

INTERNALIZING ISLAMIC EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY EPISTEMOLOGY TO CONSTRUCT GENERATION Z RELIGIOSITY IN THE POST-TRUTH ERA: A QUALITATIVE STUDY AT AN INDONESIAN ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRAK

Era pasca-kebenaran, di mana resonansi emosional dan narasi yang digerakkan oleh identitas sering kali lebih besar daripada verifikasi faktual, telah membentuk kembali bagaimana siswa Generasi Z mengakses, menafsirkan, dan menginternalisasi pengetahuan agama melalui platform digital. Sementara penelitian sebelumnya telah meneliti literasi digital agama dan pendidikan karakter berbasis nilai di sekolah-sekolah Islam Indonesia, peran epistemologi filsafat pendidikan Islam dalam menengahi religiusitas Generasi Z di perguruan tinggi Islam non-negeri masih kurang dieksplorasi. Penelitian ini menyelidiki bagaimana landasan epistemologis filsafat pendidikan Islam diinternalisasi ke dalam konstruksi religiusitas mahasiswa Generasi Z di Universitas Islam Yasni Bungo, Jambi, Indonesia. Mengadopsi desain penelitian lapangan kualitatif yang didasarkan pada paradigma interpretatif, data dihasilkan melalui wawancara mendalam semi-terstruktur dengan dua belas siswa dan enam dosen (sampel yang dimaksudkan), observasi peserta selama tiga bulan di empat pengaturan akademik dan organisasi mahasiswa, dan analisis dokumen silabus kurikulum, materi kuliah, dan catatan organisasi mahasiswa yang dikumpulkan antara Februari dan April 2025. Data dianalisis menggunakan model interaktif Miles, Huberman, dan Saldaña dengan triangulasi sumber dan metode untuk meningkatkan kepercayaan, dan pengecekan anggota dengan tujuh informan untuk memverifikasi akurasi interpretatif. Analisis ini mengidentifikasi empat mekanisme internalisasi epistemologis yang saling terkait: praktik kelas dialogis dan kritis yang berakar pada tradisi *hiwār* Al-Qur'an; integrasi kurikulum yang mendamaikan wahyu, akal, dan pengalaman; pemodelan dosen berfungsi sebagai kurikulum tersembunyi; dan literasi digital berbasis agama yang menekankan pada *tabayyun*. Mekanisme-mekanisme ini bersama-sama menumbuhkan religiusitas mahasiswa yang reflektif, rasional, dan tahan terhadap disinformasi daripada sekadar ritualistik. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa epistemologi pendidikan Islam beroperasi sebagai filter kognitif dan normatif yang memediasi keterlibatan siswa dengan wacana agama digital, menawarkan model yang didasarkan secara kontekstual untuk memperkuat religiusitas otentik dalam pendidikan tinggi pasca-kebenaran.

Kata kunci: Epistemologi Pendidikan Islam; Konstruksi Religiusitas; Generasi Z; Era Pasca-Kebenaran; Literasi Digital Berbasis Agama.

ABSTRACT

*The post-truth era, in which emotional resonance and identity-driven narratives often outweigh factual verification, has reshaped how Generation Z students access, interpret, and internalize religious knowledge through digital platforms. While prior studies have examined religious digital literacy and value-based character education in Indonesian Islamic schools, the role of the epistemology of Islamic educational philosophy in mediating Generation Z religiosity within non-state Islamic universities remains underexplored. This study investigates how the epistemological foundations of Islamic educational philosophy are internalized into the religiosity construction of Generation Z students at Universitas Islam Yasni Bungo, Jambi, Indonesia. Adopting a qualitative field-research design grounded in an interpretive paradigm, data were generated through semi-structured in-depth interviews with twelve students and six lecturers (purposively sampled), three months of participant observation across four academic and student-organization settings, and document analysis of curriculum syllabi, lecture materials, and student-organization records collected between February and April 2025. Data were analyzed using the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña interactive model with both source and method triangulation to enhance trustworthiness, and member-checking with seven informants to verify interpretive accuracy. The analysis identified four interrelated mechanisms of epistemological internalization: dialogical and critical classroom practice rooted in the Qur'anic *hiwār* tradition; curricular integration that reconciles revelation, reason, and experience; lecturer modeling functioning as a hidden curriculum; and faith-based digital literacy emphasizing *tabayyun*. These mechanisms jointly cultivate a student religiosity that is reflective, rational, and resistant to disinformation rather than merely ritualistic. The study concludes that Islamic educational epistemology operates as a cognitive and normative filter that mediates students' engagement with digital religious discourse, offering a contextually grounded model for strengthening authentic religiosity in post-truth higher education.*

Keywords: Islamic Educational Epistemology; Religiosity Construction; Generation Z; Post-Truth Era; Faith-Based Digital Literacy.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The post-truth condition, in which appeals to emotion and personal belief are more persuasive than appeals to objective fact, has become a defining feature of the contemporary information ecosystem (McIntyre, 2018; Keyes, 2004). For Generation Z students born approximately between 1997 and 2012 who matured alongside ubiquitous social media

religious knowledge is increasingly mediated by short-form video, algorithmic feeds, and influencer-driven content rather than by structured study with qualified teachers. Within Indonesian Islamic higher education, this shift has produced two recurring concerns: a religiosity that is performative and fragmentary, and a vulnerability to manipulated or decontextualized religious narratives circulating on digital platforms. The problem this study addresses is therefore not whether students are religious, but how their religiosity is epistemically constituted: on what grounds they accept, reject, or suspend judgement about religious claims encountered online.

Existing scholarship has approached this problem from several directions. A first stream documents the erosion of factual authority in public discourse and its implications for civic and religious reasoning (McIntyre, 2018; Lewandowsky et al., 2017). A second stream, situated in Indonesian Islamic education, theorizes the integration of revelation (wahy), reason ('aql), and experience (tajribah) as a corrective to scientific dichotomy (Azra, 2012; Mas'ud, 2007; Nata, 2016) and emphasizes ta'dīb as the formation of an ethically grounded knower (Al-Attas, 1991). A third stream, more recent and empirical, investigates religious digital literacy and dialogical pedagogy as instruments for shaping critical religious agency (Febriana & Khasana, 2025; Wulandari & Aziz, 2025; Ilma, 2023). These contributions are valuable, yet they tend to treat epistemology either as an abstract philosophical category or as a curricular outcome, rarely tracing how epistemological commitments are actually internalized into the lived religiosity of Generation Z students at non-state Islamic universities operating outside the Java-centric mainstream of Indonesian Islamic scholarship. The pedagogical mechanisms by which a particular epistemic stance becomes a habit of mind under post-truth conditions and the relational and curricular conditions that make such internalization possible remain insufficiently mapped.

This study addresses that gap by examining, in a single bounded site, how the epistemology of Islamic educational philosophy is internalized into students' religiosity construction at Universitas Islam Yasni Bungo, a private Islamic university in Jambi, Indonesia. The contribution offered here is empirical and theoretical: empirically, the study documents the concrete mechanisms classroom dialogue, curricular integration, lecturer modeling, and faith-based digital literacy through which an integrated revelation–reason–experience epistemology is enacted; theoretically, it reframes Islamic educational epistemology as a working cognitive-normative filter rather than a static doctrinal commitment. The objective is twofold: (i) to identify the mechanisms of epistemological internalization observable in academic and student-organization life, and (ii) to characterize the form of religiosity these mechanisms produce among Generation Z students under post-truth conditions. The remainder of the article describes the qualitative field-research design used to address these objectives, presents the four mechanisms identified, and discusses their implications relative to prior work.

2. METHOD

Metode This study employed a qualitative field-research design within an interpretive paradigm (Moleong, 2017), selected because the research question concerns how meaning specifically, the meaning of religious knowledge and its grounds is constructed in situ by participants. The site, Institute Islam Yasni Bungo (IIYB Bungo) in Jambi Province, Indonesia, was chosen purposively because it is a private Islamic university outside the dominant Java-based Islamic higher-education networks, allowing examination of a setting that is institutionally Islamic yet structurally peripheral. Fieldwork was conducted between 3 February 2025 and 28 April 2025.

Participants were recruited through purposive sampling with maximum-variation logic. Twelve students from the Islamic Religious Education programme (six female, six male; six in semester 4 and six in semester 6) and six lecturers (four senior, two junior) consented to participate. Sample size followed the principle of information power (Malterud et al., 2016): recruitment continued until no new themes emerged across two consecutive interviews per participant category, which occurred at twelve students and six lecturers. All participants provided written informed consent; pseudonyms are used throughout, except where participants specifically requested attribution.

Three data-generation techniques were used in sequence to permit method triangulation. First, semi-structured in-depth interviews of 45–75 minutes were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia, audio-recorded with a Sony ICD-PX470 voice recorder (sampling rate 192 kbps; manufacturer-stated transcription accuracy $\geq 98\%$ for clear speech), and transcribed verbatim within 48 hours. The interview guide covered four domains: sources of religious knowledge, encounters with online religious content, reasoning about contested claims, and perceived role of formal coursework. Second, participant observation was carried out across four settings two undergraduate courses (Islamic Educational Philosophy; Hadith Studies), the campus student-led Islamic study circle, and one inter-organisation public lecture for a total of approximately 64 contact hours, recorded in field notes following Spradley's descriptive–focused–selective progression. Third, document analysis covered course syllabi ($n = 8$), lecture slide decks ($n = 14$), and student-organisation programme reports ($n = 6$) from the 2024/2025 academic year.

Data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014), comprising data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Initial open coding was performed manually on the Indonesian transcripts to preserve participants' lexical nuance; codes were then organised into categories and themes through axial coding, with analytic memos maintained throughout. Two researchers coded the first three transcripts independently; inter-coder agreement, calculated as simple percentage agreement on theme assignment, reached 87.5%, with discrepancies resolved through discussion. Trustworthiness was addressed through (i) source triangulation across students, lecturers, and documents; (ii) method triangulation across interviews, observation, and documents; (iii) prolonged engagement of approximately twelve weeks; and (iv) member-checking with seven informants, who reviewed condensed thematic summaries and confirmed interpretive accuracy. Translated

quotations presented in the Results section were back-translated by an independent bilingual reviewer to verify semantic fidelity..

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

The analysis is presented in the same order as the data-generation sequence in the Method section: characteristics of the participant set are summarized first (Table 1), followed by the four mechanisms of epistemological internalization identified through cross-cutting thematic analysis. Findings reported in this section are derived solely from the primary data; comparisons with prior literature are reserved for the Discussion. Demographic and epistemic-practice characteristics of the participant set are summarized in Table 1, which presents an illustrative subset of six of the eighteen participants.

Table 1. Selected participant profiles and self-reported epistemic practices (illustrative subset; n = 6 of 18).

Code	Role / Semester	Primary Source of Religious Information (Self-Reported)	Reported Verification Practice
S-01	Student / Sem. 4	Short-form video (TikTok, Instagram Reels)	Cross-checks with lecturer; consults Tafsir application
S-04	Student / Sem. 4	YouTube lectures and Telegram channels	Compares speakers; checks chain of teachers
S-07	Student / Sem. 6	Course materials and classroom discussion	Applies tabayyun before sharing content
S-11	Student / Sem. 6	Mixed: course materials and Instagram content	Reads original texts before accepting claims
L-02	Lecturer (senior)	Classical kitab and peer-reviewed scholarship	Models tabayyun explicitly during lectures
L-05	Lecturer (junior)	Mixed digital and printed academic sources	Demonstrates source comparison in seminars

Dialogical Critical Classroom Practice

Across the observed sessions of Islamic Educational Philosophy and Hadith Studies, the dominant pedagogical mode was not lecture transmission but structured argumentative exchange. Lecturers opened most sessions with a contested case often a recent piece of online religious content and required students to articulate, defend, and revise their positions in reference to textual and rational evidence. Of 64 observation hours, approximately 41 hours (64%) involved sustained student-to-student or student-to-lecturer dialogue exceeding ten minutes. Eleven of twelve student participants spontaneously identified this dialogical mode as the most distinctive feature of their coursework, and seven explicitly contrasted it with their prior secondary-school experience of memorization-based religious instruction. One student

noted that classroom discussion forced her to ask not only "what does the text say?" but also "how do we know that this is what it says, and on what authority?" a formulation observed independently in three other interviews.

Curricular Integration of Revelation, Reason, and Experience

Document analysis of the eight syllabi revealed an explicit tripartite epistemological framing. Six of the eight syllabi listed learning outcomes that required students to identify, distinguish, and relate revelation-based, reason-based, and experience-based sources of knowledge on a given topic. Lecture decks (n = 14) operationalized this framing by structuring topical units around the same three columns. In interviews, lecturers described this as a deliberate design choice intended to prevent students from treating any single source as self-sufficient. Students, in turn, reported that this structure changed how they read online religious content: rather than judging a claim by its emotional resonance or by the presenter's appearance, they reported asking which of the three sources the claim relied upon and whether the others had been considered. This shift was articulated by ten of the twelve student participants, with varying degrees of fluency.

Lecturer Modelling as Hidden Curriculum

A consistent observation across settings was that lecturers' enacted epistemic behaviour not their stated curriculum exerted the strongest formative influence reported by students. Senior lecturers in particular were observed to demonstrate verification practices in real time: pausing during a lecture to look up a source, openly revising a previously stated position, or declining to give a definitive ruling on a contested matter. Nine of twelve students named a specific lecturer when asked who had most influenced their approach to evaluating religious information online; in all nine cases, the influence cited was behavioural rather than doctrinal. Field notes recorded sixteen distinct episodes in which a lecturer publicly suspended judgement, deferred to a more qualified colleague, or invited correction episodes that students later described as defining moments in their own willingness to admit uncertainty.

Faith-Based Digital Literacy

The fourth mechanism, faith-based digital literacy, emerged at the intersection of the previous three. Rather than a standalone media-literacy module, it manifested as a habitual practice that students applied to their own digital consumption. Eight of twelve student participants reported routinely performing *tabayyun*—verification of source, transmitter, and context—before forwarding or acting on religious content received via WhatsApp groups, TikTok, or Instagram. Five reported having unfollowed accounts that they had previously trusted after applying these checks. Importantly, this practice was rarely framed as scepticism; it was framed as a religious obligation grounded in Qur'anic injunction. The emotional tone in interviews was therefore one of confidence rather than anxiety: students described feeling more, not less, religiously secure for having tools to evaluate what they encountered. Figure 1 summarizes how the four mechanisms reinforce one another within the post-truth digital environment.

DISCUSSION

Pembahasan The four mechanisms identified above can now be placed in dialogue with prior work. The prominence of dialogical–critical classroom practice (Section 3.1) aligns with, but also extends, the argument of Wulandari and Aziz (2025) that Freirean dialogical pedagogy is effective in Islamic Religious Education. Where Wulandari and Aziz emphasize dialogue as a method for building cognitive engagement, the present findings suggest that dialogue functions, more specifically, as an epistemic practice: it foregrounds the question of how a claim is grounded, not only what the claim is. This refines the broader Indonesian discussion of *hiwār* (Nasution, 2021) by linking the classical Qur'anic dialogical form to a contemporary post-truth use case, namely the live evaluation of online religious content during class.

The curricular integration mechanism (Section 3.2) confirms the longstanding theoretical claim that Indonesian Islamic education must move beyond the dichotomy between religious and general knowledge (Mas'ud, 2007; Azra, 2012; Nata, 2016). What the present study adds is operational evidence: when integration is built into the syllabus structure as a tripartite framing of revelation, reason, and experience, students report a discernible change in how they evaluate digital religious claims. This is consistent with Al-Attas's (1991) concept of *ta'dīb* as the formation of an ethically grounded knower, but it specifies a curricular mechanism through which *ta'dīb* can be enacted under contemporary digital conditions something Al-Attas's framework, written before the social-media era, does not address directly.

Lecturer modelling as a hidden curriculum (Section 3.3) is consonant with Bandura's (1986) social-learning account and with Indonesian-context findings on religious campus culture (Nurjannah et al., 2025). However, the present data point to a more specific and previously underemphasized phenomenon: it is the public performance of epistemic humility by lecturers visible suspension of judgement, open revision, deferral to authority rather than the modelling of doctrinal certainty, that students cite as formative. This nuances the role-modelling literature by suggesting that, in a post-truth setting, the most pedagogically powerful lecturer behaviour may be the demonstration of disciplined uncertainty rather than the projection of definitive knowledge.

The faith-based digital literacy mechanism (Section 3.4) converges with Febriana and Khasana (2025) and Ilma (2023), who argue that religious digital literacy is essential for Generation Z. The contribution of the present findings is to show that, in this setting, digital literacy is not experienced by students as a secular media-evaluation skill awkwardly bolted onto a religious curriculum; rather, it is experienced as a religious practice—*tabayyun*—whose normative force is internal to the tradition. This framing matters because it addresses a recurring concern in the post-truth literature, namely that fact-checking interventions can feel adversarial to identity-based belief (Lewandowsky et al., 2017). When verification is framed as religious obligation, it appears to circumvent that adversarial dynamic for the participants studied.

Taken together, the four mechanisms suggest that Islamic educational epistemology, as enacted at this site, functions less as a body of doctrine than as a working cognitive-normative filter. Two boundary conditions deserve emphasis. First, the findings are situated in a single private Islamic university in Jambi with a small participant set ($n = 18$); they should be read as analytically generalizable to comparable settings rather than statistically representative of Indonesian Islamic higher education at large. Second, the study captured a three-month window and cannot speak to the durability of the religiosity patterns described; whether the four mechanisms continue to shape student epistemic practice after graduation remains an open question. These limitations frame, rather than weaken, the contribution: they identify the next steps for a longitudinal and cross-site research agenda.

4. CONCLUSION

Returning to the two objectives stated in the Introduction, this study set out to identify the mechanisms through which the epistemology of Islamic educational philosophy is internalized in academic life at Universitas Islam Yasni Bungo, and to characterize the religiosity such internalization produces among Generation Z students under post-truth conditions. The evidence supports a coherent answer: at this site, internalization proceeds through four interlocking mechanisms dialogical-critical classroom practice, tripartite curricular integration, lecturer modelling of epistemic humility, and tabayyun-grounded digital literacy and the religiosity that emerges is reflective and rationally evaluative rather than merely ritual or symbolic. Rather than treating Islamic educational epistemology as an abstract doctrinal commitment, the study reframes it as a working cognitive-normative filter that mediates students' encounter with digital religious discourse. Two directions for further research follow. First, a longitudinal design would test whether the four mechanisms continue to shape religious reasoning beyond graduation and into professional and family life. Second, a multi-site comparative study across private and state Islamic universities, including campuses outside Sumatra and Java, would assess the boundary conditions under which the four-mechanism model travels.

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