

Islamic Education Innovation Through Instagram: Efforts to Build Islamic Character in Students in Higher Education

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Abstract

This research is motivated by the challenges of shaping Islamic character among university students in the digital era, where social media platforms such as Instagram significantly influence young people's behavior and religious values. The main problem of this study lies in the limited innovation of Islamic education that utilizes digital platforms effectively to instill religiosity and moral values. The purpose of this study is to analyze the innovation of using Instagram as a learning and digital da'wah medium to strengthen Islamic character among university students. The research applies a qualitative approach with a literature study method, reviewing various studies and practices of Islamic education through social media. The results show that Instagram can serve as an effective medium to reinforce Islamic values through educational content such as Qur'anic quotes, short videos, infographics, and lecturer-student collaborations. The use of digital media is proven to enhance students' understanding of moral values, active participation, and religious awareness when applied strategically and with educational orientation. This innovation aligns with the principles of student-centered learning and contextual education, positioning social media not only as entertainment but as a creative and relevant learning space for developing students' Islamic character.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Character education in higher education is a strategic issue for addressing social dynamics and globalization. Universities are not only expected to produce academically intelligent graduates, but also individuals who are firmly grounded in Islamic values: faith, noble morals, social responsibility, and the ability to act as agents of change in society. However, in reality, various challenges arise: cultural shifts, easy access to technology, and the influence of social media, which can foster consumerist, individualistic, or even Islamically deviant behavior.

With the development of information and communication technology, particularly social media, platforms like Instagram have become a primary space for interaction for young people, including students, in their daily lives. Social media is not only a communication or entertainment tool, but also a channel for informal learning, sharing inspiration, and developing self-identity. For example, research shows that social media plays a positive role in Islamic religious learning, although it also carries risks such as inaccurate information and impaired concentration.

In the context of Islamic and character education, several studies have shown that the internalization of Islamic values through formal education (schools, madrasas) needs to be supported by a more contextual and adaptive approach to digital developments. For example, a study by Rohman, Arisanti, & Mansur (2024) showed that "social values" in Islamic education, such as justice, social concern, and equality, significantly contribute to the formation of students' religious character (Rohman et al., 2024). Meanwhile, studies on social media and morality have found that social media use among Muslims can have both sides: strengthening religious awareness, but also posing moral challenges (ABBARE et al., 2021). Specifically, on Instagram, a study found that the platform can influence adolescents' religious behavior through the content and features it presents (Sazali et al., 2020).

However, although there are various studies on social media and Islamic education, as well as the character of Islamic education in general, it appears that there is still limited research that specifically examines how Instagram, as a social media platform Islamic can be optimized as an innovation in Islamic education to build the Islamic character of students. Thus, it appears the need for Instagram-based Islamic education innovation which does not simply utilize social media in general, but is strategically designed for the Islamic character of students in the university environment.

The research problem underlying this study is the lack of innovative approaches in Islamic education that utilize Instagram to address the challenges of developing Islamic character among students, who are frequently exposed to secular content that can undermine religious values. The hypothesis is that innovations through Instagram features, such as educational posts and community interaction, can significantly improve the understanding and application of Islamic character, provided they are supported by appropriate guidance from educators.

The purpose of this article is to analyze Islamic educational innovation through the Instagram platform as an effective effort in building the Islamic character of students in higher education, thereby providing practical recommendations for educational institutions.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with a literature review method, as the focus is on understanding in-depth how Instagram can be used as an innovative medium in Islamic education to develop the Islamic character of university students. A qualitative approach was chosen because this research emphasizes understanding educational concepts, practices, and strategies, rather than simply collecting quantitative data.

The research procedure was conducted systematically. First, the researcher determined the research focus and formulated the main question, namely, how innovative use of Instagram can support Islamic character education. Next, the researcher collected relevant literature, including scientific articles, journals, books, and online publications discussing social media, Islamic education, and character education.

After collecting the literature, the researchers selected credible, up-to-date sources relevant to the research topic. The selected literature was then analyzed in-depth to identify innovative strategies and practices for using Instagram in Islamic education. The analysis results from various sources were then synthesized and interpreted to formulate key findings and confirm the research's scientific novelty.

The data testing and acquisition process was conducted through literature triangulation, which involves comparing and reviewing information from various sources to ensure accurate, consistent, and scientifically acceptable findings. Thus, this study provides a clear picture of Islamic educational innovations through Instagram and their impact on the development of students' Islamic character.

3. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Research result

Based on the results of a literature review from various scientific sources, it was found that the use of Instagram in Islamic education in higher education has significant potential to support the process of developing Islamic character in students. As a visual-based social media platform, Instagram can bridge the delivery of Islamic values with a creative, interactive, and contextual communication style for the younger generation, adapting to today's digital world.

Previous research conducted by Rossa Lailatul Fitria, Auliya Ridwan, entitled "Moral Education in the Digital Era: The Influence of Islamic Content on Instagram on the Formation of Islamic Character".

"Teenager Character in a Social Perspective" shows that Islamic content shared on Instagram plays a crucial role in shaping adolescent character by engagingly disseminating moral and spiritual values. Through Quranic quotations, short educational videos, and infographics on Islamic values, students can understand Islamic teachings in a lighter yet meaningful way. However, the study also emphasizes the need to improve digital literacy so that students and educators can select and use content that aligns with Islamic principles. (Lailatul & Ridwan, 2024)

Furthermore, the results of previous research conducted by Noor Mawaddah Rahmah, Nur Shofiyati, Endah Sucia Dewi, and Noorazamah Hidayati, entitled "Utilization of Social Media as an Innovative Strategy in Islamic Education in the Digital Era," confirmed that social media such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok can be optimally utilized in increasing the effectiveness of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) learning. Social media is considered capable of expanding the reach of learning, presenting innovative strategies, and strengthening religious values and student learning independence. In this context, the active involvement of lecturers and educational institutions is key to ensuring that the content disseminated remains aligned with Islamic values and oriented towards strengthening character. (Noor Mawaddah Rahmah et al., 2025)

In addition, previous research conducted by Daimurahman and Abdul Azis, entitled "Innovation of social media strategies in non-formal Islamic education: a comparative study of the Hijrah Yuk Ngaji community and Kuttub Al-Fatih," revealed that digital da'wah movements such as *Hijrah Community Let's Study the Koran successfully* built Islamic awareness among the younger generation through the use of social media, particularly Instagram, as a space for informal religious literacy. This relaxed yet substantial approach has proven effective in attracting students' interest in actively participating in religious activities and strengthening religious identity within the university environment. (Daimurahman, 2025)

Meanwhile, previous research conducted by Dela Agustiah, Taty Fauzi, and Erfan Ramadhani, entitled "The Impact of Social Media Use on Student Learning Behavior," reminds us that excessive use of social media can have a negative impact on students' learning behavior and academic concentration. Therefore, the use of Instagram in Islamic education needs to be directed at activities that support the learning process, strengthen moral values, and form Islamic ethics so that it still has an optimal educational function. (Agustiah et al., 2020)

From the various results of these studies, it can be concluded that Instagram plays a role as an effective innovative media in building the Islamic character of students. Forms of Islamic learning innovation that have emerged include Islamic motivational posts, quotations from the Qur'an, short educational videos, *podcast* light preaching,

and collaboration between lecturers and students in creating digital Islamic content. Through this strategy, social media becomes more than just a means of entertainment, but also transforms into a learning medium that strengthens religious values, social responsibility, and Islamic spirit within the university environment.

3.2. Discussion

The results of the literature review show that the use of Instagram as a medium for learning Islamic education can be analyzed through the perspective of Islamic educational theory and character building. In Islam, education aims not only to transfer knowledge but also to shape personality and noble morals (Danang Dwi Basuki, 2020). The development of students' Islamic character requires the integration of moral, spiritual, and social values into all learning activities. In this context, Instagram serves as a digital da'wah medium that can instill Islamic values through inspirational and educational content, such as Quranic quotations, advice from Islamic scholars, and reflections on Islamic life.

As explained by Wally (2021), teachers and educators have three primary roles in shaping students' character: as educators, instructors, and coaches who provide role models. In the context of Instagram use, lecturers can act as moral mentors, guiding students in understanding digital content with positive and Islamic values.

From the perspective of Islamic education theory, learning through social media is in line with the principles of tazkiyatun *nafs* (purification of the soul) and correction (moral education). Students not only understand religious values cognitively but are also motivated to internalize them in their daily behavior. This aligns with Isnaniah's (2025) view that digital media can be an effective means of instilling moral and religious values when used in a targeted and educational manner.

Furthermore, the use of Instagram in learning is also relevant to the principles of Student-Centered Learning (SCL), an approach that positions students as active subjects in the learning process (Hairunisa, 2023). Through SCL, students not only passively receive knowledge from lecturers but also participate in the creation of digital Islamic preaching content, such as short video *reels* and Islamic infographics that foster creativity, responsibility, and collaboration among students. Furthermore, learning becomes more contextual because students learn through the media they use every day. *Student-centered learning* also supports the implementation of social media as an active learning space (Mahliatussikah et al., 2022). Through activities such as creating Islamic religious content and reflecting on Islamic values, students act as active learners who creatively instill moral values.

The relationship between Instagram usage and contextual learning in the digital era is also very powerful. Instagram allows students to learn in real-life situations, practicing Islamic values through social interactions and publishing positive content. In line with constructivist theory, a learning process oriented toward direct experience helps students construct knowledge and moral values based on their life context. In this regard, digital media-based learning makes Islamic values easier to understand, internalize, and apply in campus and community life.

In line with research by Nurhanudin & Anda Juanda (2025), contextual learning strategies based on digital technology have been shown to strengthen students' internalization of Islamic values. The use of social media, such as Instagram, aligns with this approach because it can increase student engagement and build religious character that is contextual to their digital lives.

However, there are some challenges are several issues that need to be addressed. First, the low level of Islamic digital literacy among students leads to a lack of ability

to select content that is correct and in accordance with Islamic teachings (Isnaniah, 2022). Second, the potential for misuse of social media, such as the spread of false information or content that contradicts Islamic moral values. Third, weak supervision and guidance from educators regarding students' digital activities related to religious education.

To answer this challenge, several things are needed strategic solutions, improving Islamic digital literacy through training or workshops for lecturers and students, enabling them to use social media productively and ethically. Second, encouraging the development of educational content based on Islamic values that is packaged engagingly and interactively. Third, strengthening moral values monitoring by lecturers by implementing guidance and evaluation of social media-based learning activities. These efforts are crucial to ensuring that the use of digital technology is oriented not only toward creativity but also toward spiritual and moral values.

Thus, it can be emphasized that Islamic education innovation through Instagram is an effective strategy in instilling Islamic character values in higher education, social media can serve as an alternative learning space that strengthens collaboration between lecturers and students, expands the reach of Islamic preaching, and instills religious values in a manner relevant to the digital generation. The scientific novelty of this study lies in the integration of Islamic educational theory and principles. *student-centered learning*, and the digital learning context, which together encourage the transformation of Islamic education methods towards a more adaptive, creative, and character-based direction.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion presented, it can be concluded that the use of Instagram as an innovative medium in Islamic education has proven effective in developing the Islamic character of university students. This demonstrates the alignment between the research objectives outlined in the introduction and the findings in the results and discussion, indicating that Instagram can serve as a contextual, creative, and principle-based learning tool for *student-centered learning*. Going forward, this research has the potential to be developed through the direct application of social media-based learning strategies in campus environments, to strengthen the effectiveness of Islamic education that adapts to the development of digital technology without neglecting moral and spiritual values.

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