

TikTok Live as an Emotional Bridge in Islamic Boarding School: A Hermeneutic Study of Parental Longing and Institutional Adaptation

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ABSTRACT

This study addresses a critical gap in existing research on Islamic education and digital media by examining how TikTok Live functions as an emotional bridge between parents and students in Islamic Boarding School. A hermeneutic qualitative single-case study was conducted at Islamic Boarding School PPATQ RF in Central Java, drawing on in-depth interviews with parents, teachers, and leaders, participant observations across twelve TikTok Live sessions, and document analysis. The theoretical framework integrates Gadamer's hermeneutics of understanding, Ricoeur's concept of narrative identity, and Turkle's notion of mediated intimacy to interpret how meanings of care, modesty, and visibility are negotiated in digital religious settings. Findings indicate that TikTok Live enables symbolic co-presence that mitigates parental anxiety and enhances emotional connectedness. However, it also generates ambivalent experiences for students combining motivation and pride with embarrassment and performance pressure and provokes institutional tensions related to privacy, cultural resistance, and ethical legitimacy. The study contributes to the scholarship on digital religion and Islamic pedagogy by conceptualizing TikTok Live not merely as a technical tool but as a hermeneutic practice that reconfigures parental attachment, student identity, and Islamic Boarding School authority. Policy implications emphasize ethical governance through privacy protection, consent protocols, operator training, and digital literacy aligned with Islamic values.

Keywords: Hermeneutic Approach, Islamic Boarding School, Islamic Education, Parental Longing, TikTok Live

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INTRODUCTION

Islamic Boarding School, as one of the oldest Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia, have historically played a vital role in shaping religious identity, moral discipline, and social cohesion among generations of Muslims (Supriani et al., 2023; Suwendi et al., 2024). It has been recognized that the boarding system at Islamic Boarding School, where students (santri) live and study for lengthy periods

of time apart from their families, is a successful strategy to include cognitive, affective, and psychomotor learning into regular religious education routines. (Suharyat et al., 2023; Taufikin, 2021; Taufikin, Nurhayati, Badawi, et al., 2025). This residential model, however, comes with significant emotional costs. The issue of parental longing (*kerinduan orang tua*) has intensified amid the growing influence of digital media in everyday life, prompting religious institutions to rethink how emotional bonds are maintained within moral boundaries. This study was conducted at Pondok Islamic Boarding School Anak-anak Tahfidzul Qur'an Raudlatul Falah (PPATQ RF) in Central Java, an institution that has begun experimenting with TikTok Live broadcasts as a way for parents to observe their children's activities remotely. The instance provides a distinctive perspective for examining how, in a conventional Islamic context, digital media facilitate institutional adaptation and emotional connection. Such emotional detachment is not simply a private family affair but also a social issue that shows how old religious institutions react to new forms of communication in modern environments characterized by rapid digital innovation. Research has shown that Islamic boarding schools must be able to adjust to changing societal circumstances in order to remain relevant. (Azra, 2019). Within this adaptive framework, the rise of digital communication platforms has introduced both opportunities and tensions for the Islamic Boarding School community (Iskandar et al., 2023; Nurhayati, Judijanto, Wiliyanti, et al., 2025; Taufikin, Nurhayati, Muzakki, et al., 2025).

The main issue supporting this study is the dialectic tension between the Islamic Boarding School's institutional duty to protect its moral authority and religious legitimacy and the emotional demands of parents and children for connection. On the one hand, TikTok Live offers a way to improve emotional connection, comfort, and conversation over long distances. On the other hand, the integration of social media into religious boarding schools generates challenges related to privacy, modesty, and the public perception of Islamic Boarding School values in the digital sphere. The debate extends beyond mere technical considerations into ethical and cultural realms, particularly because Islamic Boarding School embody not only educational but also religious authority. Scholars of digital religion have shown that the adoption of digital media by faith-based communities often provokes concerns about the erosion of religious identity and authority (Campbell & Tsuria, 2021; Cole-Turner, 2019; Sharonova & Avdeeva, 2024). The Islamic Boarding School case highlights this tension in acute ways, as it deals with minors, strict religious environments, and the symbolic weight of Islamic tradition.

Valkenburg and Piotrowski (2017) argue that digital interactions can provide emotional satisfaction comparable to physical presence, which resonates strongly with the experiences of Islamic Boarding School parents who view TikTok Live as a surrogate form of closeness with their children. Wahid and Nurlaelawati (2020) also document the challenge of multiculturalism and communication within Indonesian Islamic education, pointing to the need for innovative approaches to bridge gaps between students and parents. Meanwhile, Wohn et al. (2018) emphasize how live streaming platforms foster co-presence and emotional

connection, findings that directly validate the emotional dynamics observed in Islamic Boarding School families. Together, these works point toward an emergent field of research exploring how live-streaming technologies intersect with religious education and family relationships.

Despite this growing body of literature, a significant research gap remains. Much of the existing research has focused either on broad questions of digitalization in Islamic education (Campbell, 2017), or on how Muslims negotiate religious identity online (Duderija & Rane, 2019). Few studies, however, have examined the emotional dimensions of parental longing in the context of Islamic Boarding School and how live-streaming technologies specifically mediate this longing. Moreover, while ethical considerations and digital literacy frameworks are often proposed in general terms, little is known about how these frameworks are negotiated in practice within the cultural and religious norms of Islamic Boarding School. The symbolic framing of TikTok Live as “obat kangen” thus represents an unexplored intersection of emotion, culture, and technology. This study addresses this gap by employing a hermeneutic approach to analyze how stakeholders in Islamic Boarding School interpret and negotiate the practice of TikTok Live.

This research theoretically relies on Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics, which underscores understanding as a dialogical fusion of horizons between tradition and new experience; Ricoeur’s theory of narrative identity, which interprets human experience through refiguration in narrative and practice; and Turkle’s framework of mediated intimacy, which elucidates how technology facilitates symbolic closeness across physical distance. Integrating these frameworks allows this study to interpret TikTok Live not merely as a technological instrument but as a hermeneutic practice – a medium through which meanings of care, presence, and authority are continually negotiated between parents, students, and Islamic Boarding School leaders (Gadamer, 2004; Ricoeur, 2016; Turkle, 2015).

Accordingly, the objective of this research is to explore the implementation, challenges, and impacts of TikTok Live as a digital remedy for parents’ longing in Islamic Boarding School PPATQ RF, Central Java. The central research questions are: How is TikTok Live implemented in Islamic Boarding School as a response to parental longing? What challenges emerge in relation to privacy, ethics, and cultural acceptance? What emotional and institutional impacts are produced for parents, students, and the Islamic Boarding School itself? The novelty of this research lies in its integration of hermeneutic theory into the study of digital practices in Islamic Boarding School, its focus on the underexplored dimension of parent-child emotional longing, and its identification of TikTok Live as both a pedagogical tool and a cultural symbol.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative research design using a single-case study approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2022), selected to capture the depth and complexity of TikTok Live as a digital practice within the unique context of Islamic Boarding School PPATQ RF. The case study method was considered appropriate

because it allows for an in-depth exploration of phenomena situated in real-life contexts that cannot be easily separated from their environment (Nurhayati, Judijanto, Sriwardiningsih, et al., 2025; Yin, 2018). A qualitative framework also aligned with the study's interpretive orientation, which sought to understand subjective experiences and symbolic meanings attached to the use of TikTok Live. Qualitative inquiry offered the flexibility to uncover nuanced perspectives, while the hermeneutic lens of Gadamer (2004) provided a theoretical framework for interpreting the interplay between Islamic Boarding School traditions and modern digital technologies.

Research Setting was Islamic Boarding School PPATQ RF. The Islamic Boarding School is a residential Islamic boarding school in Central Java. To preserve confidentiality, only broad descriptors are reported. The Islamic Boarding School operates a full boarding system with daily Qur'an recitation, prayers, and formal classes. Digital communication is regulated through institutional policies; personal device use is limited during instructional hours, while official communication is channeled via staff-managed accounts. TikTok Live is operated by designated teachers/media staff under leader supervision; broadcasts typically cover Qur'an recitation and communal activities, and parents engage through real-time comments. Families primarily reside in the broader Central Java region, with some from neighboring provinces, creating persistent distance and demand for mediated presence. These contextual features ground interpretation of how live streaming is negotiated within norms of adab, modesty, and institutional authority.

Purposive sampling was used to find participants. In qualitative research, purposeful sampling is well known for producing deep, contextually relevant findings. Four important stakeholder groups made up the sample. In order to highlight differences in how TikTok Live was perceived as a "emotional remedy," ten parents were chosen to represent a range of socioeconomic backgrounds. Five educators participated to offer pedagogical and technological viewpoints, including those who served as TikTok Live operators. Two leaders of Islamic boarding schools who oversee policy and decision-making provided institutional perspectives. Finally, twelve students were observed during live sessions to explore their experiences of being simultaneously learners and performers in a digital religious space. Sampling sought maximum variation across length of enrollment and frequency of TikTok Live viewing/participation to enhance interpretive breadth.

Three complementing techniques were used to gather data: semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. Parents, educators, and leaders participated in semi-structured interviews that gave them the freedom to express their experiences and worries in their own words while allowing the researcher to delve deeper when needed. These conversations were videotaped and verbatim transcribed. Observations were conducted during twelve TikTok Live sessions, with attention paid to the activities broadcast, interactions among students and teachers, and parents' online engagement. Field notes were used to document both verbal exchanges and non-verbal cues. Document analysis focused on institutional materials such as internal guidelines and reports related to media

use, providing context for the practices observed and complementing the interview and observation data. Observation protocols noted stream scheduling practices, operator roles, and consent/visibility procedures to situate live sessions within Islamic Boarding School norms.

Analysis followed a hermeneutic approach, emphasizing the dynamic movement between individual narratives and the broader cultural and institutional context (Gadamer, 2004). The process began with transcription and repeated reading of interview and observation data to build familiarity. Open coding was then used to identify emerging concepts, which were grouped into thematic categories such as emotional remedy, privacy, and institutional visibility. These categories were interpreted in light of Islamic Boarding School traditions and digital practices, highlighting how meanings were constructed collectively. To make the hermeneutic process explicit, the analysis proceeded through staged cycles: (1) articulating pre-understandings and positionality; (2) preliminary reading of transcripts and field notes; (3) iterative movement between excerpts and Islamic Boarding School norms (hermeneutic circle); (4) dialogical testing through member checks and peer debriefs; and (5) synthesis as a “fusion of horizons,” stabilizing shared meanings such as *obat kangen* and privacy/modesty boundaries.

Hermeneutic Procedure (Operationalization). Operationalization followed a transparent sequence designed to move between text and context: pre-understanding and reflexive memoing before fieldwork; naïve (preliminary) reading of transcripts and field notes; provisional coding tied to emic terms (e.g., *kangen*, *malu/shyness*, *adab*); iterative interpretation against Islamic Boarding School norms and institutional documents; dialogical validation via member checks and peer debriefs as counter-horizons; and integrative synthesis identifying how meanings crystallized (e.g., TikTok Live as symbolic co-presence and as a site of privacy/modesty negotiation). Figure 1 (Hermeneutic Analytic Flow) summarizes these stages and their feedback loops.

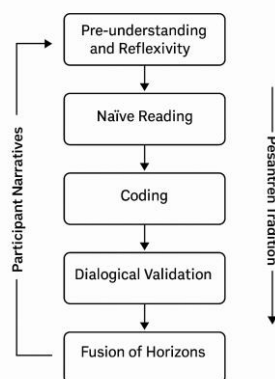


Figure 1. Hermeneutic Analytic Flow

To strengthen validity and reliability, several strategies were employed. Triangulation across interviews, observations, and documents reduced the risk of bias inherent in relying on a single source. Member checking was conducted by inviting participants to review summaries of their interview transcripts, ensuring

accuracy of representation. Peer debriefing with academic colleagues was used to refine interpretations and guard against subjective bias. Reflexivity was maintained through the researcher's reflective journal, which recorded positionality and potential influence on interpretations. An analytic audit trail (codebooks, memos, and decision logs) documented interpretive moves across cycles; discrepant cases were traced and discussed to test emerging claims.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study revealed five interrelated findings that together explain how TikTok Live reshapes emotional, pedagogical, and institutional dynamics within Islamic Boarding School PPATQ Raudlatul Falah in Central Java. First, TikTok Live was implemented as an "emotional remedy" responding to parents' longing during the COVID-19 pandemic, creating symbolic co-presence that eased separation anxiety through ritualized, scheduled broadcasts of students' daily Qur'an recitations and activities. Second, its implementation encountered ethical and technical challenges, particularly concerning privacy, modesty, and community perceptions of religious propriety, highlighting an ongoing negotiation between moral tradition and digital innovation. Third, parents experienced deep emotional relief and renewed attachment, interpreting the broadcasts as both a visual and spiritual connection that strengthened family engagement and institutional trust. Fourth, students expressed conflicted emotions, feeling appreciated and encouraged by parental attention while yet being concerned about public exposure, demonstrating the dual character of digital presence as both empowering and performative. Finally, at the institutional level, TikTok Live increased the Islamic Boarding School's exposure and legitimacy in the digital public arena, requiring its administrators to develop new ethical frameworks to protect religious integrity. Collectively, these findings demonstrate that TikTok Live operates not merely as a technological platform but as a hermeneutic space where emotional care, moral norms, and institutional authority are continuously interpreted and redefined in the lived practice of Islamic education.

Implementation of TikTok Live as an "Emotional Remedy"

The findings demonstrate that TikTok Live was implemented at Islamic Boarding School PPATQ RF primarily in response to the emotional needs of parents during the COVID-19 pandemic, when physical visits were restricted. Teachers assigned as operators broadcasted daily activities of santri, including Qur'an recitation, collective prayers, and informal moments in the dormitory. Parents described these live sessions as symbolic forms of presence that alleviated anxiety and longing. To illustrate these themes, Table 1 presents selected quotations and observations that capture parental experiences, teacher perspectives, and the symbolic functions attached to live streaming. Hermeneutically, this implementation marks a movement in the circle from *pre-understandings* of parental duty to a shared *fusion of horizons* around "symbolic co-presence"; as a narrative practice, it refigures ordinary routines into a story of care recognizable to parents at a distance (Ricoeur, 2016).

Table 1. Quotations and Observations on Implementation of TikTok Live

Theme	Informant Quotation	Frequency	Interpretation
Visual Presence	"Seeing my child recite the Qur'an live makes my heart calm." (Parent 3)	7 of 10 parents	TikTok Live creates symbolic presence that reduces emotional distance.
Scheduled Broadcasts	"We schedule Live every Friday evening so parents can anticipate the moment." (Teacher 2)	4 of 5 teachers	Regular scheduling enhances anticipation and strengthens connectedness.
Symbolic Function	"This Live is not just entertainment; it is truly our remedy for longing." (Parent 7)	6 of 10 parents	Live streaming functions as a symbolic practice with emotional and spiritual meaning.

As shown in Table 1, the recurring themes emphasize how parents interpreted TikTok Live as a calming presence that reassured them of their children's well-being. Teachers also noted that regular scheduling added structure, helping parents anticipate and emotionally prepare for these moments. Importantly, parents framed live streaming as more than a technical medium; it was understood as a symbolic remedy, embedded with emotional and spiritual meaning that extended beyond ordinary digital interaction. This interpretive move resonates with Turkle's account of mediated intimacy technology sustaining closeness while transforming its texture and with Ricoeur's view that practices acquire meaning through narrative configuration (Ricoeur, 2016; Turkle, 2015).

Challenges in Implementing TikTok Live

While TikTok Live was welcomed by many parents, its implementation also faced challenges. These difficulties fell into three major areas: concerns about student privacy, cultural resistance from the surrounding community, and technical barriers such as poor connectivity. To illustrate these issues, Table 2 summarizes key quotations, their frequency, and the interpretations derived from them. From a hermeneutic standpoint, tensions arise when platform affordances meet pre-existing moral horizons; the circle turns as actors reinterpret privacy/modesty in light of new practices (Gadamer, 2004). These negotiations echo debates on contextual integrity and youth data ethics (Turkle, 2011).

Table 2. Quotations and Observations on Challenges

Theme	Informant Quotation	Frequency	Interpretation
Privacy Concerns	"Sometimes children feel embarrassed being watched by so many people." (Teacher 4)	3 of 5 teachers	Broadcasting daily life raises concerns of student comfort and privacy.
Cultural Resistance	"Some neighbors say this live streaming is bid'ah, but for us it helps parents." (Leader 1)	2 of 2 leaders	Cultural skepticism challenges the legitimacy of using entertainment platforms for religious purposes.
Technical Barriers	"The signal often cuts out, making the video blurry"	4 of 5 teachers	Technical infrastructure remains a barrier to effective and consistent broadcasting.

or interrupted.” (Teacher
 5)

As Table 2 shows, the most frequent concern came from teachers who observed that students sometimes felt uncomfortable being broadcast, particularly when mistakes occurred during Qur’an recitation. Community members also expressed skepticism, framing the practice as inappropriate or even religiously problematic. Technical barriers, reported by most teachers, created further frustration by undermining the reliability of live sessions. Together, these findings highlight the tension between innovation and tradition, as well as the infrastructural limitations that Islamic Boarding School face in adopting new technologies. Analytically, these tensions are not merely obstacles but sites of meaning production, where institutional actors reassert moral authority in Hoover’s (2006) sense while recalibrating privacy expectations through iterative interpretive dialogue.

Emotional Impact on Parents

Parents consistently described TikTok Live as emotionally meaningful, offering reassurance, closeness, and motivation to support their children and the Islamic Boarding School. Table 3 provides selected quotations that illustrate how parents experienced these emotional outcomes. The relief reported by parents exemplifies Turkle’s (2015) mediated closeness – comfort achieved without co-location – while hermeneutically it reflects *application* of parental care to a novel digital situation, consolidating a shared narrative of vigilance and affection (Ricoeur, 2016).

Table 3. Parent Quotations on Emotional Impact

Theme	Informant Quotation	Frequency	Interpretation
Emotional Relief	“Every time the live stream happens, I feel relieved to see my child healthy.” (Parent 1)	9 of 10 parents	Live streaming reduces parental anxiety and provides reassurance.
Emotional Closeness	“Even though we are far apart, I feel close because I can see my child learning.” (Parent 6)	8 of 10 parents	TikTok Live strengthens emotional bonds despite physical distance.
Motivation to Support	“After watching the live sessions, I want to give more support to the Islamic Boarding School.” (Parent 10)	5 of 10 parents	Emotional satisfaction encourages parents’ involvement and support.

As summarized in Table 3, nearly all parents felt emotionally reassured when observing their children live, with many noting a strong sense of closeness despite physical separation. Several parents also emphasized that these experiences inspired them to contribute more actively to Islamic Boarding School life, suggesting that digital connection can foster not only personal comfort but also institutional engagement. This affective dynamic feeds back into institutional trust, reinforcing Hoover’s (2006) insight that media practices can bolster or contest religious authority depending on how communities frame and govern them.

Effects on Students

Students' experiences were ambivalent. While most reported feelings of being appreciated and motivated, others expressed embarrassment or discomfort at being visible to a broader audience. Table 4 presents quotations from students that capture these contrasting experiences. Ambivalence reflects Turkle's observation that connectivity produces both recognition and strain; hermeneutically, students negotiate between a prior horizon of *haya'* (modesty) and the performative gaze of the livestream, refiguring identity in narrative terms under parental view (Ricoeur, 2016; Turkle, 1984).

Table 4. Student Quotations on Emotional and Social Effects

Theme	Informant Quotation	Frequency	Interpretation
Feeling Valued	"I feel happy when my mother can watch me recite Qur'an live." (Student A)	10 of 12 students	Live streaming enhances students' sense of being valued and acknowledged.
Embarrassment	"Sometimes I feel shy, afraid of making mistakes while reciting." (Student D)	6 of 12 students	Live streaming creates pressure that may undermine students' comfort.
Learning Motivation	"Knowing my parents are watching makes me study harder." (Student F)	7 of 12 students	Live streaming functions as an extrinsic motivator for learning and discipline.

As seen in Table 4, the majority of students felt positively about their parents' ability to observe their activities, which gave them a sense of recognition and importance. However, some students admitted feeling nervous about mistakes being broadcast, showing how visibility can also produce anxiety. Importantly, many students reported that being watched by parents motivated them to improve academically, demonstrating both the supportive and performative dimensions of TikTok Live. These mixed outcomes show identity work unfolding in real time, consistent with Ricoeur's (2016) narrative identity and with Turkle's (2011) account of the psychological costs of constant address.

Institutional Impact on Islamic Boarding School

At the institutional level, TikTok Live created new opportunities and challenges. On the one hand, it enhanced the Islamic Boarding School's visibility, even attracting new students. On the other, it required careful management to align with Islamic values. Table 5 highlights the perspectives of teachers and leaders regarding these outcomes. Hoover's (2006) perspective clarifies why institutional guardianship intensifies under mediatization: leaders curate a platformed religious identity to preserve legitimacy while enabling parental co-presence.

Table 5. Quotations from Teachers and Leaders on Institutional Impact

Theme	Informant Quotation	Frequency	Interpretation
Public Visibility	"Many people now know our Islamic Boarding School through TikTok Live." (Teacher 1)	4 of 5 teachers	Live streaming functions as informal promotion, enhancing institutional visibility.

Enrollment Interest	"Some parents said they registered after watching our live sessions." (Leader 2)	2 of 2 leaders	TikTok Live indirectly attracts new students and families.
Managing Religious Image	"We must ensure the live stream remains consistent with Islamic ethics." (Leader 1)	2 of 2 leaders	Institution must carefully curate digital presence to maintain legitimacy.

As reflected in Table 5, teachers highlighted the role of TikTok Live in introducing the Islamic Boarding School to wider audiences, effectively acting as an informal promotional tool. Leaders also noted that new parents expressed interest in enrolling children after watching live sessions. At the same time, leaders stressed the importance of aligning digital practices with religious ethics, demonstrating awareness that visibility carries both benefits and risks for institutional reputation. Consequently, governance measures—consent, scope control, operator training—function as interpretive *applications* that stabilize authority amid exposure (Hoover, 2006).

This study examined how TikTok Live was implemented in Islamic Boarding School PPATQ RF and how the practice shaped the emotional experiences of parents and students, generated challenges, and influenced the institution as a whole. The major findings demonstrate that TikTok Live served as an "emotional remedy" for parents longing for their children, that it created new forms of pedagogical and emotional interaction in Islamic Boarding School, and that it introduced challenges related to privacy, cultural resistance, and technical limitations. It also revealed that students experienced both increased motivation and discomfort, while the Islamic Boarding School as an institution benefitted from greater visibility but faced heightened pressure to maintain its moral authority. Synthesizing these strands, the section demonstrates how meanings are produced through dialogical interpretation (Gadamer, 2004), narratively stabilized, and institutionally curated under mediatization.

The results are crucial because they broaden the conversation about Islamic education and digital religion by concentrating on the emotional aspect of family life rather than just curriculum and organizational change. The historical adaptability of Islamic boarding schools to shifting social situations was highlighted in earlier research (Azra, 2019). The present findings confirm such adaptability, but they highlight a new area of innovation: the integration of digital technologies to address emotional longing. By showing that TikTok Live was framed as "obat kangen" or a symbolic remedy, the study adds to existing literature on digital religion (Campbell, 2017; Campbell & Tsuria, 2021) by situating emotional needs and family ties at the center of digital negotiation. Theoretical scope is broadened by engaging Ricoeur (2016) on narrative identity (refigured parental care), Turkle (2015) on mediated intimacy (ambivalent closeness), and Hoover (2006) on religious authority in mediated environments (curated legitimacy).

From a hermeneutic perspective, the implementation of TikTok Live can be interpreted as a negotiation between tradition and modernity. Gadamer's (2004)

concept of the “fusion of horizons” is useful here, as it illustrates how the horizons of Islamic Boarding School values and digital technology intersect to generate new meanings. Parents interpreted the practice as symbolic presence, while Islamic Boarding School leaders framed it as both pedagogical and pastoral strategy. This finding is consistent with Campbell’s (2017) argument that religious practices in digital spaces are not simple extensions of offline rituals but processes of reinterpretation that create new religious meanings. The results also resonate with international scholarship on digital mediation of religious practice, where online technologies are used to reconstruct presence, intimacy, and authority in faith communities.

The difficulties found in this study provide additional insight on the conflicts associated with digital adaptation. Students' privacy concerns and community members' cultural opposition show that TikTok Live is not a problem-free practice. These findings are consistent with Lim's (2018) examination of Islamic authority in the digital era, which highlights the growing negotiation of religious legitimacy in virtual environments. The discomfort of students being displayed publicly also aligns with Campbell and Tsuria’s (2021) call for ethical guidelines in religious digital practices, highlighting the need to develop clear regulations for protecting minors’ privacy. Resistance to the practice as *bid’ah* reflects broader debates documented by Duderija and Rane (2019), who argue that Muslim communities often face dilemmas in balancing tradition with modernity. While these challenges confirm theoretical expectations, the findings also show that Islamic Boarding School leaders managed resistance by grounding the practice in intentions of parental care and maintaining alignment with Islamic ethical boundaries. This adaptation illustrates a pragmatic approach to reconciling religious conservatism with technological innovation.

The emotional impact of TikTok Live on parents and students constitutes one of the most novel aspects of the study. Parents consistently reported feelings of relief, closeness, and motivation, confirming theoretical perspectives on digital emotional attachment (Valkenburg & Piotrowski, 2017). This finding reinforces the argument that online interactions can provide emotional satisfaction equivalent to face-to-face encounters. Social media fosters social integration and informal learning, and this study extends their insights into the Islamic Boarding School context, demonstrating how live streaming not only supports learning but also functions symbolically as a spiritual and emotional bridge (Nurislam & Nurhayati, 2023; Ramdani et al., 2025; Taufikin, Nurhayati, & Muhajarah, 2025). For students, the practice produced ambivalent effects: while some felt encouraged and motivated by parental presence, others reported embarrassment or pressure. This dual outcome highlights the performative nature of digital visibility, in which students are both learners and performers. Such ambivalence suggests that while digital tools can enhance motivation, they may also create anxiety, an aspect that needs careful consideration in further pedagogical designs.

Institutionally, the study revealed that TikTok Live enhanced the Islamic Boarding School’s visibility, generated interest from new students, and positioned the Islamic Boarding School as an actor in the digital public sphere. This result connects with Abidin’s (2021) work on attention economies in TikTok, which

shows how digital exposure generates social and cultural capital. While beneficial, this visibility also carries risks of commodifying religious education or misrepresenting Islamic Boarding School identity. The caution expressed by Islamic Boarding School leaders to ensure alignment with Islamic ethics reflects awareness of these risks and highlights the need for careful management of digital identity. Compared to prior studies of Islamic Boarding School transformation (2019), which emphasized curriculum and organizational reform, this study provides new insights into how Islamic Boarding School manage digital presence and public image in an era where online reputation can directly affect legitimacy and enrollment (Bashori et al., 2024; Budiharso & Suharto, 2022).

To clarify the distinct contribution of this study, Table 6 compares the scope and limitations of previous research with the present study. Prior works on digital religion, emotional mediation, and Islamic Boarding School transformation have provided valuable foundations, yet none have systematically addressed the emotional-hermeneutic dimension of live-streaming practices in Islamic education. This comparative synthesis highlights how the current research extends existing scholarship through its theoretical integration, methodological depth, and focus on emotional innovation within Islamic Boarding School culture.

Table 6. Comparison of Prior Studies and Novelty of This Research

No.	Author(s) and Year	Focus of Prior Study	Main Limitation/ Research Gap	Novel Contribution of This Study
1	(Campbell, 2017; Campbell & Tsuria, 2021)	Explored digital religion and online faith practices across different contexts, focusing on identity and ritual transformation.	Did not examine how digital platforms function as emotional mediators in Islamic boarding schools (Islamic Boarding School) or within parent-child separation contexts.	Introduces TikTok Live as a hermeneutic medium that bridges parental longing and institutional adaptation in Islamic Boarding School.
2	(Duderija & Rane, 2019; Lim, 2018)	Investigated Islamic identity and authority negotiation in the digital age, emphasizing sociological and political dimensions.	Lacked analysis of emotional and pedagogical dimensions of digital engagement in faith-based education settings.	Highlights emotional hermeneutics of parental longing and ethical governance within a Islamic Boarding School's digital transformation.
3	Turkle (2011, 2015) (Turkle, 2011, 2015)	Examined mediated intimacy and emotional satisfaction through digital interaction, mostly in secular or Western contexts.	Did not contextualize emotional closeness within religious or spiritual frameworks nor	Extends mediated intimacy theory to a religious environment by interpreting TikTok Live as a spiritual-

			consider cross-generational relationships in Islamic institutions.	emotional bridge for Muslim families.
4	(Abidin, 2021; Hoover, 2006)	Discussed media, attention economy, and religion's public visibility, analyzing authority shifts under mediatization.	Focused on macro-level cultural visibility; overlooked micro-level institutional governance of digital ethics in Islamic schools.	Provides micro-level evidence of ethical curatorship and identity management in Islamic Boarding School through digital live-streaming practices.
5	(Azra, 2019; Taufikin, Nurhayati, & Muhajarah, 2025; Wahid & Nurlaelawati, 2020)	Documented Islamic Boarding School's adaptability and pedagogical reform amid modernization.	Did not explore emotional innovation – how Islamic Boarding School adapt emotionally and spiritually to digital intimacy and distance.	Positions Islamic Boarding School as emotionally adaptive religious institutions, showing integration of digital empathy, parental connection, and moral preservation.

This study advances prior scholarship by shifting the lens of digital religion research from structural or technological adaptation toward the emotional, ethical, and hermeneutic dimensions of Islamic education. It conceptualizes TikTok Live not merely as a media tool but as a symbolic and interpretive space where parental affection, student identity, and institutional authority are reconfigured. By combining Gadamer's hermeneutics, Ricoeur's narrative identity, and Turkle's mediated intimacy, the study forges a novel interdisciplinary bridge between emotional theology and digital ethnography within the Islamic Boarding School context.

CONCLUSION

In Islamic Boarding School PPATQ Raudlatul Falah (RF), Central Java, this study aimed to investigate how TikTok Live serves as a digital emotional therapy that bridges institutional adaption and parental longing. Three research issues were especially addressed: (1) how TikTok Live is used in response to parental separation; (2) what difficulties arise when it is used in a religious setting; and (3) what institutional and emotional effects it has. The research was designed to fill a critical gap in the literature namely, the absence of systematic understanding of how live-streaming technologies mediate emotional, ethical, and institutional dimensions of Islamic Boarding School life. Using an interpretivist-constructivist paradigm and a qualitative single-case design, the study applied Gadamer's hermeneutic framework to analyze data collected from interviews, observations, and documents. This approach enabled the interpretation of digital practices not

as neutral media but as dialogical processes through which meaning, emotion, and authority are continually redefined in the Islamic Boarding School setting.

The various findings show that TikTok Live modifies the institutional and affective dynamics of Islamic boarding schools in three interrelated ways. It first acts as a symbolic co-presence, turning parental longing into a shared spiritual experience and mediated certainty. A new type of emotional attachment based on love and faith was generated by parents' in-the-moment interactions during live sessions. Second, as students navigated pride and embarrassment and teachers regulated private boundaries and ethical legitimacy, implementation exposed conflicts between visibility and modesty. These challenges highlight how traditional notions of *adab* (modesty) are reinterpreted within digital spaces. Third, at the institutional level, TikTok Live generated adaptive transformation, expanding the Islamic Boarding School's visibility and outreach while requiring new governance mechanisms to maintain moral credibility. Theoretically, the study contributes to the growing field of digital religion by illustrating the hermeneutic fusion between tradition and technology; practically, it offers ethical and pedagogical insights for Islamic educational institutions seeking to balance emotional accessibility, technological innovation, and spiritual authenticity.

Despite its depth, the study acknowledges several methodological and conceptual limitations. The single-case design and qualitative scope limit the transferability of findings to other Islamic Boarding School contexts. Future research should employ comparative and longitudinal designs across multiple institutions to capture variations in digital adaptation, emotional formation, and religious authority. To more accurately evaluate engagement metrics or emotional consequences, quantitative methods could also be incorporated. In order to better understand the relationship between emotion, media, and spirituality, future research could conceptually improve the hermeneutic model through incorporating viewpoints from affect theory or digital anthropology. For policymakers and practitioners, the study underscores the need for clear ethical broadcasting policies, including privacy consent, operator training, and digital literacy programs for teachers and parents. In a broader sense, the findings demonstrate that when governed ethically, digital media can reinforce rather than erode religious identity positioning Islamic Boarding School as models of culturally grounded innovation in the era of Islamic digital education.

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