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Social Media Use and Content Creation by Gender among Islamic Religious Education Students

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Abstract
Understanding students' everyday social media practices can inform digital learning in Islamic Religious Education. This study explores the platforms students use, their main reasons for use, how often they create or upload content, and the types of accounts they follow, with comparisons between women and men. A quantitative descriptive survey used 100 completed questionnaires, with 70 submitted by women and 30 by men. Frequencies, percentages within each group, differences in percentage points, and selected crosstabulations were calculated by using PivotTable. Overall, 98% reported using WhatsApp and 96% Instagram. In both groups, 90% selected communication or keeping up with acquaintances as their main reason for use. Larger proportions of women reported using Pinterest and following entertainment and inspirational accounts. Weekly or more frequent posting was reported by 57% of men and 43% of women, whereas 20% of men and 6% of women reported never posting. Educational accounts were followed by 54% of women and 57% of men, and 33 responses indicated following both educational and entertainment accounts. These findings show similar social purposes alongside differences in platform preferences and posting experience. They support piloting content creation and source evaluation tasks that accommodate individual experience, with learning assessed through students' work.

Keywords: Social Media Participation, Content Creation, Gender, Islamic Education

INTRODUCTION

The everyday media practices of Islamic Religious Education students are relevant to their preparation for evaluating and communicating religious knowledge. Understanding the platforms, content formats, and sources they use can help lecturers connect this preparation with digital learning activities. Arif et al. (2025) identified technological competence as a priority alongside established teacher competencies, while Febrian (2024) showed how Indonesian Islamic influencers present religious authority through Instagram imagery. These studies suggest that students' routine media use provides a useful starting point for teaching them to evaluate and communicate religious material online.

Social media participation involves the platforms people use, their reasons for use, the content they produce, and the accounts they follow. The uses and gratifications perspective helps explain why people choose particular media, while social media literacy concerns the capabilities needed to use them. Kalam et al. (2023) linked social and learning motives to media use in a survey of 299 students. Across 54 publications, Manca et al. (2021) identified capabilities shared across platforms and others specific to individual platforms. Smith and Storrs (2023) also found that undergraduates valued information skills and collaboration in their learning. Together, these perspectives support exploring several aspects of participation when planning educational activities.

Comparing social media use by gender can clarify the similarities and differences in experience that students bring to shared learning activities. The uses and gratifications perspective relates media choices to social contexts, suggesting that these patterns can help lecturers plan activities suited to students' experiences. Among 309 adolescents in the United States, Manago et al. (2023) found associations between gender ideologies and several purposes of media use across girls and boys. Jimola (2023) reported gender differences in competence for using Instagram and TikTok among Nigerian university students, highlighting the importance of the population and outcome being examined. Gender comparisons in the present study therefore provide a contextual basis for exploring participation within one Islamic Religious Education cohort.

A profile of students' everyday media use can complement research on digital competence and teaching practices in Islamic education. Such a profile connects proposed learning activities with the platforms, motives, posting experience, and interests already present in a cohort. Rusadi and Aripin (2023) examined religious digital literacy among Indonesian Islamic education students, and Susanti et al. (2024) reviewed applications of digital media in religious education. Bujangga et al. (2025) identified opportunities for engagement alongside concerns about credibility, supporting closer attention to students' existing practices. This study therefore aims to explore platform use, reasons for use, the frequency of creating or uploading content, and account preferences among Islamic Religious Education students, and to examine similarities and differences between women and men.

METHOD

This study used a quantitative descriptive survey to explore social media practices among Islamic Religious Education students at UIN Syekh Wasil Kediri in the 2025/2026 academic year. The design focused on students' reported behavior. The analysis included 100 completed submissions to the Behaviors and Skills in Using Digital Platforms and AI questionnaire, recorded on 15 September 2025, with 70 submitted by women and 30 by men. Responses were included based on the availability of completed questionnaires. The findings therefore concern the responses included in this sample.

The analysis examined four aspects of social media use, with gender as the grouping variable. Each aspect captured a distinct behavior, so the questionnaire items were analyzed separately. The items covered platforms used, the main reason for use, the frequency of creating or uploading content, and the types of accounts followed. The demographic item Jenis Kelamin recorded female and male categories, reported here as women and men. Platform and account questions allowed multiple selections, while the questions about reasons and posting frequency recorded one response per submission. This approach preserved the meaning of each item and supported comparisons between the two groups.

Data preparation involved checking the response categories, completeness, and counts. These checks were appropriate because the items recorded separate behaviors and choices. All five variables had complete responses, and one written reason combining communication and information was retained as a separate category. Twenty submissions contained selections exceeding the stated maximum of three account types, including 15 from women and five from men. All recorded account categories were retained and counted once per submission. Formal content validation and repeated measurement remain areas for further instrument development. The analysis therefore provides a descriptive account of the recorded responses.

The analysis summarized social media practices using frequencies, percentages, and crosstabulations calculated by using PivotTable. Percentages were calculated within each group to account for the unequal group sizes, using denominators of 100 overall, 70 for women, and 30 for men. Tables present counts, while figures display percentages. Differences in percentage points were calculated before rounding to whole numbers. Percentages for platforms and account types can exceed 100% in total because respondents could select multiple categories. Additional summaries combined the three categories representing at least weekly posting, grouped communication with keeping up with acquaintances, and identified responses indicating both educational and entertainment accounts. Interpretation was limited to the patterns observed in this sample.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Platform use and gender differences

Several platforms were widely used in both groups. This shared use is relevant when choosing channels for course communication and learning materials. Overall, 98% reported using WhatsApp and 96% Instagram, followed by TikTok at 87% and YouTube at 84%. The median number of platforms used was six in each group. WhatsApp use was reported by 99% of women and 97% of men, while the corresponding proportions for YouTube were 84% and 83%. Manca et al. (2021) distinguish capabilities shared across media from those specific to individual platforms. The platforms commonly used by this sample could therefore provide familiar settings for course activities.

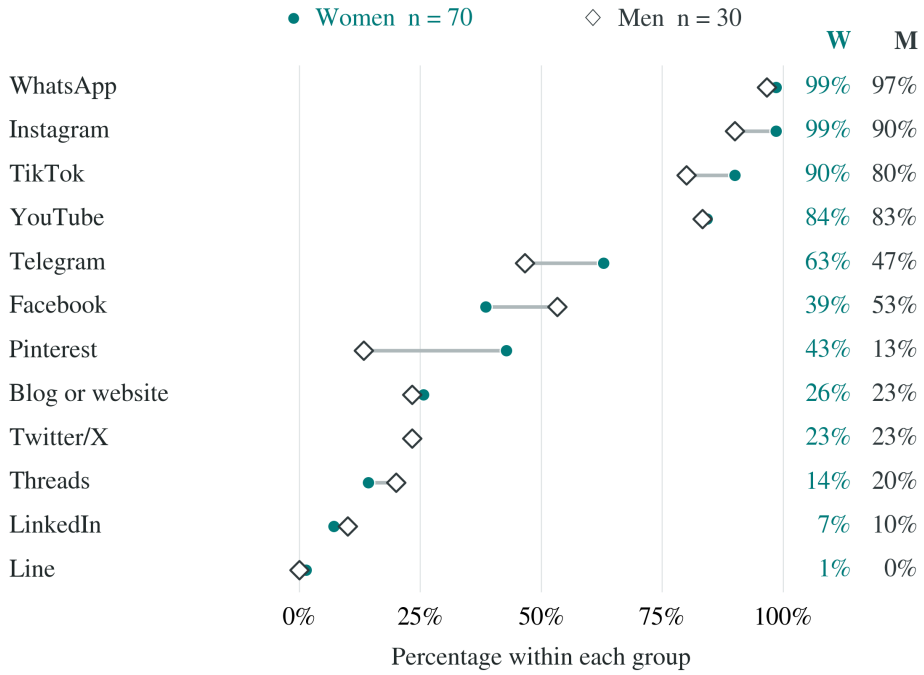


Figure 1. Social media platforms used by women and men

The groups differed in their use of particular platforms, despite reporting the same median number of platforms overall. Examining each platform separately makes these differences visible. Pinterest showed the largest observed gap, with 30 of 70 women and four of 30 men reporting use. These counts correspond to 43% and 13%, a difference of approximately 30 percentage points. Telegram use was reported by 63% of women and 47% of men, compared with 39% and 53% for Facebook. Jimola (2023) also reported gender differences, although that study examined competence in using Instagram and TikTok for language learning. In the present sample, the variation in platform use supports offering students choices in how they complete digital tasks.

Reasons for social media use

The main reasons for using social media were similar among women and men. Maintaining social relationships can motivate the use of different platforms, giving these choices a common purpose. Daily communication was selected by 51 women and 23 men, equivalent to 73% and 77%, while keeping up with acquaintances was selected by 12 women and four men, or 17% and 13%. Together, these categories accounted for 90% of each group, as shown in Figure 2. Kalam et al. (2023) also linked socialization motives with media use. Maintaining social connections was therefore a shared feature of media use in this sample.

Table 1. Main reasons for using social media

Main reason	All responses n = 100	Women n = 70	Men n = 30
Daily communication and interaction	74	51	23
Keeping up with friends or acquaintances	16	12	4
Appealing features	3	3	0
Meeting people and sharing interests	2	1	1
Combined communication and information	1	1	0
Entertainment and hobby ideas	1	1	0
Nature of available information	1	0	1
Use by friends or acquaintances	1	1	0
Additional economic value	1	0	1
Total	**100**	**70**	**30**

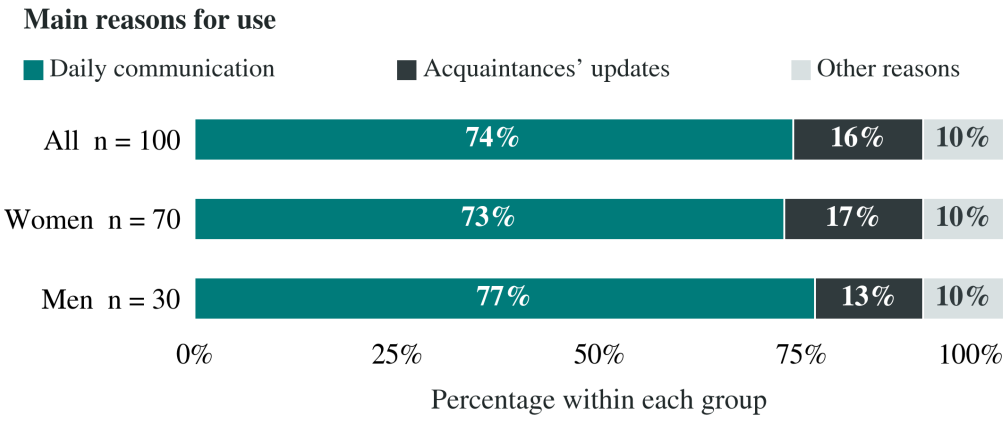


Figure 2. Main reasons for using social media. The "Other reasons" category combines the seven remaining categories in Table 1.

Students' communication routines may provide a starting point for academic collaboration. Their educational value depends on how discussions are structured and how contributions are assessed. In a survey of 407 Malaysian university students, Hosen et al. (2021) linked communication and document exchange with knowledge sharing and learning performance. Ju'subaidi et al. (2025) documented discussions of Islamic learning resources through WhatsApp and extracurricular groups in Indonesian secondary schools. These findings suggest that lecturers could incorporate source comparison and reasoned peer feedback into familiar communication practices. The value of such activities can then be evaluated through the quality of students' contributions.

Variation in content creation and uploading

Posting frequency showed a mixed pattern by gender. The most common response alone provides an incomplete picture because students within the same group reported different levels of activity. Women most often reported posting once or twice a month, at 51% compared with 23% of men. Weekly or more frequent posting was reported by 17 of 30 men and 30 of 70 women, equivalent to 57% and 43%. However, 20% of men reported never posting, compared with 6% of women, while almost daily posting was reported by 7% of men and 10% of women. These differences show why comparisons should consider the full distribution of posting frequency within each group.

Table 2. Frequency of creating or uploading digital content

Frequency	All responses n = 100	Women n = 70	Men n = 30
Never	10	4	6
Once or twice a month	43	36	7
Once or twice a week	23	12	11
Three to five times a week	15	11	4
Almost every day	9	7	2
Total	**100**	**70**	**30**

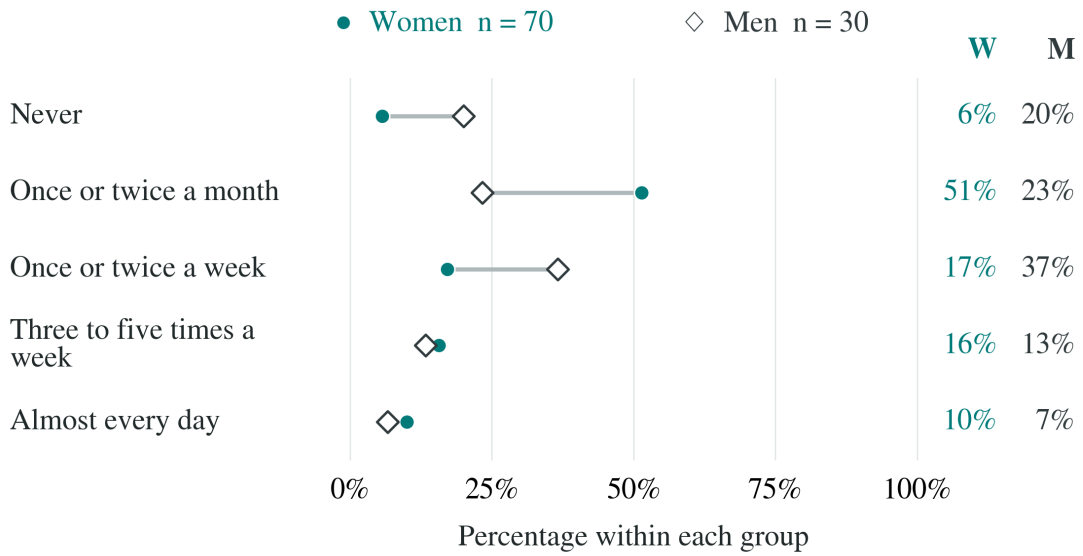


Figure 3. Frequency of creating or uploading content among women and men

Students' posting experience can inform the amount and type of guidance provided in digital assignments. Experience with creating or uploading material offers one basis for planning support, while the quality and purpose of the work require separate assessment. In an ethnographic study of Islamic sermon videos in Bangladesh, Rifat et al. (2022) showed that production involved collaboration, editing, and responsibilities toward audiences. DigComp 2.2 likewise treats content creation as involving knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Vuorikari et al., 2022). Lecturers could offer templates and guided drafting to less experienced students, with more demanding revision tasks for those with greater experience. Instructional support can therefore be based on an assessment of each student's experience.

Account preferences and shared interests

The largest observed gender differences in account preferences involved entertainment, inspiration, and individual creators. Calculating percentages within each group allows these differences to be compared despite the unequal group sizes. Entertainment accounts were followed by 70% of women and 50% of men, while inspirational accounts were followed by 47% and 23%, respectively. These differences were approximately 20 and 24 percentage points. Accounts belonging to individual creators were followed by 37% of women and 20% of men, a difference of approximately 17 points. News accounts showed the reverse pattern, at 46% of women and 57% of men. Gender differences in account preferences therefore depended on the category examined.

Table 3. Types of accounts followed

Account type	All responses n = 100	Women n = 70	Men n = 30
Entertainment	64	49	15
Hobbies and interests	60	44	16
Education	55	38	17
News and information	49	32	17
Inspiration and motivation	40	33	7
Individual creators	32	26	6
Communities and social organizations	17	10	7
Technology and AI	15	12	3
Business	11	7	4
Other	2	0	2

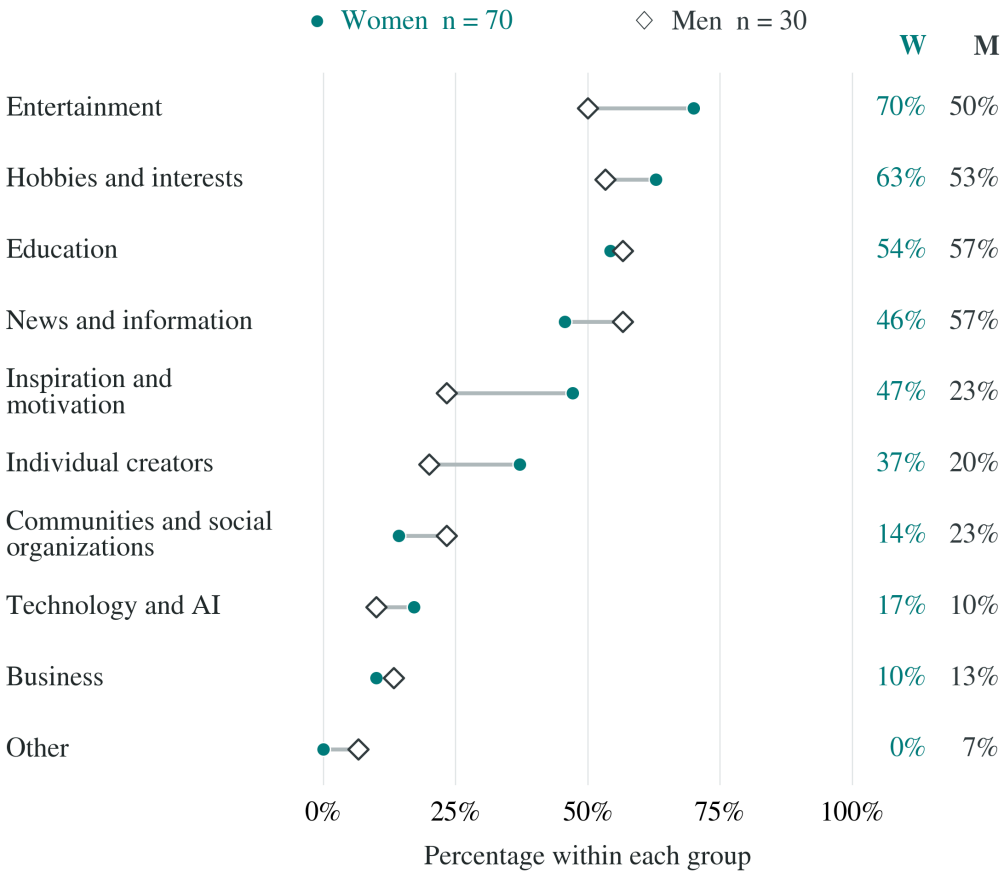


Figure 4. Types of accounts followed by women and men. Multiple selections were allowed.

Interest in educational accounts was similar in both groups. Since respondents could select several account types, educational and recreational interests could also be examined together. Educational accounts were followed by 38 women and 17 men, equivalent to 54% and 57%. A crosstabulation identified 33 responses indicating both educational and entertainment accounts, including 24 from women and nine from men, or 34% and 30% of the respective groups. These overlapping interests provide a basis for exploring how familiar entertainment formats might be adapted for educational purposes.

Account preferences raise further questions about how students interpret the authority and meaning of online material. Broad account categories indicate interests, while understanding engagement with religious messages requires evidence about specific posts and viewing practices. Febrian (2024) examined how Indonesian influencers present religious authority visually, and Inanoglu (2025) explored religious identity and how students present themselves online through interviews with 15 Muslim college students in the United States. Schröter (2024) proposes using Muslim influencers' lifestyle content for critical discussion in religious education. In the present survey, religious channels appeared in two written responses to a checklist of general account categories, providing examples of students' interests. Further research could examine these interests alongside students' interpretations of the content they encounter.

Educational implications and study limitations

The findings suggest that lecturers could combine shared learning goals with flexible ways for students to participate. Similar communication purposes and educational interests provide common ground, while differences in posting experience suggest a need for varied task formats and guidance. Lampe (2023) explored the use of TikTok to connect course concepts with discussion in online sociology classes, and Perez et al. (2023) emphasized the importance of grounding social media activities in pedagogy. An Islamic Religious Education assignment could ask students to compare the sources behind a short religious message, produce a captioned image or explanatory video, and revise it after peer feedback. Assessment could focus on source accuracy, contextual explanation, attribution, and revision quality. This proposal offers a practical way to test whether familiar media practices can support academic learning.

The findings should be interpreted in relation to the sample and questionnaire. Group sizes, item wording, and broad response categories affect the meaning of the comparisons. Each response represents a larger percentage in the smaller group of men, and 20 submissions exceeded the limit on account selections. The posting item combined content creation with uploading and covered content generally. The results therefore concern reported habits, while the quality, originality, and religious content of students' work require separate assessment. Replication using clearer activity categories, examples of students' content, and interviews would strengthen the evidence. Further studies could then examine how these patterns relate to learning in other cohorts and settings.

CONCLUSION

This study found similar social purposes alongside differences in social media use across 100 student responses. Examining several aspects of participation together provided a fuller account of the gender patterns. Communication and keeping up with acquaintances accounted for 90% of the main reasons for use in both groups, while larger proportions of women reported using Pinterest and following entertainment and inspirational accounts. The proportions reporting at least weekly posting and those reporting never posting were each higher among men. Educational account following was similar across groups. The findings show that gender comparisons vary across activities and should be interpreted alongside variation within each group.

The findings support piloting digital assignments with common learning goals and guidance adapted to individual experience. This approach connects students' existing media practices with source evaluation and responsible content production. The 33 responses indicating both educational and entertainment accounts suggest an opportunity to combine familiar formats with academic purposes, while the range of posting experience supports guided drafting, format choices, and structured revision.

Future studies could assess these activities through students' work and explanations across additional cohorts. Decisions about teaching can then draw on demonstrated learning as well as reported media habits.

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