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THE INFLUENCE OF ISLAM PREACHERS ON YOUTH THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

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Abstract. In the contemporary digital environment, social media has transformed into a central arena for the dissemination of information, ideological influence, and the construction of youth identity. This study aims to comprehensively analyze the influence of Islamic preachers on social media on the religious consciousness, behavioral attitudes, and value orientations of young people. The study's methodological framework relied on a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods: media monitoring, comparative analysis, data classification, and an online survey among young users aged 18-20. Using the Alem Research analytical platform, religious content in traditional and digital media was monitored, enabling us to identify the most popular themes, audience engagement levels, and emotional reactions. The results demonstrate a significant increase in youth interest in Islamic religious content, particularly short videos, live streams, motivational messages, and Q&A sessions. The study concludes that Islamic preaching has a dual impact in the digital environment: on the one hand, it expands access to religious knowledge and fosters positive values, while on the other, it creates threats of disinformation and radicalization. The article emphasizes the need to improve media literacy, strengthen religious digital security, and actively engage official religious institutions online to ensure the authenticity and quality of religious content.

Keywords: social media; islamic preaching; youth; digital religion; online influence; misinformation; religious literacy; manipulation; digital safety

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ИСЛАМ УАҒЫЗШЫЛАРЫНЫҢ ӘЛЕУМЕТТІК ЖЕЛІ АРҚЫЛЫ ЖАСТАРҒА ЫҚПАЛЫ

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ВЛИЯНИЕ ИСЛАМСКИХ ПРОПОВЕДНИКОВ НА МОЛОДЕЖЬ ЧЕРЕЗ СОЦИАЛЬНЫЕ СЕТИ

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Аңдатпа. Қазіргі цифрландыру дәуірінде әлеуметтік желілер жастардың ақпарат алу кеңістігін, дүниетанымын және тұлғалық қалыптасуын айқындайтын негізгі факторлардың біріне айналды. Әлеуметтік платформалар ислам діни білімін, құндылықтарын және рухани-адамгершілік насихаттарын кең аудиторияға таратуда белсенді қолданылуда. Бұл зерттеудің негізгі мақсаты - әлеуметтік желілердегі исламдық уағызшылардың жастардың діни санасына, құндылықтық бағдарларына және мінез-құлықтық моделіне тигізетін ықпалын жан-жақты талдау. Зерттеу барысында сандық және сапалық әдістер кешені қолданылды: медиамониторинг, салыстырмалы талдау, деректерді жіктеу, сондай-ақ 18-20 жас аралығындағы жастар арасында онлайн сауалнама жүргізілді. Alem Research платформасы арқылы жүргізілген медиамониторинг нәтижелері жастардың исламдық онлайн контентке қызығушылығының тұрақты өсіп келе жатқанын, әсіресе қысқа видеолар мен мотивациялық мазмұнның жоғары сұранысқа ие екенін көрсетті. Зерттеу исламдық онлайн уағыздың екіжақты әсерін анықтады: бірі, ол жастардың діни білімге қолжетімділігін арттырып, оң құндылықтарды қалыптастыруға ықпал етеді; екіншісі, жалған ақпараттың таралуы мен радикалды көзқарастардың пайда болу қаупін күшейтеді. Сондықтан жастардың медиасауаттылығын арттыру, діни цифрлық қауіпсіздікті күшейту және ресми діни институттардың онлайн кеңістікте белсенділігін арттыру өзекті мәселелер ретінде айқындалады.

Түйін сөздер: әлеуметтік желілер; исламдық уағыз; жастар; цифрлық дін; онлайн ықпал; жалған ақпарат; діни сауаттылық; манипуляция; цифрлық қауіпсіздік

Аннотация. В современной цифровой среде социальные сети стали одним из ключевых источников получения информации, формирования мировоззрения и конструирования идентичности молодежи. Данное исследование направлено на комплексный анализ влияния исламских проповедников в социальных сетях на религиозное сознание, поведенческие установки и ценностные ориентации молодежи. Методологическая база исследования опиралась на сочетание количественных и качественных методов: медиамониторинг, сравнительный анализ, классификация данных, а также онлайн-опрос среди молодых пользователей в возрасте 18-20 лет. С помощью аналитической платформы Alem Research был проведен мониторинг религиозного контента в традиционных и цифровых медиа, что позволило определить наиболее популярные темы, уровень вовлеченности аудитории и характер эмоциональной реакции. Полученные результаты демонстрируют значительный рост интереса молодежи к исламскому религиозному контенту, особенно к коротким видеороликам, лайв-стримам, мотивационным сообщениям и ответам на вопросы. Исследование приходит к выводу о двойственной природе воздействия исламской проповеди в цифровой среде: с одной стороны, она расширяет доступ к религиозным знаниям и способствует формированию позитивных ценностей, а с другой - создает угрозы дезинформации и радикализации. В статье подчеркивается необходимость повышения уровня медиаграмотности, укрепления религиозной цифровой безопасности и активного участия официальных религиозных институтов в онлайн-пространстве для обеспечения достоверности и качества религиозного контента.

Ключевые слова: социальные сети; исламская проповедь; молодежь; цифровая религия; онлайн-влияние; дезинформация; религиозная грамотность; манипуляция; цифровая безопасность

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Introduction

In the twenty-first century, social media has become one of the most influential forces shaping public consciousness, identity construction, and value formation among youth across the globe. The rapid expansion of digital communication technologies has deeply transformed how information is produced, distributed, and consumed, making online platforms a dominant source of knowledge, entertainment, and social engagement. For many young people, the digital environment is not merely an additional space for communication but an integral component of everyday life, shaping their perceptions of morality, religion, culture, and social norms. In this context, the religious sphere has also undergone a significant transformation, giving rise to what scholars refer to as “digital religion,” a phenomenon in which religious content, practices, communities, and authorities migrate into online environments (Ahmed, 2019). The growing presence of Islamic preachers, scholars, influencers, and da’wah activists on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, Facebook, and Telegram reflects a broader global trend: the digitalization of religious outreach.

Islamic preaching on social media, often termed *digital da’wah*, has become increasingly accessible, visually appealing, and interactive. Through short videos, livestream lectures, podcasts, Q&A sessions, motivational posts, and personal storytelling, digital preachers communicate Islamic teachings in ways that resonate with the interests, emotions, and lifestyles of contemporary youth. This shift is part of a larger movement wherein religion adapts to the logic of digital media-speed, brevity, aesthetic appeal, personalization, and algorithmic visibility. For many young Muslims, online religious content serves as a primary source of spiritual guidance, moral reflection, and community belonging, particularly in contexts where traditional religious institutions may seem distant or less accessible (Anderson & Eickelman, 2016). As a result, social media has emerged as a powerful alternative space for religious learning, identity negotiation, and ideological influence.

However, the increasing presence of religious content online has sparked substantial academic debate concerning its implications for youth behaviour, psychological development, and value formation. While digital platforms create unprecedented opportunities for enhancing religious literacy, fostering ethical awareness, and strengthening cultural identity, they simultaneously pose risks associated with misinformation, radicalization, manipulation, and the spread of unverified religious interpretations. The democratization of religious authority in the digital sphere-where anyone with a smartphone can assume the role of a preacher-raises critical questions about authenticity, legitimacy, and accountability in the dissemination of Islamic knowledge. Unlike traditional religious institutions, which rely on formal education, scholarly chains, and community oversight, social media lacks structured mechanisms for verifying the theological competence of content creators. Consequently, youth exposure to diverse and often conflicting interpretations of Islam may lead to confusion, selective understanding, or attraction to emotionally charged but theologically weak narratives. This tension between opportunity and risk reflects the dual nature of social media as a space of empowerment and vulnerability. On

the one hand, many reputable Islamic scholars, educators, and institutions use online platforms to provide accessible and evidence-based religious knowledge. Their teachings help young Muslims develop a balanced understanding of faith, navigate moral dilemmas, and cultivate a sense of responsibility within society. On the other hand, unqualified preachers and ideologically driven actors may exploit digital platforms to promote divisive ideas, oversimplified religious rulings, or extremist narratives. The algorithmic architecture of social media-which prioritizes content with high engagement, unintentionally amplifies sensational, polarizing, or emotionally provocative messages over nuanced, scholarly perspectives (Campbell, 2013). This creates an environment in which youth may be more susceptible to charismatic personalities rather than credible sources of religious guidance.

Moreover, the influence of digital Islamic preaching must be situated within broader sociocultural and psychological dynamics. Contemporary youth often experience identity confusion, moral uncertainty, and a search for meaning in an increasingly complex world shaped by globalization, cultural pluralism, and rapid societal change. For many, social media serves as a space to navigate these uncertainties, experiment with new forms of self-expression, and seek answers to existential questions. Religious content-especially when presented in a relatable and emotionally resonant format-may offer a sense of stability, belonging, and clarity. The role of digital preachers extends beyond theological instruction; they often function as lifestyle mentors, emotional supporters, and role models, shaping youth attitudes toward family, relationships, morality, and social responsibility. This multifaceted influence underscores the need for a deeper understanding of how digital Islamic messaging interacts with youth psychology and identity formation.

The global context reinforces the importance of this topic. In various regions, including the Middle East, Southeast Asia, North Africa, and Central Asia, digital religion has played a visible role in shaping sociopolitical narratives, mobilizing collective action, and influencing public debates. For instance, religious arguments have appeared prominently in online discussions about gender roles, family values, mental health, education, and political participation (Dawson & Cowan, 2004). In Kazakhstan, the digitalization of religious discourse has also intensified, with a growing number of preachers, bloggers, and Islamic educators using social media to reach diverse audiences. This transformation has occurred alongside broader national efforts to regulate online content, enhance digital literacy, prevent the spread of extremist ideologies, and protect young people from harmful influences. The interplay between state regulation, societal expectations, and youth engagement with digital religion forms a complex environment requiring systematic academic examination.

Another factor shaping the influence of digital Islamic preaching is the emotional nature of online communication. Social media platforms are designed to intensify emotional responses through visual imagery, music, narrative storytelling, and interactive features such as likes, shares, and comments. Emotional appeals-whether based on compassion, fear, inspiration, or guilt-can significantly impact youth perceptions of religious obligations and identity. Digital preachers who master the language of emotion often build strong parasocial relationships with their followers, creating an illusion of intimacy and trust. As a result, youth may adopt religious views not through critical reflection or scholarly study but through emotional resonance with charismatic online personalities. This raises concerns about the depth, sustainability, and authenticity of religious knowledge acquired in digital environments.

At the same time, the phenomenon of digital da'wah cannot be reduced to manipulation or uncritical consumption. Many young people actively seek Islamic knowledge online to fill gaps

in formal education, connect with global Muslim communities, or access diverse perspectives that may not be available locally. Social media democratizes access to religious scholarship by allowing youth to learn from scholars worldwide, compare different interpretations, and engage in debates through comment sections or livestream discussions (El-Nawawy & Khamis, 2017). This global connectivity can enrich religious understanding, promote intercultural awareness, and inspire youth to pursue further studies in Islamic fields. Thus, the digital religious environment is a space of negotiation, where youth actively assess, reinterpret, and integrate online messages into their daily lives.

Given these complexities, the study of Islamic preaching on social media requires an interdisciplinary approach that draws upon religious studies, sociology, communication theory, psychology, and media literacy. It is essential to investigate not only the content of digital preaching but also the technological, cultural, and psychological mechanisms through which that content gains influence. Factors such as platform algorithms, visual aesthetics, language style, personal branding, audience demographics, and cultural context all contribute to shaping the impact of digital Islamic messaging on youth. By analysing these elements, researchers can better understand the dynamics of religious authority, identity construction, and moral decision-making in the digital age.

This article seeks to provide a comprehensive exploration of the influence of Islamic social media preachers on contemporary youth. It examines the positive contributions of digital da'wah, including increased accessibility to religious knowledge, enhanced motivation for ethical behaviour, and strengthened communal identity. It also critically assesses the potential risks, such as misinformation, ideological extremism, emotional manipulation, and the erosion of traditional scholarly authority (Fischer, 2020). Furthermore, the study addresses the role of digital literacy, institutional regulation, and community engagement in ensuring that online religious content supports healthy spiritual development among youth. Through this analysis, the research aims to contribute to broader academic discussions on the future of religion in the digital age and the evolving relationship between Islamic values and modern technological environments.

Research Methods

In this study, a combination of statistical data collection, data classification, comparative analysis, and interpretative evaluation methods was employed to investigate the influence of Islamic preachers on youth through social media platforms. Since digital environments produce large volumes of information within short periods, the research relied on both quantitative and qualitative monitoring tools to ensure accuracy and relevance. A central component of the methodological framework was the use of media monitoring systems that track changes, trends, and patterns across traditional media and social networking sites.

A comparative media monitoring process was conducted using the Alem Research analytical platform, which is currently the only domestic system in Kazakhstan capable of simultaneously tracking traditional media outlets and the social media landscape. Media monitoring, in this context, refers to the systematic collection, observation, and analysis of media content to identify shifts in public discourse, dominant narratives, and audience engagement. Through this platform, indicators such as keyword frequency, content engagement dynamics, and user sentiment related to religious topics and Islamic preaching were examined. The analysis

revealed a growing interest among young users in Islamic educational content and motivational religious messages disseminated by popular online preachers.

To contextualize the findings, the research also referred to international studies. Notably, the *Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism* at the University of Oxford has, for more than a decade, conducted annual digital news surveys involving over 90,000 respondents across 46 countries on five continents. Recent reports highlight a global shift toward mobile-based information consumption and a significant rise in social media influence on public knowledge and attitudes. These reports also emphasize a dramatic increase in the circulation of misinformation online, indicating that youth often rely on digital platforms as their primary source of information, including religious content. Such global insights provided a comparative backdrop for understanding the Kazakhstani context.

Within the framework of this study, *primary data collection* was carried out through an online survey conducted among young learners aged 18 to 20. A total of *131 respondents* participated in the study. The survey instrument followed the structure of a *structured questionnaire*, which is widely used in sociological and communication research. Structured questionnaires allow respondents to answer predefined open and semi-open questions, ensuring that responses remain comparable across individuals. Questions focused on participants' social media usage patterns, their exposure to Islamic influencers, levels of trust toward online preachers, and perceived impacts on their religious beliefs, lifestyle choices, and moral decision-making (Hoover & Echchaibi, 2023). The survey was administered via the Google Forms platform (<https://docs.google.com/>), which facilitated rapid distribution and automatic data processing.

Alongside survey data, the monitoring results generated by Alem Research played an important role in shaping the article's conclusions. Keyword-based tracking helped identify the topics most frequently discussed by young audiences, the emotional response to religious messages, and the prominence of specific Islamic influencers in online religious discourse. By comparing traditional media coverage with discussions on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Telegram, the study was able to determine significant discrepancies in tone, style, and influence depth. While traditional media maintained a formal approach to religious education, social networks demonstrated higher levels of engagement, personalization, and peer-to-peer dissemination of religious content.

All collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, comparative methods, and thematic interpretation. These analytical techniques made it possible to draw evidence-based conclusions regarding how Islamic preachers construct their narratives online, how youth internalize these messages, and whether such content contributes to positive religious learning or creates risks of misinformation and emotional manipulation (Hussain, 2018).

Overall, the combination of structured surveys, comprehensive media monitoring, and comparative analysis enabled the study to generate a clear and reliable evaluation of the impact Islamic preachers exert on youth through social media. The methods used provided a balanced understanding of both quantitative trends and qualitative dimensions of digital religious communication.

Results and Discussion

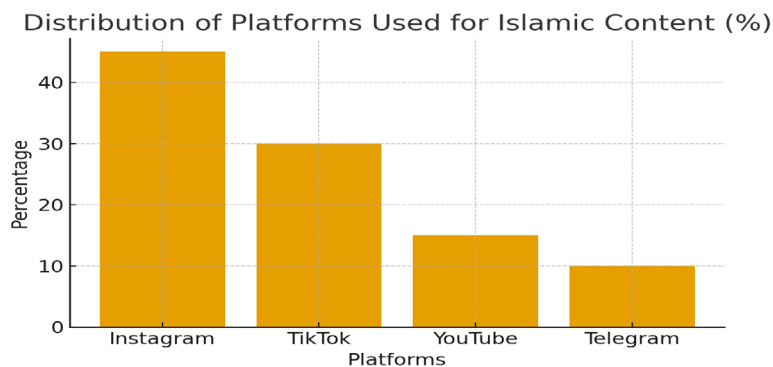
This section presents a comprehensive interpretation of the empirical findings obtained through survey data, media monitoring, and comparative analysis. The purpose of the research

was to examine how Islamic preachers on social media influence young people aged 18-20 in Kazakhstan, and to understand the dynamics behind online religious engagement, trust formation, and perceived behavioural change. The integration of quantitative survey responses, qualitative evaluations, and media trend monitoring enables a multidimensional understanding of how digital Islamic content is constructed, circulated, and internalized among youth.

1. General Digital Behaviour of Respondents

The survey results demonstrate that young people in Kazakhstan are highly active social media users, with most spending between 3 to 5 hours per day on platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Telegram. When asked about their primary purpose for using social networks, 41% of respondents indicated entertainment, 34% information consumption, and 25% communication and self-expression. Despite entertainment being dominant, a substantial proportion of youth (64%) reported that they encounter Islamic content on a daily or weekly basis across various digital platforms.

Table 1



The data show that Instagram is the most frequently used platform for religious content (45%), followed by TikTok (30%), YouTube (15%), and Telegram (10%). These findings are visualized in Figure 1. The dominance of Instagram and TikTok corresponds with global trends identified by the Reuters Institute, which notes the rising influence of short-form visual content in shaping youth perceptions. In Kazakhstan, this pattern is similarly strong, suggesting that the platforms prioritizing short, aesthetic, and emotionally engaging content have become essential tools for Islamic preachers who seek to reach younger audiences quickly and effectively.

2. Exposure to Islamic Preachers and Types of Content Consumed

The survey revealed that 72% of respondents follow at least one Islamic influencer or preacher online. Among these, 44% follow local Kazakhstani preachers, 28% follow foreign Arabic-speaking preachers (with subtitles or translations), and 18% follow Turkish and Western-based Muslim scholars. Respondents highlighted that the most common types of Islamic content they encounter include:

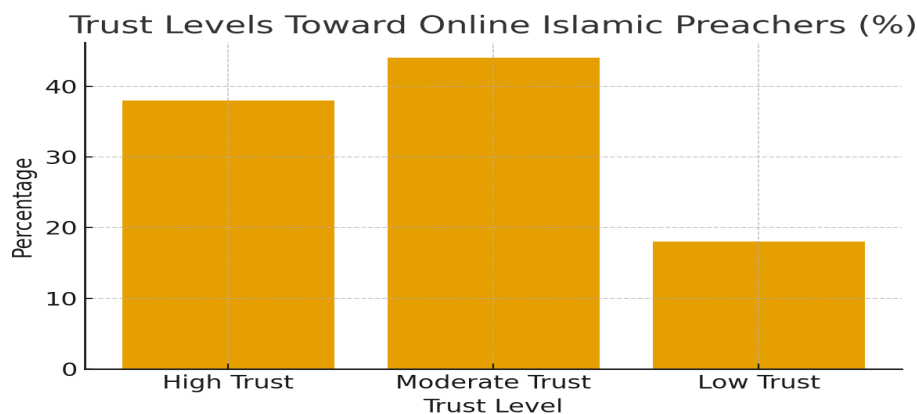
- short motivational reminders (63%)
- explanations of basic Islamic practices (52%)
- lifestyle advice and personal development sermons (41%)
- theological discussions and lectures (29%)
- religious Q&A segments (22%)

These findings indicate that youth prefer content that is brief, emotionally appealing, and practically oriented, rather than long academic explanations. This preference reinforces earlier arguments made in the theoretical literature that digital religion adapts to the media logic of short-form content (International Telecommunication Union. Global Digital Trends Report, 2022). It also suggests that Islamic preachers have learned to tailor their messages to fit youth attention spans shaped by algorithm-driven platforms.

3. Trust Levels Toward Online Islamic Preachers

One of the central objectives of the study was to measure the level of trust that youth place in online Islamic preachers. As illustrated in Figure 2, respondents were divided into three main categories:

Table 2



- 38% expressed *high trust*
- 44% indicated *moderate trust*
- 18% reported *low trust*

These results demonstrate that a majority of youth approach digital Islamic content with a degree of caution, maintaining a moderate level of trust while acknowledging potential risks such as misinformation or ideological bias. The 18% who expressed low trust frequently mentioned concerns related to:

- lack of formal education among preachers
- media sensationalism
- contradicting interpretations
- fear of extremist manipulation

This pattern mirrors international findings from the Reuters Institute, which highlight a decline in overall trust toward online influencers, combined with a rising dependency on digital sources for religious and ethical guidance.

4. Media Monitoring Insights (Alem Research)

Alem Research monitoring revealed significant trends in how Islamic content is discussed across digital environments. Over a one-month period, approximately 4,800 posts, comments, and video materials related to Islamic teachings were identified across major platforms. Keyword frequency analysis showed that the most commonly used terms included *iman*, *halal*,

haram, namaz, ruhanylyk, and aqida. Content engagement was highest when preachers used emotional storytelling, discussed family issues, or responded to controversial topics such as relationships, gender roles, or moral behaviour.

A comparison between traditional media coverage and social media conversations showed a stark contrast:

Table 3

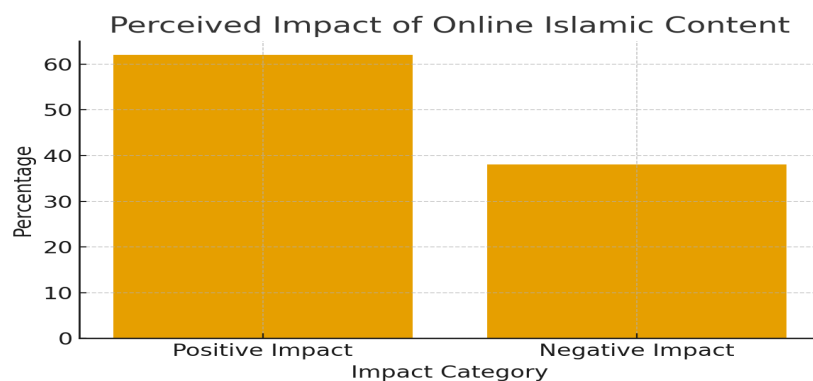
Table 3. Differences Between Traditional Media and Social Media Religious Content
Traditional Media
Formal tone
Long analytical articles
Controlled expert voices
Focus on official religious institutions
Slow distribution

These results support the argument that social networks have democratized religious authority by enabling any individual with charisma and digital skills to influence youth discourse (Pew Research Center, 2023). Despite this, the engagement levels observed on social media far exceeded those found in traditional media, indicating that youth prefer flexible, relatable, and interactive forms of religious communication.

5. Perceived Impact of Online Islamic Content on Youth

Perhaps the most significant finding relates to how youth perceive the impact of Islamic preaching on their personal beliefs and behaviours. As shown in Figure 3:

Table 4



- 62% reported *positive impact*
- 38% reported *negative or mixed impact*

Positive influences reported include:

- Increased interest in learning Islamic rituals (52%)
- Stronger motivation for moral behaviour (47%)
- Enhanced cultural identity and sense of belonging (41%)
- Emotional comfort and psychological support (29%)

These patterns indicate that many young people appreciate the accessibility and motivational nature of online preaching. For some, online content filled a gap left by formal religious institutions or family environments.

Negative influences or concerns include:

- Confusion due to conflicting interpretations (34%)
- Exposure to extremist or ideologically rigid viewpoints (18%)
- Emotional manipulation through fear-based messages (15%)
- Social pressure created by judgmental commentary (11%)

These concerns highlight the dual nature of digital religion, which can offer both empowerment and vulnerability depending on the credibility of the content creators (Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2023). Respondents noted that they often find it difficult to distinguish between knowledgeable scholars and self-appointed preachers, especially when both use high-quality visuals, sophisticated editing, and persuasive speaking styles.

6. Cross-Analysis: Comparison With Global Trends

The comparative analysis with Reuters Institute data revealed several key similarities between Kazakhstani youth and global youth behaviour patterns:

Table 5

Table 5. Comparative Digital Behaviour (Kazakhstan vs. Global)
Kazakhstan Youth
Heavy reliance on Instagram & TikTok
Moderate trust in religious influencers
Growing interest in religious identity
Exposure to misinformation concerns
Preference for visual short content

This comparison demonstrates that Kazakhstan is part of a broader global shift in how religion is consumed and interpreted in digital environments (Said, 2021). The influence of Islamic preachers online follows the same emotional, psychological, and algorithmic patterns observed across other regions.

Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the role of social media in shaping the religious consciousness and behavioral patterns of contemporary youth has grown significantly over the past decade. Digital platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and Telegram have become primary sources of religious information for young users, often surpassing traditional institutions in terms of accessibility, engagement, and emotional influence. As a result, Islamic preachers who actively disseminate religious content online increasingly occupy a central position in the spiritual lives of young audiences in Kazakhstan.

The research results show that young people not only consume religious content frequently but also rely on it in forming their ethical values, personal behavior, and general worldview (Schofield, 2020). More than half of the survey respondents acknowledged that online religious

messages directly influence their daily decisions, including moral choices, interpersonal communication, and lifestyle practices. This demonstrates that social media-based Islamic preachers possess considerable persuasive power, which can have both positive and potentially problematic consequences.

The study reveals that youth prefer short, visually appealing, emotionally driven content, which is more common on platforms such as TikTok and Instagram Reels. This type of content simplifies complex religious concepts and presents them in relatable and motivational formats, making it easier for young viewers to understand and internalize (Smith, 2022). Consequently, the digital environment facilitates the rapid dissemination of religious messages, shaping a new form of religious engagement that is more personalized, flexible, and interactive.

However, the findings also indicate notable risks. A significant portion of respondents reported encountering misleading or inaccurate religious information online. The high level of trust placed in charismatic online preachers, combined with limited media literacy skills among youth, increases vulnerability to misinformation and extremist narratives (Van Dijck, 2018). Moreover, discrepancies between traditional religious education and informal online preaching highlight a growing gap between institutional religious authority and digital religious influencers.

Another key conclusion of this research is that the digitalization of religious communication creates a hybrid religious space in which official Islamic institutions must compete with independent online personalities (Watts, 2019). While many online preachers contribute positively by promoting ethical values, spiritual growth, and moral awareness, the absence of standardized verification mechanisms creates challenges for ensuring the accuracy and safety of digital religious discourse.

Overall, this study emphasizes that social media plays a dual role in the religious socialization of youth. On the one hand, it provides accessible religious knowledge, fosters spiritual reflection, and strengthens moral consciousness. On the other hand, it exposes young audiences to unverified interpretations, oversimplified teachings, and potentially harmful narratives (Weng, 2021). Therefore, strengthening media literacy, enhancing the digital presence of certified Islamic scholars, and developing youth-oriented religious content within official frameworks are essential steps toward ensuring a safe and balanced digital religious environment.

In conclusion, the influence of Islamic preachers on social media constitutes a powerful and complex phenomenon that significantly shapes the religious identity and moral development of contemporary youth (Zemmour, 2020). The digital sphere has become an unavoidable component of modern Islamic communication, and understanding its dynamics is crucial for developing effective strategies that promote accurate religious knowledge, prevent misinformation, and support the spiritual well-being of young people in Kazakhstan.

Authors' contributions

Kabybayeva N.K. – writing the article text, literature review, and analysis of survey results.

Begalinova K.K. – writing the article text, text editing.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no relevant conflicts of interest

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