



# Analysis of Generation Z's Perceptions and Understanding of Islamic Values through TikTok Videos of Gus Dur with Islamic Ethnopedagogical Nuance

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the dynamics of digital da'wah among Generation Z by highlighting the role of ethnopedagogy and glocalization in shaping contextual religious understanding. The development of social media, particularly TikTok and Instagram, has changed the pattern of da'wah to be more creative, interactive, and relevant to Generation Z as digital natives. However, the effectiveness of digital da'wah is not only determined by the media, but also by the ability to integrate local cultural values so that religious messages remain rooted in tradition. The ethnopedagogy approach enables the internalization of Islamic values through local wisdom, while glocalization emphasizes the importance of dialogue between global identity and local traditions. This study uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological design through in-depth interviews, participatory observation, and digital document analysis. Informants were selected using snowball sampling techniques involving digital da'wah creators, religious leaders, and Generation Z audiences. Data analysis was conducted using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña and reinforced through triangulation. The results show that digital dakwah based on media creativity and local values is more effective in increasing religious understanding and strengthening the cultural identity of Generation Z. The integration of ethnopedagogy and glocalization makes dakwah more adaptive, inclusive, and relevant in the digital era.

## ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis dinamika dakwah digital di kalangan Generasi Z dengan menyoroti peran etnopedagogi dan glocalisasi dalam membentuk pemahaman keagamaan yang kontekstual. Perkembangan media sosial, khususnya TikTok dan Instagram, telah mengubah pola dakwah menjadi lebih kreatif, interaktif, dan relevan bagi Generasi Z sebagai digital native. Namun, efektivitas dakwah digital tidak hanya ditentukan oleh media, tetapi juga oleh kemampuan mengintegrasikan nilai-nilai budaya lokal agar pesan keagamaan tetap berakar pada tradisi. Pendekatan etnopedagogi memungkinkan internalisasi nilai Islam melalui kearifan lokal, sementara glocalisasi menegaskan pentingnya dialog antara identitas global dan tradisi lokal. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kualitatif dengan desain fenomenologis melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi partisipatif, dan analisis dokumen digital. Informan dipilih menggunakan teknik snowball sampling yang melibatkan kreator dakwah digital, tokoh agama, dan audiens Generasi Z. Analisis data dilakukan dengan model interaktif Miles, Huberman, dan Saldaña serta diperkuat melalui triangulasi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa dakwah digital berbasis kreativitas media dan nilai lokal lebih efektif dalam meningkatkan pemahaman keagamaan serta memperkuat identitas kultural Generasi Z. Integrasi etnopedagogi dan glocalisasi menjadikan dakwah lebih adaptif, inklusif, dan relevan di era digital.

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## KEYWORDS

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## INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology in the 21st century has brought significant changes to many aspects of human life, including the ways people obtain, process, and share information. Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, is very familiar with technology and has grown up in the digital era marked by the dominance of the internet and social media (Hidayah et al., 2024). Their daily lives cannot be separated from gadgets and digital platforms, making them highly responsive to visual information and short content that is fast, interactive, and easy to access (Faidh et al., 2024).

One of the most popular social media platforms among Generation Z is TikTok. According to Databoks, the app had around 1.4 billion global users in 2022, and the number continues to rise. A report from Business of Apps (2021) shows that almost 60% of TikTok users are from Generation Z. TikTok offers short videos that are visually and

emotionally engaging, making it not only a source of entertainment but also a medium for learning, Islamic preaching (da'wah), and sharing social and religious values (Bur et al., 2023).

This phenomenon creates great opportunities to strengthen Islamic values through digital media familiar to Generation Z. However, behind these positive influences, there are concerns about the erosion of religious and cultural values that shape national identity. Unfiltered globalization may weaken young people's spiritual and cultural identity, leading to a crisis of values and reducing understanding of moderate and contextual Islam (Ramadhani, 2025).

Many young people today recognize global figures more than local ones who have greatly contributed to Islamic and national values. Therefore, a new approach is needed to deliver Islamic messages that are not only relevant in content but also appropriate in method and medium. As a universal religion, Islam must reach its followers in ways that fit the times and the unique character of each generation (Astini et al., 2025).

One local figure who remains relevant today is Abdurrahman Wahid, or Gus Dur. He is well known not only for his knowledge but also for his humanism, pluralism, and visionary thoughts. His ideas on tolerant, democratic, and inclusive Islam make him an important figure in shaping the paradigm of Islam *rahmatan lil 'alamin* in a diverse society (Saefullah & Sukmara, 2025). Short clips of his lectures, interviews, and wise sayings circulating on TikTok have become alternative media for introducing inclusive Islamic values to Generation Z. His relaxed, humorous, yet meaningful style of communication serves as a bridge between religious messages and the communication style preferred by young people.

This phenomenon is worth studying further, especially in the context of Islamic education, through an ethnopedagogical approach. Ethnopedagogy is an educational strategy that integrates local culture and traditional wisdom into the learning process. In Islamic preaching and education, this approach plays an important role in delivering religious teachings in a contextual and practical way, so that Islamic values can be grounded and accepted by young people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Several studies have shown the relevance of ethnopedagogy in digital da'wah. For example, (Saefullah & Sukmara, 2025) studied how this approach helps internalize Islamic values effectively. Ika et al., (2025) examined the use of TikTok to spread Islamic understanding among Muslim youth through the Kadam Sidiq account. Maria & Kurniawan (2023) explored ethnopedagogical content in Islamic education, while Ummatunisak & Pasuruan (2025) studied students' perceptions of popular Islamic figures on social media. However, only a few studies specifically discuss Generation Z's perception and understanding of Islamic values through Gus Dur's TikTok videos within an ethnopedagogical framework.

This research seeks to fill that gap by exploring how Generation Z perceives and understands Islamic values delivered through Gus Dur's TikTok videos. It also evaluates the effectiveness of ethnopedagogy in spreading Islamic teachings through digital media. The findings are expected to provide both academic and practical contributions to the development of relevant, inspiring, and contextual strategies for Islamic preaching and education. In this way, Islamic values that are friendly, inclusive, and rooted in local culture can continue to live and remain relevant in the digital lives of today's youth.

## METHODS

This study was designed using a descriptive qualitative approach combined with an interpretative phenomenological perspective. This approach was chosen to achieve the research goal of understanding how Generation Z interprets Islamic messages in Gus Dur's TikTok videos. Qualitative research is considered most suitable because it focuses on the subjective experiences, narratives, and interpretations of the participants (Creswell, J.W. and Poth, 2018) Through interpretative phenomenology, the researcher seeks to capture the lived experiences of the informants and articulate the meanings they construct from their interaction with the digital content being studied.

The subjects of this study were members of Generation Z, defined as those born between 1997 and 2012 who actively use TikTok. Informants were selected purposively, based on specific criteria, namely those who had previously watched Gus Dur's videos on TikTok and had views regarding the messages contained in them (Palinkas, L.A., 2015). To expand the sample, snowball sampling was also employed, in which additional participants were recruited through recommendations from initial informants (Naderifar, M., Goli, H., & Ghaljaie, 2017). A total of eight informants were included, with the number determined by the principle of data saturation when interviews no longer produced new significant information (Guest, G., Namey, E., & Chen, 2020).

Data collection was carried out through three main methods. First, in-depth interviews were conducted to explore participants' perceptions, experiences, and interpretations of Gus Dur's videos. Semi-structured interview guides were used, allowing flexibility to explore relevant topics without being strictly bound to predetermined questions

(Kvale, S., 2015). Second, digital content observation was conducted by analyzing Gus Dur's TikTok videos, focusing on message themes, communication style, and audience interactions through comments. Third, documentation was employed to complement the findings by reviewing literature, articles, and previous studies related to digital da'wah, ethnopedagogy, and Gus Dur's thought.

Data analysis followed the framework proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2018), which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The analysis process was carried out simultaneously with data collection. Interview transcripts were coded and categorized according to key themes such as Generation Z's perceptions, the relevance of Gus Dur's preaching style, cultural integration, and value transformation. Data from observation and documentation were then used to reinforce the findings from interviews, creating a more comprehensive understanding.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, triangulation was applied, both in terms of sources and methods (Flick, 2018). Information obtained from informants was compared with other sources, while interview results were verified against observation and documentation. Member checking was also conducted by providing participants with summaries of their interviews to confirm the accuracy of the researcher's interpretations ((Birt, L., Scott, S., Cavers, D., Campbell, C., & Walter, 2016). Ethical principles were upheld throughout the research process. Participants' identities were kept confidential, informed consent was obtained before interviews, and their right to withdraw from the study was fully respected (Orb et al., 2001). This approach ensured that the study not only produced valid academic findings but also upheld the dignity of participants as research subjects.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### The Meaning of Gus Dur's Da'wah Messages from the Perspective of Generation Z

Generation Z is known as a group of digital natives who grow up in a fast, instant, and highly visual world. The rise of social media platforms such as TikTok has transformed the way they access, understand, and internalize information, including in the context of Islamic da'wah (Muhammad Adnan Faidh et al., 2024). From the interviews, it was found that most informants were drawn to Gus Dur's videos because of their light, humorous, yet meaningful style. For example, Cindy noted, *"his videos are simple, full of meaning, sometimes funny, but also touching."* This shows that Generation Z is not only seeking entertainment but also meaningful messages that they can reflect on in daily life.

From the perspective of Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz, 1974), audiences actively choose media that meet their needs. Generation Z chooses TikTok not only for entertainment but also as a source of religious learning. This aligns with Saefullah & Sukmara (2025) findings that digital da'wah, when presented briefly and interactively, engages Muslim youth more effectively than long traditional sermons. Thus, Gus Dur's messages are not limited to cognitive understanding but also create emotional and spiritual experiences for Generation Z.

The Islamic values absorbed from Gus Dur's videos are diverse. Some informants highlighted lessons of tolerance, humility, positive thinking (husnudzan), and sincerity (ikhlas). For instance, Naila explained, *"from Gus Dur's videos I learned to think positively of others and not judge people just by appearances."* Meanwhile, Fitria emphasized the importance of sincerity and simplicity reflected in Gus Dur's teachings. These findings support Maria and Kurniawan's (2023) study, which stressed that the internalization of Islamic values is more effective when connected to learners' everyday experiences rather than limited to normative doctrine.

Theoretically, this can be understood through Bandura's Social Learning Theory (Hidayah et al., 2024). Generation Z learns from admired public figures by observing their behavior, communication style, and messages in videos. Gus Dur, with his relaxed and humanist approach, serves as a social model for young audiences. This is where value internalization occurs abstract religious messages become concrete and applicable.

Within the framework of ethnopedagogy, the way Generation Z interprets Gus Dur's videos reflects the successful integration of Islamic values with local culture familiar to Indonesian society. The values of tolerance, local wisdom, and moderation presented by Gus Dur are not only normative but also contextual to Indonesia's social reality. Therefore, Generation Z's interpretation of Gus Dur's messages provides evidence that ethnopedagogical-based da'wah is effective in transmitting Islamic values in the digital era.

### The Uniqueness of Gus Dur's Da'wah Style and Its Relevance to Generation Z

Most informants considered Gus Dur's da'wah style more appealing to Generation Z compared to conventional preachers. His messages were simple, humorous, yet full of meaning. Naila explained that although Gus Dur came from an older generation, *"his messages are still strong and relatable to everyday life."* This suggests that the effectiveness of da'wah is not determined by the preacher's age, but rather by the relevance of their communication style.

However, not all informants shared the same view. Fitria, for instance, argued that *"Gus Dur's da'wah is less suitable for Gen Z, more suitable for the older generation."* This highlights the diversity of reception among Generation Z. From the perspective of Audience Reception Theory (Hall, cited in Widianingsih et al., 2025), such differences are natural because media

interpretation is subjective and shaped by audiences' backgrounds, religious experiences, and media exposure. From a communication theory perspective, this phenomenon aligns with Media Richness Theory. TikTok, as a short-video platform, provides high message richness by combining text, visuals, and audio. Gus Dur's relaxed style enriched with humor and storytelling leverages this richness to convey complex messages in a short format. This supports Bur et al. (2023) who found that narrative and humorous styles are more effective for younger audiences than formal approaches.

The comparison between Gus Dur's style and conventional preachers also demonstrates the importance of differential pedagogy. Some members of Generation Z may prefer normative, text-based, and formal preaching, while others resonate more with a humanist and reflective style. Maria and Kurniawan (2023) emphasized the importance of learner-centered education, which adapts teaching methods to learners' needs and characteristics. Da'wah works in the same way there is no single style that suits everyone.

In the context of ethnopedagogy, Gus Dur's da'wah style can be seen as a bridge between normative Islamic teachings and the practical needs of young people. Humor, stories, and simple language become pedagogical strategies that make Islamic values easier to understand and accept. Thus, digital da'wah that combines Gus Dur's style with conventional preaching may create a new synthesis: da'wah that is strong in substance yet light and communicative.

### **Ethnopedagogical Strategies through the Integration of Local Culture in Gus Dur's Da'wah Videos**

One of the interesting findings from the interviews was Generation Z's perspective on the relationship between local culture and digital da'wah. Some informants stated that da'wah on TikTok is more effective than culture-based media because it is easier to access and more appealing to young people. However, others emphasized that culture remains important as a foundation, since it represents both national and religious identity.

Gus Dur himself was known as a figure who used culture as an entry point for da'wah. He often combined Islamic values with local traditions such as art, humor, and community wisdom. According to the theory of cultural hybridization (Robertson, cited Saefullah & Sukmara, 2025) the encounter between local and global cultures can produce new, more contextual forms. This can be seen in how Generation Z consumes Islamic messages through a global platform (TikTok), yet still with local nuances inspired by Gus Dur.

From an educational perspective, this strategy aligns with the ethnopedagogical approach, which stresses the importance of integrating local wisdom into the learning process. Maria and Kurniawan (2023) showed that ethnopedagogy helps learners internalize religious values in a more grounded way. In the context of digital da'wah, ethnopedagogy may involve packaging Islamic messages using popular media while still including local values and narratives. For example, sharing Gus Dur's quotes in creative video formats that match Generation Z's communication style.

Generation Z itself tends to hold ambivalent views toward local culture. On one hand, they prefer digital media because it is faster and more engaging. On the other hand, they recognize that local culture remains relevant as a value foundation. This reflects the concept of glocalization the process of combining global values with local identity (Hidayah et al., 2024). Thus, the integration of local culture and digital technology is not a matter of choosing one over the other, but rather seeing them as complementary.

Within the framework of ethnopedagogy, an effective strategy is to combine TikTok-based digital da'wah with cultural narratives embedded in society. In this way, Islamic values appear modern and relevant while remaining rooted in local traditions. Such a model of da'wah allows Generation Z to feel both connected to and proud of their religious and cultural identity.

### **Generation Z's Perceptions and Attitudes of Tolerance after Watching Gus Dur's Da'wah Videos on TikTok**

One of the most significant impacts of watching Gus Dur's videos is the transformation of Generation Z's views on Islam and diversity. Most informants admitted that after watching these videos, they became more open, tolerant, and positive in their thinking. For example, Cindy stated, "*Gus Dur's videos made me realize that Islam is not only about worship, but also about respecting others.*" This shows that digital da'wah functions as an agent of value transformation. From a communication theory perspective, this phenomenon can be explained through the *Elaboration Likelihood Model*. Generation Z does not always process religious messages through the central cognitive route but often through the peripheral route, which relies on emotional impressions, delivery style, and the credibility of the figure. Gus Dur's charisma, humor, and simplicity serve as effective peripheral cues, enabling messages of tolerance to be received even in short video formats.

This transformation is consistent with the findings of Ummatunisak and Saifulah (2025) who showed that popular Islamic figures on social media can shape new perceptions among students, especially concerning values of

tolerance and moderation. In other words, digital media functions not only as an information channel but also as a space for shaping an inclusive religious identity.

Within the framework of ethnopedagogy, this shift in perspective highlights that digital da'wah can serve as a medium for internalizing local wisdom values such as *tepa selira* (mutual respect), *gotong royong* (mutual cooperation), and tolerance. Values that were once passed down orally or through traditional practices now find a new medium in the form of short, viral videos on social media. Thus, continuity of values is preserved, even as the medium evolves. Ultimately, the rise of tolerance awareness born from exposure to Gus Dur's videos proves that digital da'wah can play an important role in addressing value crises in the era of globalization. Generation Z often accused of neglecting tradition actually shows the capacity to absorb humanistic Islamic values when they are delivered in a communication style that resonates with them. Therefore, Gus Dur's videos on TikTok can be seen as a representation of ethnopedagogical da'wah that is relevant, contextual, and transformative.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study shows that Gus Dur's videos on TikTok are not merely short entertainment, but a medium of da'wah that deeply resonates with Generation Z. This generation, born and raised with the internet, finds relevance between Gus Dur's messages and their daily lives. His simple, humorous, yet meaningful style of da'wah makes complex Islamic values easier to understand in a light and contextual way. Messages about tolerance, simplicity, and Islamic humanism are presented in a form that suits the mindset of digital natives.

Compared to conventional da'wah often found in schools or on YouTube, Generation Z perceives Gus Dur's style as closer to their world. Formal and textual preaching often feels rigid, while Gus Dur emphasizes narrative, dialogue, and lived experience, making it more grounded. This highlights that the way religious messages are delivered greatly determines how they are received and internalized by the audience.

Furthermore, this study also emphasizes the role of local culture in Islamic preaching. Gus Dur taught that religion and culture do not need to be opposed, but rather can complement each other. For Generation Z, culture may not always be the starting point in understanding religion, but when presented through digital media, local wisdom can serve as a bridge to strengthen both Islamic and national identity. Thus, digital ethnopedagogy can be an important strategy for teaching Islam in a contextual way.

The impact of exposure to Gus Dur's videos on TikTok is evident in the changing perspectives of the informants. Many admitted that they began to see Islam not only as a set of normative rules, but as a religion of compassion, openness, and respect for differences. Their awareness of tolerance became stronger, and they felt more prepared to live within a multicultural society. This transformation proves that digital media, when used effectively, can serve as a powerful tool for fostering moderate Islamic values.

Overall, this study affirms that digital da'wah based on ethnopedagogy as exemplified by Gus Dur is a relevant approach for Generation Z. Islam, when delivered in a friendly, inclusive way and rooted in local culture, is more easily accepted. This not only strengthens religious understanding but also nurtures national and humanitarian awareness.

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