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THE PHENOMENON OF SPIRITUAL ALIENATION: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF STUDENTS AT MA'HAD AL-JAMI'AH UIN SJECH M DJAMIL DJAMBEK BUKITTINGGI

Agil Shodiki Manurung[1]*, Ibrahim Hasan Ray[2]

*Correspondence:
agilshodikimanurung48@gmail.com

Authors Affiliation:
[1, 2] UIN Sjech M. Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi

Abstract

The development of digital technology has influenced the way young Muslims access and interpret their spiritual lives. Students at Ma'had Aljamiah UIN Sjech M. Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi live in two spaces simultaneously, namely institutional-based spiritual guidance and the digital reality that is present in their daily activities. This condition raises questions about how digitization affects the religious practices and spiritual awareness of students. This study aims to examine the influence of the digital era on the spiritual practices and understanding of students, explore their experiences of spiritual awareness in dealing with digital technology, and identify strategies used to integrate spirituality with technological developments. This study uses a phenomenological approach with qualitative research methodology through in-depth interviews with students. The results show that digitalization has a dual impact. On the one hand, technology makes it easier for students to access religious studies, broadens their horizons, and supports worship and preaching activities. On the other hand, the rapid and diverse consumption of digital content has the potential to reduce the depth of worship and cause confusion in understanding religious authority. To respond to these conditions, students developed various strategies, such as utilizing digital media positively, building online spiritual communities, applying a critical and selective attitude towards religious content, and continuing to refer to religious guidance and authority within the ma'had environment. This study concludes that digitalization does not automatically weaken the spirituality of mahasantri, but rather becomes a space for adaptation and negotiation that allows for a more contextual strengthening of spirituality when accompanied by awareness, guidance, and adequate digital literacy.

INTRODUCTION

The digital era has changed almost all aspects of human life, including spirituality.[1] Mahasantri, as young people pursuing education in a religious and modern environment at Ma'had Aljamiah UIN Sjech M. Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi, face complex challenges in maintaining and appreciating their spiritual awareness amid the highly dynamic flow of technological change. The development of the digital era has brought convenience in accessing information and communicating, but on the other hand, it also carries risks in the form of distraction, spiritual

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[1] D. I. Waluyojati, M. P., & Swari, "The Role of Sufi Psychology in Mental Health and Spirituality of Generation Z in the Digital Age," *Journal of Research and Scientific Works* 2, no. 4 (2024): 199－209.

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alienation, and shifts in mindset that can affect the intensity of religious experiences.[2]

Digitalization brings new dynamics to spiritual practices, such as the formation of digital spirituality where religious experiences can be built or reinterpreted through online activities and the consumption of religious content on social media.[3] A study titled "*Religious Authority, Digitality, and Islam: The Stakes and* Background" (2023) explains that the digital world means religious messages are no longer centered on pulpits and official institutions, but spread to many new spaces such as private groups and online communities, which also become places where people can form their own religious identities more freely. In these spaces, religious discourse outside of mosques has emerged, often viewing the authority of clerics and institutions as outdated, thus encouraging the emergence of a floating spirituality that is highly personal and tends to be detached from community ties and established religious authority structures.[4] This phenomenon creates tension between traditional religious authorities and digital media, allowing individuals to find personal transcendental meanings without being bound to formal institutions.

Research on the spiritual alienation of students in the digital age shows a tendency toward a decline in the depth of spiritual appreciation due to the consumption of instant and fragmented information.[5] On the other hand, technology also opens up opportunities for the re－actualization of religious values in a more contemporary and relevant context.[6]

Initially, students at Ma'had Aljamiah UIN Sjech M. Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi were in an environment that was structurally designed to shape spiritual discipline through worship routines, religious guidance, and institutional mentoring. This is in line with the first point of the philosophical foundation of Ma'had Al－Jamiah, namely: "*the appreciation of Islamic values for students.*[7] However, in daily practice, students also live side by side with intense digital technology, such as the use of social media and free access to various online religious sources. This condition has given rise to the phenomenon of spiritual alienation among students, some of whom have begun to build their spiritual understanding and experience through diverse digital content, while on the other hand showing signs of a decline in the depth of spiritual appreciation in worship practices.

This phenomenon forms the basis of the research problem, as it reveals a tension between institution－based spiritual guidance and new patterns of religiosity influenced by digital trends in the lives of mahasantri. Therefore, according to the

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[2] Zheng Bufan, "The Alienation of Contemporary College Students' Spiritual Life and Its Solution from the Perspective of Internet Subculture," *Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences* 6, no. 6 (2023): 43－47.

[3] A. D. Dionisius Barai Putra & Firmanto, "The Spirituality of Young People in Urban Areas in the Digital Age," *Missio Ecclesiae* 11, no. 2 (2023): 50－62.

[4] Ibrahim Abusharif, "Religious Authority, Digitality, and Islam: The Stakes and Background," *Journal of Islamic and Muslim Studies* 8 (May 2023): 109－19, https://doi.org/10.2979/jims.00010.

[5] Bufan Zheng, "The Alienation of Contemporary College Students' Spiritual Life and Its Solution from the Perspective of Internet Subculture," *Journal of Humanities & Social Sciences* 6, no. 6 (2023): 43－47.

[6] N. H. M. Ulfa, "Harmony Between Spirituality and Modernity: The Dynamics of Islamic Education in the Digital Age," *Social Science Academic* 2, no. 1 (2024): 147－52.

[7] U I N Syech and M Djamil Djambek, "MA ' HA D AL－JA MI ' AH Head :," 2025.

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author, it is necessary to conduct a more in－depth study to explore how mahasantri feel, interpret, and give meaning to their spiritual awareness amid the challenges posed by technology. The phenomenological approach is relevant for exploring the subjective experience of spiritual alienation and the dynamics of reinterpreting religious life amid digital technological transformation.[8] By understanding these dynamics, it is hoped that new insights can be gained about the integration of spirituality and technology, as well as the positive contributions of mahasantri in facing the challenges of the digital age without losing their deep religious values.

Based on this background, this study will answer the following three questions: *First*, what is the influence of the digitalization era on the spiritual practices and understanding of students at Ma'had Aljamiah UIN Sjech M. Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi? *Second*, how do students experience spiritual awareness in facing the influence of technology in the digitalization era? *Third*, what strategies do students use to integrate spiritual awareness with technological advances in their daily lives?

METHOD

This study uses a phenomenological approach with descriptive qualitative methods to explore in depth the spiritual awareness experiences of Islamic boarding school students in facing the dynamics of digitalization. The phenomenological approach was chosen because it allows researchers to understand the lived experiences of research subjects from their own perspective, by suspending assumptions and initial judgments through a process of epoche or bracketing, so that the meanings that emerge truly originate from the subjects' consciousness. Data collection was conducted through *in-depth interviews* and participant observation. There were five research informants, consisting of four active mahasantri residing at Ma'had Aljamiah UIN Sjech M. Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi and one dormitory supervisor as a supporting informant. These mahasantri represented each faculty at UIN Sjech M. Djambek Bukittinggi.

Informants were selected using *purposive sampling*, with the following criteria: (1) students who had lived at Ma'had Aljamiah for at least one year, (2) actively participated in the ma'had's religious programs, (3) used digital technology in their daily lives, and (4) were willing to openly reflect on their spiritual experiences. These criteria were established to ensure that informants had relevant and reflective experiences related to the research focus. Interviews were conducted using a semi－structured approach to provide space for informants to express their experiences, perceptions, and personal reflections related to spirituality and digital technology. Participant observation was carried out by observing the daily activities of the students, particularly in religious practices, the use of technology , and social interactions in the Ma'had Aljamiah environment. The data obtained was analyzed through the stages of phenomenological reduction, theme grouping, and drawing out the essence of spiritual experiences, thereby obtaining a complete understanding of the phenomenon of spiritual alienation and strategies for integrating spirituality in the digital age.

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[8] M. S. Alnashr, "Husserl's Phenomenological Approach and Its Contribution to the Development of Da'wah in Indonesia," *Journal of Da'wah and Islamic Communication* 2, no. 1 (2024): 85－106.

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This study shows that digitization shapes complex dynamics in the spirituality of students at Ma'had Aljamiah UIN Sjech M. Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi, both in religious practice and meaning. Digital access expands sources of spiritual learning and enriches Islamic knowledge, but at the same time presents challenges in the form of superficiality due to instant and less reflective consumption of information. In this context, students undergo a process of spiritual awareness characterized by self－reflection, digital content selection, and the search for a balance between technological engagement and depth of faith. The strategy of integrating spirituality and technology is realized through the use of digital media as a means of worship and reflection, the development of digital consumption discipline (digital mindfulness), the use of social media as a space for preaching, the formation of virtual religious communities, and a critical attitude towards religious information. These findings confirm that digitalization is not an inherent threat to spirituality, but rather a medium of transformation that enables more contextual, humanistic, and relevant religious practices, while enriching our understanding of how young Muslims negotiate their spiritual lives amid the development of modern technology.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Phenomenological Approach and Spiritual Alienation: A Theoretical Framework

Phenomenology as a Research Approach

Phenomenology as a qualitative research method focuses on the in－depth exploration and description of human *lived experience*.[9] Edmund Husserl, the father of phenomenology, emphasized the importance of returning to "things themselves" (*zu den Sachen selbst*) without theoretical preconceptions that could distort understanding of phenomena.[10] In the context of spirituality research, Edmund Husserl's phenomenological approach allows researchers to understand how individuals experience, interpret, and live out the spiritual dimension of mahasantri in the context of daily life at Ma'had Al－Jamiah, which is influenced by digital technology.

The principle of *epoche* or *bracketing* in phenomenology requires researchers to suspend personal judgments and assumptions in order to understand the research subjects' experiences authentically.[11] Through phenomenological reduction, researchers seek to identify the essence of the spiritual experiences of Islamic boarding school students that arise in their interactions with the digital world. This approach is particularly relevant for examining the phenomenon of spiritual alienation because it allows for a deep understanding of how spiritual consciousness is formed, maintained, or even degraded in the context of the digital age. This approach is relevant because it provides space for spiritual experiences that are non－linear and contextual. Spiritual consciousness is not understood as something

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[9] Max Van Manen, *Researching Lived Experience: Human Science for an Action Sensitive Pedagogy* (London: The Althouse Press, 1990).

[10] Edmund Husserl, *Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy*, F. Kersten (Trans.) (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1983).

[11] Alnashr, "Husserl's Phenomenological Approach and Its Contribution to the Development of Da'wah in Indonesia."

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fixed and static, but as a dynamic process that continues to evolve alongside social and technological changes.Thus, phenomenology helps bridge the gap between traditional spiritual experiences and modern spiritual experiences mediated by digital technology. By listening to the narratives, reflections, and emotions they express, researchers can understand how spiritual consciousness is formed, disrupted, or restored amid the rapid flow of digitalization.

The Concept of Spiritual Alienation in the Modern Context

Spiritual alienation refers to the condition of separation or estrangement of individuals from the dimension of transcendence, deep meaning of life, and authentic religious experiences.[12] In the tradition of philosophy, the concept of alienation was first developed by Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and later expanded by Karl Marx in an economic－political context, but was later adapted to understand the psychological and spiritual dimensions of modern humans.[13]

In the context of the digital age, spiritual alienation takes on new and more complex forms. First, *informational overload* or an excess of religious information in the digital space can lead to fragmentation of understanding and superficiality of spiritual appreciation.[14] Second, technological mediation in religious practice can create a distance between individuals and direct, profound religious experiences. Third, the logic of digital consumerism, which emphasizes speed, efficiency, and instant gratification, can conflict with spiritual values that require contemplation, patience, and a continuous process of self－transformation.[15] In the context of Islamic boarding school students, spiritual alienation can arise when religious activities are carried out only because of routine or social demands, not personal awareness. This phenomenon is in line with a 2025 study entitled "*The Crisis of Meaning in Life among Millennial Islamic Boarding School Students: A Phenomenological Approach to Spiritual Activities in* Islamic *Boarding* Schools." The study concluded that daily worship routines such as congregational prayers and religious studies in boarding schools actually pose challenges if they are only obligations without deep awareness, especially amid academic pressures.[16]

This phenomenon is exacerbated by the pressures of digital culture, which emphasizes speed, popularity, and *self-image*. The practice *of performative piety*— , or obedience that is displayed to gain social recognition—is a clear manifestation of spiritual alienation in the virtual world. [17]

However, several studies also show that digital technology does not always result in alienation, but can become a new medium for spiritual expression and

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[12] Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952).

[13] Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, Martin Milligan (Trans.) (New York: International Publishers, 1964).

[14] Zheng Bufan, "The Alienation of Contemporary College Students' Spiritual Life and Its Solution from the Perspective of Internet Subculture."

[15] Ewelina Sugianto., "The Role of Islamic Religious Education in The Development of Students Spirituality and Morality in The Digitalization Era.," *Jurnal Sustainable* 7, no. 2 (2024): 412－22.

[16] Rahmat Ramatul Andika, Nana Supriyani, and Martin Kustati, "The Crisis of Meaning of Life Among Millennial Santri: A Phenomenological Approach to Spiritual Activities in Islamic"－303.

[17] Dionisius Barai Putra and Antonius Denny Firmanto, "The Spirituality of Young People in Urban Areas in the Digital Age," *Missio Ecclesiae* 11, no. 2 (2022): 50－62.

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deepening when used reflectively and critically. In the context of Islam, the concepts of *tadabbur* (deep reflection) and *muhasabah* (self－introspection) can be integrated with the use of technology to strengthen spiritual awareness, not weaken it.[18]

Digital Spirituality and the Transformation of Religious Practices

Digital spirituality is a phenomenon that has emerged as a result of the integration of technology with the religious dimension of humanity. It refers not only to the use of digital media for religious activities, but also to a paradigm shift in how humans experience, interpret, and express their spirituality.[19] In the context of phenomenology, digital space is understood as an extension of the *lifeworld* where spiritual meanings are constructed and negotiated[20] . The virtual world is not a separate entity, but an integral part of the modern human experience. For Islamic boarding school students, digital spirituality has become a dialectical arena between traditional Islamic boarding school values and the demands of campus modernity. This phenomenon is evident in the emergence of digital－based religious activities such as online studies, prayer reminder applications, online tahfidz communities, and preaching through social media. These practices show that technology can function as a mediator of spirituality or a tool that connects individuals with transcendental experiences through new formats[21] However, this transformation also has epistemological consequences. In classical Islamic tradition, spiritual knowledge was obtained through *talaqqi* (direct transmission from teacher to student). Now, this process has shifted to virtual interactions with minimal personal guidance. This phenomenon poses the risk of decontextualizing spirituality, where depth of understanding is replaced by the consumption of brief and quick information.[22]

Nevertheless, the positive potential of digital spirituality cannot be ignored. The digitization of Islamic education opens up opportunities for the formation of a more adaptive and global religious consciousness. Open access to the thoughts of scholars across countries, cross－cultural interactions, and virtual religious communities broaden the Islamic horizons of the younger generation. This transformation also shifts the orientation of spirituality from the ritualistic to social praxis. Through social media, mahasantri can articulate their faith through works, solidarity, and humanitarian movements based on Islamic values.[23] Thus, digital spirituality can be understood as a new form of piety oriented towards social responsibility, not merely individual worship.This theoretical framework provides a basis for understanding

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[18] Ulfa, "The Harmony of Spirituality and Modernity: The Dynamics of Islamic Education in the Digital Age."

[19] Dionisius Barai Putra & Firmanto, "The Spirituality of Young People in Urban Areas in the Digital Age."

[20] Marianus. Patora, "Religion and Dehumanization: Developing Humanistic Spirituality Through Church Life in the Era of Digital Disruption," *KURIOS* 10, no. 1 (2024): 252－63.

[21] H Thahura et al., "The Concept of Religious Behavior Among Muslim Millennials in the Era of Globalization and Modernization," *Journal of Religion, Society, and Culture* 1, no. 2 (2023): 1－12.

[22] Husen Ghulam Al Muntazor, "Digital－Based Learning Management in Improving Al－Qur'an Reading Skills" (PTIQ Institute Jakarta, 2024).

[23] Eva Dewi., "Strengthening the Direction of Islamic Education in the Era of Globalization: Internalizing the Values of Islamic Education during the Khulafaur Rasyidin Period," *Al-Thariqah Journal of Islamic Education*, 9, no. 1 (2024): 1－15.

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how students at Ma'had Aljamiah UIN Sjech M. Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi experience, interpret, and respond to the phenomenon of spiritual alienation in the era of digitalization, as well as how they develop strategies to integrate spiritual awareness with the realities of digital life.

Brief Description of Ma'had Aljamiah UIN Sjech M. Djamil Djambek and Religious Activities

Based on the Decree of the Rector of UIN Bukittinggi Number 245/In.26/KP.00.3/05/2017 concerning the Implementation of Ma'had al−Jami'ah UIN Bukittinggi, which is a campus dormitory institution to integrate the pesantren education system with Islamic higher education. As part of UIN Sjech M. Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi, Ma'had Aljamiah plays a strategic role in shaping the character and spiritual competence of students through various structured religious development programs. The Ma'had Aljamiah is located on the campus of UIN Sjech M. Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi, West Sumatra, with dormitory facilities accommodating hundreds of students from various regions in Indonesia.Life at Ma'had Aljamiah is designed to create an academic−religious environment conducive to the intellectual and spiritual development of students. The guidance system implemented combines classical Islamic boarding school traditions with a modern educational approach that is responsive to the times, including the era of digitalization.[24]

Religious activities at Ma'had Al−Jamiah include five daily prayers in congregation, which are mandatory for all dormitory residents, classical Islamic texts study, Quran *memorization*, *muhadharah* (religious speech training), Islamic discussions, and various self−development activities such as Islamic leadership and entrepreneurship. Each student is also required to participate in daily activities such as leading prayers, taking turns as prayer leaders, and participating in dormitory cleaning activities. These programs are designed to instill strong values of discipline, responsibility, and spiritual awareness. In facing the era of digitalization, the management of Ma'had Aljamiah implements a balanced policy between the use of technology for learning and restrictions on the use of gadgets at certain times to maintain focus on worship and religious studies. Dormitory supervisors actively assist students in navigating spiritual challenges in the digital age, including providing guidance on Islamic digital literacy and ethics of communication on social media. This context forms the backdrop for research on the phenomenology of spiritual alienation among students in the face of the dynamics of digitalization.[25]

The Influence of the Digitalization Era on the Practices and Meaning of Spirituality among Mahasantri

The era of digitalization has had a significant impact on spiritual practices and understanding among students at Ma'had Aljamiah UIN Sjech M. Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi. Wide access to Islamic information through digital media such as YouTube, podcasts, and online study platforms allows students to explore religious

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[24] Syech and Djambek, "MA ' HA D AL−JA MI ' AH Head :"
[25] Syech and Djambek.

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knowledge outside of formal classrooms and campus Islamic boarding schools.[26] This shift in knowledge access patterns has altered the dynamics of religious learning, which previously relied heavily on direct interaction with teachers or ustadz.

Syaukani, a student in the Aqidah and Islamic Philosophy program, said:

"*When I was still in a boarding school isolated from technology, we had to ask seniors or go directly to teachers to find religious information, but now as a student with internet access, I can freely explore Islamic studies through social media and digital platforms.*"[27]

This phenomenon shows a shift to a more flexible and individual learning pattern, where spirituality is no longer only instilled through direct interaction with teachers or mursyids, but also through reflective experiences gained from the digital space.[28] This change has dual implications for the formation of students' spiritual awareness. On the one hand, easy access to diverse Islamic perspectives enriches insight and enables broader intellectual dialogue, encouraging critical thinking and openness in understanding religious teachings. The digital dimension has become a new medium for the formation of spiritual awareness that is dynamic and adaptive, allowing students to learn from various contemporary Islamic scholars and thinkers from around the world without geographical limitations. The digital space also provides a platform for more inclusive and democratic religious discussions, where each individual can participate in the construction of religious meaning.

However, this transformation also poses challenges to the authenticity and depth of spiritual understanding.[29] The massive flow of religious information in the digital world is often not accompanied by scientific validation and adequate methodological guidance, thus potentially reducing the values of Sufism, theology, and Islamic ethics. Mahasantri who are accustomed to fast and short learning patterns tend to experience spiritual decontextualization, where the meaning of worship and tadabbur is replaced by the instant consumption of religious content .[30] The phenomenon *of spiritual snacking,* which is the quick and superficial consumption of religious content without deep appreciation, is one of the risks faced by the digital generation in their religious practices.

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[26] & Sunarto. Mubarok, A. R., "Religious Moderation in the Digital Era: Challenges and Opportunities," *Journal of Islamic Communication Studies (JICoS),* 2, no. 1 (2024): 1−10.

[27] Syaukani, "Direct Interview" (Bukittinggi, n.d.).

[28] Muhammad Sanusi, "Transforming Islamic Education in the Digital Age: Challenges and Opportunities for the Young Generation," *Innovative Education Journal* 6, no. 3 (2024): 206−15.

[29] A. Suhada, S. A., Risladiba, R., Sa'dudin, I., Kusnandar, E., & Syafaah, "The Concept of Spiritualism in Society in the Era of Modernization in Social and Religious Life," *Gunung Djati Conference Series* 21 (2023): 151−59.

[30] Ewelina Sugianto., "The Role of Islamic Religious Education in The Development of Students Spirituality and Morality in The Digitalization Era."

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Ari Muhammad Rasya, a student in the Sharia Economic Law program, responded to this phenomenon by stating that:

> *"I often listen to Ustadz Adi Hidayat's lectures through social media, which would be impossible to access from Bukittinggi without digitalization. However, I also admit that listening to religious studies on social media makes me negligent and feel a decrease in spiritual quality or solemnity in worship because all information can be obtained instantly and easily from electronic devices such as cell phones, which are only a handful."*[31]

This experience shows the paradox of digital spirituality: ease of access is not always directly proportional to depth of understanding, and can even create an illusion of religious competence without substantial spiritual transformation. Another challenge that arises is the potential for distraction caused by notifications, entertainment content, and information flows that are not related to spirituality.

Ahmad Doli Harahap, a student in the Islamic Education study program, acknowledges that the use of social media and worship reminder applications helps maintain consistency in spiritual activities, but when he sees entertainment content, his focus on reading the Qur'an or reciting prayers is often disrupted. He states:

> *"The biggest challenge in the digital age is maintaining intention and sincerity, because many religious activities published on social media sometimes lead to a tendency to show off or display worship activities to others (riya')."*[32]

This observation reveals a complex psychological dimension of spiritual alienation, where technological mediation in religious practice can blur the line between sincere worship and the display of religiosity for public consumption. This phenomenon is reminiscent of the criticism of *performative* piety, which is more oriented towards external appearance than internal transformation, which has become one of the pathologies of spirituality in the social media era. On the other hand, digitalization also opens up opportunities for the re－actualization of Islamic spirituality that is more contextual and humanistic.[33] Through the use of technology as a means of interactive da'wah, mahasantri can practice transcendental values in the form of social contributions, scientific collaboration, and the strengthening of digital ethics.

In this way, the era of digitalization not only changes the form of spiritual practice but also broadens the horizon of spiritual understanding for students as a process of internalizing divine values in the reality of modern life. Spirituality is no longer understood narrowly as religious rituals separate from social life, but as a holistic awareness that integrates vertical (relationship with God) and horizontal (relationship with others and nature) dimensions in a context mediated by

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[31] Ari Muhammad Rasya, "Direct Interview" (Bukittinggi, n.d.).

[32] Ahmad Doli Harahap, "Direct Interview" (Bukittinggi, n.d.).

[33] M. Thahura, H., Safitri, J., Muna, K., & Qibtiah, "The Concept of Religious Behavior in the Millennial Muslim Generation in the Era of Globalization and Modernization," *Journal of Religion, Society, and Culture* 1, no. 2 (2023): 1－12.

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technology. This transformation requires high spiritual maturity and digital literacy so that technology truly becomes a tool for empowerment, not a source of alienation.

The Spiritual Awareness of Mahasantri in Facing the Dynamics of Technology in the Digitalization Era

The spiritual awareness of students at Ma'had Aljamiah UIN Sjech M. Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi in facing the influence of technology in the era of digitalization appears to be developing in a reflective and adaptive manner.[34] They have begun to interpret technology not merely as a means of entertainment or information consumption, but also as a means of actualizing Islamic values in modern life. This process involves a complex dialectic between appreciation for the conveniences offered by technology and critical awareness of its potential dangers to spiritual life.

Syaukani stated that:

> *"When I was still in the pesantren, I always had difficulty carrying the Qur'an and the books to be studied because it was not just one or two books or the Qur'an that would be studied, but many other books that would be brought into the classroom. However, with digital technology, all of that can now be accessed through a cell phone stored in my pocket."*[35]

This statement shows that digitization changes the way people practice religion and interpret spirituality. The experiences of students at Ma'had Aljamiah UIN Sjech M. Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi show the adjustment process that occurs in everyday life. Easy access to digital religious content provides opportunities for students to broaden their horizons and build a more personal spiritual meaning, but it also presents challenges in the form of an abundance of information that sometimes makes spiritual appreciation less profound. In this situation, students do not simply accept information from digital media, but try to sort it and adjust it to the spiritual values that have been formed through guidance in the ma'had environment. This condition shows that digitalization does not merely weaken religious traditions, but rather becomes a space for the convergence of existing spiritual practices and the demands of digital life, thereby forming religious practices that are more contextual and relevant to students.

Ahmad Doli Harahap emphasizes that:

> *"Technological advances in the era of digitalization are like a double-edged sword: they can be very useful and facilitate access to deepen religious knowledge from leading religious figures wherever they are, but they can also cause intellectual decline and laziness due to being lulled by the entertainment available. I admit that initially I was not aware of how great the influence of technology was on my spiritual journey, but the research interview process became a kind of reflection that opened my*

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[34] M. Ahmadi, A., & El Widdah, "Analysis of Islamic Education Policy (A Study of Educational Management Literature)," *Journal of Educational Management and Social Sciences,* 4, no. 1 (2023): 1−15.

[35] Syaukani, "Direct Interview."

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eyes and heart and made me realize that I had begun to feel alienated and uninspired in my worship."[36]

This acknowledgment suggests that spiritual awareness in the digital age often emerges through reflective moments that compel individuals to reevaluate their relationship with technology.

Syaukani also revealed that:

> *"The solemnity in worship and the sense of reverence that I used to feel when I was at the Islamic boarding school have begun to decline due to the frequent distractions of entertainment available on my cell phone. I really feel this symptom, which has made me forget that worship is not just about quickly finishing it so that it leaves no impression and does not change my behavior for the better. But I have come to realize that worship also requires devotion to truly enjoy drawing closer to Allah."*[37]

This experience reflects a broader phenomenon of how digital technology, designed to attract and retain user attention (*attention economy*), can erode one's capacity for concentration and the depth of spiritual experience. Constant notifications, algorithms that present content always relevant to user preferences, and *addictive* interface designs create a digital environment that is not conducive to contemplation and deep spiritual reflection.This awareness is an important turning point that reminds us that spirituality requires consistent attention, discipline, and appreciation, so that technology becomes a means of strengthening faith, not a distraction from the true purpose of life. In phenomenological terminology, this reflective awareness can be understood as a form *of intentionality,* where consciousness is directed toward objects that experience a shift from an authentic spiritual orientation toward digital distractions, and then back to spiritual reorientation through critical awareness.

Advances in the digital world should facilitate access to religious information that can help improve religious knowledge and practice. However, the paradox faced by mahasantri is that this convenience does not automatically result in depth of understanding or spiritual transformation. *Critical consciousness* and high digital literacy ( ) are needed to be able to use technology wisely without getting caught up in the superficiality and distractions it offers. The spiritual awareness that has developed among these students also reflects the process *of agency* or individual power in dealing with the technological structures that dominate modern life. Instead of becoming passive victims of the tide of digitalization, mahasantri are beginning to develop strategies of resistance and adaptation that allow them to maintain their spiritual integrity while remaining productively engaged with the digital world. This awareness is an important asset in maintaining the continuity of authentic and contextual faith in a modern and digitally connected campus environment.

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[36] Harahap, "Direct Interview."
[37] Syaukani, "Direct Interview."

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Strategies for Integrating Spiritual Awareness and Technological Advancement in the Daily Lives of Mahasantri

In the face of rapid digitalization, students at Ma'had Aljamiah UIN Sjech M. Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi have developed a number of strategies to maintain and integrate spiritual awareness into their daily lives.[38] These strategies reflect creative and adaptive efforts to bridge the tension between Islamic spiritual traditions and the inevitable realities of digital life. One of the main strategies is to use technology as a medium for religious reflection and contemplation. Many students use digital applications such as the Al-Qur'an app, online study channels, and Islamic meditation platforms to deepen their worship practices and strengthen their faith.[39] Through digital access, they can plan their time for zikr, read tafsir, and listen to tausiyah that are relevant to the challenges of contemporary life.

Ahmad Doli Harahap stated that:

> *"When using social media, sometimes religious lectures on Islamic studies or motivational videos for worship appear, which are very motivating to improve the quality of faith in worship."[40]*

The second strategy is the development of self-discipline in digital consumption, or what can be called *digital mindfulness*. Awareness of the potential dangers of digital distractions encourages students to manage their gadget usage time and limit access to social media at certain times, because prolonged use of electronic devices can easily distract us and cause us to lose track of time. Therefore, they are asked to prioritize and increase spiritual activities such as congregational prayers, recitation of the Qur'an, and book studies. This strategy involves setting clear boundaries between time for digital activities and time for spiritual activities, so that the two do not interfere with each other but rather complement each other.

Andri Umar Lubis, as the dormitory supervisor at Ma'had Aljamiah UIN Sjech M. Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi, explained that

> *"To maintain a balance between the academic (intellectual) and spiritual (inner) worlds of students living in the dormitory, the management provides several agendas that support the spirituality of the students, including the obligation to always pray in congregation, muhadharah (religious speeches), leading prayers, and mutual cooperation in the dormitory."[41]*

These structured programs serve as *a counterbalance* to the individualistic and consumptive tendencies promoted by digital culture, while strengthening the communal dimension in religious practice.

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[38] Dewi., "Strengthening the Direction of Islamic Education in the Era of Globalization: Internalizing Islamic Educational Values from the Khulafaur Rasyidin Period."

[39] A. R Syam, "Teachers and the Development of Islamic Education Curriculum in the Era of Industrial Revolution," *Journal of Islamic Education* 14, no. 1 (2019): 1-18.

[40] Harahap, "Direct Interview."

[41] Andri Umar Lubis, "Direct Interview" (Bukittinggi, n.d.).

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The third strategy is the use of social media as a space for da'wah and constructive social contribution. Students not only passively consume religious content, but also actively produce and disseminate useful content, such as quotations from the Qur'an, hadith, spiritual reflections, or information on religious social activities.

Ari Muhammad Rasya states:

> *"I usually don't just watch studies on social media, but also repost quotations from the Qur'an or hadith that I think are relevant to the current situation. Sometimes I upload them to my WhatsApp or Instagram status so that they can also serve as reminders for my friends."*[42]

Through these activities, the students transform social media from a platform for consumption into a space for spiritual productivity, where Islamic values can be shared creatively and in a way that resonates with the language and aesthetics of the digital generation.

The fourth strategy is to build a digital community that supports spiritual strengthening. Mahasantri join WhatsApp, Telegram, or other platforms that focus on Islamic studies, online tahfidz, or Muslim intellectual discussions. These virtual communities provide a space for *peer support*, reminding each other to do good, and sharing spiritual experiences, so that digitization does not result in isolation but rather expands the network of Islamic brotherhood (*ukhuwah Islamiyyah*).

Syaukani explains that his involvement in digital communities actually helps him maintain consistency in worship:

> *"I join several WhatsApp groups for study and memorization. There, we remind each other of our murojaah schedules, share study materials, and sometimes encourage each other when someone starts to get lazy."*[43]

The fifth strategy is to be critical and selective about digital content. Mahasantri with mature spiritual awareness do not blindly accept every piece of religious information circulating in the digital world, but instead verify it by referring to authoritative sources, consulting with teachers or ustadz, and comparing various perspectives before drawing conclusions. This Islamic digital literacy is important to avoid the traps of misleading information, extreme religious understanding, or polarization that often occurs in the digital space.

Muhammad Riski emphasizes the importance of being selective in using social media, stating:

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[42] Rasya, "Direct Interview."
[43] Syaukani, "Live Interview."

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> *"If there is religious content on social media, I don't immediately believe it. Usually, I check the source first, who is presenting it, and whether I have heard it from an ustadz or in the books we study at the ma'had."*[44]

Ultimately, these strategies show that the integration of spiritual awareness and technological advancement is not merely a technical issue, but a reflection of the maturity of faith in the modern era. By using technology as a means of worship, self－control, and creative da'wah, students are able to balance the spiritual and digital dimensions in their daily lives. This transformation shows that Islamic spirituality in the digital age has not lost its substance, but has found a new, more contextual form of awareness of God's presence in every click, upload, and interaction in the virtual world. Progress should enable Muslims to walk with balance, not closing themselves off from developments but also not being held hostage by them. The students at Ma'had Aljamiah demonstrate that it is possible to be a driving force in making Islam relevant in every era without losing the essence of deep spirituality. They prove that technology can be a tool for spiritual empowerment if used with awareness, discipline, and the right intentions, rather than becoming a cause of decline in faith.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that digitalization shapes complex dynamics in the spirituality of students at Ma'had Aljamiah UIN Sjech M. Djamil Djambek Bukittinggi, both in religious practice and meaning. Digital access expands sources of spiritual learning and enriches Islamic insight, but at the same time presents challenges in the form of superficiality due to instant and less reflective consumption of information. In this context, students experience a process of spiritual awareness characterized by self－reflection, digital content selection, and the search for a balance between technological involvement and depth of faith. The strategy of integrating spirituality and technology is realized through the use of digital media as a means of worship and reflection, the development of digital consumption discipline (digital mindfulness), the use of social media as a space for preaching, the formation of virtual religious communities, and a critical attitude towards religious information. These findings confirm that digitalization is not an inherent threat to spirituality, but rather a medium of transformation that enables more contextual, humanistic, and relevant religious practices, while enriching our understanding of how young Muslims negotiate their spiritual lives amid the development of modern technology.

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[44] "Muhammad Riski," n.d.

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