



Beyond Traditionalism: Media Technology and the Digital Transformation of Nahdlatul Ulama Boarding School

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ABSTRACT

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This study focuses on analyzing the role of media technology in the development of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*). It employs an extensive literature review of journal articles, undergraduate theses, master's theses, dissertations, and relevant online sources. The study is conducted within the paradigm of da'wah communication. The collected data were analyzed using the interactive data analysis model developed by Miles and Huberman. The findings reveal that digital media technology has transformed areas of conflict and institutional development, including shifting the traditional social role of the kyai toward a more gender-inclusive model. Women in NU Islamic boarding schools are increasingly provided with broad access to digital media skills and knowledge, enabling them to contribute to boarding school development. Furthermore, the development of NU Islamic boarding schools should continue to be strengthened through the convergence of digital media and technological innovation. The construction of NU Islamic boarding schools demonstrates that digital media technology can serve as a productive space by integrating traditional Islamic values with modern technological practices. In this regard, media technology is utilized to build a positive digital presence that supports the promotion of da'wah and Islamic education.

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INTRODUCTION

The focus of this research is to analyze the development of Islamic boarding schools from a technological perspective media. This research is considered important because of the changes in media technology produced by the West (Baihaqi & Miskiyah, 2025; Penghuni, 2016). NU Islamic boarding schools which was previously very loyal to the character of traditionalism then changed to neo-modernism (Lukens-Bull, 2010; Rahmatullah & Sunaryanto, 2024; Tijani & Banyal, 2024). This provides an illustration that media technology is a factor that encouraging the change of NU Islamic boarding schools from traditional to post-modernism. Education that initially using the Kyai teaching system, now we are forced to use technology virtual

media (Fridiyanto et al., 2020; Ilaihi, 2019). Teaching that was previously carried out using gather to listen to lessons from a Kyai, technology has changed this procedure into virtual system. The authority of Kyai scholars in Islamic boarding schools can be shifted by the presence of information Islam on virtual social media (Mundiri & Annisa, 2025; Qudsy, 2019).

In other aspects, the presence of media technology could give rise to class conflict in Islamic boarding schools. NU neo-modernism. The class conflict in question is that technologists are not considered better His knowledge is compared to scholars who study Islam in Islamic boarding schools. Because, so far, almost all traditional Islamic boarding school education is oriented towards teaching the Yellow Book and so on (Mutakin, 2018) . Some views, for example, assume that until now, traditional Islamic boarding school education is the best education system. However, according to the idea Hayati (2019) in general, Islamic boarding schools have not experienced development to date. The reason is that Islamic boarding schools are not critical, creative, and innovative and still use the legacy their predecessors. In some cases, modern Islamic boarding schools actually limit the use of technology for students because it is considered disruptive to learning (Hayati, 2019).

This research confirms that it is currently very important for both traditional and Islamic boarding schools modern to utilize media technology in building their Islamic boarding schools. So this research agree with the view on the importance of developing Islamic boarding schools by adopting technology media. For example, Rifa'i (2009) concluded that in the future the presence of the Islamic boarding school model will not be visible its form but its existence is recognized as an institution, namely a virtual Islamic boarding school. Ilaihi (2019) explains that the moderate Islamic boarding school system that accepts the development of internet technology will continue gave rise to the phenomenon of online Islamic boarding schools. Mukhibat & Ghafar (2019) explain that the internet this has given rise to a new phenomenon known as virtual Islamic boarding schools. Zamhari & Rahmayanti (2021) consider it necessary to maintain the values of Islamic boarding schools even though the teaching system is carried out in a Blended learning is still less effective and several obstacles arise.

This research then rejects the view that has not discussed the importance of media technology. Which is the foundation for the development of Islamic boarding schools. Khaerurrafie' (2019) and Windra et al., (2021) explains that modern Islamic boarding schools have special characteristics, namely an Islamic education curriculum which adopted from general education. Istikomah (2017) and Zuhri 2016) stated that the acceptance of Islamic boarding schools' response to modernization is limited to efforts to transform leadership and systems. Education, curriculum, and teaching methods. MT (2016) and Siyono (2016) theses which only discussing the presence of globalization and its relevance to the curriculum and institutions of Islamic boarding schools. This research has not yet concluded about the importance of media technology and its relevance. With

the development of Islamic boarding schools. Sholikhah's thesis (2014) analyzes globalization and Islamic boarding schools with their cultural educational dynamics. Ardiansyah (2019) submitted a thesis on hybrid worldview Islamic boarding school with a moderate Islamic paradigm that focuses on development coding technology-based curriculum.

This research focuses on Islamic boarding schools from the perspective of the media technology developed by Nahdlatul Ulama. This oldest and largest Islamic organization in Indonesia has built many traditional Islamic boarding schools (Niam, 2017). The characteristics of traditionalism in Nahdlatul Ulama Islamic boarding schools, for example can be seen in teaching practices that use *the sorogan and bandongan* models (Musaddad, 2021). Many alumni of this Islamic boarding school have gone on to become leaders of the Indonesian nation. For example, Abdur Rahman Wahid (Azra, 2014; Wahid, 2006). Apart from that, there are many other NU figures, who contributed their energy and thoughts to the development of the Indonesian nation (Barton, 1997; Binfas et al., 2014, 2018). The contributions of these NU figures and scholars resulted in Islamic moderate which is a characteristic of Islamic practice in Indonesia which is called Islam Nusantara.

The above discourse will be answered with the theory of media technology elaborated by Branston and Stafford (2003). Media technology is divided into 4 (four) key concepts, namely technology and focus conflict, changes in media technology, smart technology and the workplace, and digital imaging. In addition, technology includes facilities designed in such a way for convenience transactions and human work, especially media technology. If we look at the revolution, in the past Humans are only able to express themselves, their culture, their group through paintings on cave walls. Nowadays, humans are very free to express themselves in the media. In addition, technological advancements have changed the way we work and opened up freedom and opportunities creative. In an economic context, digital technology also offers space for transactions to audiences that can be used as promotional media (Branston & Stafford, 2003).

The discussion of the above problem will be answered with the major question, namely how development Nahdlatul Ulama Islamic boarding schools from a media technology perspective? This major question will be elaborated on with a minor question, namely what kind of media technology is used by Islamic boarding schools? Is Nahdlatul Ulama in the spotlight of conflict? How can changes in media technology be leveraged? How far has the construction of the Nahdlatul Ulama Islamic boarding school progressed? Have scholars utilized media technology as a workplace

The problem outlined above will be addressed through the following primary research question: How is the development of Nahdlatul Ulama boarding school understood from the perspective of media technology? This primary question will be further elaborated through several secondary research questions: How do Nahdlatul Ulama boarding school utilize media technology in relation to the dimension of conflict? How can changes in media technology

be leveraged to support the development process of Nahdlatul Ulama boarding school? To what extent have Nahdlatul Ulama boarding school utilized media technology as a digital workplace to support institutional development?

METHOD

Discourse on media technology in the development of virtual Islamic boarding schools This Nahdlatul Ulama will be completed using qualitative research (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Miles et al., 2014). The paradigm that is being offered is qualitative communication science tries to elaborate on media technology theory which seeks its relevance to The phenomenon of Islamic society in this context is the Nahdlatul Ulama Islamic boarding school. Technology theory the media developed by Branston & Stafford, (2003); Ronaldi et al., (2024); Sunaryanto et al., (2023) is a general theory. So that, in line with Islam, this theory was then elaborated with Islamic scientific paradigms. This communication (read: da'wah) was developed from scholars idea's (Bakti, 2004, 2018; Mustapa & Bakti, 2021)). Furthermore, the research in this study uses extensive library references from relevant journals, books, and websites. The extensive library is then reduced for display and then formulated into Conclusion. The data in this study uses the ideas of Adeni (2016); Hancock et al., (2009); Miles et al., (2014) using fluid interactive techniques with data reduction, data display, and conclusions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Media Technology in Nahdlatul Ulama Islamic Boarding Schools: Areas of Conflict and Institutional Development

In Islam there is no social class system that divides people into several castes. According to Rahman's (2016) view as an ideal modern social system, Islam views every human being in accordance with faith and devotion to Allah SWT (Al Qur'an Al-Hujurat: 13). So, whoever is most pious will have a high rank in Allah. Before Allah SWT, in achieving piety towards Allah SWT it is submitted to each individual. In the current digital era, Muslims can build piety according to with the Qur'an and As-Sunnah. In this context, da'wah also does not differentiate between class systems or preaching with gender discrimination. In fact, Allah SWT once rebuked the Prophet Muhammad SAW because he frowned at Ibn Ummi Maktum who wanted to study Islam (Muzakky, 2020). Rasulullah Muhammad SAW saw more opportunities for the victory of da'wah against the Quraysh nobility compared to seeing Ibn Ummi Maktum. This important lesson was immortalized by Allah SWT in Al-Qur'an Surah 'Abasa verses 1-10 (Umaroh, 2020).

The above discourse can then be elaborated further to formulate that technology media in Islam does not give rise to class conflict. Islam itself recognizes gender equality between men and women (Syam, 2018; Umar, 2001). Both men and women are given the same functions and responsibilities before Allah SWT (Hasanah, 2019). The difference is only in the process of piety that

built by men and women. In Islam, men and women have responsibilities responsible for complementing each other (Bakti, 2009; Suhra, 2013; Warsah et al., 2022). So, from a media technology perspective, men and women are given equal roles in various activities. Men can work in industrial media field and women can also work in that field. Men can get higher education in the field of media technology and women can also get it education. Ultimately, media technology is utilized by men and women to building devotion to Allah SWT (Egbai et al., 2026; Valentina et al., 2022).

In Islamic education using media technology, the existence and role of women are recognized. Islamic education management uses technology media can also be carried out by women in a moderate way within the framework of justice gender (Ummah, 2021). From a media technology perspective, women can become film producers, which uses Islamic da'wah themes. Thus, the presence of current media technology providing opportunities for women to participate in preaching using new media. Women using this new media is shifting the dominance of preaching which is mostly carried out by men (Damayanti et al., 2020; Ward & Grower, 2020). Before the new media era, preaching was mostly done by men pulpit with lectures and sermons. The new media era opens up opportunities for women preaching in a modern way, for example, building da'wah content through films in the media social.

Westergaard (1979), Castells (2007), Lupton (2015), and Healy (2020) have written their views on power and class relations towards mass media. The thesis of their ideas, for example, media the masses can support a particular social class, for example the bourgeoisie. Branston and Stafford (2003) using the European context, that the presence of technology actually gives rise to division class. Technologists in Europe do not have a better life than other classes, for example engineers and doctors. Borrowing Fuchs's (2009, 2013) view the class structure produced by media technology this could raise questions about the role of the media in production, circulation, consumption commodities, and ideology. This description provides an overview of the class structure produced by media technology can produce humanitarian technophilia (Branston & Stafford, 2003; Seuferling & Leurs, 2021). In the structure European society could experience class divisions caused by media technology. In other societies, this class division may not be the same as the conditions that occur in society Europe.

In the case of Indonesia, several gaps emerged in the use of information technology, specially by Islamic boarding school students. Mantyastuti's (2017) research proves that the digital divide what happened to the students occurred in the aspects of utilization, operation, skills and physical and material access. This gap that occurs if not resolved by providing wide access for students to technology and various aspects of its use. In this aspect Islamic boarding school skills can provide a curriculum specifically on information technology ownership aspect, Islamic boarding schools try to provide internet network facilities and devices the computer. Provision of these facilities must be done because e-learning must be changed virtually. So that in the future, Islamic boarding school

graduates will not only have scientific abilities religion but also knowledge about media technology (Syakroni et al., 2019).

The novelty of media technology, especially the internet, has given rise to various responses in Islamic boarding school's view. The response to the presence of internet technology, rejecting or accepting each Islamic boarding schools are indeed not the same. This condition is certainly in line with the policies of the Islamic boarding school and thoughts that are built in Islamic boarding schools. Muin M., (2011) for example is of the view that Islamic boarding schools accepting the presence of information technology in two ways, namely adaptive and anticipatory. Acceptance adaptively carried out in order to formulate modern learning of Islamic values. Meanwhile anticipatory acceptance based on the perspective of the needs of Islamic boarding schools regarding the importance learning using information technology.

Students at Islamic boarding schools also accept information technology with unique strategies positive and negative (Mahfudhoh, 2019). Gadgets with internet can be used by students to search for readings of several Islamic books. Other information is easily available to students by using gadgets to gain broad insight. Gadgets also make things easier communication between students and various parties, especially their parents. Negative reception for example, there are students who play games excessively to the point of forgetting to study. If they are not given the correct understanding is that students also use these gadgets to access pornographic films. Of course not, all students access pornographic films because this only happens in a few cases (Hidayat, 2019).

The acceptance of internet technology by the students has made the Islamic boarding school managers organize policy review. Internet technology and its devices should not be treated with hostility but should be managed with both as a medium for developing Islamic boarding schools. Therefore, the attitude that absolutely prohibits the use of Internet technology must be abandoned. Because there was one case, when teaching on campus a student a female student tells the story of a boarding school in Bandung. The boarding school strictly forbids students to use gadgets. The Islamic boarding school believes that gadgets are a tool which will damage the morals of the students (Yulianti, 2016). This attitude is only one case in the Islamic boarding school in Bandung, but if research is conducted, the same case will be found. Internet technology is rejected his presence is considered to have a more dominant negative impact on the students (Azanella & Galih, 2019).

In the following discussion, Branston and Stafford (2003) explain that the presence of Technology is said to have its own gender. In this context, women are considered to have a role under the power of men in the use of technological media. Nadhlatul Ulama Islamic Boarding School with traditionalism is symbolically under the authority of the Kyai (Zulkifli, 2013). The shift from this virtual Kyai class opens up women's roles much more broadly. On the media technology side, the role of women is not limited to studying religion alone. Women in Islamic boarding schools can be equal to Kyai in the development of

virtual Islamic boarding schools. Women can work in higher sectors. For example, in the application of technology. Technological developments also open up opportunities for women to get education related to technology and not just religious knowledge.

According to Pramono (2018), the symbolic power of the Kyai can give rise to stereotypes injustice against women, including subordination, marginalization, and double burden in terms of access, participation, control, and benefits. Gender construction in Islamic boarding schools is reinforced by the interpretation of holy book called *the Yellow Book*. The character of the Kyai in the dialectical process of externalization, objectification, and internalization also contribute to gender construction. The concepts of *karomah* and *barokah* which attached to the Kyai increasingly makes the Kyai a central figure in the Islamic boarding school, so that the the students have great respect (*tadzki*) for the Kyai as the leader of the Islamic boarding school. This then forming a pattern of patron-client relationships between Kyai, students, and society that is increasingly strengthening the position of Kyai as a significant other in the gender construction process in Islamic boarding schools.

According to Jannah (2019) the presence of new media then shifted the authority of male clerics to female clerics for Nahdlatul Ulama. The contestation of gender identity, which was previously more played by male clerics, in the new media era women have taken part. New media can building a network of female clerics with more independent authority without constraints patriarchal culture. Arnez's (2010) question about women's empowerment in NU which is still has not been realized because it is under the male tradition when this begins to be answered. This is marked by the emergence of popular female celebrants, ustadzah and female preachers through social media. They then build their da'wah through online channels such as YouTube and various other channels. Other platforms, in addition, women in Nadhlatul Ulama can produce Islamic discourse they independently use media technology (Jannah, 2019). All of the above descriptions are then contradicts Branton and Stafford's (2003) idea that the presence of media technology gives rise to class and gender inequality. NU's shift from traditional to neo-modernism directly it shifted gender roles which were initially dominated by male clerics (Adisti, 2021).

Changes Media Technology in Nahdlatul Ulama Islamic Boarding Schools

As a revealed religion (based on the Qur'an), Islam teaches humans to make changes. Allah SWT gives a message through QS Ar Ra'du verse 11 that a nation will experience progress if the nation does not change it self (Amin, 2013). Message this can be interpreted to mean that humans are given minds to develop various sciences knowledge in order to build civilization. This provides an illustration that Islam is a religion that is very relevant to changing times. In the context of this paper it is Islam is in line with changes in media technology, for example the internet. Although In fact, most of today's media technology is produced by the West. Borrowing a message from Al Quran Surah Al-Mudatsir, Muslims today are still shrouded and asleep. This message is in this verse it can

be interpreted that Muslims are still asleep in the development of science and technology.

Media technology developed by the West can be borrowed and utilized for da'wah activities through the development of Islamic education. Because, with the presence of media technology, nowadays, da'wah has become cheaper, easier, and more practical. Elaborating on Adeni's (2020), Adeni & Bakti's (2020) idea, using new media, da'wah provides the opportunity to open up new spaces of authority in exchange Islamic messages. In other words, new media provides space and opportunities in quickly update the content of Islamic da'wah. Arifin, (2019) then invited Muslims to rethink the use of media technology as a means of digital preaching. Because, da'wah has been using social media but some preachers have not adapted it Its function. A clear explanation of Islam is still very much needed by the younger generation of Muslims. digital media users to date (Rumata et al., 2021).

Before the internet era, preaching was only carried out using television media, for example, in the past, therefore, the preaching material is very limited because communication only occurs in one direction. Society as communicants of da'wah can only watch da'wah programs on television communicants of da'wah, even though they can receiving the message of da'wah and then interpreting it in a limited way (Marwantika, 2019). Technological changes have transformed this process into a mutually beneficial communication. In today's social media era, anyone can even create their own Islamic content. The result, there is a lot of abundant Islamic da'wah content that can be found on social media. How to preach digital currently uses the views Ismail & Uyuni (2020), there is a shift in the preaching model from theology to technology.

According to Branston and Stafford (2003) technological change starts from analog to digital models. In the early twenty-first century the technological revolution has become a common part of society driven to change by the increasingly rapid pace of technological change is very clear in relation to with media and communication technology compared to other technologies. In some the last decade has focused on the space race, weapons technology, new cars, or medical breakthroughs. This era of industrial manufacturing was then replaced by the development of revolution in the field of media technology. The world's largest industry today is more dominant in producing information and entertainment and more people are employed in it than in the manufacturing industry traditional.

Apart from Islamic boarding schools, Fridiyanto et al., (2020) conducted research to analyze changes Nadhlatul Ulama's traditionalism towards the digital revolution. An important summary of research findings that Nahdlatul Ulama, which was initially slow to respond to the arrival of the industrial revolution, is now starting to catching up, NU's digitalization of preaching is carried out by building the promotion of prominent figures preaching through social media (For example Gus Baha, Gus Miftah, Gus Muwaffiq, KH. Kata Aqil Siradj, KH. Mustofa Bisri, and others. The digitalization of Islamic moderation in Islamic boarding schools is built using media online and social media as a counter-discourse to the emergence of Islamic fundamentalism (Hamidah &

Chasannudin, 2021). NU then attempted to build a discourse on digital democracy in order to provide information to the public about moderating the relationship between the state and Islam. Finally, Nahdlatul Ulama is digitizing Islamic boarding schools within the framework of preaching, education, economics and politics.

For example, the renewal of Islamic boarding schools is only seen from the aspect of preserving tradition or culture, graduating scholars as cadres, and transferring and transmitting knowledge (Anwar, 2011). This idea has not seen the opportunity for change in the Islamic boarding school system from a technological perspective. Teaching in Islamic boarding schools ultimately only focuses on the traditional learning system in front of the Kyai. This is a system that cannot be replaced by another system because it has took root and became a characteristic of Islamic boarding school education. But media technology is such that opportunities to accept and make changes must be taken. Methods that can be used for example with the blended learning model. Although this hybrid or blended learning teaching model is by Zamhari & Rahmayanti (2021) still raise several problems, for example, it is less effective. According to Zainal et al., (2018) there is no clear boundary between the sciences referred to as traditional Islamic boarding schools and modern Islamic boarding schools.

Even though there has been a media technology revolution, according to Kuswara (2022) and Mantyastuti (2017) critical notes stated that there is still a digital divide among Islamic boarding school students. There are many factors that influence the digital divide among these students include facilities factors and motivational factors. Facilities factors, for example, internet access is still minimal in Islamic boarding schools. Islamic boarding schools, especially those outside Java. In other aspects, ownership of equipment is also a factor important factors, for example, students do not have laptops as a means of online learning. This condition reconfirming Branston and Stafford's (2003) theory which questions whether digital provide a better quality of life. In the context of digitalization of Islamic boarding schools, it will certainly provide good quality of life if media technology does not create gaps for students.

Hapsari et al., (2019) explains the importance of information technology skills for students in traditional Islamic boarding schools. Using the case of PPMI Assalaam female students in Surakarta, research findings provide an illustration that female students do not have equal access in the use of information technology provided by Islamic boarding schools. The main cause is Islamic boarding schools themselves do not have sufficient information technology facilities for all students. This condition is then supplemented with a full-time study package for students religion. Ultimately, technological changes such as the ideas of Branston and Stafford (2003) actually has not provided a better quality of life due to limited access.

In the case of other Islamic boarding schools, Fakiha (2021) explains that the digital era is a continuation phase of the globalization era. This then has an impact on education conducted by Islamic boarding schools in Indonesia. For example, the case of research by Fakiha, namely the Sunan Drajat Islamic Boarding School in Lamongan. The major findings of this study provide

Information that restrictions on gadgets actually create gaps for students. The use of digital technology that is restricted will have an impact on poor information and development for students. Unfortunately, Fakiha's research does not discuss digitalization. Islamic boarding schools in depth. The important thesis of this research is that the empowerment of Islamic boarding school students in the digital era can be done by providing science and technology teaching through formal institutions, training, cooperation between Islamic boarding schools and the government or private sector, and using technological equipment in learning activities.

Branston and Stafford (2003) in the aspect of technological change explain that quality also is a matter of expertise required by the user and the technical specifications of the media equipment technology. For many years, technology has been categorized by manufacturers as suitable for domestic, semi-professional or professional use. In the context of construction Nahdlatul Ulama Islamic boarding schools based on media technology, the important thing that must be built is user quality. The Islamic boarding school community is required to use media technology both in a domestic, semi-professional and professional. In the domestic aspect, Islamic boarding schools can provide convenience for students in utilizing media technology. In the semi-professional and professional aspects Professionally, Islamic boarding schools can use media technology as a promotional and networking medium. and so on (Safitri, 2020).

According to Branston and Stafford (2003) all changes in digital media technology are very potential to be used in building creativity in new things. Digital media technology can enable new ways of doing things and even suggest new things to be carried out with various information obtained globally. In the context of Islamic boarding schools virtual Nahdlatul Ulama, this idea can be interpreted that digital technology provides opportunities that extensive development (Ilaihi, 2019). Islamic boarding schools can utilize digital technology to find new things that were then adapted into Islamic boarding school values. Traditionalism that has been become a characteristic of Islamic boarding schools that can be deconstructed again to adapt to modernity in line with with the presence of digital technology (Fakhrurrozi, 2021).

According to Anwas (2015) digital media technology can create cultural development, local wisdom, and community empowerment programs. This provides an illustration that technology media does not actually make local culture disappear. Local culture is a characteristic Islamic boarding schools are actually looking for equivalents in other cultures outside of Islamic boarding schools. Islamic boarding schools can then selecting and selecting which cultures are not in accordance with the culture of Islamic boarding schools. In addition, Islamic boarding schools can choose which culture (for example from the West) is not in line with Islam and then try to find it context in Islam. Elaborating on the view of Munawara et al., (2020) that media technology digital makes learning easier, creates creativity, improves literacy, and activities Another positive aspect. Media technology also develops critical thinking in students to balance technological development by spreading Islamic boarding school knowledge.

Another aspect according to Brantson and Stafford (2003) in the concept

of media technology change namely miniaturization. Digital processing is controlled by increasingly smaller microchips and strong, it seems that day by day, the process of miniaturization continues relentlessly. Consumer products new and especially new portable products will continue to emerge. The latest example of this is the mobile phone third generation which is effectively a microcomputer. When associated with NU Islamic boarding schools at this time, the presence of technology will automatically enter Islamic boarding schools. Media technology that in the past, for example, we used television, then laptops, now we use even smaller gadgets. After the Covid-19 pandemic, various Islamic boarding school activities (education and preaching) were carried out using zoom or google meet room.

The idea of miniaturization caused by changes in media technology according to Branston and Stafford (2003) this really came true. This also proves the statement of the view Lupton (2012, 2015), Orton-Johnson & Prior (2013), Lupton (2015) also Orton-Johnson and Prior (2013) stated that we are currently entering the era of digital sociology causing human activities to be in the digital space. Everything is included in the digital space, if using Sudibyo's, (2021) idea, all aspects of society are included in the capitalist system digital. When viewed in the context of Islamic boarding schools, apart from being a medium for education and preaching, technology digital can be used as a storage space for Islamic boarding school manuscripts. Manuscripts or books of previous scholars can then be saved in digital format. Manuscript storage This Islamic boarding school is an effort to pass on traditions and culture to the next generation (Nofrizal, 2020).

Media Technology as a Workplace for Nahdlatul Ulama Islamic Boarding School

Media technology for Muslims is no longer merely a source of news, information, or entertainment. Nor is it simply a tool for da'wah. Rather, the rapid development of digital media has transformed media technology into a new public sphere where da'wah is produced, disseminated, and negotiated. New media provide Muslims with opportunities to create and distribute diverse forms of Islamic content independently (Sule & Sulaiman, 2021). Before the emergence of digital media, Islamic preaching relied predominantly on television broadcasting. Television functioned as the primary platform for religious communication, yet producing Islamic programs required substantial financial resources and depended heavily on audience ratings to remain sustainable (Adam, 2018). Consequently, only a limited number of religious organizations and media institutions were able to produce Islamic content. The expansion of the internet and social media has fundamentally altered this landscape. The contemporary hijrah movement among young Muslims has grown alongside the rapid development of digital technologies, particularly through social networking platforms and user-generated content across various digital media (Annisa & Wati, 2023).

The emergence of the internet has enabled ordinary Muslims to become independent religious communicators. Individuals can now produce Islamic

content on YouTube and other digital platforms without incurring the high production costs associated with traditional broadcasting (Hilmi, 2021). One prominent example is Habib Ja'far, whose YouTube channel @JedaNulis has become highly popular among Indonesian youth by promoting moderate Islamic values. Similarly, young Muslim content creators have established channels dedicated to Islamic short films, including Film Maker Muslim (FMM) Studios, Teladan Cinema, and several others. These developments indicate that social media has gradually shifted religious authority from traditionally established ulama toward digital religious influencers (Hazim & Musdholifah, 2021). This finding contrasts with Rachmadhani's (2021) argument that social media, as a modern medium of da'wah, does not diminish the authority of traditional religious leaders but instead reinforces their influence.

Media technology also functions as a workplace for da'wah rather than merely a channel for disseminating Islamic values or popular religious culture. Through digital platforms, da'wah activities have become increasingly intertwined with economic practices, allowing religious content creators to generate financial benefits through commodification (Aini & Akalili, 2021). Rather than undermining Islamic values, economic sustainability can strengthen da'wah by providing the resources necessary for its continuity. Commercialization, therefore, should not automatically be interpreted as the secularization of Islamic teachings. Instead, digital media enable Islamic preaching to remain economically viable while continuing to uphold Islamic ethical principles. This perspective differs from the view that da'wah should be entirely separated from commercial or commodification processes.

Branston and Stafford (2003) argue that society demonstrates diverse responses toward technological development. Some individuals exhibit technophobia, characterized by resistance to or fear of new technologies, whereas others embrace technological innovations as technophiles. These contrasting attitudes are influenced not only by familiarity with technological devices but also by broader social transformations brought about by technology. Many technological changes are not immediately visible yet gradually reshape everyday life. Pam Lin, writing during the mid-1980s, described this phenomenon as technological immanence, referring to the subtle penetration of technology into everyday life that transforms how society works. Technology simultaneously creates opportunities for liberation and creativity while also generating uncertainty, anxiety, and insecurity.

These differing attitudes are also evident within Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) boarding school. Historically, many traditional boarding schools have adopted media technology relatively slowly compared with the pace of technological change itself. This situation is closely related to the conventional educational model centered on face-to-face learning under the direct guidance of the kyai (Nasution, 2017). In some boarding schools, students are still prohibited from using digital devices such as smartphones because they are believed to distract learners and reduce educational effectiveness (Gazali, 2018). Such attitudes reflect what identifies as technophobia, which is associated with educational background, health concerns, and perceptions of safety and well-being (Nimrod,

2018).

One example can be found in Tebuireng Islamic Boarding School in Jombang, where digital media technology has traditionally been viewed primarily as a supporting tool rather than a determining factor in educational success. According to Munawara (2020), technology is regarded mainly as a medium for learning and entertainment, while the boarding school continues to place greater emphasis on the study of *the Yellow Book* as the primary foundation of Islamic scholarship. Consequently, digital technology is considered complementary rather than essential to the educational process. This perspective also reflects concerns regarding technological disruption and its potential impact on the cultural traditions of boarding school (Fakhrurrozi, 2021). Although previous studies have debated whether technological anxiety differs across demographic groups, evidence remains inconclusive (Ha et al., 2011; Nestik et al., 2019).

Other scholars, however, argue that boarding school have increasingly interpreted media technology in more positive ways. Arif (2013) suggests that in the era of globalization, boarding school are no longer institutions devoted solely to Islamic religious instruction. Instead, they have expanded their educational missions by integrating general education and technological innovation. Consequently, digital media have become valuable tools for institutional development, enabling boarding school to disseminate information, strengthen organizational management, and facilitate online learning, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Beyond merely accepting technological change, many boarding school actively employ digital media to support educational, religious, economic, and administrative activities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, the emergence of virtual boarding school enabled religious education to continue through online platforms. This transformation demonstrates how digital technology can facilitate educational innovation while preserving religious values. Apriyani et al., (2018) argue that social media, as part of information technology, contributes positively to students by functioning as both an information resource and a learning medium. Nevertheless, the effective use of digital technology within boarding school requires continuous guidance from both parents and boarding school administrators to ensure that technological benefits are aligned with Islamic ethical principles.

Ummah (2020) further explains that contemporary Indonesia has witnessed the rise of millennial santri, who actively engage in digital da'wah. These young Muslims employ diverse communication strategies and digital storytelling techniques to make Islamic teachings more relevant and accessible to contemporary audiences. Digital media provide students with unprecedented access to Islamic knowledge, allowing them to obtain religious materials instantly without relying solely on physical libraries. Although digital da'wah presents numerous challenges, these challenges do not diminish its legitimacy as a medium for disseminating Islamic teachings.

These developments support Branston and Stafford's (2003) proposition that media technology functions as a workplace, where communication,

production, collaboration, and organizational activities increasingly occur within digital environments. In the context of virtual boarding school, institutional management, correspondence, educational resources, and teaching activities have gradually shifted from physical spaces to digital platforms. Administrative documents that were previously exchanged through printed letters are now managed electronically. Religious texts that were once stored exclusively in libraries can now be archived digitally. Likewise, classroom instruction has expanded into virtual learning environments through platforms such as Zoom and other online applications. Consequently, students no longer need to be physically present at the boarding school to participate in learning activities. As Purnamasari (2016) argues, boarding school can adapt to technological modernization without abandoning their traditional educational values.

The emergence of virtual boarding school has also generated important academic debates. Fakhurrozi (2021) questions whether online boarding school can produce graduates with levels of religious competence comparable to those educated through conventional face-to-face instruction. Similar concerns have been raised regarding the future role of the kyai and traditional learning methods such as sorogan and bandongan, which have historically formed the core of boarding school education (Badi'ah et al., 2021). Nevertheless, in the era of digital disruption, students increasingly rely on online resources to access Islamic knowledge, making digital technology an inseparable component of contemporary religious learning.

Consistent with Badi'ah et al. (2021), this study argues that digital transformation is no longer optional for boarding school. Institutions that fail to integrate digital technology risk falling behind other educational organizations. However, the adoption of digital media does not necessarily reduce the quality of Islamic scholarship or weaken boarding school traditions. Instead, boarding school can strengthen their institutional capacity by developing digital literacy among their human resources while maintaining their distinctive religious identity. In this way, boarding school continue to function as educational, social, economic, and religious institutions within the digital era (Asiyah & Chasanudin, 2020). Azizah (2021) emphasizes, modernization within boarding school should be pursued through an inculturation approach, whereby technological innovation is harmonized with local cultural traditions and Islamic values rather than replacing them

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of the literature reviewed above, it can be concluded that research specifically examining the development of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) virtual Islamic boarding schools from a media technology perspective remains limited. Although several studies have discussed the emergence of online or virtual Islamic boarding schools, this body of literature is still relatively small. Existing empirical studies have primarily focused on boarding school development, curriculum reform, and educational management rather than on the role of digital media technology. This gap indicates a significant opportunity

for further research on virtual Islamic boarding school models, particularly those grounded in the ideological tradition of Nahdlatul Ulama. Given that digital media technology has become an integral part of contemporary Muslim life, NU Islamic boarding schools must inevitably adapt to and effectively utilize these technological developments.

From the perspective of media technology, digital transformation has reshaped power relations within Islamic boarding schools. For example, digital media has begun to reduce gender-based barriers by expanding women's access to media technology skills and digital literacy, enabling them to participate more actively in the development of Islamic boarding schools. However, the transition from analog to digital media has not yet been fully optimized within NU boarding school. The development of neo-modernist NU Islamic boarding schools should therefore be strengthened through the convergence of digital media and technological innovation. In this context, virtual NU Islamic boarding schools can employ media technology as a platform for education, institutional development, and community engagement, although its implementation remains far from optimal. Likewise, digital media can be utilized to create a positive online presence, serving both as a promotional tool and as a medium for da'wah (Islamic outreach).

The role of the kyai remains fundamental in preserving the traditional values and religious authority of Nahdlatul Ulama Islamic boarding schools. Nevertheless, the rise of digital media technology has begun to transform the nature of religious authority, shifting it from symbolic and institutionally embedded power toward more open and decentralized forms of digital da'wah. In this digital environment, the traditional authority of the kyai increasingly competes with digital preachers (da'i) who establish religious influence through online platforms. Consequently, the development of media technology-based da'wah in NU Islamic boarding schools should foster a moderate digital public sphere that reflects the principles of Islam Nusantara. While kyai continue to be respected for their religious scholarship, digital media simultaneously facilitates the emergence of "popular kyai," whose authority is constructed through online visibility and audience engagement. Furthermore, the development of digital media-based da'wah in NU Islamic boarding schools should consistently promote gender equality by ensuring equal opportunities for women and men to participate in religious communication, leadership, and knowledge production.

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