

Date Received : June 2026
Date Revised : August 2026
Date Accepted : August 2026
Date Published : August 2026

INTEGRATING ISLAMIC EDUCATION THROUGH TELEVISION EDUTAINMENT: A QUALITATIVE MULTI-CASE STUDY OF PRODUCTION PRACTICE AT THREE ISLAMIC HIGHER EDUCATION MEDIA UNITS IN INDONESIA

Fatmawati¹

Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indonesia (fatmawati@uinjkt.ac.id)

Ade Sofyan Mulazid

Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indonesia (adesofyanmulazid@uinjkt.ac.id)

Armawati Arbi

Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indonesia (armawati.arbi@uinjkt.ac.id)

Kalsum Minangsih

Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indonesia (kalsumminangsih@uinjkt.ac.id)

Kata Kunci:

Edutainment Islam;
Pendidikan Islam
Integratif; Dakwah
Pedagogis; Karakter
dan Spiritualitas;
Produksi Media

ABSTRAK

Artikel ini menelaah cara perguruan tinggi keagamaan Islam (PTKI) di Indonesia memproduksi edutainment televisi, dan memperlakukan produksi semacam itu sebagai dakwah pedagogis yang sudah terlembaga sekaligus sebagai ruang pendidikan Islam integratif. Selama ini kajian media Islam lebih banyak menyorot khalayak, pendakwah media sosial, dan penerimaan pesan, sedangkan sisi produksinya di lembaga akademik formal jarang disentuh. Tiga pertanyaan yang dijawab di sini adalah bagaimana edutainment televisi dilembagakan menjadi dakwah pedagogis, bagaimana produser menerjemahkan nilai Islam integratif ke dalam format yang menghibur, dan kendala apa yang membentuk proses itu. Desain yang dipakai adalah studi kasus jamak kualitatif pada tiga unit media PTKI, yaitu SUN TV di UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, UNINUS TV di Universitas Islam Nusantara Bandung, dan DNK TV di UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, dengan data dari 30 wawancara mendalam, 18 sesi observasi partisipatif, telaah dokumen organisasi dan arsip media digital, serta 3 diskusi kelompok terarah yang dihimpun pada April sampai September 2025, lalu dianalisis lewat reduksi data, penyajian data, dan verifikasi yang dipadukan dengan analisis tematik lintas-kasus. Ada tiga temuan pada tataran praktik dan niat produksi. Pertama, produksi di sini bukan penyiaran yang berdiri sendiri, melainkan kepanjangan terlembaga dari pengajaran kelas dan dakwah. Kedua, produser menerjemahkan nilai Islam integratif ke format yang menghibur melalui cerita, dramatisasi, dialog, dan humor, dengan batas etis yang dalam kajian ini dibaca memakai kerangka *maqāsid al-sharī'ah* sebagai lensa analitis peneliti, bukan kosakata produser sendiri.

¹Correspondence Author

	<p>Ketiga, produksi tetap merupakan praktik yang terus dinegosiasikan karena dibentuk oleh tenaga manusia yang tidak stabil, ketimpangan infrastruktur, dan tarik-menarik antara martabat keagamaan dan daya tarik khalayak. Kajian ini mengusulkan <i>moral media work</i> sebagai konsep analitis yang diturunkan dari tiga kasus, bukan teori yang sudah tervalidasi. Karena resepsi khalayak dan hasil belajar tidak diteliti, pernyataan tentang nilai edukatif di sini dibaca sebagai tujuan yang dikejar produser, bukan efek yang terbukti, dan implikasinya bagi madrasah serta pesantren masih perlu diuji secara empiris.</p>
<p>Kata Kunci: Islamic Edutainment; Integrative Islamic Education; Pedagogical Da'wah; Character and Spirituality; Media Production</p>	<p>ABSTRAK</p> <p>This article asks how Islamic higher education institutions (PTKI) in Indonesia produce television edutainment, and it treats that work as an institutionalized form of pedagogical da'wah and as a space for integrative Islamic education. Research on Islamic media has concentrated on audiences, social-media preachers, and reception, while the production side inside formal academic institutions has stayed largely out of view. The study answers three questions: how television edutainment becomes institutionalized as pedagogical da'wah, how producers translate integrative Islamic values into entertaining formats, and what constraints shape the work. The design is a qualitative multi-case study of three PTKI media units, SUN TV at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, UNINUS TV at Universitas Islam Nusantara Bandung, and DNK TV at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, drawing on 30 in-depth interviews, 18 participatory observation sessions, organizational documents and digital media archives, and 3 focus group discussions collected from April to September 2025, analyzed through data reduction, display, and verification together with cross-case thematic analysis. Three findings emerged at the level of production practice and producer intention. Production at these sites is an institutional extension of classroom teaching and da'wah rather than stand-alone broadcasting. Producers carry integrative Islamic values into entertaining formats through story, dramatization, dialogue, and humor, within ethical limits that this study reads through maqāṣid al-sharī'ah as the authors' interpretive lens rather than as the producers' own vocabulary. Production remains a negotiated practice, shaped by unstable human resources, uneven infrastructure, and the pull between religious dignity and audience appeal. The study proposes moral media work as an analytical concept derived from three cases rather than as a validated theory. Because audience reception and learning outcomes were not investigated, claims about educational value describe producer intention rather than demonstrated effects, and implications for madrasah and pesantren require empirical testing.</p>

A. INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia today, religious knowledge reaches people through television and digital screens at least as often as it once passed through classrooms and the Friday sermon, and the line between instruction, persuasion, and entertainment has become difficult to draw (Hefner, 2022; Kholili et al., 2024). Research on digital da'wah has documented how new media allow communicators whose standing rests largely on media competence to reach wide audiences, sometimes at the expense of established religious authorities, while piety is repackaged for mass consumption (Akmaliah, 2020; Febrian, 2024; Hasbullah et al., 2022; Raya, 2024; Siuda, 2021). That work has taught us much about reception, celebrity preachers, and the commercial structures behind them. A different question has received far less attention: how do formally constituted educational institutions produce religious media as part of their academic mandate?

Indonesian Islamic higher education institutions, known as Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam or PTKI, occupy an unusual position in this field. They are expected not only to teach but also to project a moderate and integrative Islam to students and to the wider public (Abdullah et al., 2023; Jayadi et al., 2022; Kadi, 2022; Subchi et al., 2022), and recent studies show them promoting religious moderation and countering radical narratives through institutional policy (Burhanuddin & Khairuddin, 2022), even as fragmentary online content can weaken students' religious identities where credible alternatives are absent (Ismail & Astuti, 2023; Kustiawan et al., 2023). Read against this backdrop, the campus audiovisual units and university television channels appearing across these institutions look less like an accidental development than a purposeful move into a mediated public sphere that would otherwise be left to commercial or individual producers. Because PTKI sit at the top of a wider Islamic education system that also includes madrasah and pesantren, the practices they develop may travel beyond their own campuses, although whether they in fact do so is an empirical question this study does not settle (Nasir et al., 2024; Suresman et al., 2025).

Edutainment names what happens when teaching and broadcasting are combined, the deliberate embedding of educational content in forms designed to entertain. International research has established that entertainment-education can shift knowledge, attitudes, and behavior when narrative and enjoyment carry the instructional content, and the same literature consistently identifies a tension between informing and entertaining (Arshad et al., 2025; Doré et al., 2025; Martinez et al., 2022; Mateus et al., 2022). Almost all that evidence comes from secular communication settings. Media production in Islamic contexts works under different constraints, since scholars in the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* tradition hold that any use of media must be weighed against obligations to protect religion, intellect, human dignity, and the public good (Mohadi & Tarshany, 2023; Mohammed, 2024; Raquib et al., 2022). How that tension is handled in practice, particularly where content is overtly religious and producers answer to both theological standards and institutional authority, remains poorly understood.

Two further considerations sharpen the gap. PTKI work under real material constraints, and research on educational technology adoption in Indonesian Islamic higher education repeatedly documents institutional enthusiasm alongside persistent shortfalls in infrastructure and human resources (Nasir et al., 2024; Suresman et al., 2025; Susanto et al., 2022; Wakhidah & Erman, 2022). Media and cultural studies, for its part, has shown that media texts are not free creative expression, but products worked out through organizational routines, institutional rules, and negotiation among many actors (Poell et al., 2025). Placing these next to the literatures already reviewed makes the gap visible. Digital da'wah research has concentrated on preachers and audiences, edutainment research has been largely secular and effects-oriented, PTKI research has concentrated on curriculum and policy, and production studies have rarely engaged Islamic educational institutions in the global South. Very little is therefore known about how Islamic universities institutionalize media production, how they translate religious values into watchable formats, and how they manage the tensions that follow.

This study examines television edutainment production at three PTKI media units and puts the production work itself at the center of the inquiry. It addresses three questions:

RQ1: How is television edutainment institutionalized as pedagogical da'wah in PTKI?

RQ2: How are integrative Islamic values translated into entertaining television formats?

RQ3: What institutional, pedagogical, and production constraints shape this process?

The article's central argument is that PTKI television edutainment is a form of moral media work, an institutionalized practice in which producers answer not only to audiences but also to academic legitimacy and religious authority, so that even technical and creative decisions become ethical negotiations. The term is a concept this study proposes based on the three cases rather than a theory it adopts from prior work, and it is developed from the findings rather than applied to them. Placing production before reception lets the study treat PTKI as active producers of religiously grounded educational media and situate television edutainment within integrative Islamic education, where da'wah, character formation, and modern media practice are pursued together rather than in separate compartments. The study therefore addresses Islamic education first and media studies second. Since production at these sites also works as experiential learning, the findings bear on curriculum and pedagogy, pointing to hands-on media production as a space where students build professional judgment, ethical discernment, and communicative capability (Jackson et al., 2023).

Theoretical framework

Five bodies of work inform this study, and their division of labor is set out here so that the framework is not read as an accumulation of theories. Two of them define the object of analysis. Integrative Islamic education explains why a campus television unit can be treated as an educational site at all, since it holds that religious formation, general knowledge, and professional skill belong to a single process rather than to

separate compartments (Hosic et al., 2025; Wakhidah & Erman, 2022). Experiential learning specifies the mechanism through which such formation is expected to take place here, namely learning by carrying real production responsibility rather than by studying media in the abstract (Jackson et al., 2023). Taken together, these two make it possible to read media production at the three sites as teaching and as da'wah at the same time.

Two further bodies of work function as analytical vocabulary rather than as claims about the cases. Entertainment-education supplies the terms for how instructional content is carried by entertaining form, and it identifies the tension between informing and entertaining that this analysis tracks across the three sites (Arshad et al., 2025; Doré et al., 2025; Martinez et al., 2022; Mateus et al., 2022). Because that literature is largely effects-oriented while the present data covers production alone, it is used to describe the strategies producers adopted and not to predict what those strategies achieved among viewers. Media production scholarship contributes a second assumption, that content is worked out through organizational routines and negotiation among actors rather than expressed freely by an author (Poell et al., 2025). *Maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* then serves as the Islamic normative lens through which the ethical limits observed in production are interpreted (Mohadi & Tarshany, 2023; Mohammed, 2024; Raquib et al., 2022).

The status of that last lens needs stating plainly. *Maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* is a lens the researchers applied, not a framework the participants consciously used. Producers spoke of protecting the dignity of religious representation, of inviting rather than judging the audience, and of the ethics of da'wah, and they rarely named the formal *maqāṣid* categories. Reading those situated judgments through it brings out a coherence the producers did not articulate in those terms and saying so guards against the impression that production at these sites was designed around *maqāṣid* theory. Moral media work, finally, occupies a different position from the four frameworks above. It is not an input to the analysis but its outcome, an analytical concept abstracted from the comparison of the three cases and offered for testing rather than presented as a validated theory. It is named here only to indicate where the argument arrives, and it is developed after the findings, since the evidence for it is the patterned variation the cross-case analysis reports.

B. METHOD

The study adopted a qualitative multi-case design, a choice that suited its exploratory goals. A qualitative orientation was appropriate because the research was concerned with understanding meanings, practices, and institutional processes rather than with measuring variables, and the multi-case structure enriched the analysis by making it possible to compare how television edutainment production took shape across different institutional settings. The goal was analytical insight rather than statistical generalization. Comparable qualitative and case-based designs have been

applied in recent studies of Islamic media and education in Indonesia (Kholili et al., 2024; Nasir et al., 2024). One boundary of this design should be stated at the outset, because it governs how every claim below is to be read. The data records what producers say and what they do, so the findings concern production practice and producer intention. Where the analysis refers to educational or da'wah purposes, these are the purposes producers pursued and the assumptions on which they worked, not effects demonstrated on audiences or learners, since neither audience reception nor learning outcomes were investigated here.

The unit of analysis was the media or television production unit operating within an Islamic higher education institution, together with the people, routines, and content associated with it. Three institutions were selected through purposive sampling, and each is identified here by the name of its campus media unit: SUN TV at UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, UNINUS TV at Universitas Islam Nusantara Bandung, and DNK TV at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta. The selection was designed to capture variation in production arrangements, in the maturity of the unit, and in the level of infrastructure available at each site. A site was included if it maintained an active campus television or audiovisual da'wah production activity, if both lecturers and students were involved in production, and if the institution agreed to participate. Table 1 summarizes the three cases, their institutional profile of production, and the principal data sources drawn from each. The three institutions are named in this report, but individual informants are not, and specific program titles are described only by genre and topic so that no student or staff member can be identified from the examples discussed here.

Data came from three types of sources. The human informants included producers, supervising lecturers, students who wrote scripts, operated cameras, edited footage, and presented programs, and campus media personnel. Direct observation covered activities directly tied to the production process, including editorial meetings, recording sessions, and post-production work. Documentary materials included program plans, scripts, production schedules, internal guidelines, and the program content itself. Data was gathered through in-depth semi-structured interviews conducted with an interview guide, through participant and non-participant observation, through document review, and through focus group discussions with the production teams. The use of several collection techniques across three sites made it possible to triangulate both by method and by source.

Data collection ran from April to September 2025. Thirty informants took part across the three sites, drawn from all three production units and including producers, supervising lecturers, and the student personnel responsible for scripting, filming, editing, and presenting, as well as campus media staff. Alongside the 30 in-depth interviews, 18 participatory observation sessions and 3 focus group discussions with the production teams were conducted. Recording these numbers follows established guidance on transparency in qualitative research and gives readers the means to assess

whether the evidence base for each case is adequate and to what extent the findings might apply elsewhere.

Analysis proceeded through an interactive cycle of data reduction, data display, and verification, applied repeatedly across the data set. Transcripts, field notes, and documents were read closely, coded, and condensed into analytic categories; the coded material was then arranged in matrices and thematic summaries so that patterns within and across cases could be identified; and the interpretations that emerged were checked against the data and refined until they were stable. Content analysis of program materials made it possible to examine how values were expressed in the content. The process moved from within-case analysis to cross-case synthesis. To strengthen the trustworthiness of the findings, triangulation was used throughout, an audit trail of coding decisions was maintained, and member checking was carried out, in which selected producers and supervising lecturers at each site reviewed the summaries and quotations attributed to them and confirmed that the interpretations were consistent with what they had intended. Because every informant quotation was originally given in Indonesian, the bilingual authors translated each one into English and verified it through a bilingual cross-check, with the original Indonesian wording preserved in the audit trail. Figure 1 outlines the overall procedure.

The research maintained its ethical commitments to informed consent, voluntary participation, and confidentiality. Non-clinical social research of this kind did not require clearance from a formal medical or biomedical ethics committee at the participating institutions at the time of fieldwork. Ethical governance was therefore secured through the research permit issued by each participating media unit and its faculty, through the institutional research ethics provisions of the authors' home university, and through the written informed consent of every participant, obtained before each interview, observation session, and focus group discussion. Participants were told they could withdraw at any point, identifying information was removed from transcripts, and sensitive institutional documents were consulted only with permission.

The data corpus brought together interview transcripts, field notes from observation, and a set of institutional and program documents. Informants were selected to cover the main production roles so that planners, supervisors, performers, and editors were all represented, and observation was scheduled to capture both routine production activity and decision-making moments, including editorial discussions. Documentary sources were used to corroborate and contextualize informant accounts, making it possible to check claims about routines and institutional rules against written records. At each site, data collection continued until new informants contributed little that had not already been recorded. Given the purposive multi-case design and the modest number of informants per site, this is best understood as within-case information adequacy in the sense of information power rather than as full thematic saturation.

Coding moved through two cycles. The first applied descriptive codes that remained close to the language used by informants and in the documents. The second drew those codes together into the analytic categories that became the reported themes. Cases where a site departed from its usual pattern were retained and examined rather than set aside, because such departures often marked the outer boundaries of a theme. Throughout the analysis, the researchers maintained a reflexive awareness of their own familiarity with Islamic education and media, keeping the meanings offered by informants in the foreground and resisting the tendency to impose prior theoretical frameworks on the data prematurely. Their positionality also shaped both access and interpretation. Two of the authors are based at UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, the institution that hosts DNK TV, which meant they approached that site with insider familiarity and easier access, whereas the team engaged SUN TV and UNINUS TV as outsiders. To manage this insider position at DNK TV, the same interview guide, observation protocol, and documentary triangulation were applied consistently across all three sites, and interpretations concerning DNK TV were cross-checked by the team members who came from outside that institution. Making this explicit gives readers the means to consider how it may have shaped what could be observed and how accounts were interpreted. Together with triangulation and member checking, these steps were intended to support credibility and confirmability, not to claim a single objective account of a complex field.

Because the three cases differed in their institutional maturity and resource base, the cross-case comparison required careful handling. Rather than ranking the sites against one another, the analysis asked how each one managed the same underlying task, namely producing religious educational television under its own conditions, so that differences could be read as variation in institutional arrangement rather than as degrees of achievement or failure. A pattern was treated as analytically robust only when it appeared in more than one case or when a single case supported it through several independent sources, and where a site diverged from the others that divergence was itself treated as informative rather than as noise. This comparative approach made it possible to name the institutional logics the sites shared while keeping each setting analytically distinct.

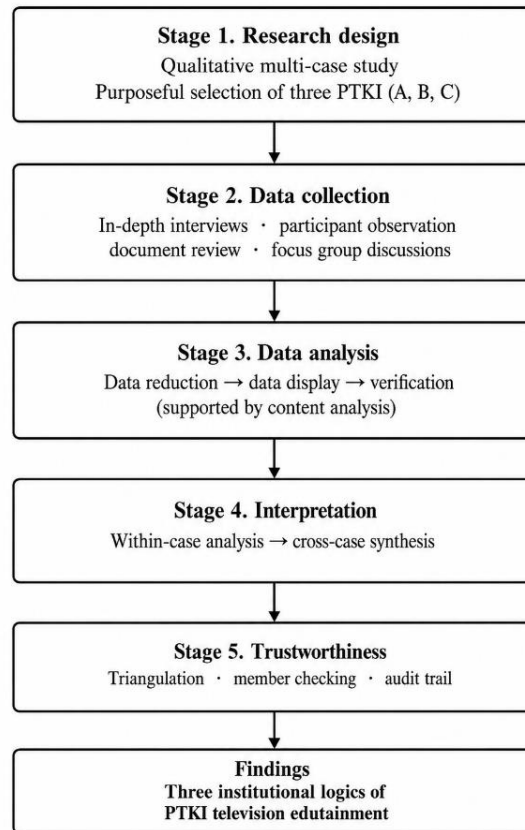


Figure 1. Research procedure of the multi-case study

Table 1. Cases, institutional profile, and data sources

Case	Institutional profile of production	Principal data sources
SUN TV (UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta)	Production embedded in an Islamic Educational Management program; functions as a student laboratory and public platform	Interviews with lecturers and student producers; observation of scripting and editing; program scripts
UNINUS TV (Universitas Islam Nusantara Bandung)	Collaborative model involving lecturers, student organizations, and campus media personnel; theme-based programming	Interviews with producers and students; focus group discussion; sample program content
DNK TV (UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta)	Formalized production ecology with professional equipment, scheduled programming, and editorial governance	Interviews with producers and reviewers; observation of editorial meetings; broadcast schedules and guidelines

Source: Authors' analysis

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Television Production as Experiential Pedagogical Da'wah

At SUN TV, television production was embedded within an academic program in Islamic Educational Management and was operated as a teaching environment rather than a broadcast unit in any ordinary sense. The studio served as a laboratory where students carried out the scripting, camera work, presenting, and editing under the supervision of their lecturers, while the resulting programs were distributed to public audiences on a broadcast platform. What distinguished this arrangement from an ordinary production house is that the act of making a program was treated as the curriculum itself, so that the learning produced in the production process mattered as much as the finished program and sometimes more.

The supervising lecturer described embedding production within teaching as a deliberate pedagogical choice, on the reasoning that students understand media differently once they are responsible for producing it. If Islamic communication remained a classroom subject, he observed, students treated it as theory; that changed when they had to decide what should and should not appear on screen, because at that point they found that “every production decision carries consequences.” One episode illustrates the standard applied here. A student team proposed building a discussion program around pointed satire because it would attract attention, and rather than rejecting the idea the lecturer worked through with them whether such satire was consistent with the ethics of da'wah, after which the students revised the script of their own accord. His formulation of the governing principle was deliberately two-sided: “technical quality matters, but how Islam is represented matters too.” Craft and representation were held to a single combined standard, and that standard was conveyed through shared deliberation rather than prescribed in advance.

Students reported absorbing this standard through cycles of revision rather than through direct instruction. One student producer assumed at first that the studio was mainly concerned with completing assignments, then found that a script might be returned three or four times and that supervision extended past visuals and editing to the moral orientation of the message. While preparing an episode on digital ethics, she had written dialogue that by her own account sounded like “blaming people who use social media badly,” which prompted the lecturer to caution her: “Don't position yourself as morally higher than the audience. Invite them to think.” The team reworked the segment into peer dialogue. The analytical weight of the correction lies in what it was not about. Nothing turned on the accuracy of the content; the issue was the stance of the speaker, moving the producer from a position of moral authority over the viewer to that of a peer thinking alongside them.

An observed script session showed the same pedagogy at work. A draft for a youth program on online behavior framed cyberbullying in openly moralizing language, with

lines such as “Muslims should not behave like this.” The supervising lecturer asked whether such phrasing might alienate younger viewers, and the disagreement that followed was genuine: one student defended the direct wording as clearer, another argued that the audience would read it as lecturing. The lecturer proposed to recast the segment as a conversation between two friends who disagreed about reposting gossip that might harm someone, and by the end of the session the script had moved from direct preaching to narrative discussion. Even the students who had defended the original wording agreed that the revision felt, as one put it, “less like class,” which indicates that the students had come to judge the revision on the ground the lecturer raised, namely how they anticipated a young audience would receive it. How audiences in fact received it was not observed.

The same concern with register carried into recording and editing. Students rotated through the roles of presenter, camera operator, floor director, and audio technician, and the lecturer stopped recording whenever a presenter drifted into highly formal religious speech, telling the team to “speak like you are talking to friends, not giving Friday sermons.” One segment was restarted three times before the tone was judged right. In post-production a technical decision became an ethical one when students debated whether dramatic background music for a reflective scene about slander would carry the message or merely make it sensational, and they settled on quieter instrumentation. Script, mode of address, and sound choice all returned the same judgment, that the manner of the communication had to remain faithful to its content.

Taken together, these moments describe one recurring mechanism, something resembling an ethical apprenticeship. The characteristic move at SUN TV was to shift a prescriptive, top-down religious address into an invitational, peer-level one, through repeated revision and through modeling by lecturers rather than codification in any document. One program at the site, a peer-conversation segment on the thoughtful use of social media that closed with practical reflection rather than explicit condemnation, can be read as the product of this mechanism, since its form embodies the stance the revision cycles had been teaching.

The main structural weakness of this arrangement was continuity. Because the unit depended on students who eventually graduated, technical knowledge proved unstable, and one editor described certain editing skills having to be relearned from scratch after seniors left, with quality falling during examination periods. Knowledge was preserved informally, through peer transmission and lecturers correcting errors in conversation. The feature that made the laboratory effective at forming producers was therefore also the source of its fragility, because competence resided in people rather than in durable institutional systems.

What ultimately defined SUN TV is that oversight and teaching could not be separated. There was no review board, because the review was itself the lesson, conducted through conversation as each program took shape, and this fusion of gatekeeping and pedagogy places the site at one end of the spectrum developed below.

Translating Islamic Values Through Entertainment Logic

UNINUS TV organized production through a collaborative arrangement involving lecturers, student organizations, and campus media personnel, and its central preoccupation was making religious instruction available inside formats audiences would choose to watch. Where SUN TV gave priority to the formation of its student producers, UNINUS TV gave priority to the audience. The team treated relatability not as a cosmetic nicety but as the condition for any educational effect, which is why programming tilted toward dramatization and narrative; in the team's own experience straightforward instruction failed to hold viewers to the end of a program.

A student scriptwriter traced this strategy to a specific early failure. One of the unit's first videos, she recalled, "felt too much like classroom teaching, and almost nobody watched until the end," which led the team to resolve to "hide the message inside stories," with the explicit aim of having audiences reach the end before noticing the lesson. This was less a dilution of religious content than a working theory of reception, resting on the assumption that an overt lesson triggers the resistance that prevents it from being absorbed. Whether audiences in fact respond this way was not tested in this study; what matters analytically is that this belief shaped how programs were built.

Topics were drawn from the texture of student life rather than from a curriculum. A member of one campus organization described bringing forward issues such as gossip, family pressure, anxiety about religious consistency, and toxicity in online communication, after which lecturers would ask "what Islamic lesson can emerge naturally from this issue." The unit's real work lay in negotiating between what felt genuine to young viewers and what remained religiously defensible, and that negotiation was conducted collectively rather than resolved by a single authority. The curriculum, in effect, was reverse engineered from lived experience.

An observed weekly content meeting on an episode about academic dishonesty showed how far this logic reached into narrative form. Students from campus organizations, media staff, and a lecturer advisor worked through the script together, and the students first proposed ending the narrative with the cheating character receiving a public punishment. A lecturer asked whether an ending built on punishment genuinely expressed Islamic educational values or merely communicated fear of consequences, and the group reworked the resolution so that the character acknowledged his own wrongdoing after being confronted by peers, an ending several participants described as "more humane." The analytical significance of the decision is that the moral meaning of the program was being encoded in the shape of its ending. Value translation at UNINUS TV operated at the level of plot structure and narrative resolution, and the choice between a punitive and a restorative conclusion was treated as a matter of theological judgment rather than of dramatic preference.

Supervisors similarly treated believability as a condition of moral effectiveness and not merely of audience enjoyment. During a dramatized recording about dormitory residents in conflict over gossip circulated on social media, supervisors called for

multiple retakes because exaggerated emotional responses made the program feel artificial, and one lecturer stated the principle plainly: “If audiences cannot believe the characters, they will also ignore the lesson.” The reasoning treats credibility as a moral prerequisite, since in the team's understanding an unconvincing character does not merely weaken a scene but voids the lesson the scene was built to carry.

One program at this site illustrates the mechanism the team used consistently. It was a dramatized narrative about the effects of digital gossip (*ghībah*), following students who become drawn into sharing online rumors and concluding with guided reflection rather than explicit instruction. The mechanism can be described as narrative substitution, meaning the replacement of direct exhortation with a story whose component parts, a recognizable topic, a believable character, a restorative conclusion, are intended to carry the value that exhortation would otherwise state directly. The competence the team was developing was the capacity to judge when a story was sufficiently engaging to attract viewers and sufficiently sound to withstand scrutiny from those responsible for its religious content.

The unit was candid about the limits of this approach. A lecturer advisor framed the central problem not as whether entertainment was permissible, since young audiences plainly enjoyed it, but as “deciding where the line is,” and recalled a comedic scene that delighted everyone in rehearsal yet later struck colleagues as making religious guidance seem unserious. Students were equally frank about viewing habits, several admitting that peers skip videos that look overtly religious, because “if the thumbnail already looks like preaching, people scroll.” This opened a debate about whether engagement should weigh as heavily as religious seriousness, a debate the site kept permanently active rather than resolved.

What defined UNINUS TV is that moral judgment resided with the group rather than with an individual or a formal procedure. The content meeting was the gatekeeper, which distributed responsibility across the people who shaped a program and kept the boundary between religious dignity and audience appeal under continuous negotiation rather than fixing it by rule. In the comparison below this collective location of judgment sits between the mentorship of SUN TV and the formalized procedure of DNK TV.

Editorial Governance and Religious Accountability

DNK TV is produced within a formalized editorial structure, with professional equipment, a scheduled programming calendar, and documented review processes. Its distinguishing characteristic was that a content idea could not be realized simply because its author wanted to pursue it. Every proposal passed through institutional gatekeeping before production began, which made religious and scholarly accountability a standing requirement of the workflow rather than something negotiated afresh each time.

The editorial coordinator described a deliberate sequence of scrutiny applied before anything was produced. Nothing moved directly into production on submission; proposals entered editorial review first, where they were assessed for academic soundness, for the risk of misunderstanding, and for whether their religious content was properly balanced. He stated plainly that the unit would not accept “oversimplified Islam simply because simplification attracts viewers,” a position that places doctrinal integrity above audience appeal and in this respect reverses the order of priorities observed at UNINUS TV.

Religious reviews at this site reshaped both how a topic was handled and what a program said, and it did so in two distinct ways. A religious reviewer described a proposal built on comedy about prayer practices that was reworked into “reflective humor rather than direct parody” once the team had considered whether viewers might read it as ridicule; this is review that polices tone. A student presenter described recording a complete segment and then being required to redo it because a reviewer judged that the explanation “sounded too absolute and ignored differences of opinion in Islamic scholarship”; this is review that polices doctrinal overreach. The standard applied at DNK TV therefore protected not only propriety but also scholarly pluralism, treating unwarranted certainty about contested religious questions as a fault comparable in seriousness to disrespect for the audience.

The same presenter described a shift in his own attitude that says something about how the system worked overtime. He admitted finding the lecturers overly strict at first, since revisions slowed production, and understanding the reasons only after several productions. On his account, the procedure shaped producers' dispositions gradually, functioning as a slower, formalized counterpart to the immediate teaching at SUN TV. What the data support here is the producer's own report of that change, not a measured effect on his professional judgment.

An observed editorial meeting showed the institutional stakes of this review. Working through printed scripts for proposed content on Islamic financial ethics, reviewers questioned whether the sources cited represented the range of opinion within Islamic legal scholarship and withheld approval until the material was revised. One participant summarized the logic of the apparatus in a sentence: “If this goes public carrying the university name, mistakes become institutional mistakes.” This remark locates accountability in the institution rather than in the individual producer, and it is precisely this transfer of risk that formalized gatekeeping is designed to manage.

Accessibility and restraint were governed with the same formality. In rehearsal, presenters worked at cutting technical religious vocabulary, with supervisors urging ordinary Indonesian in place of Arabic terminology and reminding them: “Don't assume viewers already understand religious terms. Explain first.” In post-production, an edited sequence whose comedic pacing struck reviewers as too playful for the subject was revised to soften humor. The judgments SUN TV reached through spontaneous dialogue

were reached here through documented review, so the difference between the sites lay less in what was judged than in the form judgment took.

One program illustrates the site's characteristic mechanism. It was an expert-led discussion on Muslim financial ethics, combining lecturer commentary with examples drawn from students' own financial decisions, and it reached broadcast only after concerns about doctrinal oversimplification had been addressed in review. The mechanism can be described as procedural gatekeeping, in which moral judgment is externalized into a repeatable review conducted against explicit criteria. Its intended advantage, in the terms staff themselves used, is that output quality depends less on the disposition of any individual producer, because the criteria rather than the person carry the normative standard.

This consistency came at a cost. DNK TV followed documented weekly schedules recording editing timelines, presenter assignments, and revision histories, which gave it a stability the volunteer-dependent units could not achieve, yet staff acknowledged that layered approval slowed the unit's response to emerging issues. What defined DNK TV is that moral judgment resided in the procedure, completing a spectrum that runs from the mentor at SUN TV, through the deliberating group at UNINUS TV, to the institutional process here.

Cross-Case Comparative Analysis

Examined side by side, the three sites were engaged in the same underlying task, producing religious educational television under institutional conditions, yet each had organized that task in a systematically different way. The comparison that follows is analytic rather than evaluative, since the cases differed in institutional maturity and resource levels, and ranking them would obscure more than it revealed. The comparison is most productive along four dimensions on which the sites genuinely diverged: where production was located institutionally, how values were predominantly translated into form, how ethical gatekeeping operated, and how constraint was managed. Table 2 maps these differences, and each is discussed in turn below.

Table 2. Cross-case comparison of television edutainment production across the three PTKI

Comparative dimension	SUN TV	UNINUS TV	DNK TV
Institutional location of production	Pedagogical laboratory within an academic program; output is the formation of students	Collaborative cultural production with student organizations; output is community reach	Institutional broadcasting with professional facilities and scheduled output
Dominant mode of value translation	Dialogic pedagogy; values embedded	Dramatized moral narrative; lessons	Expert-mediated explanation;

Comparative dimension	SUN TV	UNINUS TV	DNK TV
	through conversational reframing	carried inside credible stories	commentary paired with practical illustration
Mechanism of ethical gatekeeping	Informal and in the moment, exercised by the supervising lecturer	Negotiated and collective, enacted in group content meetings	Formalized and procedural, through documented editorial review
Principal constraint and coping strategy	Volunteer turnover; peer mentoring and lecturer continuity	Dignity-versus-appeal tension; resolved through collaborative discussion	Layered approval and slower response; absorbed by documented routines

Source: Authors' analysis

The institutional location of production differed in kind rather than in degree, and this difference sets the terms for everything else. At SUN TV, production was situated within an academic program and functioned as a pedagogical laboratory whose primary output was the formation of students. At UNINUS TV, it took the form of collaborative cultural production, with student organizations and media personnel working alongside lecturers toward a community audience. At DNK TV, it has approximately increased institutional broadcasting, with scheduled programming and professional facilities answerable to formal oversight. These locations governed the rhythm of the work, determined who held authority over it, and determined how closely the content was tied to the teaching curriculum. SUN TV followed the academic calendar and slowed during examination periods; DNK TV was governed by documented schedules that provided stability; UNINUS TV operated at an intermediate, project-based tempo that depended on when the collaborating parties were available.

The translation of Islamic values into form followed from these institutional locations. SUN TV relied on dialogic pedagogy, working values into the content through conversational formats and through visible revisions to the presenter's relationship with the audience. UNINUS TV relied on dramatized moral narrative, carrying lessons inside credible stories whose resolutions were themselves subjects of religious deliberation. DNK TV relied on expert-mediated explanation, combining lecturer commentary with practical illustration under editorial supervision. Running beneath these differences was a shared sub-practice, the management of register and accessibility, which each site conducted in its own idiom. The SUN TV lecturer who told presenters to speak as if addressing friends rather than delivering sermons, the UNINUS TV team who judged a script by whether viewers would watch it to the end, and the DNK TV supervisors who insisted that religious terms be explained before they were used were all holding the same underlying boundary: humor, dramatization, and popular form were permitted so

long as they preserved religious dignity, but each site held this boundary through a different means.

The most consequential dimension of variation, and the one that gives structure to the rest, was the mechanism of ethical gatekeeping, which ran along a clear gradient from the informal to the procedural. On SUN TV, gatekeeping was informal and dialogic, exercised in real time when a lecturer stopped recording or returned a script for the third or fourth revision. At UNINUS TV, it was negotiated and collective, worked out through group deliberation in content meetings where a proposed ending or a comedic scene could be challenged and revised by everyone present. At DNK TV, it was formalized and procedural, conducted through documented editorial review against explicit criteria of academic soundness, doctrinal balance, and institutional risk. What is notable is that the same protective impulse was present in every case while its location shifted across the three sites, from the individual mentor to the deliberating group to the institutional procedure. Each location carried its own trade-off: the mentor provided responsiveness but limited durability; the group provided shared ownership but no settled rule; and the procedure provided consistency and accountability but reduced speed. This quality of negotiation, in which audience engagement was always being weighed against religious propriety, is represented in Figure 2. Figure 2 was developed inductively from the cross-case findings and is offered as a summary of the observed material rather than as an established theoretical model.

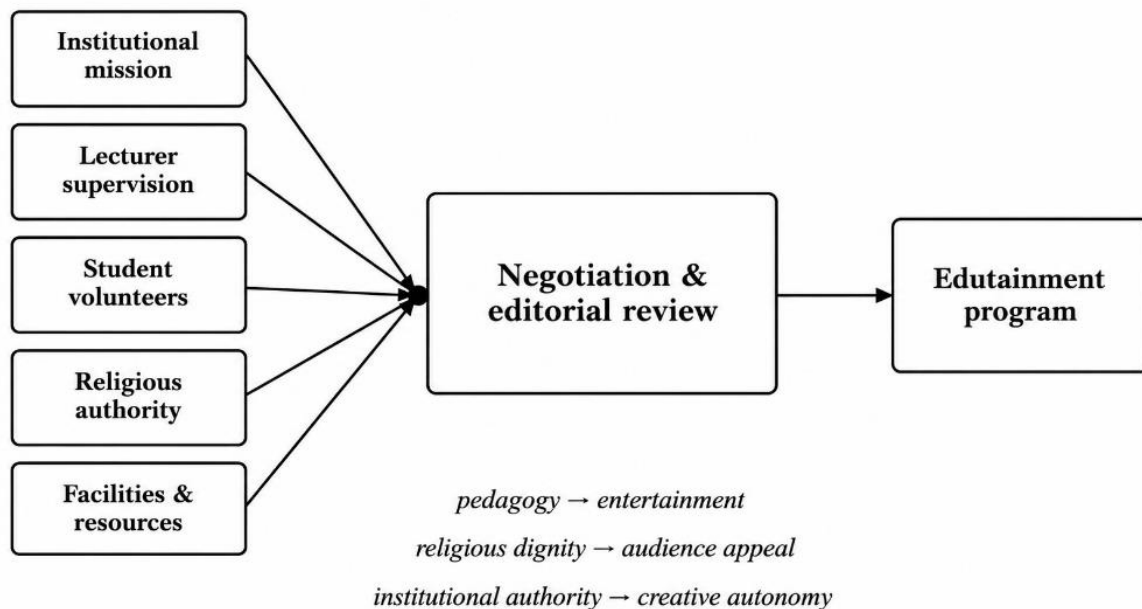


Figure 2. PTKI television production as negotiated practice

The cases also confronted distinct, though overlapping, constraints, and the pattern of those constraints followed the same institutional differences. The instability of human resources bit hardest at SUN TV and UNINUS TV, where dependence on student volunteers meant that graduation periodically reset technical capability, a problem each

site absorbed through peer mentoring and through the continuity supplied by lecturers. Infrastructural disparity sets the better-resourced DNK TV apart from the other two, which adapted by choosing formats within their means. Institutional bureaucracy was felt most at DNK TV, where layered approval stretched production timelines even as it protected output quality. The tension between religious dignity and audience appeal was a constant across all three sites, but it pressed most forcefully where the audience orientation was strongest, at UNINUS TV, and was contained most systematically where governance was tightest, at DNK TV, so that the arrangement that relieved one constraint tended to intensify another.

What the comparison reveals beneath the visible differences is equally significant. At none of the three sites was problematic content treatment simply rejected outright. In every case it was revised, whether by a lecturer in conversation, by a content meeting through deliberation, or by an editorial board through formal review. All three treated the dignity of religious representation as non-negotiable, and all three responded to difficulty by reworking the material rather than abandoning it. The sites differed not in whether they protected that dignity but in where the protection was located and by what means it was triggered, and it is this shared commitment that allows their differences to be read as variations on a common practice.

These four dimensions did not vary independently of one another. Each site displayed a coherent configuration in which the institutional location of production predicted both the mode of value translation and the mechanism of gatekeeping. The laboratory at SUN TV produced dialogic translation and informal gatekeeping; the collaborative unit at UNINUS TV produced dramatized translation and negotiated gatekeeping; and the governed unit at DNK TV produced expert-mediated translation and formalized gatekeeping. The mechanism of gatekeeping can be read as the organizing variable in each configuration, since where moral judgment is located, whether with a mentor, a group, or a procedure, aligns closely with how each site translated values and managed its characteristic constraints. The variation among the cases was therefore patterned rather than incidental, and this patterning provides the empirical foundation for the synthesis developed in the section that follows.

From Institutional Variation to Moral Media Work

The patterned variation across the three sites points toward a single underlying object of analysis. Each unit was working through the same problem, how to make religious education engaging without compromising its integrity, and each arrived at a different but internally consistent solution shaped by its institutional form. Beneath the differences, the cases share one property: technical, pedagogical, and religious accountabilities were treated as inseparable at every stage of production rather than as separate concerns to be reconciled after the fact.

This shared property is what the study describes as moral media work, meaning media production in which decisions about craft are simultaneously decisions about

pedagogy and religious responsibility. The concept is proposed as an analytical framework derived from the cross-case comparison rather than as a validated theory, and it is grounded in the empirical material rather than imposed on it from outside. The choice of background music at SUN TV, the resolution of a dramatized plot at UNINUS TV, and the approval of a script on financial ethics at DNK TV were not, in the first instance, aesthetic or logistical matters. They were judgments about how Islam should be represented, made by people who understood themselves as accountable for that representation. The three configurations are best read as three institutional forms of a single underlying practice.

Two features of this concept warrant emphasis. The practice is moral in the sense that craft decisions and decisions about religious representation are not merely related but become identical at the point of action: choosing a musical tone or the ending of a story is already an act of religious judgment. It is work in the sense that this judgment is effortful, repeated, and distributed, exercised across scripting, recording, and editing and shared among lecturers, reviewers, and students rather than residing with a single author. On both counts, moral media work differs from a model in which entertainment is produced first and religious value added afterward, because here form and value are generated together in the same sequence of decisions, and the religious character of a program is not applied after the fact but is a property of the process that produces it.

Table 3 arranges the three sites as a typology of moral media work, indicating where each configuration locates the practice, what it foregrounds, and what it risks. The typology is offered not to rank the sites but to show that a common practice can be institutionalized in more than one workable arrangement, each with its own strengths and vulnerabilities.

Table 3. A typology of moral media work across the three production configurations

Configuration	Locus of moral judgment	Foregrounds	Characteristic risk
Pedagogical laboratory (SUN TV)	The mentor, in real-time dialogue	Formation of conscientious producers	Unstable continuity as students graduates
Collaborative cultural production (UNINUS TV)	The deliberating group	Audience relatability and narrative credibility	Drift toward engagement at the expense of seriousness
Institutional broadcasting (DNK TV)	The editorial procedure	Doctrinal balance and institutional accountability	Reduced responsiveness from layered approval

Source: Authors' analysis

Taken together, the cases suggest that institutionalizing religious edutainment is not a matter of finding a single model but rather of working within a family of arrangements, differentiated above all by where moral judgment is situated in the production process, whether with the mentor, with the group, or with the procedure. This is precisely where the value of the multi-case design becomes clear. By holding the underlying task constant and allowing the institutional form to vary, the analysis shows that moral media work is durable across differences in resources and governance, taking the organizational shape its setting allows while preserving its defining combination of technical, pedagogical, and religious accountability. The three sites are best understood not as better or worse versions of one model but as distinct institutional responses to a problem that Islamic higher education increasingly faces as it takes on media production.

Conceptual Distinction of Moral Media Work

Naming the practice in these terms sets it apart from three adjacent frameworks, and the distinction is worth stating precisely, since the novelty of the concept rests on it. Studies of creative labor describe media work as precarious, shaped by self-exploitation, and caught between commercial demands and the desire to do meaningful work (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011). The PTKI cases share that texture of committed and negotiated labor, but what they add is a standard of judgment that is doctrinal rather than commercial, so the line a producer must hold is the dignity of religious representation rather than the demand of a market. The media-as-practice approach asks researchers to study what people do in relation to media rather than reading texts or industries in isolation (Couldry, 2004); moral media work is one such practice, though it is normatively saturated, since the doing is itself an act of religious accountability. Moral economy treats economic and organizational life as governed by norms of obligation and worth rather than by efficiency alone (Sayer, 2007); moral media work can be read as a moral economy of religious media production, except that it locates the binding norm not in fairness or reciprocity but in a religious account of permissible benefit and harm. Table 4 sets out these distinctions. The concept does not replace the three frameworks. It specifies what creative labor, media practice, and moral economy look like when the governing value is religious and the producer is institutionally answerable for how Islam is represented.

Table 4. Conceptual distinction of moral media work from adjacent frameworks

Framework	Main concern	Limitation for this study	Contribution of moral media work
Creative labor (Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2011)	Labor conditions and creativity in cultural industries	Primarily labor-centered; the governing standard is commercial	Adds religious accountability as the binding standard of judgment
Media-as-practice (Couldry, 2004)	What actors do with and around media	Descriptive rather than specifically normative	Adds religious normativity to the practice itself
Moral economy (Sayer, 2007)	Norms of obligation and worth in economic life	Reference points are usually economic or social	Adds Islamic educational and institutional accountability
Moral media work (this study)	Technical, pedagogical, and religious judgment held together at the point of action	Proposed from three cases; requires testing elsewhere	Integrated framework for institutionally answerable religious media production

Source: Authors' analysis

Analysis and Discussion

Institutionalizing edutainment as pedagogical da'wah

The first analytical point concerns what changes when media production is owned by an educational institution rather than a broadcaster or an individual preacher. Studies of Indonesian religious media describe producers who adapt entertaining forms to reach broad audiences in a field where authority is increasingly tied to media competence, such that established religious figures can find themselves marginalized and piety repackaged for wide reach (Febrian, 2024; Hefner, 2022; Kholili et al., 2024; Raya, 2024). The PTKI cases share the same field but operate with a different motivating structure. Commercial broadcasting answers primarily to ratings, and individualized da'wah answers to personal reach, but PTKI production answers primarily to academic legitimacy and religious propriety, which is why gatekeeping in these institutions takes the form of editorial review oriented to scholarly credibility rather than to audience metrics alone. This is consistent with the production-of-culture argument that texts are shaped by organizational rules and by negotiations among actors (Poell et al., 2025), with the addition that in a religious educational context those negotiations carry normative weight that is not present in most production environments.

This institutional ownership also links production to the moderation mandate that PTKI carry. Islamic universities are expected to cultivate an inclusive and integrative

religiosity and to resist fragmenting narratives (Burhanuddin & Khairuddin, 2022; Jayadi et al., 2022; Kadi, 2022; Subchi et al., 2022), so their programs can be read as media instruments of that mandate, constructing a public religiosity that producers intend to be at once credible and engaging in the formats young audiences consume. The embedding of production within teaching, most visible at SUN TV, means further that media work simultaneously functions as experiential learning, an arrangement whose value for student development has been documented in higher education research (Jackson et al., 2023) and which is consistent with reports that PTKI pursue technological capability under uneven institutional conditions (Nasir et al., 2024; Suresman et al., 2025; Susanto et al., 2022).

There is a further implication worth drawing out, which is that institutional ownership reconfigures what audience reach means as a goal. For a commercial broadcaster, reach is an end because it generates revenue. For PTKI, the value of reaching a public is conditional on the credibility of what is transmitted, so audience size matters primarily insofar as it extends a defensible religious education. This helps explain why the cases tolerated slower and review-heavy production processes instead of maximizing output, a choice that is difficult to justify on purely commercial grounds but coherent once accountability to scholarly and religious legitimacy is taken seriously (Kholili et al., 2024; Poell et al., 2025). It also suggests that comparisons between PTKI media and commercial religious broadcasting should be made carefully, since formats that superficially resemble one another may serve very different institutional ends.

The institutional character of this work is also consistent with studies of how organizations manage religious outreach as a coordinated institutional activity rather than an individual initiative (Tahir & Elbarqi, 2023). In the PTKI cases, that coordination took the recognizable academic forms of supervision, review, and documentation, embedding production within the social and professional networks of the campus (Yusdani et al., 2019). This embeddedness helps explain both the resilience and the fragility visible in the field. Resilience followed from the routines and institutional memory that lecturers carried, which allowed production to survive turnover in the student workforce. Fragility followed from the same source, because that same dependence on particular people and relationships meant that capacity could erode quickly when key individuals moved on.

The Islamic logic of value translation

The second analytical point concerns how values are translated into entertaining forms. The international edutainment literature identifies the tension between informing and entertaining as the central challenge of the genre and has shown that narrative, audience identification, and enjoyment can serve as effective carriers of instructional content (Arshad et al., 2025; Doré et al., 2025; Hursting & Comello, 2021; Martinez et al., 2022; Mateus et al., 2022). The PTKI cases reproduce this tension but resolve it within a distinctly Islamic frame, one in which entertainment is legitimate

only to the extent that it serves educational benefit and protects moral integrity, a logic that corresponds to *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* reasoning about the use of media and technology (Mohammed, 2024; Raquib et al., 2022). As set out in the theoretical framework, this correspondence is an interpretive reading rather than a description of the producers' own vocabulary. The producers in these cases rarely invoked the formal *maqāṣid* categories of protecting religion, intellect, dignity, and benefit by name; they spoke instead of protecting the dignity of religious representation, of inviting rather than judging the audience, and of the ethics of da'wah. Using this framework brings out the coherence underlying the observed practices, while identifying it as an interpretive choice guards against overstating the case that producers were consciously applying *maqāṣid* reasoning. The result is not secular entertainment-education with a religious overlay but a religiously organized practice in which form and value are produced together.

Read this way, the findings clarify why producers invested so heavily in topic selection, presenter conduct, and editing decisions. These were not incidental aspects of the production process but the precise points at which integrative values were enacted in material form, which is consistent with arguments that integrative, value-laden designs can combine creativity with formation in religious learning contexts (Hosic et al., 2025; Wakhidah & Erman, 2022). The findings also recast the producers' imagined young audience as a design principle, one that combines pedagogical assumptions about how young people learn with da'wah assumptions about how hearts are reached. Whether actual audiences respond as imagined is an empirical question this study cannot settle, since reception and learning outcomes were not investigated here, and the literature on new media literacy suggests that reception is shaped by viewers' critical orientations (Orhan, 2023). What the data establishes is narrower and firmer: the imagined audience leaves clear and traceable marks in the content PTKI institutions produce.

The Islamic framing of value translation also speaks to ongoing debates about authority in mediated religion. Where studies of online preaching identify figures, whose legitimacy is largely performative (Febrian, 2024; Raya, 2024), the PTKI cases show legitimacy anchored instead in institutional and scholarly structures and then expressed through entertaining form. This does not make PTKI content immune to the pressures of attention that govern all media, but it means that the pursuit of engagement is held in check by an explicit account of permissible benefit. In this respect the cases offer a counter-model to the fragmentation of religious authority documented in the literature (Akmaliah, 2020; Hamdi, 2023), showing how an institution can enter the attention economy while trying to maintain the integrity of its religious content.

Comparative evidence from other contexts sharpens this institutional contrast. Research on online preachers in other parts of the Muslim world documents a similar migration of religious communication onto entertaining digital formats, often led by individuals working outside formal institutions (Kurmanaliyev et al., 2025). Against this

background, the PTKI model is distinctive in re-anchoring entertaining religious media within an institution that carries both scholarly and pedagogical accountability, pointing to one route through which the energy of mediated religion can be channeled without ceding authority to purely performative figures. This matters for a public sphere in which contests over religious identity and legitimacy are increasingly played out through media (Rahman & Nuryana, 2023), since content that is both engaging and institutionally vouched for positions PTKI as active participants in how Islam is represented to young audiences rather than as spectators of that process.

Constraints, creative labor, and the formation of producers

The third analytical point recasts the constraints the cases encountered rather than simply listing them. Volunteer turnover, limited facilities, and slow approval processes are real limitations on productive output, consistent with accounts of uneven educational technology readiness in Indonesian Islamic higher education (Susanto et al., 2022). But the creative labor literature shows that media work everywhere is marked by precarity, by negotiation between institutional or commercial missions and creative goals, and by dependence on the commitment of individual workers (Arnold & O'Brien, 2025; Poell et al., 2025; Vilasís-Pamos et al., 2024). Viewed through this lens, the PTKI constraints are not anomalies but a religiously inflected variant of conditions that characterize cultural production.

This reframing reveals a dual register against which campus religious media should be assessed: the quality and reach of the content on one side, and the formation of the students who produce it on the other. Because production is embedded in teaching, instability that disrupts the continuity of output can at the same time create authentic conditions for learning, as students take on genuine responsibility and confront the gap between intention and execution directly, an outcome consistent with research on experiential and work-integrated learning (Jackson et al., 2023). The present study documents the conditions that make such learning plausible rather than measuring what students in fact learned. Optimizing only for polished output, for instance by professionalizing production and withdrawing student participation, could inadvertently undermine the formative purpose the arrangement was designed to serve. The tension over dignity and audience appeal similarly mirrors the contests over religious authority documented in digital da'wah research (Akmaliah, 2020; Febrian, 2024; Hefner, 2022), but in the PTKI setting it is resolved within an institutional structure through shared editorial judgment rather than through market feedback.

Treating media work as creative labor also changes how quality should be evaluated. Judged only against professional broadcast standards, the PTKI cases look modest in their technical achievement, but judged as the product of a formative process conducted under real constraints, the assessment changes substantially (Arnold & O'Brien, 2025; Vilasís-Pamos et al., 2024). The cases suggest that institutions might design deliberately for both registers at once, for example by combining a stable professional core with

rotating student participation, so that continuity and formation are pursued in parallel rather than exchanged against one another. Such a design would acknowledge that what these units produce is not only the programs themselves but also the capabilities and dispositions cultivated in the students who make them, which is consistent with the evidence on experiential learning in higher education (Jackson et al., 2023; Susanto et al., 2022).

This dual register also changes how success in campus religious media production should be measured. Commercial production is judged largely by reach and revenue, and individual da'wah by growth in audience numbers, but PTKI media must be evaluated against a compound standard that encompasses the quality of the content, its fidelity to religious and academic values, and the formation of the students involved in producing it (Jackson et al., 2023; Poell et al., 2025). Holding these criteria together is genuinely demanding, and the cases suggest that institutions sometimes resolve the tension pragmatically, accepting modest production values in exchange for richer learning or tightening editorial review at the cost of slower output. Making the compound standard explicit would help institutions weigh such trade-offs deliberately rather than by default and would clarify for institutional leaders and funders why investment in campus media is investment in education rather than merely in institutional publicity.

Moral media work: contributions and implications

Drawing these threads together yields the study's central contribution, the proposed concept of moral media work, which names production in which technical, pedagogical, and religious accountabilities cannot be separated. The concept is advanced as an analytical framework derived from three cases and open to testing, not as a fully validated theory. It extends production-centered media analysis into Islamic higher education and complements the scholarship on digital religion and broadcasting that has concentrated on audiences and preachers (Hadiyanto et al., 2025; Herlambang et al., 2025; Kholili et al., 2024; Siuda, 2021). It captures something that separate analytical frameworks tend to pull apart, because a single decision about whether a comedic scene is acceptable is simultaneously a creative judgment about the program, a pedagogical judgment about what students should learn to make, and a theological judgment about the dignity of representation. It also explains why editorial review was experienced as both a safeguard and a burden at the same time. Figure 3 presents this synthesis. Its lower tier restates the empirical configurations documented in the three cases, while its upper tier is the theoretical abstraction built from them, and the figure should be read as a proposed conceptual framework rather than as a validated model.

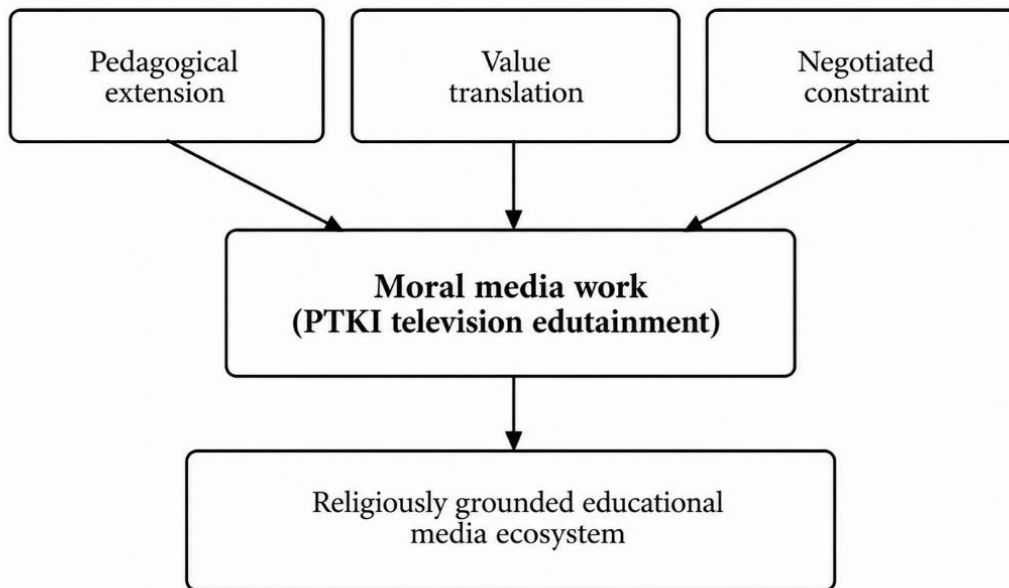


Figure 3. Proposed conceptual framework of PTKI television edutainment as moral media work

In practical terms, the analysis suggests an agenda for institutional action. PTKI can develop steadier production capacity through structured training and some degree of staffing continuity beyond the volunteer cycle, can invest selectively in the infrastructure that most constrains the formats available to them, and can formulate explicit ethical guidelines that help production teams calibrate the use of humor and dramatization against standards of religious dignity rather than negotiating these questions anew under pressure each time. Streamlining editorial reviews so that it protects legitimacy without impeding creativity would address the tension that producers described most consistently. These measures align with broader arguments in favor of connecting Islamic educational media to both pedagogical and value-based goals (Lahmar, 2024; Rofiah et al., 2025) and with the recognition that institutionally grounded production can serve as a credible counterweight to the fragmentation of religious authority in online spaces (Hamdi, 2023; Kustiawan et al., 2023). The cases come from higher education institutions, and the same logic of integrative, value-governed media production may offer implications for madrasah and pesantren, which are increasingly using audiovisual media in character and spiritual formation. That transferability remains untested. It is a plausible extension rather than a demonstrated result, and it requires its own empirical investigation in those settings (Nasir et al., 2024; Rofiah et al., 2025; Suresman et al., 2025; Zh et al., 2026).

Finally, moral media work has implications that extend beyond this case. It suggests that wherever media are produced within institutions that carry explicit value commitments, whether religious, civic, or educational in orientation, production

analysis should treat normative accountability as a structuring condition rather than as an external constraint. For Islamic higher education specifically, the concept provides a vocabulary for explaining why campus media warrant investment and governance attention, namely that they are settings in which the institution rehearses, in public and with students present, the very values it claims to teach. Located within broader scholarship on digital religion and media literacy (Herlambang et al., 2025; Orhan, 2023; Siuda, 2021), the study contributes both a concept and a research agenda, and it invites future work that connects how religious educational media are made to how they are received and to what they form in the people who produce them.

Taken together, these comparisons position moral media work as more than an account of a particular national case. They point to a broader pattern in which the entertaining mediation of religion can be organized either around individuals or around institutions, with different consequences for accountability and for continuity over time (Kurmanaliyev et al., 2025; Tahir & Elbarqi, 2023). The PTKI route shows that an institution can pursue audience engagement while keeping it subordinate to educational and religious ends, but it also shows that this route depends on sustaining the human and material conditions of production. The contribution of this study is to make those conditions visible and to name the practice they sustain, so that future research and institutional decision-making can attend to them deliberately rather than treating them as background features of the work.

Implications for policy and practice

At the level of policy, ministries and university leaders can approach campus media production as part of the academic and da'wah mission of Islamic higher education rather than as peripheral institutional publicity and can resource it on that basis. Embedding media competencies within Islamic education and communication curricula would formalize the experiential learning that already occurs informally across these sites (Jackson et al., 2023; Susanto et al., 2022), while networks connecting PTKI, madrasah, and pesantren production units could allow the sharing of training resources, equipment, and content standards across the wider Islamic education system (Nasir et al., 2024; Suresman et al., 2025). Since the evidence here comes from higher education alone, any extension of these arrangements to madrasah and pesantren should be treated as a proposal to be trialled and evaluated in those settings rather than as a measure the present findings already justify. Measures of this kind are intended to strengthen the capacity of Islamic education to communicate integrative values and to support character and spiritual formation through media that producers design for young audiences. Whether such measures achieve those outcomes is a question for evaluative research rather than a claim established by the present study.

D. CONCLUSION

This study asked how Indonesian Islamic higher education institutions produce television edutainment, and the three cases show such production working as an institutionalized form of pedagogical da'wah organized around three recurring logics: the extension of pedagogy beyond the classroom, the translation of integrative Islamic values into formats that producers judge to be engaging, and the continuous negotiation of the tensions and constraints this work creates. Producers at these sites did not simply transmit religious content to passive audiences; they constructed it through decisions that were at once technical, educational, and ethical, and remained answerable to academic legitimacy and religious authority as much as to the audiences they hoped to reach. On this basis the study proposes moral media work as an analytical concept derived from the cross-case comparison and offered for testing rather than as a validated theory, naming the inseparability of technical, pedagogical, and religious accountability in institutionally owned religious media. Read in these terms, PTKI television edutainment is a form of integrative Islamic education in which da'wah, the formation of character and spirituality, and modern media practice are pursued together rather than separately, and the practical priorities it indicates for PTKI are steadier production capacity, infrastructure directed where it constrains most, and explicit ethical boundaries for humor, dramatization, and popular formats.

Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations bound these claims. The qualitative design and the use of three cases mean that the aim throughout has been analytic insight rather than statistical generalization, and institutions not represented here may work quite differently. The findings also rest substantially on participants' own accounts, so a risk of self-reporting bias remains, one that triangulation through observation and documentary review reduces without eliminating. The study examines production as it is understood by those who carry it out, and it does not measure how audiences receive or interpret the programs. One further limitation deserves explicit statement. The study demonstrates the pedagogical potential and the institutional practice of television edutainment, but it does not empirically establish its effectiveness as an Islamic educational intervention, since student learning outcomes, audience learning, changes in religious understanding, and character or spiritual development were not measured. Claims about the educational significance of these programs should therefore be read as claims about producer intention and production practice rather than about demonstrated effects, and for the same reason the implications drawn here for madrasah and pesantren are offered as plausible extensions that require their own empirical investigation. The concept of moral media work should be read within the same boundary. It is an analytical proposal abstracted from three cases in a single national setting, so its scope conditions can be established only by applying it to other institutions, other media forms, and other religious traditions.

Future research could broaden and test these findings through larger comparative studies, investigate audience reception of PTKI edutainment directly, measure learning and formation outcomes both among the students who produce programs and among those who watch them, trace how graduates carry their production and ethical competencies into professional media and da'wah careers, and examine how digital platforms continue to reshape the conditions of institutional production.

Acknowledgments: The authors thank the leadership, lecturers, students, and media personnel of the participating Islamic higher education institutions for their openness and cooperation. The authors also acknowledge colleagues who offered constructive feedback on earlier drafts.

Ethical considerations and informed consent: The study followed the research ethics provisions of the authors' home institution and the research permits issued by each participating media unit. Formal clearance from a medical or biomedical ethics committee was not required for non-clinical social research of this kind at the participating institutions at the time of fieldwork. All participants took part voluntarily after being informed of the study's purpose, the procedures involved, and their right to withdraw at any time, and written informed consent was obtained before each interview, observation session, and focus group discussion. Identifying information about individual participants was removed, and sensitive documents were consulted only with permission.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare that they have no competing interests or conflicts of interest relevant to this research.

Author contributions: All authors contributed to the conception and design of the study, data collection, analysis, and interpretation, and drafting and revising the manuscript, and all approved the final version.

Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Data availability: The qualitative data supporting the findings are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request, subject to ethical and confidentiality constraints.

Disclaimer: The views expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not represent an official position of their institutions or funders.

REFERENCES

- Abdullah, A., Alim, A., Andriyadi, F., & Burga, M. A. (2023). Application of multicultural education in strengthening community solidarity in Indonesia. *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun*, 11(3), 1173–1198. <https://doi.org/10.26811/peuradeun.v11i3.965>
- Akmaliah, W. (2020). The demise of moderate Islam: New media, contestation, and reclaiming religious authorities. *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies*, 10(1), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v10i1.1-24>
- Arnold, S., & O'Brien, A. (2025). Employment motivations and values in the creative industries: Reorienting from creativity to well-being among Generation Zs in Ireland. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13675494251317067>
- Arshad, M. F., Abbas, I., Porcu, F., Ricci, A., Gaglio, G., Brianti, E., Carta, S., Cavallo, L., Tamponi, C., Gabrielli, S., González, C., Cantacessi, C., Scala, A., & Varcasia, A. (2025). Breaking the cycle of parasitic diseases with edutainment: The intersection of entertainment and education. *PLOS Neglected Tropical Diseases*, 19(5), Article e0013072. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pntd.0013072>
- Burhanuddin, N., & Khairuddin. (2022). The radicalism prevention through academic policies at state Islamic higher education in Indonesia. *Ulumuna*, 26(2), 363–391. <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v26i2.511>
- Couldry, N. (2004). Theorising media as practice. *Social Semiotics*, 14(2), 115–132. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1035033042000238295>
- Doré, A., Rebitschek, F. G., Morello, K., Stierstädter, E., Thiemann, K. J., & Kubiak, T. (2025). A systematic review and meta-analysis of the effects of entertainment-education interventions on persuasive health outcomes. *Scientific Reports*, 15, Article 11012. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-025-11012-y>
- Febrian, H. (2024). Visualizing authority: Rise of religious influencers on Instagram. *Social Media + Society*, 10(4). <https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051241286850>
- Hadiyanto, A., Putri, K. Y. S., & Fazli, L. (2025). Religious moderation in Instagram: An Islamic interpretation perspective. *Heliyon*, 11(4), Article e42816. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2025.e42816>
- Hamdi, A. Z. (2023). The radicalization of contemporary educated Indonesian: A case study of university students in Yogyakarta. *Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences*, 44(1), 155–162. <https://doi.org/10.34044/j.kjss.2023.44.1.17>
- Hasbullah, H., Wilaela, W., Masduki, M., Jamaluddin, J., & Rosidi, I. (2022). Acceptance of the existence of Salafi in the development of da'wah in Riau Islamic Malay society. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 8(1), Article 2107280. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2022.2107280>

- Hefner, C. M. (2022). Morality, religious authority, and the digital edge: Indonesian Muslim schoolgirls online. *American Ethnologist*, 49(3), 359–373. <https://doi.org/10.1111/amet.13088>
- Herlambang, S., Muttaqin, I., Rahmap, Torikoh, & Suratman, B. (2025). New media in the interpretation of the Qur'an: Study of Quraish Shihab's interpretation of Covid-19 on YouTube. *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, 12(1), Article 2493463. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2025.2493463>
- Hesmondhalgh, D., & Baker, S. (2011). *Creative labour: Media work in three cultural industries*. Routledge.
- Hosic, R., Abrori, F. M., Lavicza, Z., Kasti, H., Houghton, T., & Ulbrich, E. (2025). STEAM-integrated interfaith learning through maker education: A framework for innovative religious learning. *Religious Education*, 120(3), 239–258. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00344087.2025.2508569>
- Hursting, L. M., & Comello, M. L. G. (2021). Creating narrative entertainment for health communication: Perspectives from practice. *Journal of Creative Communications*, 16(2), 175–189. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0973258621992847>
- Ismail, F., & Astuti, M. (2023). The religious moderation and decreasing Muslim students' identity. *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice*, 23(17), 93–101. <https://doi.org/10.33423/jhetp.v23i17.6549>
- Jackson, V., O'Brien, V., & Richards, A. (2023). Investigating the impact of experiential learning on employability skill development and employment outcomes: A UK case study of MBA students from the Indian Subcontinent. *Journal of Education and Work*, 36(6), 476–493. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13639080.2023.2231366>
- Jayadi, K., Abduh, A., & Basri, M. (2022). A meta-analysis of multicultural education paradigm in Indonesia. *Heliyon*, 8(1), Article eo8828. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2022.eo8828>
- Kadi, T. (2022). Mainstreaming Islamic moderation values in higher education: Policy, implementation, and challenges. *Dinamika Ilmu*, 22(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.21093/di.v22i1.3679>
- Kholili, M., Izudin, A., & Hakim, M. L. (2024). Islamic proselytizing in digital religion in Indonesia: The challenges of broadcasting regulation. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 10(1), Article 2357460. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2024.2357460>
- Kurmanaliyev, M., Kerim, S., Shakizada, S., Almukhametov, A., & Abdilkhakim, B. (2025). Online preachers: A new phenomenon in the media space of Central Asian countries. *Pharos Journal of Theology*, 106(3). <https://doi.org/10.46222/pharosjot.106.3016>
- Kustiawan, M. T., Rasidin, M., Witro, D., Busni, D., & Jalaluddin, M. L. (2023). Fragmentation of dakwah media: Exploring exclusive Islam in Indonesia post-

- reform popular Islamic novels. *Ulumuna*, 27(1), 1–26.
<https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v27i1.530>
- Lahmar, F. (2024). Redefining leadership: The role of spirituality and motherhood in Muslim women's educational leadership. *Religions*, 15(12), Article 1565.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15121565>
- Martinez, L., Gimenes, M., & Lambert, E. (2022). Entertainment video games for academic learning: A systematic review. *Journal of Educational Computing Research*, 60(5), 1083–1109. <https://doi.org/10.1177/07356331211053848>
- Mateus, J.-C., Campis Carrillo, R., Aguaded, I., Jabba Molinares, D., & Erazo Coronado, A. (2022). 2.0 society convergences: Coexistence, otherness, communication and edutainment. *Social Sciences*, 11(10), Article 434.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci11100434>
- Mohadi, M., & Tarshany, Y. (2023). Maqasid al-Shari'ah and the ethics of artificial intelligence: Contemporary challenges. *Journal of Contemporary Maqasid Studies*, 2(2), 79–102. <https://doi.org/10.52100/jcms.v2i2.107>
- Mohammed, T. A. S. (2024). A scientometric study of maqāṣid al-sharī'ah research: Trending issues, hotspot research, and co-citation analysis. *Frontiers in Research Metrics and Analytics*, 9, Article 1439407.
<https://doi.org/10.3389/frma.2024.1439407>
- Nasir, M., Rizal, S., Basri, & Pabbajah, M. (2024). Revolutionizing Teungku Dayah learning model: Exploring the transformative impact of technological advancements on Islamic education in Aceh. *Cogent Education*, 11(1), Article 2335720. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2024.2335720>
- Orhan, A. (2023). Fake news detection on social media: The predictive role of university students' critical thinking dispositions and new media literacy. *Smart Learning Environments*, 10, Article 24. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40561-023-00248-8>
- Poell, T., Duffy, B. E., Nieborg, D. B., Mutsvairo, B., Tse, T., Arriagada, A., de Kloet, J., & Sun, P. (2025). Global perspectives on platforms and cultural production. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 28(2), 147–164.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/13678779241292736>
- Rahman, A., & Nuryana, Z. (2023). Islamic identity and transitional democracy in Indonesia: Ideology, public sphere, and political contestation. *Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies*, 11(2), 451–486.
<https://doi.org/10.21043/qijis.v11i2.7953>
- Raquib, A., Channa, B., Zubair, T., & Qadir, J. (2022). Islamic virtue-based ethics for artificial intelligence. *Discover Artificial Intelligence*, 2(1), Article 11.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s44163-022-00028-2>

- Raya, M. K. F. (2024). Digital religion: The packaging and persuasion of celebrity preachers in contemporary Indonesia. *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, 23(67), 80–94. <https://thenewsri.ro/index.php/njsri/article/view/512>
- Rofiah, N. H., Kawai, N., & Sudiraharja, D. (2025). Pesantren and inclusion: Bridging religion and disability in Islamic education in Indonesia. *African Journal of Disability*, 14, Article a1741. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ajod.v14i0.1741>
- Sayer, A. (2007). Moral economy as critique. *New Political Economy*, 12(2), 261–270. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13563460701303008>
- Siuda, P. (2021). Mapping digital religion: Exploring the need for new typologies. *Religions*, 12(6), Article 373. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12060373>
- Subchi, I., Zulkifli, Latifa, R., & Sa'diyah, S. (2022). Religious moderation in Indonesian Muslims. *Religions*, 13(5), Article 451. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13050451>
- Suresman, E., Faqihuddin, A., Jenuri, & Abdullah, M. (2025). From sorogan to digital learning: A systematic literature network analysis of pesantren learning models. *Cogent Education*, 12(1), Article 2460480. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2024.2460480>
- Susanto, S., Muafiah, E., Desrani, A., Ritonga, A. W., & Hakim, A. R. (2022). Trends of educational technology (EdTech): Students' perceptions of technology to improve the quality of Islamic higher education in Indonesia. *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 21(6), 226–246. <https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.21.6.14>
- Tahir, M., & Elbarqi, N. S. (2023). State, secularism, and the management of Islamic proselytizing movement in Türkiye: The case of Hayrât Vakfı Organization. *Qudus International Journal of Islamic Studies*, 11(1), 177–206. <https://doi.org/10.21043/qijis.v11i1.18357>
- Vilasís-Pamos, J., Pires, F., Grohmann, R., & Fernandes Araujo, W. (2024). Social media and platform work: Stories, practices, and workers' organisation. *Convergence*, 30(1), 7–20. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13548565241227391>
- Wakhidah, N., & Erman, E. (2022). Examining environmental education content on Indonesian Islamic religious curriculum and its implementation in life. *Cogent Education*, 9(1), Article 2034244. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2022.2034244>
- Yusdani, Sanaky, H. A., Safitri, E., Machali, I., & Juliansyahzen, M. I. (2019). Yogyakarta urban middle-class sufism: Economic, political and cultural networks. *Ulumuna*, 23(2), 266–293. <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujis.v23i2.342>
- Zh, M. H. R., Sari, C. M., At Thaariq, Z. Z., Sumalee, I., & Kamilah, A. N. (2026). Enhancing conceptual understanding in Islamic education through a hypercontent digital flipbook in blended learning: Evidence from Indonesian

madrasah. *Educational Technology in Developing Countries*, 1(1), 1–22.
<https://ejournal.tuah.or.id/index.php/etdc/article/view/60>