important thing we need to highlight is its relation to the psychological development of religion. Someone who has schizophrenia will isolate himself from social life

and his perception of religion will be influenced by hallucinations.

#### b. External Factors

External factors are considered influential in religiosity. They can be known from the environment where they live. Generally the environment is divided into three parts, they are:

##### 1. Family environment

Family is the simplest social unit in human life. It is the first social environment that is known by each individual. Thus, family life is the initial phase of socialization for the formation of religious souls on each individual.

##### 2. Institutional environment

Through the curriculum, which contains teaching material, the attitudes and exemplary behaviour of teachers as educators and associations among friends at schools are considered to have an important role in instilling good habits. Good habituation is part of moral formation that is closely related to the development of one's religious life.

##### 3. Societal environment

The societal environment is not an environment that contains elements of responsibility; it solely contains the element of influence. Norm and value have a greater influence on the development of religious souls, both in positive and negative forms.

### 2.3 Responsibility for Da'wah

Etymologically, the word "da'wah" derives from Arabic language *da'a-yad'u da'watan*, which means calling, uttering or inviting (Hans, 1980). Terminologically, da'wah is a conscious and planned effort to invite others verbally or with deed to realize and behave according to Islamic teachings (Jumantoro, 2001). Thus, we commonly know the term *da'wah bil lisan* and *da'wah bil hal*. Da'wah can be done not only by lecture, but also by concrete actions, such as donating money to orphan, donating money to build public facilities.

*Da'wah* is an obligation of individual s addressed to anyone to do good things and prevent the immorality (*amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*), in accordance with Quran surah Ali Imran: 104. The best predicate of *ummah (khaira ummat)* is given by Allah to those who actively preach, namely doing good deed and preventing the bad ones (Assad, 2017). In order to be successful in *da'wah*, it is

necessary to apply the right method. *Da'wah* should be applied with wisdom and good instruction, and discussion which is the best (Q. Surah al-Nahl: 125) (Religious Ministry of RI, Thematic Quranic Interpretation, jilid 3, Jakarta: Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf Quran). According to Assad, this verse emphasizes on goodness, wisdom, and the use of logical reason in religious discussion, not coercion (Religious Ministry of RI, Thematic Quranic Interpretation, jilid 1, Jakarta: Lajnah Pentashihan Mushaf Quran). *Da'wah* is different from coercion. In this modern era, religious proselytizers have a chance to proselytize in various ways by considering the audience. How proselytizing becomes interesting without forcing. How preaching is delivered in such away. Therefore, *da'wah* can use various media. Social media can be an effective means of preaching (Sumadi, 2016).

### 3 RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The following is data resulted from interview:

No	Type of Social Media	Duration	Purpose
I	Line, WA, ask fm, instagram dan snapchat	3-5 hours	communicating, doing assignment, learning to read Quran
II	Line, BBM, WA, dan instagram	3 hours	Communicating (i.e.. asking about school assignment), learning Islamic materials
III	Line, WA, instagram, ask fm	2 hours	Chatting, googling school assignment (i.e. assignment of PAI about usury in Qur'an)
IV	Line, WA, instagram, snap chat dan ask fm	2 hours	chatting, finishing school assignment, browsing material to understand Al-Quran on yahoo
V	Line, WA, instagram, ask fm dan snapchat	2 hours	Talking about school assignment, <i>osis</i> and <i>paskibar</i> , browsing Islamic material to understand the content of Al-Quran about the position of women
VI	BBM, Line, WA,	2 hours	Talking about school assignment,

	instagram, ask fm, snapchat		<i>paskibar</i> , googling Islamic material, learning to recite Quran from youtube
VII	Line, WA, instagram, ask fm, snapchat, fb, BBM, dan twitter	2 hours	Talking about school assignment, discussion, browsing Islamic materials
VIII	Line, WA, instagram dan BBM.	2 hours	Communicating among the members of <i>rohis</i> , googling Islamic materials and sharing information
IX	Line, WA, instagram, ask fm, snapchat, BBM, FB dan twitter	2 hours	Refreshing, communicating with friends
X	Line, WA, instagram, ask fm, snapchat	2 hours	Communicating and making friends, browsing blog about Islamic material, i.e. learning ritual ablution according to Quran
XI	Line, WA, instagram, ask fm, FB, BBM	2 hours	Communicating with <i>OSIS</i> members and learning online business, browsing web and blog to learn Al-Quran and Islamic materials
XII	Line, WA, instagram, ask fm, FB, BBM.	7 hours	chatting, asking about school assignment, sharing pictures
XIII	Line, WA, instagram, ask fm, FB, snapchat	2 hours	Communicating with friend and family, googling Islamic materials, learning Quran
XIV	Line, WA, instagram, w e chat, ask fm, FB, BBM	5 hours	Chatting, sharing photograph
XV	Insagram, W A, youtube, google search	4 hours	Communicating with friend and family, sharing information and knowledge, searching Islamic

			motivation and materials
XVI	IG,WA,FB, youtube	2 hours	Communicating with friend, sharing photograph, watching religious ceremony from youtube, looking for verses of Quran and translation
XVII	FB,WA, twitter, instagram, youtube	4-5 hours	Information, chatting, entertainment, funny animation, learning to read al qur'an from youtube, learning Islamic materials i.e. adultery, forbidden drink, etc
XVII I	WA, fb, youtube	2 hours	Looking for information, chatting with friend, communicating with family, watching film on youtube, sharing photo
XIX	WA, IG, youtube, blog	Flexible	Looking for information, media of learning, school assignments, inspiring video, never use social media to learn Quran because to learn it we need a teacher
XX	WA, FB, IG, youtube	4-5 hours	Communicating with friend and family, looking for information and knowledge, entertainment, sport video

The table above describes that all informants have used many types of social media in their daily life. The data above shows the students use many types of social media. Those who use *line* and *instagram* are (14), *ask fm* (11), *snap chat* (8), *BBM* (8), *facebook* (6), *Twitter* (2), *we chat* (1).

The students always use social media in their daily activities; they cannot even be away from them. The ones who use social media for approximately 2 hours a day to chat with friends or

family or to browse through google or yahoo are 12 people, those who spend 3 hours are 1 person, 3-5 hours 1 person, 4 hours 1 person, 4-5 hours 2 people, 5 hours 1 person, 7 hours 1 person and flexible 1 person.

Most students in Semarang use social media as a means to communicate with friends and to complete school assignments, they communicate among members of the organization (i.e. *osis*, *rohls*, *paskibar*, and English club). As teenagers they want to show their existence to others, one student used social media to show self-existence (informant XII). There is a student who used social media to expose himself in order to be famous (informant XIV).

From the data described above, it is known that social media plays a role for high school students in improving their understanding on Quran and Islamic knowledge. 16 informants stated that social media is important to improve the understanding of Quran and Islam. There are only 4 informants who could not feel it; he used social media merely to send photos for the purpose of becoming famous. There are some interesting expressions we need to consider, i.e. social media can be a teacher in improving the understanding of Quran and Islam (informant I). This expression means a lot for some religious proselytizers, Islamic education teachers, Islamic spirituality activists (*rohls*) in order to provide qualified blogs to meet the informants' need. In addition to all social media mentioned above, they must also utilize social media to provide content or to share material related to Quran. For example, *Rohls* with its official line, it is routinely sending its members about interesting themes of Quran to hear and discuss among students.

On *whatsapp* or *line* group, each member can play a role as proselytizer, as said by Prophet Muhammad "*ballighu annni walau ayatan*", which means to convey from me even though it's only one verse. The awareness of preaching from each member of a social networking group will have a positive impact on improving the Islamic knowledge of members. This is exactly the same as experienced by informants VIII and XIII. One student stated that learning to read Quran needs a teacher.

Using technology is an appropriate and effective method to support learning Quran and religious proselytizing because in Indonesia the internet users in 2017 had reached 140 million (80% of them use social media). Globalization era is an opportunity to proselytize globally in order to convey Islamic messages and teachings quickly based on target. In general, the students may obtain many kinds of materials about Quran and Islam from social media,

starting from simple things such as how to read Quran well, ritual ablution, worship, wearing veil, ethics of mingling with others, reading tutorial of classical book, even the discussion of modern Islamic law. It shows that through social media one can find positive benefits to improve the quality of their understanding of Quran and Islam.

## 4 CLOSURE

### 4.1 Conclusion

From the elaboration above, it can be concluded that all informants use social media, the average use of social media is 2 hours a day, they use many types of social media such as *line, whatsapp, Instagram, ask fm, snap chat, BBM, facebook, twitter, and we chat*. They use social media to communicate with friends and family, complete the school assignments, communicate and coordinate among members of organization, chat and refresh, and some others use social media to show their existence in order to be famous.

To improve the understanding of Quran and Islamic materials from social media, they use websites and blogs by Google, Yahoo and YouTube. Through the social media mentioned above, they can improve their understanding of Quran, they used it learn about history, worship, wearing veil, the ethics of mingling with others, even about modern Islamic law such as bank interest. Thus, the roles of social media in improving the understanding of Quran are: as a teacher that is able to answer Islamic issues, social media facilitates them to answer the problems they face, social media provides reading tutorial of classical book without having to stay in Islamic Boarding School, as a means of learning and religious proselytizing.

### 4.2 Suggestions

The writer would like to give some suggestions. *First*, for students and all social media users, let's use social media wisely, to communicate, learn and proselytize. *Second*, for the religious proselytizers, Islamic education teachers, Islamic spirituality activists, we should be able to use social media as a means to learn about Islam, to convey Islamic messages which are easy and fun, and to share the verse of Quran even though it's only one verse.

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