

TIKTOK AND YOUTUBE CONTENT PREFERENCES AMONG GEN ALPHA STUDENTS: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES IN DEVELOPING ISLAMIC CHARACTER AT SMPN 5 JEROWARU

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Abstract

Although social media use among Generation Alpha has received increasing scholarly attention, limited research has examined students' content preferences across both TikTok and YouTube and their implications for Islamic character formation. This study aimed to explore students' TikTok and YouTube content preferences, identify the opportunities and challenges of Islamic character formation through these platforms, and analyze teachers' strategies for addressing the negative impacts of social media at SMPN 5 Jerowaru. A qualitative descriptive design was employed using purposive sampling. Data were collected through observations, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis and were analyzed using an interactive model consisting of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings show that TikTok is predominantly used for entertainment, social interaction, and participation in digital trends, whereas YouTube functions as a platform for educational enrichment, information seeking, and religious learning. Students' content preferences are shaped by generational characteristics, peer interactions, algorithmic recommendations, digital literacy levels, and guidance from teachers and parents. The findings further reveal both opportunities and challenges in Islamic character formation. Educational and religious content supports religious awareness, self-regulation, moral responsibility, and digital ethics; however, entertainment-oriented content, algorithm-driven exposure, limited digital literacy, and insufficient supervision

may hinder character development. Teachers address these challenges through value-based digital literacy, mentoring and role-modeling practices, and teacher–parent collaboration. This study concludes that social media influences Islamic character formation through the quality of content consumed and the effectiveness of educational guidance. The findings contribute to digital-era Islamic character education and provide practical implications for promoting responsible, ethical, and value-oriented digital engagement among Generation Alpha students.

Keywords: TikTok; YouTube; Generation Alpha; Islamic Character Formation; Digital Literacy

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of digital technology has transformed the way young people access information, communicate, and construct their social identities. In the contemporary digital era, social media platforms have become an inseparable part of adolescents' daily lives, functioning not only as channels of entertainment but also as influential environments that shape attitudes, values, and behavioral patterns. Communication plays a fundamental role in human interaction because it enables individuals to exchange information and establish meaningful social relationships (Ramdani et al., 2021). In this regard, media serve as intermediaries connecting sources of information with receivers, facilitating the transmission of messages and knowledge across diverse contexts (Arsyad, 2016). More specifically, social media have evolved into communication instruments capable of influencing how users think, behave, and make decisions within social environments (Rahman et al., 2023).

Among the various digital platforms available today, TikTok and YouTube have emerged as the most popular social media applications among young people worldwide. TikTok enables users to create and share short videos easily and creatively, while its recommendation algorithm, developed by ByteDance, personalizes content according to users' preferences and interaction patterns, thereby increasing engagement and influencing content consumption behavior (Akademi et al., 2018). Likewise, YouTube has become a prominent digital platform that offers educational, entertainment, and informational content capable of fostering learning communities and providing solutions to adolescents' developmental needs (Jung et al., 2025). The widespread use of these platforms is

particularly evident among Generation Alpha, a cohort born between 2010 and 2025 that has grown up entirely within a digital ecosystem characterized by continuous internet connectivity and intensive interaction with smartphones, tablets, and other digital devices (Puspitasari & Ramadhan, 2025). Ziatdinov and Cilliers, (2021) further argue that Generation Alpha represents the first generation to be fully immersed in digital environments, making social media one of their primary sources of information, entertainment, and learning.

The increasing dependence of Generation Alpha on social media raises important concerns regarding character development and moral formation. In Indonesia, character education constitutes a fundamental objective of the national education system. Article 31 paragraph (3) of the Constitution of the Republic of Indonesia emphasizes the government's responsibility to develop a national education system aimed at strengthening faith, piety, noble character, and intellectual advancement for the welfare of society (Undang-Undang Republik Indonesia, 2007). Nevertheless, contemporary Indonesian society continues to face significant moral challenges. Prasetyawan (2019) notes that issues such as theft, bullying, intimidation, disrespect toward teachers, and various forms of violence increasingly reflect the moral crisis affecting younger generations. Similarly, Andika, (2022) argues that while globalization and technological development offer convenience and opportunities for human advancement, inadequate understanding and guidance may lead individuals to lose their cultural and moral identities. Consequently, schools are expected not only to provide academic instruction but also to cultivate students' character and moral integrity. Zuhriy, (2011) emphasizes that educational institutions play a strategic role in helping students critically evaluate information obtained from the internet, while Kurniawan, (2023) highlights that strong character enables Generation Alpha students to navigate the complexities of modern society with integrity and responsibility.

The challenge of character education has become increasingly complex in the digital era because students often acquire values and behavioral models from social media rather than from schools or families. According to Putri, (2018), rapid technological development has exposed children and adolescents to vast amounts of information, including content that may negatively influence character formation. Maulida & Makrufi, (2025) similarly argue that digital technology presents both opportunities and challenges for character education because students increasingly rely on social media as a source of values

and behavioral references. As a result, understanding students' content preferences on social media platforms has become essential for identifying both the positive and negative influences of digital media on character development.

The concept of content preference refers to individuals' tendencies to select specific types of content based on their interests, needs, experiences, and environmental influences (Hussin et al., 2023). In the context of TikTok and YouTube, content preferences among students can be observed through their attraction to particular themes, formats, creators, and trends, ranging from entertainment and tutorials to religious education and popular culture. TikTok's recommendation algorithm further reinforces these preferences by continuously presenting content that aligns with users' previous interactions and interests Reski et al., (2026). Consequently, students' content consumption patterns may significantly influence their worldview, attitudes, communication styles, and moral orientations.

From the perspective of Islamic education, social media should not merely be viewed as a source of risk but also as a potential medium for fostering Islamic values and character development. Recent studies indicate that TikTok and YouTube can function as effective platforms for disseminating Islamic teachings among young audiences. Wahud et al., (2025) found that Islamic content on TikTok contains values related to *aqidah*, *sharia*, and *akhlaq* that can support Islamic religious education. Likewise, Haya and Syihab, (2025) demonstrated that the effectiveness of Islamic messages on TikTok is strongly influenced by the use of humor, storytelling, and language that resonates with students' daily experiences. Furthermore, Falah, (2025) reported that digital *da'wah* content on TikTok can effectively promote values such as honesty, responsibility, politeness, and social awareness among young audiences. Rudiana and Salim (2025) similarly emphasized that digital *da'wah* content has considerable potential to facilitate the internalization of religious and moral values among Generation Alpha. These findings suggest that social media can serve as a strategic medium for strengthening Islamic character when utilized appropriately.

However, social media also presents substantial challenges. Fauziah and Thelma, (2024) observed that Generation Alpha increasingly accesses religious information through digital platforms, making digital literacy essential for evaluating the credibility and authenticity of online content. Moreover, Ebert et al., (2023) warned that uncontrolled TikTok usage may negatively affect adolescents' identity formation, privacy awareness, and

social behavior. The influence of social media is particularly evident in the emergence of slang expressions and communication styles that are frequently adopted by students from TikTok and YouTube content. Such linguistic trends may alter patterns of communication and politeness, potentially conflicting with Islamic moral values if not accompanied by appropriate guidance and supervision.

The discussion of Islamic character development in this study is grounded in Ibn Miskawaih's Theory of the Golden Mean. According to Mulia, (2019), four fundamental virtues constitute the foundation of noble character: al-Iffat (self-control), al-Syaja'ah (courage), al-Hikmah (wisdom), and al-'Adalah (justice). These virtues represent balanced moral dispositions positioned between two undesirable extremes, namely al-Tafrith (deficiency) and al-Ifrath (excess). Within this framework, Islamic character development involves cultivating moderation, balance, and ethical conduct in all aspects of human behavior, including interactions within digital environments.

Several previous studies have examined the relationship between social media and Islamic character formation. Prasetyo (2021) found that TikTok usage among Islamic junior high school students produced both positive and negative effects on Islamic behavior, depending on the nature of the content consumed. Ardini (2021) highlighted TikTok's global popularity and technological features but did not specifically address character development issues. Rahmawati (2025) demonstrated that YouTube effectively enhanced students' motivation and understanding of Islamic Religious Education materials. Putri (2023) revealed that TikTok could function as a creative educational medium that improves students' learning motivation and narrative writing skills. Meanwhile, Ariyani (2024) reported a significant relationship between TikTok usage intensity and students' akhlakul karimah. Although these studies contribute valuable insights, they primarily focus on a single platform, specific educational outcomes, or direct behavioral effects. None comprehensively investigate the comparative content preferences of Generation Alpha students across both TikTok and YouTube while simultaneously exploring the opportunities, challenges, and educational strategies associated with Islamic character development.

This gap is particularly relevant in the context of SMPN 5 Jerowaru. Preliminary observations indicate that TikTok and YouTube are widely used among students and significantly influence their communication styles, language use, social interactions, and

behavioral tendencies. Many students demonstrate stronger preferences for entertainment-oriented content than for educational or Islamic content. Furthermore, the increasing use of slang expressions adopted from social media reflects changing communication patterns that may affect politeness and moral behavior. Although the school has implemented various religious and character-building programs, including habituation practices and religious activities, the influence of digital media remains a significant challenge. These conditions highlight the necessity of investigating how students' content preferences on TikTok and YouTube create both opportunities and challenges for Islamic character development within the school environment.

Therefore, this study aims to explore TikTok and YouTube content preferences among Generation Alpha students at SMPN 5 Jerowaru, identify the opportunities and challenges associated with the development of Islamic character through these platforms, and analyze teachers' strategies in addressing the negative impacts of social media while promoting positive Islamic values. By integrating perspectives from digital media studies, character education, and Islamic educational philosophy, this study is expected to contribute theoretically to the growing body of literature on digital-era Islamic character education and practically to the development of effective educational strategies for Generation Alpha students.

METHODS

1. Research Approach and Design

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach to explore Generation Alpha students' preferences for TikTok and YouTube content and their implications for Islamic character development at SMPN 5 Jerowaru. Qualitative research is particularly appropriate for investigating social phenomena within their natural settings and for understanding participants' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations in depth (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Similarly, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) emphasized that qualitative inquiry enables researchers to construct rich descriptions of social realities by examining meanings embedded in human interactions and behaviors.

A descriptive qualitative design was adopted because the study sought to understand how students interacted with digital content, how such interactions influenced Islamic character formation, and how teachers responded to both the opportunities and

challenges emerging from social media use. The study focused on naturally occurring phenomena without manipulating variables, allowing participants' perspectives and experiences to emerge authentically.

2. Researcher's Role

In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the primary instrument for data collection, interpretation, and analysis. According to Creswell and Poth (2018), researchers play an active role in interacting with participants and interpreting social realities through continuous engagement with the research setting. Likewise, Yin (2018) noted that qualitative researchers function as key instruments whose sensitivity and responsiveness contribute significantly to the depth and quality of the findings.

Throughout the study, the researcher acted as the principal instrument responsible for planning the research, collecting data, conducting interviews, observing participants, analyzing findings, and preparing the final report. The researcher maintained prolonged engagement in the field to establish trust with participants and gain a comprehensive understanding of the educational and social contexts under investigation.

3. Research Site and Duration

The study was conducted at SMPN 5 Jerowaru, located in Jerowaru District, East Lombok Regency, West Nusa Tenggara Province, Indonesia. Data collection took place from October 2025 to January 2026.

The school was selected purposively because it represented a relevant educational setting in which Generation Alpha students actively engaged with digital media platforms, particularly TikTok and YouTube. Purposive site selection is widely recommended in qualitative research because it enables researchers to investigate information-rich contexts capable of providing deep insights into the phenomenon being studied (Patton, 2015). Furthermore, Maxwell (2021) argued that selecting research settings based on relevance to the research objectives strengthens the contextual validity of qualitative findings.

4. Participants and Data Sources

The study utilized both primary and secondary data sources to obtain comprehensive and triangulated information.

a Primary Data

Primary data were obtained directly from participants through interviews and observations. The participants included the school principal, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers, and selected Generation Alpha students at SMPN 5 Jerowaru. These participants were chosen purposively because they possessed direct knowledge and experience regarding students' social media usage, content preferences, and character development processes.

Purposive sampling is considered appropriate when researchers seek participants who can provide detailed and relevant information about a particular phenomenon (Patton, 2015). Similarly, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) explained that participant selection in qualitative studies should prioritize information richness rather than statistical representativeness.

b Secondary Data

Secondary data were collected from official school documents, including school profiles, vision and mission statements, student enrollment records, teacher data, character education programs, school regulations, and activity reports related to Islamic character development.

Documentary evidence plays an important role in qualitative inquiry because it provides contextual information and supports the verification of findings obtained from interviews and observations (Bowen, 2017). Moreover, Flick (2022) noted that documentary sources contribute to a deeper understanding of institutional practices and social contexts surrounding the phenomenon under investigation.

5. Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected through observations, interviews, and document analysis.

a Observation

Participant observation was conducted to obtain direct insights into students' behaviors, social interactions, religious activities, and patterns of digital media engagement within the school environment. The researcher observed classroom activities, religious programs, student interactions, and other relevant educational practices.

Observation is regarded as a fundamental technique in qualitative research because it enables researchers to capture naturally occurring behaviors and social interactions that

may not emerge during interviews (Flick, 2022). Similarly, Silverman (2021) argued that observational data provide valuable evidence for understanding social realities as they unfold in everyday settings.

b Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the principal, Islamic Religious Education teachers, and students. An interview guide was developed based on the research questions while allowing flexibility for probing and follow-up questions. The interviews explored three major themes: (1) students' preferences regarding TikTok and YouTube content, (2) opportunities and challenges associated with Islamic character development through social media, and (3) teachers' strategies for addressing the negative impacts of social media while promoting Islamic values.

According to Brinkmann and Kvale (2018), semi-structured interviews facilitate the exploration of participants' experiences and perspectives while maintaining sufficient flexibility for deeper inquiry. Likewise, Ravitch and Carl (2021) emphasized that qualitative interviews enable researchers to access participants' meanings, beliefs, and interpretations regarding specific social phenomena.

c Document Analysis

Document analysis was conducted to complement the findings obtained through observations and interviews. The documents reviewed included school policies, character education programs, activity schedules, evaluation reports, photographs, and other institutional records related to students' character development. Bowen (2017) explained that document analysis provides a systematic procedure for reviewing and evaluating both printed and electronic materials relevant to a research problem. Furthermore, Yin (2018) highlighted that documentary evidence enhances the credibility of qualitative findings through corroboration with other data sources.

6. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using the Interactive Model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2020), which consists of four interconnected stages: data collection, data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data collection was conducted continuously through observations, interviews, field notes, and document analysis to obtain

comprehensive information related to students' social media preferences, Islamic character formation, and teachers' educational strategies.

The collected data were then condensed through selecting, focusing, categorizing, and simplifying relevant information into meaningful analytical units. This process enabled the identification of patterns, themes, and significant issues emerging from the field data. According to Miles et al. (2020), data condensation helps researchers manage large amounts of qualitative information while maintaining analytical rigor. Subsequently, the condensed data were organized into thematic categories, matrices, and narrative descriptions to facilitate interpretation and the identification of relationships among themes. As noted by Miles et al. (2020), effective data displays support analytical thinking by making complex qualitative data more accessible and understandable.

The final stage involved drawing and verifying conclusions through continuous comparison of data sources and emerging themes. Conclusions were refined throughout the research process to ensure consistency with the evidence collected from the field. Miles et al. (2020) emphasized that conclusion drawing and verification are iterative processes aimed at strengthening the validity and trustworthiness of qualitative findings.

7. Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, several validation strategies were employed, including prolonged engagement, prolonged participation, and triangulation. Prolonged engagement enabled the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the research setting and participants' perspectives, thereby enhancing the credibility of the findings (Lincoln et al., 2018). Likewise, prolonged participation allowed the researcher to identify potential inconsistencies while building trust with participants.

Triangulation was applied through multiple approaches. Source triangulation involved comparing information obtained from principals, teachers, students, observations, and school documents. Method triangulation integrated observations, interviews, and documentary analysis to examine the phenomenon from different perspectives. Researcher triangulation was conducted through discussions with academic supervisors and peer researchers to minimize interpretive bias. Finally, theory triangulation was employed by interpreting the findings through digital media theory, Islamic character education theory, and Ibn Miskawaih's Theory of the Golden Mean. According to Flick (2022), triangulation

enhances the credibility and analytical depth of qualitative research by reducing the limitations of single-perspective interpretations.

RESULTS

1. TikTok and YouTube Content Preferences in Character Development Among Students at SMPN 5 Jerowaru

a General Patterns of TikTok and YouTube Usage among Students

Findings from observations and interviews revealed that TikTok and YouTube were the two most frequently accessed digital platforms among students at SMPN 5 Jerowaru. Both platforms had become integral components of students' daily routines and were regularly utilized for entertainment, information seeking, social interaction, and educational purposes. However, students demonstrated distinct usage patterns for each platform in terms of frequency, duration, and purpose.

Field observations indicated that TikTok was generally accessed more frequently throughout the day, particularly during short breaks and leisure moments. Students tended to engage with short-form videos repeatedly but within relatively brief viewing sessions. In contrast, YouTube was commonly used less frequently but for longer durations, as students often searched for specific content related to learning materials, religious topics, hobbies, or personal interests (Observation, January 8, 2026).

One student explained that TikTok had become part of his everyday routine because it provided quick entertainment and short religious messages that were easy to understand. Meanwhile, YouTube was primarily used to obtain more detailed explanations of school subjects and Islamic content.

"I open TikTok almost every day, usually for a short time but quite often. Most of the content I watch consists of light entertainment and short Islamic videos containing advice and moral messages. On the other hand, I usually use YouTube to find explanations of school lessons or short religious lectures. I spend more time watching YouTube, but I do not access it as frequently as TikTok." (P01, Male, Student, SMPN 5 Jerowaru, Interview, January 8, 2026).

The interview demonstrates that students were not merely passive consumers of digital content. Instead, they differentiated platform functions according to their needs. TikTok primarily served as a source of instant entertainment and brief motivational

content, whereas YouTube functioned as a platform for deeper learning experiences and information acquisition.

Further observations revealed that students generally approached YouTube with clearer objectives. Before accessing the platform, they often had specific topics, subjects, or channels in mind. Conversely, TikTok usage was more spontaneous and largely influenced by algorithmically generated recommendations displayed on the For You Page (FYP). As a result, students frequently encountered diverse content without actively searching for it.

This pattern was reflected in another student's statement:

“When I open TikTok, I usually do not decide what I want to watch because the videos automatically appear on my feed. However, I try to control my viewing time. When I use YouTube, I normally already know what I am looking for, such as mathematics lessons, educational tutorials, or particular entertainment videos. If the content is useful, I continue watching; otherwise, I search for another video.” (P02, Male, Student, SMPN 5 Jerowaru, Interview, January 9, 2026).

The findings indicate that students demonstrated varying levels of intentionality in their digital media consumption. YouTube usage tended to be goal-oriented and purposeful, whereas TikTok consumption was more exploratory and algorithm-driven. Nevertheless, many students showed awareness of the need to regulate their viewing behavior and select content perceived as beneficial.

Observational data also revealed that peer interactions played a significant role in sustaining platform engagement. Students frequently exchanged recommendations regarding videos, creators, and channels, resulting in the collective development of content preferences within friendship networks. Consequently, TikTok and YouTube functioned not only as individual entertainment tools but also as social spaces that shaped shared interests and discussions among students (Observation, January 10, 2026).

From the perspective of educators, social media usage among students was viewed as an unavoidable aspect of contemporary adolescent life. Rather than prohibiting access, teachers emphasized guidance, supervision, and the promotion of responsible digital behavior. Students were encouraged to utilize YouTube as a supplementary learning resource while maintaining balance between entertainment, academic responsibilities, and religious obligations.

As explained by an Islamic Religious Education teacher:

“The use of TikTok and YouTube cannot be separated from students’ daily lives. Therefore, our approach is not based on prohibition but on guidance and supervision. Students are encouraged to use YouTube for learning purposes and to select content that aligns with Islamic values and good character. We also continuously remind them to manage their time wisely so that social media does not interfere with their academic and religious responsibilities.” (P03, Male, Islamic Religious Education Teacher, SMPN 5 Jerowaru, Interview, January 8, 2026).

Overall, the findings demonstrate that TikTok and YouTube have become embedded within students’ everyday digital experiences. While TikTok is predominantly associated with short-duration entertainment and spontaneous content consumption, YouTube is more frequently utilized for information seeking, educational enrichment, and religious learning. These distinct patterns suggest that both platforms possess significant potential to influence students’ habits, attitudes, and character development. When accompanied by appropriate guidance and supervision, social media can function not only as a source of entertainment but also as a meaningful medium for learning, self-development, and character formation.

b Students’ Content Preferences on TikTok and YouTube

The findings revealed that students at SMPN 5 Jerowaru demonstrated distinct yet complementary content preferences across TikTok and YouTube. While TikTok was primarily utilized for entertainment-oriented content characterized by brevity, visual appeal, and trend-driven features, YouTube was more frequently used to access educational, informational, and religious content requiring longer viewing duration and deeper engagement. These preferences reflected students’ efforts to balance entertainment needs with learning and self-development activities within their daily digital experiences.

Interview data indicated that TikTok content preferences were predominantly centered on humorous videos, comedy sketches, viral trends, dance challenges, lip-sync performances, and content produced by creators within the same age group. Students perceived such content as entertaining, easily accessible, and capable of providing instant enjoyment without requiring sustained concentration. The short-video format enabled students to consume multiple pieces of content within a limited period, making TikTok particularly attractive during leisure moments.

One student explained:

“Most of the time, I watch funny videos, trending challenges, and content created by teenagers because it feels more relatable and entertaining. The videos are short, so they are easy to watch whenever I have free time.” (P04, Male, Student, SMPN 5 Jerowaru, Interview, January 10, 2026).

Observational findings confirmed that entertainment-oriented content dominated students’ TikTok feeds. During informal discussions among peers, students frequently exchanged information regarding viral trends, popular creators, and recently trending videos. This pattern suggests that TikTok functions not only as a source of entertainment but also as a medium through which students maintain social connectedness with their peer groups (Observation, January 11, 2026).

In contrast, students’ preferences on YouTube reflected a broader range of interests and purposes. Besides entertainment content such as gaming videos, animations, and vlogs, students frequently accessed educational materials, tutorials, academic explanations, and religious content. Many students reported using YouTube to supplement classroom learning, review difficult subjects, and gain additional knowledge beyond school textbooks.

One student stated:

“When I use YouTube, I usually search for lesson explanations, especially when there is homework or a topic that I do not fully understand in class. Sometimes I also watch educational videos and Islamic lectures because they are easier to understand when presented through video.” (P05, Female, Student, SMPN 5 Jerowaru, Interview, January 12, 2026).

The findings further revealed that religious content constituted an important component of students’ YouTube consumption. Islamic lectures, stories of prophets, motivational religious messages, and short sermons were among the most frequently mentioned categories. Students perceived such content as accessible, practical, and relevant to their daily lives. The visual and narrative presentation of religious messages appeared to facilitate greater engagement compared to conventional text-based learning materials.

This tendency was reinforced by the statement of an Islamic Religious Education teacher:

“Students today are very familiar with digital media. Therefore, we encourage them not only to use YouTube for entertainment but also to access Islamic content, religious lectures, and educational materials

that can strengthen their understanding of Islamic values and good character.” (P03, Male, Islamic Religious Education Teacher, SMPN 5 Jerowaru, Interview, December 8, 2025).

Similarly, the school principal emphasized the educational potential of digital media in supporting students’ religious understanding:

“Religious learning should not rely solely on textbooks. Students need alternative learning resources that are closer to their daily experiences. Educational and Islamic content on YouTube can help them understand moral and religious values more effectively through visual presentations.” (P06, Male, Principal, SMPN 5 Jerowaru, Interview, December 8, 2025).

Field observations further showed that teachers consistently encouraged students to become more selective in choosing digital content. During classroom activities, particularly in Islamic Religious Education lessons, students were frequently reminded to prioritize content that contained positive messages, educational value, and moral guidance while avoiding content that contradicted Islamic ethical principles (Observation, January 13, 2026).

The findings also indicate that content preferences among students were not exclusively oriented toward entertainment. Although entertainment remained a dominant motivation, many students demonstrated an increasing tendency to utilize YouTube as a learning resource and to engage with Islamic content capable of enriching both academic understanding and moral awareness. This pattern suggests the emergence of a more balanced digital consumption behavior in which entertainment, education, and religious learning coexist within students’ media experiences.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that TikTok and YouTube serve different but complementary functions in students’ digital lives. TikTok primarily satisfies students’ needs for entertainment, social interaction, and trend participation through short-form content, whereas YouTube provides broader opportunities for educational enrichment, religious learning, and self-directed knowledge acquisition. The coexistence of these preferences indicates that digital media platforms can contribute positively to students’ character development when accompanied by appropriate guidance, supervision, and value-based digital literacy practices implemented by schools and families.

c Factors Influencing Students' Content Preferences

The findings revealed that students' preferences for TikTok and YouTube content at SMPN 5 Jerowaru were shaped by a combination of individual, social, technological, and educational factors. These factors interacted dynamically in influencing how students selected, consumed, and responded to digital content in their daily lives. Data obtained from observations, interviews, and school documentation identified five major factors influencing students' content preferences: generational characteristics, peer influence, social media algorithms, digital literacy levels, and guidance from teachers and parents.

1) Generation Alpha Characteristics and Digital Habits

The first factor influencing content preferences was students' generational background as members of Generation Alpha. Since childhood, students had been exposed to smartphones, internet-based applications, and digital media environments. As a result, they tended to prefer content that was visually attractive, interactive, concise, and easily accessible.

Observations indicated that students were generally more interested in short videos containing visual stimulation, music, animations, and rapidly changing scenes than in lengthy textual explanations. Content that delivered information in a simple and entertaining format attracted greater attention than content requiring prolonged concentration (Observation, January 9, 2026).

One student explained:

"I usually prefer videos that are short and easy to understand. If a video is too long, I often skip it unless the topic is really important for school or something I am interested in." (P07, Female, Student, SMPN 5 Jerowaru, Interview, January 11, 2026).

The findings suggest that students' content preferences are closely associated with their familiarity with fast-paced digital environments. This tendency influences not only the type of content they consume but also the way they process information and engage with digital media.

2) Peer Influence and Social Interaction

The second factor was peer influence. Interviews and observations revealed that students frequently discovered new content, creators, and trends through

recommendations from friends. Discussions regarding viral videos, trending challenges, and popular creators were common during informal interactions at school.

Many students reported that they often watched specific videos simply because they were widely discussed among classmates. Consequently, content popularity within peer groups significantly affected individual viewing choices.

As one student stated:

“Sometimes I watch certain videos because my friends talk about them at school. If many people are watching the same content, I become curious and want to see it too.” (P08, Male, Student, SMPN 5 Jerowaru, Interview, January 12, 2026).

Observational data further showed that students frequently exchanged links, discussed viral content, and imitated popular trends circulating on TikTok and YouTube. Such interactions contributed to the collective formation of content preferences among student groups (Observation, January 12, 2026).

These findings indicate that peer networks function as an important social mechanism influencing students’ digital consumption patterns. Students’ content choices are often shaped not only by personal interests but also by the desire to remain connected with their social environment.

3) Social Media Algorithms and Content Recommendations

The third factor influencing content preferences was the recommendation system embedded within TikTok and YouTube. Students acknowledged that much of the content they consumed appeared automatically through algorithmic recommendations based on previous viewing behavior.

Several students reported that after watching certain types of videos repeatedly, similar content continued to appear on their feeds, encouraging prolonged engagement with particular themes and creators.

One participant explained:

“Usually, after I watch one type of video, more videos like that keep appearing. Sometimes I continue watching because the recommendations seem interesting and match what I watched before.” (P09, Male, Student, SMPN 5 Jerowaru, Interview, January 13, 2026).

Field observations similarly indicated that students often encountered content unintentionally through the For You Page (FYP) on TikTok or YouTube recommendations, rather than through active searching (Observation, January 14, 2026).

The findings demonstrate that algorithmic systems play a substantial role in shaping students' media consumption patterns by continuously exposing them to content aligned with their previous interests and viewing behaviors.

4) Digital Literacy and Content Selection Ability

The fourth factor was the level of students' digital literacy. Variations were observed in students' abilities to evaluate, select, and interpret digital content critically. Students with stronger digital literacy skills tended to demonstrate greater selectivity when choosing content and were more likely to prioritize educational or beneficial material.

Conversely, students with limited digital literacy often consumed content passively without carefully considering its quality, credibility, or potential impact.

An Islamic Religious Education teacher explained:

"Some students are already able to distinguish between beneficial and harmful content. However, others still tend to watch whatever appears on their screen without considering whether the content is appropriate or useful." (P03, Male, Islamic Religious Education Teacher, SMPN 5 Jerowaru, Interview, January 14, 2026).

Observational findings further indicated that students who actively searched for educational materials, tutorials, or religious content generally demonstrated higher levels of awareness regarding the value and purpose of digital media use (Observation, January 15, 2026).

These findings suggest that digital literacy significantly influences the extent to which students can navigate digital environments responsibly and make informed content choices.

5) Teacher and Parental Guidance

The fifth factor influencing students' content preferences was guidance provided by teachers and parents. Interviews revealed that students who received consistent supervision, advice, and discussions regarding media use tended to be more selective in their content consumption practices.

Teachers regularly encouraged students to utilize YouTube as a learning resource and reminded them to avoid content that conflicted with educational and Islamic values. Similarly, parental involvement contributed to monitoring viewing habits and reinforcing responsible digital behavior at home.

One parent stated:

“After receiving guidance from the school, especially from the Islamic Education teacher, we became more attentive to our child’s online activities. We try to accompany and guide rather than simply prohibit them from using social media.” (P10, Female, Parent, SMPN 5 Jerowaru, Interview, January 15, 2026).

The effectiveness of such guidance was evident in several students’ reflections regarding their changing viewing habits.

One student explained:

“Now I am more careful when choosing videos. I still watch entertainment content, but I also try to find videos that can help me learn something useful.” (P11, Female, Student, SMPN 5 Jerowaru, Interview, January 16, 2026).

Overall, the findings indicate that students’ content preferences are shaped by a complex interaction of personal characteristics, peer relationships, technological systems, digital literacy competencies, and educational guidance. Among these factors, peer influence and algorithmic recommendations appear to strongly affect initial content exposure, while digital literacy and adult guidance play crucial roles in helping students evaluate, filter, and utilize digital content more responsibly. These findings suggest that efforts to promote positive digital engagement and character development among Generation Alpha students require collaborative support from schools, families, and the broader digital environment.

d Implications of Content Preferences for Islamic Character Development

The findings revealed that students’ preferences for TikTok and YouTube content have significant implications for the development of Islamic character at SMPN 5 Jerowaru. Although the two platforms serve different functions in students’ daily digital lives, both contribute to shaping attitudes, habits, and behavioral tendencies. The influence of social media was not limited to entertainment consumption but extended to students’ self-regulation, religious awareness, digital ethics, and moral decision-making. Based on

observations, interviews, and document analysis, the implications of content preferences for Islamic character development can be categorized into five major dimensions.

1) Strengthening Self-Regulation and Responsible Media Use

One of the most prominent implications identified in this study was the gradual development of students' self-regulation in managing social media use. Several students demonstrated an increasing awareness of the need to control the duration of media consumption and to distinguish between beneficial and non-beneficial content. Although TikTok was frequently used for entertainment, students who received guidance from teachers became more conscious of their viewing habits and attempted to limit excessive use.

This finding was reflected in the statement of one student:

"I still watch TikTok almost every day, but now I try not to spend too much time scrolling. If I realize I have been watching for too long, I stop and focus on my schoolwork. My teachers often remind us that we should use social media wisely and not let it interfere with our responsibilities." (P01, Male, Student, SMPN 5 Jerowaru, Interview, January 08, 2026).

Classroom observations further indicated that several students demonstrated greater awareness in managing their digital activities and balancing entertainment with academic responsibilities (Observation, January 10, 2026).

These findings suggest that content preferences, when accompanied by appropriate educational guidance, can contribute to the development of self-discipline, responsibility, and self-control, which are fundamental components of Islamic character.

2) Enhancing Religious Awareness through Digital Content

The study also found that YouTube, in particular, served as an important medium for strengthening students' religious awareness. Many students reported accessing Islamic lectures, stories of prophets, motivational Islamic content, and short religious reminders through the platform. Such content provided alternative channels for religious learning beyond formal classroom instruction.

A student explained:

"I often watch short Islamic lectures on YouTube because they are easy to understand. Sometimes I also watch stories about the Prophets and Islamic history. These videos help me learn religious lessons in a more interesting way." (P02, Female, Student, SMPN 5 Jerowaru, Interview, December 18, 2025).

Similarly, observations revealed that students occasionally discussed Islamic videos they had watched and shared recommendations with their peers during informal interactions (Observation, January 12, 2026).

These findings indicate that students' preferences for Islamic-oriented digital content contribute to the reinforcement of religious knowledge, spiritual reflection, and moral awareness, thereby supporting the internalization of Islamic values in everyday life.

3) Promoting Digital Ethics and Moral Responsibility

Another important implication concerns the development of digital ethics and moral responsibility. Students increasingly recognized that the content they consume, imitate, and share reflects their personal values and character. Through continuous guidance from teachers, students became more selective in evaluating whether particular content aligned with Islamic norms and school values.

This tendency was reflected in the statement of a student:

"Before, I followed trends without really thinking about them. Now I try to consider whether a video is appropriate and whether it reflects good behavior. If it contains something negative, I usually avoid sharing it." (P03, Female, Student, SMPN 5 Jerowaru, Interview, January 14, 2026).

Field observations confirmed that students increasingly demonstrated caution when discussing viral content and appeared more aware of the potential consequences of their online behavior (Observation, January 15, 2026).

These findings suggest that content preferences can contribute to the formation of digital ethics by encouraging students to exercise greater responsibility and moral judgment in online environments.

4) Risks Associated with Entertainment-Oriented Content Consumption

Despite the positive outcomes identified, the findings also revealed several challenges associated with students' preferences for entertainment-oriented content. TikTok's short-form videos and personalized recommendation system often encouraged prolonged viewing and repetitive consumption patterns. Some students acknowledged difficulties in controlling their engagement with entertaining content, particularly during leisure time.

One student stated:

“Sometimes I only intend to watch for a few minutes, but then more interesting videos keep appearing, and before I realize it, a lot of time has passed.” (P04, Male, Student, SMPN 5 Jerowaru, Interview, January 16, 2026).

Observations similarly showed that some students frequently discussed viral trends and entertainment content, indicating the strong attraction of algorithm-driven digital media (Observation, January 17, 2026).

These findings demonstrate that while social media offers educational opportunities, excessive engagement with entertainment-oriented content may reduce productive learning time and potentially weaken students’ focus on academic and religious responsibilities.

5) Fostering Balanced Digital Citizenship and Islamic Character

The most significant implication emerging from this study is the development of a more balanced form of digital citizenship among students. Rather than rejecting social media entirely, students gradually learned to combine entertainment, learning, and religious enrichment within their digital activities. Teacher guidance played a crucial role in helping students understand that social media can function both as a source of enjoyment and as a medium for personal growth.

As explained by a PAI teacher:

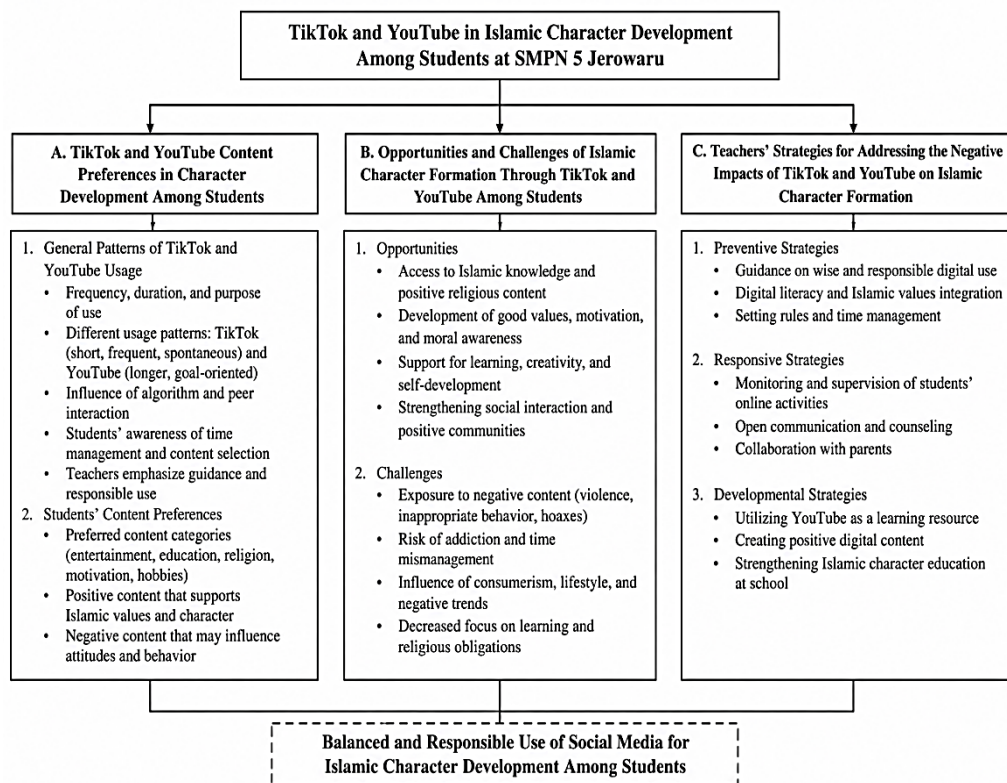
“Our goal is not to prohibit students from using TikTok or YouTube. Instead, we encourage them to use these platforms responsibly and to benefit from the positive content available. We want them to become digitally literate while maintaining strong Islamic values.” (P05, Male, Islamic Religious Education Teacher, SMPN 5 Jerowaru, Interview, December 08, 2025).

Observational data further demonstrated that students increasingly viewed digital media as a tool that could support learning, religious development, and personal improvement when used appropriately (Observation, January 20, 2026).

Overall, the findings indicate that students’ content preferences on TikTok and YouTube generate both opportunities and challenges for Islamic character development. While entertainment-oriented content may create risks related to excessive consumption, exposure to educational and religious content can strengthen self-regulation, religious awareness, moral responsibility, and digital ethics. Consequently, the influence of social

media on character formation is not inherently positive or negative; rather, its impact depends largely on the quality of content consumed and the effectiveness of guidance provided by teachers, parents, and the broader educational environment.

Figure 1 presents an integrative framework illustrating the role of TikTok and YouTube in shaping Islamic character development among students at SMPN 5 Jerowaru. The framework synthesizes the major findings of the study by connecting students' content preferences, the opportunities and challenges of social media use, and teachers' educational strategies.



Source: Research Findings (2025-2026).

Figure 1. TikTok and YouTube Content Preferences in Character Development Among Students at SMPN 5 Jerowaru

Figure 1 illustrates that students' TikTok and YouTube usage is shaped by entertainment, educational, and religious content preferences, creating both opportunities and challenges for Islamic character formation. While social media can enhance religious awareness, learning, and moral development, it may also expose students to negative content and excessive media consumption. To address these challenges, teachers implement digital literacy, mentoring, supervision, and parent collaboration strategies,

ultimately fostering balanced, responsible, and value-oriented social media use among students.

2. Opportunities and Challenges of Islamic Character Formation Through TikTok and YouTube Among Students at SMPN 5 Jerowaru

a Opportunities for Islamic Character Development through TikTok and YouTube

The findings revealed that TikTok and YouTube provide substantial opportunities for fostering Islamic character among students at SMPN 5 Jerowaru. Although both platforms are commonly associated with entertainment, students increasingly utilize them as sources of religious knowledge, moral guidance, and educational enrichment. The integration of digital media into students' daily lives has created new avenues for the internalization of Islamic values beyond formal classroom instruction.

1) YouTube as a Medium for Religious Learning and Value Internalization

The study found that YouTube serves as an important source of Islamic learning among students. Many students accessed religious lectures, stories of prophets, Islamic animations, and instructional videos related to Islamic Religious Education. Such content enabled students to strengthen their religious understanding independently outside school hours.

As explained by a teacher:

"Students who regularly access educational and religious content on YouTube tend to demonstrate better understanding of Islamic values, particularly in terms of manners, respect for teachers, and religious practices." (P01, Male, Islamic Religious Education Teacher, SMPN 5 Jerowaru, Interview, December 08, 2025).

Classroom observations further indicated that students exposed to Islamic educational content displayed greater engagement in religious activities and more respectful interactions with teachers and peers (Observation, January 09, 2026).

These findings suggest that YouTube functions not only as an information source but also as a medium for reinforcing Islamic values and positive behavioral development.

2) TikTok as a Medium for Moral Reminders and Religious Awareness

Although TikTok was primarily used for entertainment purposes, the findings showed that some students actively followed accounts containing short Islamic messages, motivational content, and moral reminders. Such content appeared to increase students' exposure to religious messages in formats compatible with their digital habits.

A parent stated:

"When children are guided toward positive content, such as short Islamic messages and religious stories, we can see improvements in their attitudes and behavior at home." (P02, Female, Parent, SMPN 5 Jerowaru, Interview, December 14, 2025).

Observations revealed that several students frequently shared short motivational and religious videos with their peers through social media platforms (Observation, January 12, 2026).

These findings indicate that TikTok can serve as an accessible entry point for promoting religious awareness among adolescents in contemporary digital environments.

3) Teacher Guidance in Maximizing Educational Opportunities

Another significant opportunity identified in this study was the active role of Islamic Religious Education teachers in directing students toward beneficial digital content. Teachers regularly recommended educational and religious channels and encouraged students to critically evaluate the content they consumed.

One parent explained:

"The school, especially the Islamic Religious Education teacher, actively guides students in selecting beneficial content. As a result, social media is not used solely for entertainment but also for learning and religious development." (P03, Male, Parent, SMPN 5 Jerowaru, Interview, December 18, 2025).

Field observations confirmed that teachers frequently incorporated discussions of digital content into classroom learning activities (Observation, January 15, 2026).

These findings demonstrate that effective teacher involvement enhances the educational potential of social media and supports the development of Islamic character among students.

4) Positive Behavioral Changes among Students

The study further found that students who regularly engaged with Islamic content exhibited positive behavioral changes, including increased politeness, improved discipline, and greater commitment to religious practices.

A parent reported:

“My child has become more respectful, more obedient, and more interested in religious activities after regularly watching Islamic educational content.” (P04, Female, Parent, SMPN 5 Jerowaru, Interview, January 05, 2026).

Similarly, observations indicated improvements in students’ communication patterns and adherence to school norms (Observation, January 18, 2026).

These findings suggest that digital platforms can contribute positively to character formation when students are consistently exposed to constructive and value-oriented content.

5) Students as Agents of Positive Influence

An additional opportunity identified was the emergence of students as promoters of positive values within their peer groups. Students who frequently consumed educational and Islamic content often encouraged their friends to access similar materials and demonstrated positive behaviors in daily interactions.

Observational data showed that students occasionally shared educational videos, reminded peers about appropriate behavior, and promoted positive online content within their social circles (Observation, January 20, 2026).

Overall, the findings indicate that TikTok and YouTube offer meaningful opportunities for Islamic character development by facilitating religious learning, strengthening moral awareness, encouraging positive behavior, and fostering peer-based value dissemination among students.

b Challenges in Islamic Character Development through TikTok and YouTube

Despite their educational potential, the findings revealed several challenges associated with the use of TikTok and YouTube in fostering Islamic character among students. These challenges primarily stem from students’ content preferences, platform algorithms, limited digital literacy, and insufficient supervision.

1) Dominance of Entertainment-Oriented Content

One of the most significant challenges identified was the predominance of entertainment-oriented content. Students were generally more attracted to humorous videos, viral trends, and entertainment-based content than to educational or religious materials.

The principal stated:

“Social media presents both opportunities and challenges. Without proper guidance, students may use digital platforms primarily for entertainment rather than educational and character-building purposes.”
(P05, Male, Principal, SMPN 5 Jerowaru, Interview, December 08, 2025).

Observations confirmed that discussions among students frequently revolved around trending videos and viral content rather than educational topics (Observation, January 10, 2026).

This pattern suggests that entertainment-oriented consumption may reduce students' engagement with content that supports character development.

2) Algorithmic Reinforcement of Existing Preferences

The study found that platform algorithms continuously reinforced students' existing viewing preferences. Students who frequently consumed entertainment content received similar recommendations repeatedly, limiting their exposure to educational and religious alternatives.

Observations indicated that students often remained within highly homogeneous content environments shaped by algorithmic recommendations (Observation, January 14, 2026).

This condition creates challenges for schools attempting to encourage more balanced and value-oriented media consumption.

3) Limited Digital Literacy Skills

Another challenge concerned students' limited ability to critically evaluate digital content. Several students tended to consume information passively without adequately assessing its relevance, credibility, or moral implications.

Classroom observations revealed that some students struggled to distinguish between beneficial content and content that conflicted with Islamic values (Observation, January 16, 2026).

This finding highlights the importance of strengthening digital literacy as part of character education initiatives.

4) Limited Supervision from Parents and Teachers

The study also found that supervision outside school hours remained limited. Parents and teachers acknowledged difficulties in continuously monitoring students' digital activities due to time constraints and technological challenges.

A parent explained:

"We realize that social media is part of our children's daily lives, but it is not always easy to monitor everything they watch and access online." (P06, Female, Parent, SMPN 5 Jeromaru, Interview, January 08, 2026).

These findings suggest that insufficient supervision increases students' vulnerability to inappropriate or non-educational content.

5) Inconsistency between School Values and Digital Content

The final challenge involved inconsistencies between Islamic values promoted at school and the content students encountered online. Some digital content conveyed messages and lifestyles that conflicted with the ethical principles emphasized in Islamic character education.

Observations indicated that students occasionally experienced difficulties reconciling school expectations with trends and behaviors promoted on social media platforms (Observation, January 21, 2026).

Overall, the findings demonstrate that Islamic character development through TikTok and YouTube is shaped by a complex interaction between educational opportunities and digital challenges. While social media can facilitate religious learning and moral development, its effectiveness depends on students' content choices, digital literacy competencies, and the collaborative guidance provided by teachers and parents.

Table 1 summarizes the major opportunities and challenges associated with the use of TikTok and YouTube in supporting Islamic character formation among students at

SMPN 5 Jerowaru. The table highlights the dual role of social media as both a potential educational resource and a source of challenges for students’ moral development.

Table 1. Opportunities and Challenges of Islamic Character Formation Through TikTok and YouTube Among Students at SMPN 5 Jerowaru

Dimension	Key Findings	Implications for Islamic Character Development
Opportunities	YouTube provides access to Islamic lectures, prophetic stories, and educational content.	Strengthens religious understanding and value internalization.
	TikTok exposes students to short Islamic messages, moral reminders, and motivational content.	Enhances religious awareness and moral reflection.
	Teacher guidance directs students toward beneficial and value-oriented content.	Promotes responsible and purposeful social media use.
	Exposure to Islamic content encourages positive behavioral changes.	Improves discipline, politeness, and religious commitment.
	Students share positive content and influence peers.	Facilitates peer-based dissemination of Islamic values.
Challenges	Entertainment-oriented content dominates students’ viewing preferences.	Reduces engagement with educational and religious content.
	Social media algorithms reinforce existing viewing habits.	Limits exposure to diverse and beneficial content.
	Students’ digital literacy skills remain uneven.	Weakens critical evaluation of online information and values.
	Supervision from parents and teachers is often limited.	Increases vulnerability to inappropriate content.
	Some online content conflicts with Islamic and school values.	Creates challenges in maintaining consistent moral behavior.

Source: Research Findings (2025-2026).

Table 1 shows that TikTok and YouTube provide various opportunities for strengthening Islamic character, including enhancing religious understanding, increasing moral awareness, encouraging positive behavior, and promoting the dissemination of Islamic values among peers. However, the findings also reveal several challenges, such as the dominance of entertainment-oriented content, algorithm-driven viewing patterns, limited digital literacy, insufficient supervision, and the presence of content that may conflict with Islamic values. These findings suggest that the impact of social media on Islamic character formation is influenced by students’ content choices and the effectiveness of guidance provided by teachers and parents in fostering responsible and value-oriented digital engagement.

3. Teachers' Strategies for Addressing the Negative Impacts of TikTok and YouTube on Islamic Character Formation at SMPN 5 Jerowaru

a Educative Strategies for Guiding the Use of TikTok and YouTube

Findings revealed that Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers at SMPN 5 Jerowaru adopted educative rather than restrictive approaches in addressing students' engagement with TikTok and YouTube. Instead of prohibiting social media use, teachers emphasized guidance, critical reflection, and value-based digital literacy to help students navigate digital environments responsibly. Classroom observations indicated that discussions about social media were frequently integrated into Islamic education lessons, allowing students to connect online experiences with moral and religious values (Observation, December 12, 2025).

1) Reflective Learning Through Social Media Experiences

One prominent strategy involved encouraging students to reflect on the content they consumed through TikTok and YouTube. Teachers invited students to discuss popular trends, viral content, and online behaviors, followed by critical reflection on their ethical and religious implications. This approach enabled students to evaluate digital content through the lens of Islamic values rather than consuming it passively.

As explained by a PAI teacher:

"We realize that students cannot be separated from TikTok and YouTube. Therefore, our approach is not prohibition but guidance. We encourage them to distinguish beneficial content from harmful content and relate their digital experiences to Islamic moral teachings." (P02, Male, PAI Teacher, SMPN 5 Jerowaru, Interview, December 08, 2025).

The findings indicate that reflective discussions helped students develop greater awareness of the consequences of their digital behavior and strengthened their ability to make value-based decisions when interacting with online content.

2) Value-Based Digital Literacy

Another important strategy involved integrating Islamic values into digital literacy education. Teachers emphasized responsible media use, content evaluation, time management, and ethical online behavior. Rather than focusing solely on technical competencies, digital literacy was framed as a moral responsibility that required students to consider the religious and social implications of their online activities.

Observations showed that teachers consistently reminded students to verify information, avoid inappropriate content, and prioritize educational and religious resources when using digital platforms (Observation, December 18, 2025).

3) Promoting Moral Responsibility and Self-Control

Teachers also sought to cultivate students' sense of moral responsibility and self-regulation in digital environments. Students were encouraged to recognize that every online action—including viewing, sharing, and imitating content—carries ethical consequences. Consequently, self-control was promoted as an essential component of Islamic character in the digital era.

A PAI teacher stated:

“If students are simply forbidden from using social media, they will likely continue using it without guidance. What is more important is helping them develop self-control so they can make responsible choices even when no one is supervising them.” (P02, Male, PAI Teacher, SMPN 5 Jerowaru, Interview, January 10, 2026).

The findings suggest that internalized self-regulation was considered more sustainable than external control because it encouraged students to act responsibly based on personal conviction rather than fear of punishment.

4) Utilizing Viral Trends as Character Education Resources

Teachers frequently used viral social media phenomena as contextual learning materials. Trending content that contradicted Islamic ethics was discussed critically in class, enabling students to examine contemporary issues through moral and religious perspectives. This strategy made character education more relevant to students' everyday digital experiences.

Field observations revealed that students were generally more engaged when classroom discussions incorporated real examples drawn from social media platforms familiar to them (Observation, January 15, 2026).

5) Transforming Character Education in the Digital Era

Overall, the findings demonstrate a shift from normative instruction toward transformative character education. Teachers moved beyond merely telling students what was right or wrong and instead focused on developing critical awareness, ethical reasoning, and responsible digital citizenship. Through continuous guidance, reflection, and value

reinforcement, students were encouraged to internalize Islamic values and apply them independently within digital environments.

These findings indicate that effective Islamic character education in the digital era requires adaptive pedagogical strategies that align religious values with students' everyday experiences in social media spaces.

b Mentoring and Role-Modeling Strategies in Digital Character Education

1) Educational Mentoring through Reflective Dialogue

The findings reveal that Islamic Education teachers at SMPN 5 Jerowaru prioritize mentoring through reflective and educational dialogue to address students' social media habits. Rather than imposing strict prohibitions, teachers encourage students to critically evaluate the content they encounter on TikTok and YouTube and reflect on its moral implications. This mentoring approach helps students develop awareness of how digital content influences attitudes, behaviors, and religious values. Students reported that teachers frequently recommended beneficial content, including Islamic lectures, prophetic stories, and educational videos, which gradually broadened their perspectives on the constructive use of social media. These findings suggest that dialogue-based mentoring fosters internal awareness and supports students in making more responsible digital choices.

2) Teachers as Digital Role Models

Another important strategy identified in this study is the role-modeling function performed by Islamic Education teachers. Observations indicated that teachers consistently demonstrate responsible and value-oriented use of digital media by utilizing online platforms for learning, religious enrichment, and self-development. Such practices provide students with concrete examples of how social media can be used productively rather than merely for entertainment. Students acknowledged that teachers' recommendations and personal examples motivated them to explore educational and religious content on YouTube. This finding highlights the continuing relevance of role modeling in contemporary education, where teachers influence students not only through instruction but also through their digital practices.

3) Encouraging Positive Content Creation

The findings further indicate that teachers encourage students to become active contributors rather than passive consumers of digital content. Students are motivated to

create and share simple forms of positive content, such as Islamic reminders, motivational messages, and reflections on moral values. This strategy promotes active engagement with ethical principles while strengthening students' digital literacy skills. By participating in content creation, students become more aware of the social and moral consequences of their online activities and develop a stronger sense of responsibility toward the information they disseminate. Consequently, social media becomes a platform for constructive self-expression and character reinforcement.

4) Developing Self-Regulation and Digital Responsibility

A notable outcome of continuous mentoring is the emergence of greater self-regulation among students. Several participants reported becoming more selective in choosing content and less inclined to imitate viral trends without consideration. Students increasingly evaluated online content based on its educational value and compatibility with Islamic teachings. This shift demonstrates the development of internalized control mechanisms that enable students to regulate their own behavior in digital environments. The findings suggest that effective digital character education is not solely dependent on external supervision but also on cultivating students' capacity for ethical decision-making and self-discipline.

5) School–Parent Collaboration as a Support System

The study also highlights the importance of collaboration between teachers and parents in supporting students' digital character development. Teachers maintain communication with parents to encourage consistent supervision and guidance regarding students' use of TikTok and YouTube outside school hours. This collaborative effort helps establish continuity between the values promoted at school and those reinforced at home. Participants emphasized that parental involvement strengthens the effectiveness of teacher mentoring by providing ongoing support in students' daily digital experiences. The findings therefore indicate that successful digital character education requires shared responsibility between educational institutions and families.

6) Implications of Mentoring and Role-Modeling Strategies for Islamic Character Development

Overall, the findings demonstrate that mentoring and role-modeling strategies play a significant role in mitigating the negative effects of social media while strengthening Islamic character development. Through reflective dialogue, exemplary behavior, positive

content creation, self-regulation training, and school–parent collaboration, teachers create a supportive environment that encourages students to engage with digital media responsibly. These strategies shift the focus of character education from restriction to empowerment, enabling students to develop moral awareness, digital responsibility, and Islamic values that remain relevant within contemporary digital culture.

c Teacher–Parent Collaboration in Islamic Character Development

1) Establishing Continuous Communication Between Teachers and Parents

The findings indicate that Islamic Education teachers at SMPN 5 Jerowaru actively establish communication with parents to support students' character development in the digital era. Communication occurs through both formal and informal channels, enabling teachers and parents to exchange information regarding students' social media use, online behavior, and moral development. Teachers consistently emphasize the importance of monitoring the content students access on TikTok and YouTube and encourage parents to provide guidance at home. This communication framework strengthens shared awareness that character education is a collective responsibility extending beyond the classroom environment.

2) Aligning Educational Values Between School and Family

Another important finding is the effort to ensure consistency between the Islamic values promoted at school and those reinforced within the family. Teachers recognize that character formation becomes less effective when students receive conflicting messages from different environments. Consequently, parents are encouraged to support the values of responsibility, respect, self-discipline, and ethical digital behavior that are taught in Islamic Education classes. This alignment creates a coherent moral environment that facilitates the internalization of Islamic values in students' daily lives. The findings suggest that value consistency across educational settings contributes significantly to sustainable character development.

3) Promoting Dialogic Parenting in Digital Supervision

The study further reveals that teachers encourage parents to adopt a dialogic rather than restrictive approach when supervising students' digital activities. Instead of relying solely on prohibitions, parents are advised to engage in open discussions about the content their children watch, the influencers they follow, and the values conveyed through social

media. Such interactions allow students to express their experiences and concerns while receiving guidance in a supportive environment. As a result, students are more likely to develop critical awareness and become selective in their media consumption. This approach demonstrates the importance of communication-based supervision in strengthening digital responsibility among adolescents.

4) Collaborative Monitoring as Preventive Character Education

The findings also show that teacher–parent collaboration functions as a preventive mechanism against the negative influences of social media. Through regular communication and shared monitoring, both parties can identify problematic digital behaviors at an early stage and provide timely interventions. Teachers contribute educational guidance within the school setting, while parents reinforce similar expectations at home. This collaborative monitoring system minimizes inconsistencies in supervision and strengthens students' accountability in their online activities. Consequently, character education becomes a continuous process supported by multiple social environments.

5) Reinforcing Islamic Values Through Sustained Collaboration

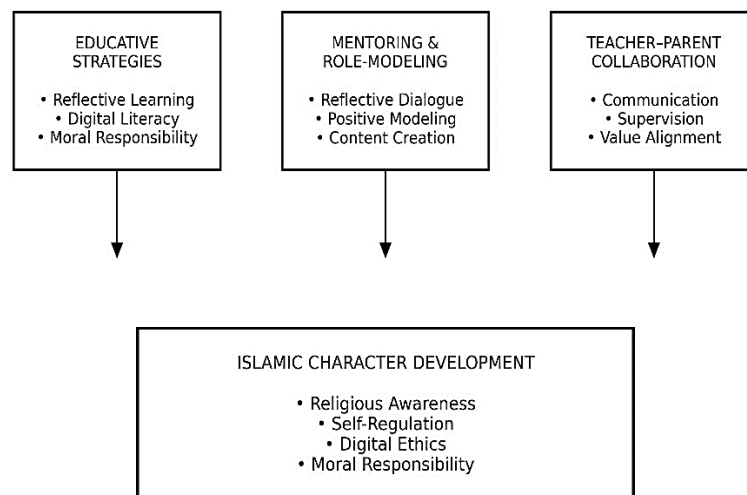
An additional finding is that sustained collaboration between teachers and parents enhances the reinforcement of Islamic values beyond formal learning activities. Values such as honesty, respect, self-control, responsibility, and religious commitment are not only introduced in the classroom but are also continuously practiced and monitored within the family context. This ongoing reinforcement enables students to encounter similar moral expectations across different environments, increasing the likelihood that Islamic values become embedded in their daily behavior. The findings indicate that long-term collaboration provides a stable foundation for character development in the face of rapidly evolving digital influences.

6) Implications of Teacher–Parent Collaboration for Islamic Character Development

Overall, the findings demonstrate that teacher–parent collaboration represents a critical component of Islamic character development in the digital age. Continuous communication, value alignment, dialogic supervision, collaborative monitoring, and sustained reinforcement collectively create a supportive ecosystem for students' moral growth. Such collaboration not only reduces the negative impacts of TikTok and YouTube but also transforms digital media into a context for guided learning and ethical development. These findings underscore that effective character education requires a

coordinated partnership between schools and families to ensure that Islamic values remain consistently reinforced across students' everyday digital experiences.

To provide a clearer understanding of the findings, Figure 2 presents the integrated framework of teachers' strategies used to address the negative impacts of TikTok and YouTube on students' Islamic character formation.



Source: Research Findings (2025-2026).

Figure 2. Teachers' Strategies for Addressing the Negative Impacts of TikTok and YouTube on Islamic Character Formation at SMPN 5 Jerowaru

Figure 2 demonstrates that Islamic character development among students is supported through three interconnected strategies: educative strategies, mentoring and role-modeling, and teacher–parent collaboration. Educative strategies strengthen students' digital literacy, moral awareness, and critical reflection toward social media content. Mentoring and role-modeling encourage students to develop self-regulation, positive online behavior, and responsible digital engagement through guidance and exemplary conduct from teachers. Meanwhile, teacher–parent collaboration reinforces consistent supervision, communication, and value alignment between school and family environments. The integration of these strategies contributes to the development of religious awareness, self-regulation, digital ethics, and moral responsibility, enabling students to engage with TikTok and YouTube in ways that remain aligned with Islamic values and character formation objectives.

DISCUSSION

1. Results Analysis

a. TikTok and YouTube Content Preferences in Character Development Among Students at SMPN 5 Jerowaru

The findings demonstrate that Generation Alpha students at SMPN 5 Jerowaru utilize TikTok and YouTube for distinct yet complementary purposes. TikTok is predominantly associated with entertainment, social interaction, and participation in digital trends, whereas YouTube is more frequently used for educational, informational, and religious learning. This pattern suggests that students are not merely passive consumers of digital media but actively differentiate platform functions according to their personal, academic, and spiritual needs. In relation to the first research objective, the findings indicate that content preferences are shaped by a combination of individual interests, peer influence, algorithmic recommendations, digital literacy, and educational guidance.

From a conceptual perspective, these findings highlight that content preference functions as a mechanism through which digital media influences character formation. Students' attraction to short, visually engaging, and trend-based content reflects the characteristics of Generation Alpha as a cohort immersed in highly interactive digital environments. At the same time, the frequent use of YouTube for educational and religious purposes indicates that students also perceive digital platforms as important resources for knowledge acquisition and self-development. This dual pattern illustrates the coexistence of entertainment-oriented and value-oriented media consumption within students' digital experiences.

A significant finding is that digital literacy and adult guidance play a mediating role in shaping content selection. Although social media algorithms largely determine initial content exposure, students who received consistent guidance from teachers and parents demonstrated greater selectivity in choosing educational and Islamic content. Consequently, the influence of social media on character development appears to depend not only on content availability but also on students' ability to critically evaluate and regulate their media consumption.

The findings further suggest that exposure to educational and religious content contributes to the development of self-regulation, religious awareness, moral responsibility,

and digital ethics. These outcomes reflect the principles of balanced character formation emphasized in Islamic education. In the context of Ibn Miskawaih's Theory of the Golden Mean, students who successfully balance entertainment, learning, and religious engagement demonstrate forms of self-control (*al-Iffat*) and wisdom (*al-Hikmah*) in navigating digital environments. Therefore, social media should be understood not merely as a source of entertainment but as a contemporary space where character formation is continuously negotiated through the interaction of technology, social influences, and educational values.

The findings suggest that students' content preferences are shaped by a complex interaction between individual interests, social influences, and technological environments. From a conceptual perspective, this finding supports the view that social media has become a significant factor in shaping young people's attitudes, behaviors, and patterns of information consumption (Rahman et al., 2023). The results further reflect the characteristics of Generation Alpha as a cohort whose learning experiences, social interactions, and identity formation processes are deeply embedded in digital ecosystems (Ziatdinov & Cilliers, 2021). Moreover, the influence of peer interactions, algorithmic recommendations, and educational guidance demonstrates that content preferences are constructed through both personal and environmental factors, as proposed by Hussin et al., (2023). Within this framework, students' digital engagement can be understood as a process through which entertainment, learning, and character formation are continuously negotiated. Consequently, value-based digital literacy becomes essential for ensuring that social media consumption contributes positively to Islamic character development.

b. Opportunities and Challenges of Islamic Character Formation Through TikTok and YouTube Among Students at SMPN 5 Jerowaru

The findings reveal that TikTok and YouTube simultaneously function as opportunities and challenges for Islamic character formation among students at SMPN 5 Jerowaru. In relation to the second research objective, the study demonstrates that digital platforms provide accessible spaces for religious learning, moral reflection, and value internalization, while also exposing students to entertainment-oriented content that may distract them from educational and spiritual development. This dual role highlights the complexity of character education in contemporary digital environments.

From an opportunity perspective, YouTube and TikTok enable students to access Islamic lectures, prophetic stories, motivational messages, and other forms of religious

content beyond the boundaries of formal classroom instruction. Such exposure contributes to strengthening religious awareness, moral understanding, and positive behavioral dispositions. The findings further indicate that students who regularly engage with Islamic-oriented content tend to demonstrate greater discipline, respectfulness, and commitment to religious practices. This suggests that digital media can serve as an effective medium for extending Islamic character education into students' everyday lives.

However, the findings also reveal several challenges that may hinder the formation of Islamic character. The dominance of entertainment-oriented content, reinforced by algorithmic recommendation systems, encourages repetitive viewing patterns and limits students' exposure to educational and religious materials. Furthermore, variations in digital literacy skills make some students more vulnerable to passive content consumption and less capable of critically evaluating information encountered online. These conditions create risks related to excessive media use, reduced academic focus, and exposure to values that may conflict with Islamic ethical principles.

Conceptually, these findings suggest that the impact of social media on Islamic character formation is contingent upon the interaction between content exposure and students' capacity for critical engagement. Social media itself is neither inherently beneficial nor harmful; rather, its influence depends on how students navigate digital environments and how effectively educational stakeholders provide guidance. Within the framework of Ibn Miskawaih's Theory of the Golden Mean, the challenge lies in cultivating moderation (*wasatiyyah*) by balancing entertainment, learning, and religious engagement. Students who develop this balance are more likely to exhibit self-control, wisdom, and moral responsibility in their digital behavior.

The coexistence of opportunities and challenges identified in this study highlights the dual role of social media within contemporary Islamic character education. The findings demonstrate that digital platforms can simultaneously function as spaces for religious learning and moral development while also exposing students to risks associated with excessive entertainment consumption and uncritical media engagement. Within this context, social media may serve as an effective medium for disseminating Islamic teachings and facilitating the internalization of religious values among younger generations (Wahud et al., 2025). At the same time, the algorithm-driven nature of digital platforms creates conditions that may influence adolescents' behavioral orientations and identity construction

processes when media use occurs without sufficient guidance and self-regulation (Ebert et al., 2023). These findings further emphasize that digital literacy is not merely a technical competency but also a moral and cognitive capacity that enables students to evaluate the credibility, relevance, and appropriateness of online religious content (Fauziah & Thelma, 2024). Therefore, the opportunities and challenges associated with TikTok and YouTube should be understood as interconnected dimensions of students' digital experiences, requiring a balanced educational approach that integrates Islamic values, critical media literacy, and continuous support from schools and families.

c. Teachers' Strategies for Addressing the Negative Impacts of TikTok and YouTube on Islamic Character Formation at SMPN 5 Jerowaru

The findings indicate that teachers at SMPN 5 Jerowaru adopt educative, preventive, and collaborative approaches to address the negative impacts of TikTok and YouTube on students' Islamic character formation. In relation to the third research objective, the study demonstrates that teachers do not rely on restrictive measures or outright prohibition of social media use. Instead, they emphasize digital literacy, reflective mentoring, role-modeling, and teacher–parent collaboration as strategies for guiding students toward responsible and value-oriented digital engagement.

From a conceptual perspective, these strategies reflect a shift from control-based character education toward empowerment-based character education. Teachers encourage students to critically evaluate digital content, reflect on its moral implications, and develop self-regulation in their online behavior. Through reflective discussions and value-based digital literacy, students are guided to distinguish between beneficial and harmful content and to align their media consumption with Islamic ethical principles. This approach is particularly important in digital environments where students are continuously exposed to diverse and often conflicting values.

The findings further reveal that mentoring and role-modeling play a significant role in strengthening Islamic character. Teachers serve not only as instructors but also as examples of responsible digital behavior, demonstrating how social media can be used for learning, religious enrichment, and self-development. In addition, students are encouraged to become active creators of positive content rather than passive consumers, fostering a stronger sense of moral responsibility and digital citizenship.

Another important finding is the role of teacher–parent collaboration in ensuring consistency between school-based and home-based character education. Continuous communication, shared supervision, and value alignment enable teachers and parents to reinforce similar expectations regarding students’ online behavior. This collaborative approach creates a supportive ecosystem that strengthens the internalization of Islamic values across different social environments.

Within the framework of Ibn Miskawaih’s Theory of the Golden Mean, these strategies contribute to the cultivation of self-control (*al-Iffat*), wisdom (*al-Hikmah*), courage in making ethical decisions (*al-Syaja’ah*), and balanced conduct (*al-‘Adalah*). Rather than shielding students from digital media, teachers seek to equip them with the moral competencies necessary to navigate digital environments responsibly. Consequently, Islamic character education becomes a process of developing ethical awareness and self-regulation rather than merely enforcing compliance.

The findings reveal that teachers’ strategies are oriented toward empowering students to become responsible digital citizens rather than restricting their access to social media. This approach reflects the broader educational responsibility of schools in helping students critically interpret and evaluate information encountered in digital environments (Zuhriy, 2011). The emphasis on reflective dialogue, digital literacy, mentoring, and role-modeling suggests that Islamic character education in the digital era increasingly focuses on developing students’ internal capacities for ethical judgment and self-regulation. Such capacities are particularly important for Generation Alpha students, who are required to navigate complex technological and social environments while maintaining moral integrity and responsible behavior (Kurniawan, 2023). Furthermore, the findings illustrate how digital technology simultaneously presents opportunities and challenges for character education, making active educational intervention essential for ensuring that students’ digital engagement contributes positively to their moral development (Maulida & Makrufi, 2025). From this perspective, effective Islamic character formation depends not on limiting students’ exposure to digital media but on strengthening their ability to engage with technology critically, ethically, and responsibly through collaborative support from teachers and parents.

2. Comparison with Previous Studies

The findings corroborate previous studies indicating that TikTok and YouTube have become integral components of adolescents' digital lives. Consistent with the findings of Putri (2023), students in this study viewed TikTok as an engaging platform that supports creativity and attracts sustained attention through short-form content. Similarly, the present findings align with Rahmawati (2025), who reported that YouTube serves as an effective educational medium capable of enhancing students' understanding of learning materials. However, this study extends previous research by demonstrating that students do not merely use these platforms for isolated purposes. Instead, they differentiate platform functions, positioning TikTok primarily as a source of entertainment and social interaction, while utilizing YouTube for educational and religious learning. This finding provides a more nuanced understanding of how Generation Alpha students strategically navigate multiple digital platforms simultaneously.

Furthermore, while Ariyani (2024) identified a relationship between TikTok usage intensity and students' moral behavior, the present study moves beyond usage intensity by examining the underlying factors shaping content preferences. The findings reveal that peer influence, algorithmic recommendations, digital literacy, and educational guidance collectively influence students' content selection. Thus, this study contributes a broader explanatory perspective regarding the mechanisms through which digital media preferences may affect character development.

The findings are consistent with studies emphasizing the educational and religious potential of social media. Wahud et al., (2025) found that TikTok contains values related to *aqidah*, *sharia*, and *akhlak* that can support Islamic education, while Rudiana and Salim (2025) highlighted the role of digital da'wah content in facilitating the internalization of religious values among younger generations. Similarly, the present study demonstrates that exposure to Islamic lectures, prophetic stories, and motivational religious content contributes to students' religious awareness, moral reflection, and positive behavioral development.

However, this study also confirms concerns identified in previous research regarding the risks associated with digital media use. In line with Ebert et al., (2023), the findings reveal that algorithm-driven content consumption and excessive engagement with entertainment-oriented media may influence students' behavioral orientations and reduce

exposure to educational content. Moreover, the present study reinforces the argument of Fauziah and Thelma, (2024) that digital literacy has become increasingly important in helping students critically evaluate online information. Unlike previous studies that primarily emphasized either the opportunities or risks of social media, this research highlights the coexistence of both dimensions and demonstrates how they interact within the context of Islamic character education.

The findings support previous arguments regarding the evolving role of educators in the digital era. Zuhriy, (2011) emphasized that schools play a crucial role in helping students critically assess information obtained from the internet, and the present findings confirm this perspective through teachers' efforts to develop value-based digital literacy and critical reflection. Likewise, the findings align with Maulida and Makrufi, (2025), who argued that digital technology presents both opportunities and challenges that require active educational intervention.

Nevertheless, this study contributes a distinctive perspective by demonstrating that teachers employ a multidimensional strategy encompassing educative approaches, mentoring and role-modeling, and teacher–parent collaboration. While previous studies generally focused on the educational use of digital platforms, the present findings reveal how Islamic character education can be integrated into digital literacy practices through continuous guidance, reflective dialogue, and collaborative supervision. Consequently, this study broadens existing discussions by positioning teachers not merely as instructors but as facilitators of ethical digital citizenship grounded in Islamic values.

3. Implications of Findings

a. Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to the growing literature on digital-era character education by demonstrating that social media should not be conceptualized solely as a source of moral risk or educational opportunity. Rather, its influence on character formation emerges through the interaction between content preferences, digital literacy competencies, algorithmic exposure, and educational guidance. The findings enrich contemporary discussions on Islamic character education by extending the application of Ibn Miskawaih's Theory of the Golden Mean into digital contexts. The virtues of self-control (*al-Iffat*), wisdom (*al-Hikmah*), courage (*al-Syaja'ah*), and balance (*al-'Adalah*) are shown to remain

relevant in understanding how students navigate digital environments and make ethical decisions regarding media consumption.

Furthermore, the study contributes to the emerging scholarship on Generation Alpha by illustrating how digital media platforms function simultaneously as spaces of entertainment, learning, religious engagement, and identity formation. This finding provides a more integrated framework for understanding the relationship between social media use and Islamic character development among digitally native generations.

b. Practical Implications

Practically, the findings suggest that schools should move beyond restrictive approaches toward social media and instead promote value-based digital literacy programs. Educational interventions should focus on strengthening students' critical thinking skills, self-regulation, and ethical awareness in digital environments. Islamic Religious Education teachers can utilize TikTok and YouTube as complementary learning resources by integrating relevant educational and religious content into classroom activities.

The findings also highlight the importance of teacher–parent collaboration in supporting students' digital behavior. Continuous communication between schools and families can enhance supervision, reinforce shared values, and create consistent expectations regarding responsible social media use. Additionally, policymakers may consider incorporating digital citizenship and ethical media literacy into character education curricula to address the realities of students' contemporary digital experiences.

4. Research Limitations

Several limitations should be acknowledged when interpreting the findings of this study. First, the research was conducted within a single educational institution, namely SMPN 5 Jerowaru, which may limit the transferability of the findings to other educational contexts with different socio-cultural and technological environments. Future studies involving multiple schools across diverse regions may provide a broader understanding of Generation Alpha students' digital behaviors and character development processes.

Second, the study employed a qualitative design that relied primarily on interviews, observations, and document analysis. Although these methods provided rich and in-depth insights, the findings remain interpretive and context-dependent. Future research may

benefit from adopting mixed-methods approaches that combine qualitative exploration with quantitative measurement to strengthen generalizability.

Third, the study focused specifically on TikTok and YouTube as the dominant platforms used by students. Other digital platforms, such as Instagram, Facebook, or emerging social media applications, were not examined in detail and may also influence character formation. Future investigations could explore comparative patterns across multiple digital platforms.

Finally, the study examined students' perceptions, experiences, and reported behaviors within a relatively limited time frame. Since digital media trends and algorithmic systems evolve rapidly, longitudinal studies are needed to assess how social media preferences and their implications for Islamic character development change over time. Despite these limitations, the study provides meaningful insights into the opportunities, challenges, and educational responses associated with Islamic character formation among Generation Alpha students in contemporary digital environments.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to explore Generation Alpha students' TikTok and YouTube content preferences, examine the opportunities and challenges of Islamic character formation through these platforms, and analyze teachers' strategies for addressing their negative impacts at SMPN 5 Jerowaru. The findings indicate that TikTok and YouTube serve different yet complementary functions in students' digital lives. While TikTok is primarily utilized for entertainment, social interaction, and participation in digital trends, YouTube is more frequently used for educational enrichment, information seeking, and religious learning. Students' content preferences are shaped by the interaction of generational characteristics, peer influence, algorithmic recommendations, digital literacy levels, and guidance from teachers and parents. As a result, social media has become an influential environment that contributes to the formation of students' attitudes, behaviors, and moral orientations.

The study further reveals that TikTok and YouTube present both opportunities and challenges for Islamic character development. Educational and religious content can strengthen religious awareness, self-regulation, moral responsibility, and digital ethics, whereas excessive exposure to entertainment-oriented content, algorithm-driven viewing

patterns, limited digital literacy, and insufficient supervision may hinder character formation. To address these challenges, teachers employ educative strategies, mentoring and role-modeling practices, and teacher–parent collaboration. Rather than restricting social media use, these strategies emphasize critical reflection, value-based digital literacy, responsible media engagement, and the internalization of Islamic values. A key insight emerging from this study is that Islamic character formation in the digital era is influenced not merely by access to technology but by the quality of digital engagement and the effectiveness of educational guidance that enables students to balance entertainment, learning, and religious development.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study was conducted within a single junior high school context, which may limit the transferability of the findings to other educational settings. Second, the qualitative design relied primarily on interviews, observations, and document analysis, making the findings context-specific and dependent on participants' perspectives and experiences. Third, the study focused on TikTok and YouTube, while other digital platforms that may influence students' character development were not examined.

Based on these limitations, future research is recommended to involve broader and more diverse educational contexts, including schools from different regions and socio-cultural backgrounds. Comparative and mixed-methods studies may provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between social media use and character development. Additionally, future studies could investigate the long-term effects of digital media consumption on Islamic character formation and explore the influence of emerging social media platforms on the moral and educational development of Generation Alpha students. Such efforts would contribute to a deeper understanding of how character education can remain relevant and effective within increasingly digitalized learning environments.

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