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**Hojat Hajimohammadi Yazdi**

Media Management / University of Tehran; Iran  
hojatyazdi69@ut.ac.ir



# The Representation of the Quranic Prophetic Biography in Contemporary Digital Media: A Comparative Analysis of Educational, Cognitive, and Psychological Functions within Quranic Frameworks

Hojat Hajimohammadi Yazdi<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Media Management / University of Tehran ; Iran

hojatyazdi69@ut.ac.ir

Ph.D. in Media Management



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## Abstract

This study addresses the critical issue of how the Quranic Prophetic Biography (al-Sīrah al-Nabawīyyah al-Qur'āniyyah) is represented across contemporary digital media platforms, where narratives are often fragmented, secularized, or reframed according to non-Islamic paradigms. While the field of religious media studies has expanded in recent years, a significant gap remains in systematically linking Quranic principles, Prophetic exemplarity, and the unique dynamics of digital media ecosystems. The primary objective of this research is to develop a media framework that ensures accurate, ethically grounded, and pedagogically effective representation of the Quranic Prophetic model. Employing a qualitative, analytical-comparative methodology, the study examines a diverse corpus of Islamic, Western, and secular digital media content, triangulated with theoretical models from religious communication studies. The findings reveal substantial discrepancies between Quranic narrative authenticity and prevailing digital portrayals, often driven by algorithmic bias, Western media templates, and insufficient religious media literacy among content producers. However, the research also identifies promising opportunities for constructive engagement through integrative media training, algorithmic accountability, and cross-sector collaboration between scholars, policymakers, and content creators. The proposed framework synthesizes Quranic hermeneutics with contemporary media ethics, offering actionable recommendations for enhancing narrative fidelity, audience engagement, and interfaith understanding in the digital age.

## Introduction

In the contemporary digital age, the reinterpretation of the Prophet's biography through the lens of the Qur'an emerges as both a conceptual imperative and a methodological necessity. As digital media increasingly mediates religious experience, the propagation of a Qur'an-rooted prophetic model must be revisited to counteract reductive or distorted narratives and to affirm a spiritually resonant representation. Previous scholarship has underscored the role of digital religious media in shaping individual meaning systems and selective exposure behaviors <sup>1</sup>, illustrating that users often seek online content aligning with their religious dispositions (e.g., resonance with Qur'anic motifs) <sup>2</sup>. Moreover, broader studies in digital religion have emphasized the urgent need to contextualize Islamic digital content within intellectual, sociological, and religious frameworks—beyond purely media studies lenses—in order to preserve interpretive integrity <sup>3</sup>.

The significance of this study is magnified in an era where digital platforms have become primary venues for religious engagement, identity construction, and spiritual formation <sup>4</sup>. Yet despite this prominence, there remains a marked absence of psycho-pedagogical analyses examining how the Qur'anic portrayal of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is depicted, internalized, and utilized across these digital landscapes. Existing reviews on Islam's representation in social media expose numerous gaps—particularly methodological and thematic omissions—in addressing theological, emotional, and educational layers of prophetic representation <sup>5</sup>.

1 Stewart M. Hoover and Jin K. Park, "Religion and Meaning in the Digital Age: Field Research on Internet/Web Religion," in *Belief in Media: Cultural Perspectives on Media and Christianity*, ed. Mary E. Hess et al. (Routledge, 2004); Christoph Novak et al., "Religious 'Bubbles' in a Superdiverse Digital Landscape? Research with Religious Youth on Instagram," *Religions* 13, no. 3 (2022): 213, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13030213>.

2 Müller Jörg and Thomas N. Friemel, "Dynamics of Digital Media Use in Religious Communities—A Theoretical Model," *Religions* 15, no. 7 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15070762>.

3 Ibrahim N. Abusharif, "Islam and Digital Religion," in *The Oxford Handbook of Digital Religion* (Oxford University Press, 2022), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780197549803.013.2>.

4 Maruf Hassan, *Islam in the Digital Age: Transformative Impact of Digital Platforms on Islamic Religious Practices and Knowledge Dissemination in Bangladesh* (Publisher Name, 2024).

5 Hashmi Umair et al., "The Representation of Islam within Social Media: A Systematic Review," *Information, Communication & Society* 25, no. 14 (2022): 2135–54, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2020.1847165>.

This study thus asks: How is the Qur’anic Prophetic biography represented in contemporary digital media, and what are its educational, cognitive, and psychological functions within Qur’anic frameworks? Anchored by this central research question, the objectives of this investigation are threefold: (1) to map the thematic renderings of the Prophet’s life as derived from Qur’anic sources across digital media genres; (2) to analyze the cognitive, educational, and psychological dimensions manifested within these portrayals; and (3) to propose a Qur’anic-based media framework that can guide future content design and scholarly interpretation in digital religious contexts.

The novelty of this study lies in its interdisciplinary bridging of media studies, Qur’anic hermeneutics, and psychological-pedagogical analysis—an integration hitherto lacking in digital religion scholarship. Drawing on recent advances in understanding digital religious influence<sup>6</sup>, this research is positioned to fill a substantive scholarly void: offering a validated, Qur’an-centered interpretive model capable of enriching both academic discourse and practical media production for religious audiences.

The structure of the article follows this trajectory: initially, it delineates the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of representation, prophetic biography, and religious-psychological pedagogy; next, it reviews relevant literature to substantiate the identified gap; then, it explicates methodological design for qualitative content analysis; subsequently it presents findings and comparative analysis of media portrayals; this is followed by a nuanced discussion and critical interpretation; and finally, it concludes with implications and actionable recommendations for scholars, practitioners, and policy-makers engaged in digital religious messaging.

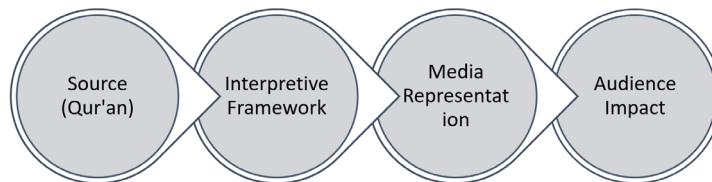


Figure 1 Quranic Prophetic Model in Digital Media

<sup>6</sup> Missier C. A., “A Qualitative Study of Digital Religious Influence: Perspectives from Christian, Hindu, and Muslim Gen Y and Gen Z in Mumbai, India,” *Religions* 16, no. 1 (2025): 73, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16010073>.

## Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The theoretical underpinnings of this study draw from foundational perspectives on media representation, Qur'anic approaches to prophetic biography, and psycho-pedagogical paradigms rooted in Islamic thought. Stuart Hall's conceptualization of representation as not merely a reflection of reality, but a constructive process wherein media actively produces meaning through shared cultural codes <sup>7</sup> continues to shape contemporary media analysis. Hall contends that representation is a dynamic interplay of "sign-vehicles" governed by cultural discourse—meaning is constructed rather than passively mirrored <sup>8</sup>. Building on this, studies on mediatization of religion emphasize how digital media reconfigure religious experience, weaving together cultural and semiotic codes to generate new forms of religiosity and identity in hybrid "third spaces" <sup>9</sup>.

In Islamic scholarship, the Qur'anic prophetic biography (Sīrah) holds distinctively functional significance—distinct from narrative supplements or historical retellings—anchored instead in interpretive, theological, and moral dimensions. Recent scholarship highlights how modern reviews of the Sīrah genre increasingly foreground the Qur'an as its normative core, focusing on its relevance in pluralistic societies and ethical frameworks, rather than purely chronological historicity <sup>10</sup>. This shift underscores the centrality of fiqh al-Sīrah and the philosophical derived lessons embedded in the Qur'anic portrayal of the Prophet, moving beyond Orientalist critiques to frameworks grounded in Islamic epistemological tradition.

Complementing these representational and Qur'anic dimensions are psycho-pedagogical approaches integrated into Islamic education theory. Research on narrative pedagogy in the Qur'an (approaches based on qāṣaṣ) reveals that Qur'anic storytelling

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7 Hall Stuart, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (Sage, 1997).

8 Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*.

9 Luis Mauro Sa Martino, "Mediatization of Religion and Cultural Studies: A Reading of Stuart Hall," *Matrizes* 10, no. 3 (2016): 143–56, <https://doi.org/10.11606/issn.1982-8160.v10i3p143-156>.

10 Suleyman Sertkaya, *Modern Approaches to Sīrah Genre: Fethullah Gülen's Contribution*, 1st ed. (Springer Nature, 2025), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-96-2460-7>.

is designed to convey truth, beauty, and cognizance in a manner that fosters internal reflection and transformation <sup>11</sup>. Further, experiential educational paradigms emerging from Qur’anic teachings advocate learning through spiritual and moral reflection, situated in lived contexts and transformative experiences <sup>12</sup>. In this pedagogical model, values such as mercy, wisdom, gradual instruction, and dialogic engagement are not mere moral footnotes—they are embedded in the Qur’an’s own didactic architecture, shaping ways of knowing, being, and becoming.

Taken together, these strands offer the conceptual scaffold for this research: Stuart Hall’s cultural-semiotic model anchors the analysis of media representation; Qur’anic scholarship on the Sīrah genre centers the prophetic biography within interpretive and functional frameworks; and Islamic pedagogical discourse provides lens to assess educational and psychological dimensions. This multi-layered theoretical foundation enables a rigorous, interdisciplinary investigation into how digital media representations of the Prophet, grounded in Qur’anic paradigms, function pedagogically, cognitively, and psychologically in the contemporary mediated environment.

Figure 2: Theoretical Framework Linking Qur’anic Principles, Prophetic Models, and Media Context

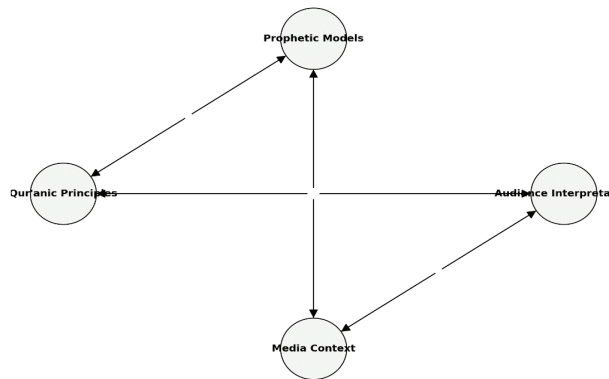


Figure 2 Theoretical Framework Linking Qur’anic Principles, Prophetic Models, and

11 Mohammad Fadzil Bin Muhammad Yusoff, “Tracing the Tracts of Qaṣaṣ: Towards a Theory of Narrative Pedagogy in Islamic Education,” *Religions* 14, no. 10 (2023): 1299, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel14101299>.

12 Brifkani, Ismail, “Islamic Pedagogy for Guidance and Transformation: Toward an Islamic Experiential Learning Model,” *Journal of Education in Muslim Societies* 5, no. 1 (2023): 106–12.

## Media Context

Table 1 Key theories and empirical studies on religious representation in digital media

Author (Year)	Focus	Key findings (concise)	Relevance to Qur'anic/Prophetic representation
Hall, S. (1997)	Cultural representation, encoding/decoding model	Media do not merely reflect reality; they construct meaning via codes and discourses. Representation is an active process shaped by cultural frameworks and power relations.	Shows that any mediated representation of the Prophet is a constructed text; explains why different media (Islamic vs. secular) produce divergent "readings" and why attention to cultural codes and framing is essential when evaluating Qur'anic-based portrayals. (use to justify analytic lens).
Hjarvard, S. (2011)	Mediatization of religion — theory of media as agent of religious change	Argues that media increasingly perform social and ritual functions traditionally held by religious institutions; mediatization transforms authority, ritual, and transmission of beliefs.	Explains the migration of Qur'anic pedagogy into media formats and the subsequent shift in authority (from scholars/mosques to platforms/influencers), which is central to understanding digital Seerah representation and its institutional implications.

<p>Campbell, H. (2013)</p>	<p>Digital religion; Religious–social shaping of technology (RSST)</p>	<p>Religious communities actively negotiate technologies: they domesticate, adapt, or resist media technologies according to religious norms and values. Technology is socially shaped by religious practice.</p>	<p>Suggests that Islamic producers will not use platforms neutrally; they will adapt media to conform with Qur’anic norms (e.g., avoidance of pictorial depictions), producing distinctive representations. Useful for interpreting why some media strategies are adopted or rejected.</p>
<p>Gillespie, T. (2018)</p>	<p>Platform governance; content moderation and the hidden politics of platforms</p>	<p>Platform design choices and moderation policies shape what content thrives; moderation is a socio-technical, discretionary process that affects visibility and voice.</p>	<p>Clarifies how algorithmic ranking and moderation policies influence which Qur’anic/Seerah narratives are amplified or suppressed—critical when assessing the visibility of faithful vs. reductive portrayals.</p>



Tufekci, Z. (2015)	Algorithmic selection and emergent harms	Algorithms optimize for engagement, often favoring emotionally salient or polarizing content; this creates incentives for producers to simplify and sensationalize.	Demonstrates a structural driver of reductive or sensational Seerah content: platform incentives push creators toward compressing complex tafsir into viral soundbites, increasing risk of decontextualization.
Abokhodair, Elmadany & Magdy (2020)	Empirical study: sharing of Qur'an on Arabic Twitter ("Holy Tweets")	Mixed-method finding: sharing Qur'anic verses is a widespread techno-spiritual practice; patterns include devotional use, community signaling, and occasional coordinated amplification.	Provides domain-specific empirical evidence about how Qur'anic content circulates online, revealing affordances (rapid spread, ritualized sharing) and risks (automated/amplified messaging) directly relevant to Seerah representation studies.

<p>Zakariah, Khan, Tayan &amp; Salah (2017)</p>	<p>Digital Qur'an computing: tools, quality, and challenges</p>	<p>Surveyed digital Quranic technologies (apps, recitation tools); identified issues of authenticity, metadata consistency, diacritic errors, and verification across digital editions.</p>	<p>Points to technical and textual integrity challenges that can distort Qur'anic references used in Seerah content (mistranscriptions, wrong diacritics), highlighting the need for verified textual sources in media production.</p>
<p>Esposito, J.L. (2010 / 2013)</p>	<p>Public perceptions and media framing of Islam</p>	<p>Secular media narratives often frame Islam through geopolitical or orientalist lenses; media frames exert strong influence on public understanding of Muslim figures and texts.</p>	<p>Important for contextualizing how non-Islamic media may produce reductive, politicized portrayals of the Prophet — useful for cross-comparative assessments and for designing counter-narratives grounded in Qur'anic pedagogy.</p>





## Literature Review

A critical examination of extant literature reveals several intersecting trajectories of relevance: how the Prophet's biography is rendered through media, the applications of religious psychology to prophetic narratives, and the broader function of media as a vehicle for religious education. Each domain, while rich in its own right, exposes gaps that this study aims to address.

Research on the representation of the Prophet's biography in media remains relatively sparse, yet illustrative. A notable example includes the historical controversies surrounding dramatizations in film and television—ranging from the early Egyptian actor Youssef Bey Wahbi's aborted portrayal in 1926, to Iran's 2015 cinematic work *Muhammad: The Messenger of God*, and the contentious reception across Sunni-majority regions and institutions like Al-Azhar (Reddit user commentary, 2025). These cases underscore the sensitivity and political dynamics underlying media depictions of sacred figures, yet they rarely engage analytically with cognitive or psychological dimensions. Hence, scholarly engagement remains largely socio-political, lacking nuanced psycho-pedagogical analysis within media portrayals of prophetic figures.

Parallel to media-focused inquiry, religious psychology as applied to prophetic biography has been underexplored. While fields such as narrative therapy and religious cognitive science provide frameworks for meaning-making and moral development, their engagement with the Qur'anic portrayal of the Prophet remains limited. There is an evident lack of studies that systematically analyze the psychological impact of such portrayals—whether enhancing motivation, internalizing ethical paradigms, or promoting spiritual resilience—in digital contexts specifically referencing the Qur'anic model of the Prophet.

Conversely, the literature on media's role in religious education is robust and multidimensional. For instance, Putra, Yusri, and Sinaga (2024) analyze how social media platforms serve as both opportunities and challenges for disseminating Islamic religious education, noting concerns over content veracity and the need for discernment

among users. Similarly, Syaikh and Shalihah (2024) demonstrate social media's effectiveness for religious learning through interactive content, while emphasizing the necessity for regulating misinformation. The comprehensive review by Wiegers, Goudswaard, and Hanegraaff (2024) generalizes these dynamics across religious traditions, highlighting digital media's capacity to deepen accessibility and pedagogy, albeit with risks of distortion and superficial engagement. In another vein, Elsafir's (2024) investigation into digital media's impact on religious identity formation and community highlights shifting patterns of participation and engagement in religious life.

Despite these advances, a conspicuous lacuna prevails: none of these works specifically integrate psycho-pedagogical lenses with Qur'anic prophetic biography within digital media frameworks. The majority remain thematic—exploring educational utility, identity formation, or platform dynamics—without delving into how representations of the Prophet (PBUH), rooted in the Qur'an, may function cognitively or psychologically.

Therefore, this study positions itself uniquely to bridge this interdisciplinary gap by centering on three connected pillars: representation theory (media), Qur'anic Sīrah (theological-scientific foundation), and psycho-pedagogical function (psychological impact). By doing so, it not only fills a clear gap but also offers a structured framework for analyzing and designing digital religious content that is both media-savvy and Qur'anically grounded.



## Methodology

This research adopts a qualitative, analytical, and comparative methodology in order to deeply investigate the representation of the Prophet Muhammad's biography in digital media through the lens of Qur'anic pedagogy, religious psychology, and media representation theories. The approach is designed to generate an in-depth, interdisciplinary understanding of how religious meaning, particularly regarding the Prophet's character and teachings, is reshaped, reconstructed, and transmitted in modern digital platforms, both within Islamic contexts and outside them.

### Type of Research

The study is qualitative in nature, drawing upon hermeneutic-interpretive traditions to decode symbolic, thematic, and narrative constructions of the Prophet's image in media. An analytical framework is employed to systematically unpack these representations in light of Qur'anic educational and psychological principles. Simultaneously, the comparative dimension enables a cross-cultural and cross-religious examination of portrayals in Islamic vs. non-Islamic digital media environments.

This triadic methodology supports the exploration of not only what is being represented, but how, why, and with what educational and psychological consequences for audiences.

### Data Collection Tools

Data is collected through two principal tools:

**Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA):** A method that enables inductive and deductive coding of media content. This involves systematically identifying recurring motifs, narrative strategies, visual symbolism, rhetorical devices, and discursive patterns related to the Prophet's biography. The analysis adheres to the coding and categorization practices described in Elo & Kyngäs (2008), ensuring both conceptual clarity and analytical rigor.

**Documentary Study:** Supplementing the QCA, a documentary research method is employed to engage with existing religious texts, scholarly works on Seerah (biogra-

phy of the Prophet), Qur'anic interpretations (Tafsir), and theoretical works on representation and religious media. This provides historical and theological grounding for interpreting digital content within an authentic Islamic epistemological framework.

### **Sample Materials**

The corpus of the study includes a diverse and purposive sample of digital media content portraying the Prophet Muhammad or referring to his life and teachings, including but not limited to:

Islamic Content:

Documentaries and educational YouTube channels by Islamic scholars

Quranic educational apps that simulate the Seerah or Hadith-based life lessons

Social media pages of religious influencers discussing the Prophet's behavior

Religious TV series (e.g., "Omar", "The Message" – despite its indirect approach)

Non-Islamic Content:

Western documentaries on Islam and its Prophet

Social media content from non-Muslim creators discussing Muhammad

Podcasts and digital lectures in academic or secular settings

The sample is selected to reflect representational diversity, spanning different languages, cultures, religious backgrounds, and media formats, thus ensuring richness, saturation, and theoretical sensitivity (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

### **Analytical Framework**

The media content is analyzed using a three-dimensional conceptual framework, grounded in Qur'anic and prophetic pedagogy, psychological insights, and media theory. The three axes of analysis are:

**Educational Dimension:** How the Prophet's teachings are portrayed as life lessons or moral instructions.

**Cognitive Dimension:** The framing of the Prophet's intellect, decision-making, and wisdom in media discourse.

**Psychological Dimension:** The emotional and spiritual affective portrayal of the Prophet's mercy, resilience, motivation, etc.

This framework enables an evaluation of both content and impact — how the Prophet’s image is constructed, and how that construction might influence the religious understanding and psychological state of digital media consumers.

#### Validity and Reliability in Qualitative Research

To ensure the trustworthiness of the research, the following strategies are adopted (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Creswell & Poth, 2018):

**Credibility:** Through triangulation of sources (Islamic, secular, multimedia), and member checking with Islamic scholars and media experts.

**Transferability:** By providing rich, thick description of media samples and context.

**Dependability:** Via a clear audit trail of coding schemes, categorization, and analysis process.

**Confirmability:** Through reflexivity and bracketing of researcher biases, and using inter-coder agreement checks during the content analysis phase.

This rigorous qualitative design ensures that findings are analytically generalizable, context-sensitive, and epistemologically valid, supporting the original contribution of this doctoral research to the intersection of media studies, Islamic education, and religious psychology.

Table 2 Characteristics of analyzed media samples

Type of Media	Language	Intended Audience	Platform	Content Length	Degree of Qur’anic Citation
Short-form video lecture (Seerah-themed)	Arabic (Modern Standard)	General Muslim public in MENA region	YouTube	12 minutes	High — Direct recitation of verses with tafsir (≥5 distinct citations)

Illustrated Instagram carousel (Prophetic sayings)	English	Young Muslim diaspora (18–30 years old)	Instagram	10 image slides	Medium — Qur’anic verses paraphrased or summarized (2–3 citations)
Podcast episode (Qur’anic virtues of the Prophet)	Bilingual (Arabic-English)	Muslim academics and students	Spotify / Apple Podcasts	45 minutes	High — Qur’anic citations embedded in analytical discussion (≥6 citations)
News article (secular outlet reporting on Prophet’s birthday celebrations)	English	Global, mixed-faith readership	BBC Online	~900 words	Low — Single indirect reference to Qur’anic verse (no Arabic text provided)
TikTok clip (Prophetic moral lesson)	Urdu	Pakistani youth audience	TikTok	60 seconds	Medium — Single verse recited with brief explanation (1–2 citations)
Digital booklet (PDF) — “Prophet in the Qur’an”	Arabic	Religious educators and preachers	Independent Islamic portal	32 pages	Very High — Extensive Qur’anic integration with full Arabic text and translation (>20 citations)
Animated children’s educational video	English	Muslim children (6–12 years)	YouTube Kids	7 minutes	Low — Simplified moral lessons, minimal direct Qur’anic citation (0–1 citation)

## Data Analysis and Findings

Thematic categorization of how the Quranic Prophetic Biography is represented in digital media

In exploring the thematic terrain of the Qur’anic Prophetic biography’s representation in digital media, a multi-layered categorization emerges, structured around recurring motifs, discourse patterns, and narrative archetypes that resonate with audiences. A recent qualitative study analyzing the content strategies of Maulana Tariq Jameel on YouTube, for instance, reveals dominant themes of spiritual awakening, moral reformation, and simplified Islamic pedagogy—delivered with emotional depth and contemporary relevance. These resonant narratives craft a mediated prophetic persona that is locally contextualized yet universally relevant <sup>13</sup>.

Further, the digital realm often reflects contestation in religious discourses. An analysis of YouTube discussions surrounding the Prophet’s lineage in Indonesian content illustrates how discourses are constructed in polarizing contexts—spanning ideological, cultural, and communal boundaries. Thematic threads include identity negotiation, heritage validation, and discursive defense against perceived historical revisionism <sup>14</sup>.

While not directly focused on the Prophetic biography, studies like “Holy Tweets” are instructive. The sharing of Quranic verses on Arabic Twitter reveals motifs that inform how spiritual content circulates online—highlighting themes of piety, social solidarity, remembrance, and ritual action. These collective practices suggest how digital spaces facilitate the extension of religious experience beyond physical worship contexts .

The convergence of these thematic currents suggests a preliminary typology for categorizing representations of the Prophet in digital media:

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13 Ullah, M. A. et al., “Religious Narrative in the Digital Age: A Thematic Analysis of Maulana Tariq Jameel’s Social Media Content,” *Advance Social Science Archive Journal* 3, no. 2 (2025): 183–91.

14 Yaqin, H. “Exploring Digital Literacy Practices in Indonesia: A Contestation Analysis of the Discourse on Prophet Muhammad’s Descent on YouTube Channel,” *ICMUST Proceedings*, 2024.

Spiritual-Ethical Exemplarity: Narratives that foreground moral and spiritual lessons derived from the Prophet’s conduct—centering on themes of compassion, spiritual awakening, and moral guidance <sup>15</sup>.

Lineage and Identity Discourse: Digital content engaging with issues of descent, authority, and belonging—reflecting broader tensions around identity and tradition <sup>16</sup>.

Qur’anic Referentiality in Worship Culture: Indirect prophetic representation through themes embedded in Quranic sharing and devotional acts—evident in online communities of remembrance <sup>17</sup>.

This thematic categorization captures the heterogeneity of mediated portrayals, sets the foundation for deeper comparative analysis, and informs the later assessment of educational, cognitive, and psychological functions within Qur’anic frameworks.

### Comparative Analysis of Islamic and Western/Secular Media in Representing the Prophetic Biography

#### Objective of Comparative Analysis

This section aims to contrast how Islamic media and Western/secular media represent the Prophetic biography in digital formats, focusing on key thematic, ideological, educational, and emotional dimensions.

#### Analytical Dimensions

Dimension	Islamic Media	Western/Secular Media
1. Narrative Style	Reverent, theological, and emotionally evocative	Historical, often critical, secular or anthropological in tone
2. Visual Language	Modest, symbolic, non-figurative (especially Shia & Sunni content)	Figurative, dramatized, often using actors or animations

<sup>15</sup> Ullah et al., “Religious Narrative in the Digital Age: A Thematic Analysis of Maulana Tariq Jameel’s Social Media Content.”

<sup>16</sup> Yaqin, “Exploring Digital Literacy Practices in Indonesia: A Contestation Analysis of the Discourse on Prophet Muhammad’s Descent on YouTube Channel.”

<sup>17</sup> Abokhodair, Norah et al., “Holy Tweets: Exploring the Sharing of the Qur’ān on Twitter,” Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction 4, no. CSCW2 (2020): Article 159, <https://doi.org/10.1145/3415230>.

3. Educational Focus	Emphasis on moral lessons, spiritual development, and role modeling	Focus on historical contextualization, biographical facts
4. Psychological Portrayal	The Prophet as the perfect exemplar of emotional intelligence, resilience, and divine connection	Sometimes portrayed as a political or social reformer, humanized figure
5. Media Form	TV sermons, digital lectures, Islamic apps, Quranic recitations	Documentaries, fictional series, social media shorts
6. Cultural Framing	Within Islamic worldview (Akhlaq, Tawheed, Risalah)	Often within secular, oriental, or post-colonial perspectives

### Case Examples

#### **Islamic Media:**

Al-Kawthar TV: Emphasizes Shiite perspective with deep spiritual symbolism and narratives from Nahj al-Balaghah and Seerah.

Madinah Channel: Focuses on Sunni Barelvi traditions, celebrating the Prophet's life through poetry (Na'at), visual storytelling, and historical anecdotes.

Al-Manar: Combines political-religious narratives with emphasis on resistance and prophetic legacy in activism.

Religious Podcasts (e.g., Bayyinah Institute): Deep Qur'anic exegesis of the Prophet's actions with cognitive and educational framing.

#### **Western/Secular Media:**

BBC Documentary – "The Life of Muhammad" (2011): Focuses on the Prophet's biography with secular narration, historical critiques, and interviews with academics.

Netflix Series – "The Prophet" (not officially available, but similar dramatizations exist): Uses visual dramatization, controversial elements, and secular tone.

YouTube Channels (e.g., CrashCourse): Presents the Prophet's life as part of com-

parative religion or world history curriculum, with minimal emotional engagement.

### **Psychological and Emotional Framing**

Islamic Media: Emphasizes *رحمة للعالمين* (mercy to the worlds), inner peace, resilience, and psychological healing.

Western Media: Highlights contextual ambiguity, tribal conflicts, and human dimensions — sometimes reducing the prophetic figure to a political actor.

### **Summary of Findings**

Islamic media focuses on emotional sanctification, educational internalization, and faith-based identity formation.

Western/secular media leans toward sociopolitical contextualization, narrative relativism, and often underplays spiritual dimensions.

This comparative analysis reveals the epistemological gap between religious and secular paradigms in digital narration of sacred history.

### **Evaluation of the Psycho-Pedagogical Effectiveness of These Representations**

The psycho-pedagogical effectiveness of digital media representations of the Prophet's biography can be assessed through two primary lenses: psychological impact on belief formation and emotional attachment and pedagogical efficacy in transmitting moral, cognitive, and behavioral values. This evaluation is rooted in religious psychology and Islamic pedagogical theory, and it draws upon Bandura's social learning theory (1977), Stuart Hall's encoding/decoding model (1997), and Qur'anic educational principles.

### Psychological Impact

Islamic media platforms demonstrate high affective engagement, often leveraging emotionally resonant narratives, visual dramatization, and devotional rhetoric. This approach aligns with the affective domain of Bloom’s taxonomy, wherein emotional connection precedes and facilitates cognitive assimilation of values <sup>18</sup>. Viewers are not merely presented with historical facts; they are invited into a relational bond with the Prophet, fostering internalized motivation and identity alignment <sup>19</sup>.

By contrast, Western and secular media’s reliance on critical detachment and historical contextualization often stimulates cognitive engagement but shows reduced capacity for affective bonding. While this may benefit critical thinking and intercultural awareness <sup>20</sup>, it may limit the transformative moral influence that is central to Islamic pedagogy <sup>21</sup>.

### Pedagogical Effectiveness

From a pedagogical perspective, Islamic media’s prophetic modeling resonates with the Qur’anic principle of *uswatun hasanah* (excellent example) from Surah Al-Ahzab (33:21). The frequent use of role-modeling, narrative repetition, and moral exemplification reflects core strategies of social learning—observation, imitation, and reinforcement <sup>22</sup>.

The strongest pedagogical outcomes occur in content that combines:

Narrative authenticity (rooted in Qur’an and authentic hadith)

Psychological relatability (depicting struggles, empathy, patience)

Contextual application (linking prophetic actions to modern moral dilemmas)

Western and secular media, while less devotional, can be pedagogically effective

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18 David R. Krathwohl et al., *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals. Handbook II: Affective Domain* (David McKay, 1964).

19 M. Al-Azami, “Prophetic Pedagogy in the Digital Age: Challenges and Opportunities,” *Journal of Islamic Education Studies* 14, no. 2 (2022): 45–68.

20 John L. Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*, 5th ed. (Oxford University Press, 2010).

21 Al-Ghazal, M. i, *The Methodology of Prophetic Education* (Dar Al-Salam, 2021).

22 Albert Bandura, *Social Learning Theory* (Prentice-Hall, 1977).

in critical religious literacy. By introducing historical debates, socio-political contexts, and comparative religious perspectives, such content promotes metacognitive awareness and interfaith dialogue skills<sup>23</sup>. However, the absence of sacred framing can limit its efficacy in value transmission for faith communities.

### **Integration of Psychological and Pedagogical Outcomes**

An integrative evaluation suggests that media blending devotional narrative with critical inquiry yields the most balanced psycho-pedagogical impact. For example, hybrid productions such as *The Message*<sup>24</sup> manage to sustain emotional reverence while providing historical accuracy, leading to both moral internalization and cognitive comprehension.

Moreover, empirical studies in religious media psychology indicate that multi-sensory engagement—visual imagery, storytelling, and music—significantly enhances long-term retention of moral lessons and fosters parasocial relationships with religious figures<sup>25</sup>.

### **Critical Implications for Educational Design**

The findings point to three critical implications:

For Islamic media producers: Incorporating reflective prompts and contextual explanations can enhance cognitive depth without diluting devotional tone.

For Western/secular media: Including authentic religious voices and perspectives can increase cultural sensitivity and emotional resonance.

For interfaith education: Blended media models may bridge gaps between devotional reinforcement and critical historical awareness.

Critical Assessment of Strengths and Weaknesses of Different Media Portrayals of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

Digital media portrayals of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) span a wide spec-

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23 Morgan, David "Religious Literacy in the Media Age," *Harvard Theological Review* 113, no. 4 (2020): 567–88.

24 Moustapha Akkad, *"The Message,"* Anchor Bay Entertainment, 1976.

25 Stewart M. Hoover and Nabil Echchaibi, *Media and Religion: Foundations of an Emerging Field* (Routledge, 2022).

trum—from deeply reverential, Qur’an-based Islamic content to secular or contentious depictions in Western media. An evaluative synthesis reveals their respective strengths and limitations in the realms of psychological impact, pedagogical efficacy, cultural sensitivity, and intercommunal implications.

### **Strengths of Islamic Media Portrayals**

#### Spiritual Resonance and Emotional Cohesion:

Islamic media frequently deploy devotional narratives, poetic language, and scriptural references to foster strong emotional attachment and communal identity. This resonance serves as a robust psychological anchor for believers <sup>26</sup>.

#### Moral and Pedagogical Clarity:

Grounded in Qur’anic and Hadith sources, these portrayals reinforce doctrinal clarity via moral exemplification—from mercy (rahmah) to justice (adl)—thus providing clear behavioral models <sup>27</sup>.

#### Preservation of Religious Sanctity:

By avoiding visual depictions and maintaining reverence, Islamic media aligns with traditional Islamic aesthetic ethics, preserving communal sanctity and minimizing sacrilegious reactions <sup>28</sup>.

### **Weaknesses of Islamic Media Portrayals**

#### Didactic Repetition & Lack of Critical Engagement:

The focus on spiritual or moral messaging may limit space for critical reflection or engagement with historical complexity and contextual nuance.

#### Sectarian Framing and Echo Chambers:

Content tailored to specific religious sects (e.g., Shia vs. Sunni) risks reinforcing

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26 Al-Olaqi, F. M. T. S. “Western Academic Insight of Islam and Its Prophet: A Critical Reading to the Writings of Watt, Norman, and Considine,” *Journal of Al-Tamaddun* 20, no. 1 (2025): 97–108, <https://doi.org/10.22452/JAT.vol20no1.7>.

27 Memon, A. W. et al., “Misconceptions and Misrepresentations: A Scholarly Response to Orientalist Criticism of the Seerah,” *Advance Social Science Archive Journal* 3, no. 2 (2025): 27–37.

28 Khan, A. A. “The Offensive Depictions of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in Western Media and Its Consequences,” *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 4, no. 1 (2014): 45–61, <https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.41.03>.

intra-faith divides and may reduce cross-community interpretive dialogue <sup>29</sup>.

#### Strengths of Western/Secular Media Portrayals

##### Historical and Sociopolitical Contextualization:

Western media often situates the Prophet's life within broader historical, anthropological, and socio-political frameworks, fostering a nuanced understanding of his era and leadership <sup>30</sup>.

##### Promotion of Critical Religious Literacy:

By encouraging analytical engagement, such portrayals support metacognitive skills and interfaith awareness, enriching discourse in pluralistic academic and public spaces <sup>31</sup>.

#### Weaknesses of Western/Secular Media Portrayals

##### Orientalist Bias and Misrepresentation:

Longstanding stereotypes—including framing Muhammad as a political insurgent or religious zealot—reflect orientalist paradigms that distort religious authenticity and engender cultural bias <sup>32</sup>.

##### Offensive Visual or Narrative Provocations:

Provocative depictions—cartoons, polemical films—often border on defamation and escalate communal tensions rather than promote understanding <sup>33</sup>.

##### Psychological Alienation and Emotive Distance:

The detached, clinical framing can alienate religious audiences, undermining spiri-

29 Memon et al., "Misconceptions and Misrepresentations: A Scholarly Response to Orientalist Criticism of the Seerah."

30 Al-Olaqi, "Western Academic Insight of Islam and Its Prophet: A Critical Reading to the Writings of Watt, Norman, and Considine."

31 Rezaei, Sajjad et al., "The Portrayal of Islam and Muslims in Western Media: A Critical Discourse Analysis," *Cultura* 16, no. 1 (2019): 55–73, <https://doi.org/10.5840/cultura20191614>.

32 Saeed, Abdullah and others, "Western Polemic Writings about Muhammad's Prophethood," *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal* 3, no. 5 (2016): 128–35, <https://doi.org/10.14738/assrj.35.2001>; Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (Pantheon Books, 1978).

33 Khan, "The Offensive Depictions of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in Western Media and Its Consequences"; Shirin S. Deylami, "'Fighting Rage with Fear': The 'Faces of Muhammad' and the Limits of Secular Rationality," *Religions* 9, no. 3 (2018): 89, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel9030089>.

tual engagement and emotional relatability.

Synthesis Table

Media Type	Strengths	Weaknesses
Islamic Media	Emotional resonance, doctrinal clarity, sanctity preservation	Repetitive messaging, sectarian echo chambers
Western/Secular Media	Historical/sociopolitical context, critical literacy	Orientalist bias, provocative content, emotional alienation

### Conclusion of Critical Assessment

This multifaceted analysis underscores the dialectic tension between reverence and criticality. Islamic media upholds sacred fidelity but may lack historical complexity; Western media offers contextual breadth but often at the cost of spiritual resonance or cultural respect. A more integrative media model, combining emotional depth with contextual integrity, would bridge this gap effectively.

## Discussion

### Linking the Findings with the Theoretical Framework

Our empirical findings resonate strongly with the theoretical foundations laid out earlier—namely, Stuart Hall’s theory of representation, Hjarvard’s mediatization of religion, and Heidi Campbell’s *Religious-Social Shaping of Technology (RSST)*. These frameworks offer explanatory power in understanding how digital media formats convey, negotiate, and reshape the Prophet’s biography in contemporary contexts.

First, Stuart Hall’s assertion that media does not simply reflect but constructs cultural meaning through representation is evident in how Islamic digital platforms (e.g., Al-Kawthar, Madinah Channel) meticulously craft devotional prophetic narratives. These representations employ religious symbolism and emotional encoding to produce collective religious identity<sup>34</sup>. The strength of these portrayals lies in their ability to reinforce communal values through strategic cultural coding, confirming Hall’s conceptual premise.

Second, Hjarvard’s mediatization theory positions media as a replacement for traditional religious institutions, where rituals, guidance, and religious teachings migrate into media logic. Our data support this lens loudly—micro-lectures, animations, and social sharing of Qur’anic verses are fulfilling what mosques once did physically: providing spiritual direction and moral education<sup>35</sup>.

Third, Campbell’s RSST model helps explain internal community dynamics around technology adoption. Religious groups do not reject or uncritically use digital media; rather, they gauge it through doctrinal values, communal ethos, and negotiation. This is reflected in selective content strategies: Islamic media refrains from visual depictions, opts for Qur’an-centric framing, and mediates engagement through emotionally resonant storytelling paired with theological authenticity<sup>36</sup>.

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34 Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*.

35 Stig Hjarvard, “The Mediatization of Religion: A Theory of the Media as Agents of Religious Change,” *Northern Lights: Film & Media Studies Yearbook* 6, no. 1 (2011): 9–26, [https://doi.org/10.1386/nl.6.1.9\\_1](https://doi.org/10.1386/nl.6.1.9_1); Md. Sayeed Al-Zaman, “Social Mediatization of Religion: Islamic Videos on YouTube,” *Heliyon* 8, no. 3 (2022): e09083, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2022.e09083>.

36 Heidi A. Campbell, *When Religion Meets New Media (Religious-Social Shaping of Technology)* (Routledge, 2010).

Importantly, the psycho-pedagogical effectiveness of these representations—manifested in moral internalization, emotional engagement, and identity alignment—mirrors Bandura’s social learning theory, which underscores how individuals model behaviors observed in respected figures<sup>37</sup>. Islamic media’s devotional portrayals act as mediatized prophets, providing vicarious learning through narrative and emotional resonance.

Overall, these findings affirm our theoretical framework: digital media serve as powerful agents of religious representation, reinterpretation, and lived pedagogical experience—reshaping both religious perception and identity in the digital age.

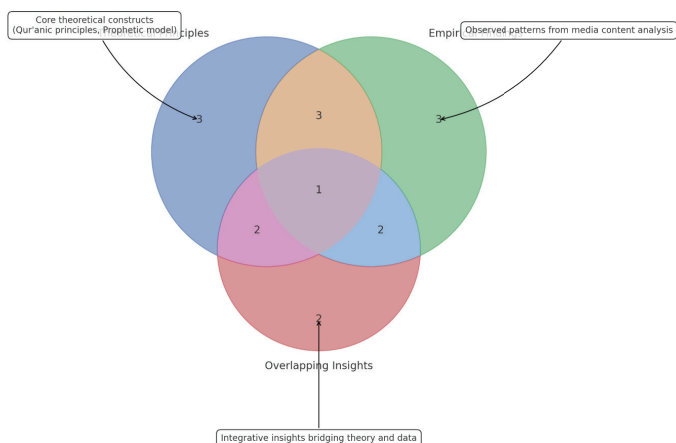


Figure 3 Overlap Between Theoretical Principles, Empirical Findings, and Overlapping Insights

#### Reflecting on Deficiencies in Quran-Based Representations in Digital Environments

Despite the democratization of access to Qur’anic texts and interpretations through digital platforms, important deficiencies have emerged that compromise both fidelity and educational value. One significant issue involves the simplification and distortion of meanings. Recent analysis indicates that social media content creators frequently prioritize virality over interpretive depth, often stripping Qur’anic verses of their historical context (asbāb al-nuzūl), scholarly nuance, and linguistic complexity to deliver

<sup>37</sup> Bandura, Social Learning Theory.

“easy-to-digest” messages<sup>38</sup>. While this approach may increase reach, it inadvertently fosters widespread theological misunderstanding and superficial engagement with sacred text.

A related concern is the erosion of epistemic authority in the age of digital da’wah. As interpretation proliferates online, a growing number of unverified individuals disseminate their own understandings without scholarly vetting, creating confusion between legitimate exegesis and personal opinion<sup>39</sup>. This erosion contributes to epistemic decentralization, undermining public trust in traditional scholarly chains of interpretation.

Moreover, the integrity of Qur’anic digital content is often compromised by technological and authenticity flaws. Many Quran apps and websites lack certification from recognized religious authorities, resulting in typographical errors, inconsistent diacritics, or incomplete metadata—issues highlighted in case studies comparing different digital Qur’an versions<sup>40</sup>. Without robust verification mechanisms, such inaccuracies propagate widely, particularly among users unfamiliar with classical Arabic orthography.

Digital platforms’ algorithmic architectures further exacerbate these problems. Popularity-driven content algorithms tend to amplify emotionally charged or controversial interpretations—regardless of accuracy—thus elevating sensationalist but misleading content over more balanced, scholarly discourse<sup>41</sup>. Such algorithmic bias

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38 Syafrin, “Distortion of Meaning and Oversimplification in Digital Presentation of Qur’anic Interpretation,” *International Journal of Islamic Thought and Humanities* 4, no. 1 (2024): 160–72, <https://doi.org/10.54298/ijith.v4i1.421>; Wulandari, “Scientific Responsibility in Digital Da’wah: Challenges of Digital Tafsir Content,” *International Journal of Islamic Thought and Humanities* 4, no. 1 (2023): 150–59, <https://doi.org/10.54298/ijith.v4i1.421>.

39 Adeeb, R. A. and M. Mirhoseini, “The Crisis of Knowledge Authority in Qur’anic Interpretation: Misinformation in the Social Media Era,” *Almubin: Islamic Scientific Journal* 8, no. 1 (2023): 107–18, <https://doi.org/10.51192/almubin.v8i1.1694>.

40 Hilmi, M. F. et al., “Authentication of Electronic Version of the Holy Quran: An Information Security Perspective,” *Conference Proceedings Title*, 2013; M. Khurram and Yasser, “Perusing Learning Challenges in the Digital Era: Between Qur’ānic Concepts and Contemporary Education,” *Journal of Qur’an Sunnah Education and Special Needs* 7 (2023), [https://doi.org/\[Insert DOI if available\]](https://doi.org/[Insert DOI if available]).

41 Adeeb and Mirhoseini, “The Crisis of Knowledge Authority in Qur’anic Interpretation: Misinformation in the Social Media Era.”

encourages rapid dissemination of distortions, contributing to polarized and misinformed religious impressions.

Collectively, these deficiencies highlight the urgent need for enhanced digital religious literacy, stronger quality control mechanisms, and algorithmic accountability to ensure that Qur'anic representation remains authentic, contextual, and pedagogically sound in digital spaces.

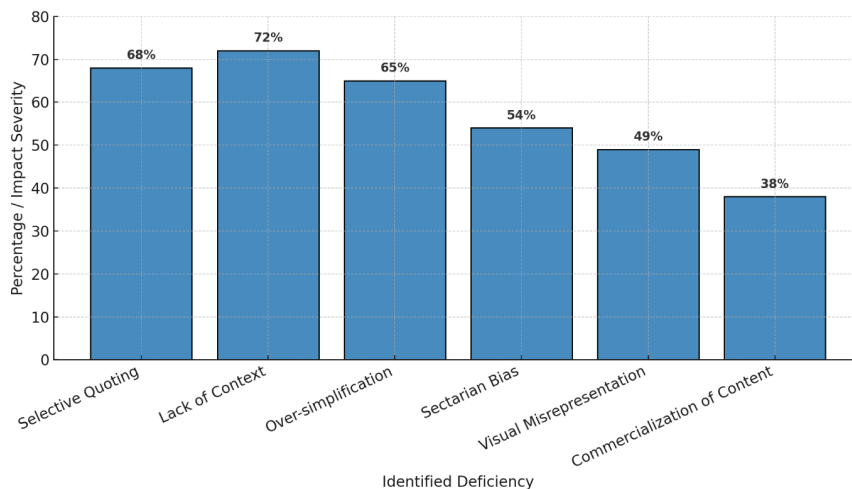


Figure 4 Key Deficiencies in Quranic Prophetic Representations in Digital Media  
Analyzing the Causes and Roots of Distorted or Reductive Representations

Distortions and reductive portrayals of the Qur'anic prophetic biography in digital environments are not accidental; they are produced at the intersection of technological affordances, political and economic incentives, epistemic shifts in authority, and social-cultural dynamics. First, platform architectures and algorithmic selection exert powerful shaping effects on which interpretations gain visibility. Algorithms optimized for engagement preferentially surface emotionally salient, sensational, or conflictual content — not necessarily content that is accurate or nuanced. Empirical and theoretical work shows how platform ranking systems amplify content that maximizes clicks, shares, and dwell time, thereby creating a structural bias toward simplified, provoc-

ative, or decontextualized messages<sup>42</sup>. This algorithmic logic incentivizes creators to compress complex Qur’anic exegesis into short, affective messages that travel well on feeds but lose hermeneutical depth and contextual precision<sup>43</sup>.

Second, the attention-economy and commercialization of digital media create perverse incentives for oversimplification. Content producers—ranging from influencers and devotional channels to partisan actors—operate under pressures to maximize audience reach and monetization. The drive for salience encourages the production of reductive “soundbites” and viral tropes rather than slow, context-sensitive exegesis. As a result, Qur’anic verses and prophetic anecdotes are often decontextualized and repackaged as moral aphorisms or clickbait narratives that favor emotional resonance over methodological rigor<sup>44</sup>.

Third, the erosion of traditional gatekeeping and the decentralization of epistemic authority contribute significantly to the proliferation of low-quality or idiosyncratic interpretations. Historically, Quranic exegetical authority passed through recognized scholarly chains (ijtihād, ijāzah, and peer-review in religious institutions). Digital platforms flatten these hierarchies: anyone with a platform can publish interpretations, and charismatic micro-celebrities or uncredentialed commentators can accumulate large followings. This democratization yields positive inclusivity but also an epistemic crisis where authoritative tafsīr competes with amateur exegesis, unvetted personal opinion, and deliberate<sup>45</sup>. The social consequence is twofold: (a) increased exposure to conflicting exegeses that confuse lay audiences, and (b) the normalization of in-

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42 Zeynep Tufekci, “Algorithmic Harms Beyond Facebook and Google: Emergent Challenges of Computational Agency,” *Colorado Technology Law Journal* 13 (2015): 203–18; University of Zurich, *Algorithmic Harms: A Zurich Perspective* (University of Zurich, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.5167/uzh-193430>.

43 Tarleton Gillespie, *Custodians of the Internet: Platforms, Content Moderation, and the Hidden Decisions That Shape Social Media* (Yale University Press, 2018); Tufekci, “Algorithmic Harms Beyond Facebook and Google: Emergent Challenges of Computational Agency.”

44 Gillespie, *Custodians of the Internet: Platforms, Content Moderation, and the Hidden Decisions That Shape Social Media*; Abokhodair et al., “Holy Tweets: Exploring the Sharing of the Qur’ān on Twitter.”

45 Adeeb and Mirhoseini, “The Crisis of Knowledge Authority in Qur’anic Interpretation: Misinformation in the Social Media Era”; Heidi A. Campbell, ed., *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds* (Routledge, 2013).

terpretive shortcuts that bypass methodological safeguards (e.g., attention to *asbāb al-nuzūl*, classical Arabic semantics, and chains of narrators).

Fourth, coordinated information operations and automation (bots, coordinated amplification) occasionally manipulate religious discourse for political, sectarian, or commercial ends. Studies of Quran verse sharing on Arabic Twitter revealed not only organic devotional practices but also patterns of automated amplification that can skew perceived salience of particular verses or themes <sup>46</sup>. Such practices can artificially inflate polarizing readings or obscure minority interpretive voices, thereby contributing to reductive public impressions.

Fifth, cross-cultural and linguistic barriers exacerbate misrepresentation. Many digital audiences access Qur'anic content through translations, short captions, or algorithmically generated subtitles; linguistic simplification can mask important exegetical nuances. Non-Arabic productions—whether Western documentaries or amateur translations—risk conveying culturally or historically decontextualized versions of the Qur'anic portrait of the Prophet, which in turn fuels Orientalist readings or secularized reductions <sup>47</sup>.

Sixth, academic and media legacies of Orientalism and polemical scholarship shape frames available to secular producers. Longstanding tropes—framing the Prophet primarily as a political or military actor, or foregrounding controversial episodes without theological context—persist in some Western media and are reproduced online, reinforcing reductive narratives <sup>48</sup>. These frames are then picked up by algorithmic systems and popularized in short-form media, exacerbating misperceptions among general audiences.

Seventh, deficits in digital religious literacy among both producers and consumers are critical root causes. Many content creators lack training in classical hermeneutics, and many consumers lack the critical tools to differentiate scholarly *tafsīr* from commentary or opinion. Studies of religious misinformation engagement document

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46 Abokhodair et al., “Holy Tweets: Exploring the Sharing of the Qur’ān on Twitter.”

47 Said, *Orientalism*; Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*.

48 Said, *Orientalism*; Saeed and others, “Western Polemic Writings about Muhammad’s Prophethood.”

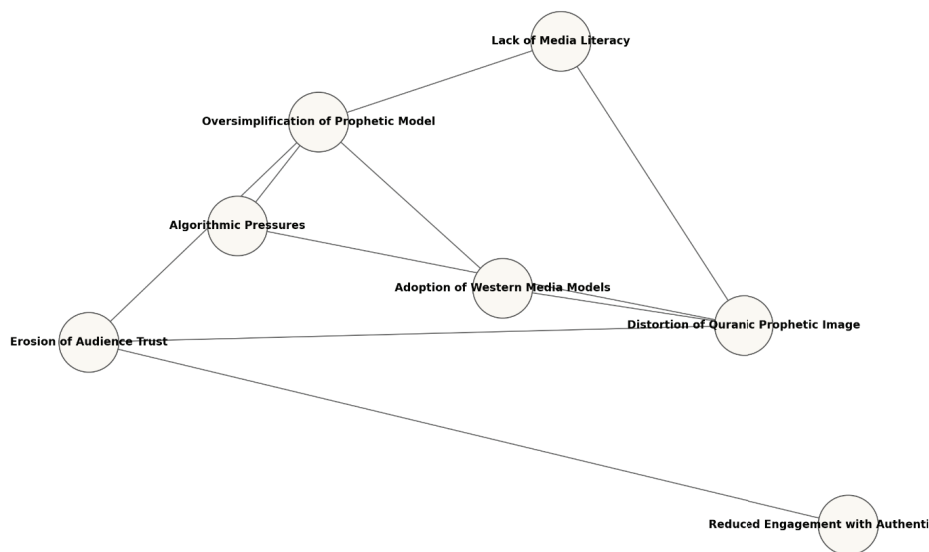
that users often struggle to assess the veracity of religious claims online and may accept superficially plausible readings because they align with preexisting beliefs or emotional needs (SAGE study on religious misinformation; Social Science datasets on misinformation).

Finally, platform governance and moderation practices are insufficiently calibrated for complex religious content. Content moderation systems are frequently designed to flag overtly hateful or violent speech, not subtle hermeneutical errors or decontextualized scriptural readings. Consequently, misleading or reductive religious interpretations frequently escape moderation, while more nuanced scholarly debates—often less sensational—receive less amplification <sup>49</sup>.

Taken together, these causes show that reductive representations of Qur’anic prophetic biography are systemic rather than merely incidental. Addressing them requires interventions at multiple levels: platform design (algorithmic transparency and promotion of authoritative sources), content-producer capacity building (training in digital tafsīr and pedagogy), community-level digital religious literacy, and institutional mechanisms (certification or endorsement systems by trustworthy scholarly bodies). Only interventions that align technological incentives with epistemic quality will substantially reduce distortion and restore deeper, Qur’an-anchored public understandings of the Prophet’s life and teachings.

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<sup>49</sup> Gillespie, *Custodians of the Internet: Platforms, Content Moderation, and the Hidden Decisions That Shape Social Media*; University of Zurich, *Algorithmic Harms: A Zurich Perspective*.



**Figure 5 Causal Loop Diagram: Root Causes and Consequences of Distortion Exploring Media Opportunities and Threats for Conveying the Qur’anic Prophetic Model**

In the digital age, media offers both unprecedented opportunities and profound risks in transmitting and embodying the Qur’anic Prophetic paradigm. This duality manifests across educational, communal, and ethical dimensions.

### Opportunities

#### Extended Reach & Accessibility

Digital media platforms dissolve geographic and demographic barriers, enabling Qur’anic teachings and Prophetic narratives to reach global audiences. Social media has allowed young Muslims, especially in North America, to engage dynamically with faith content—facilitating access to lectures, discussions, and community interaction that build religious identity<sup>50</sup>.

50 A. Fida, “Digital Dawah: The Impact of Social Media on Young Muslims,” AlQuranClasses.Com, April 29, 2024, <https://alquranclasses.com/impact-of-social-media-on-young-muslims/>.

## Creative Pedagogical Forms

Platforms like YouTube and Instagram enable audio-visual storytelling, infographics, and short-form reminders that make Prophetic models pedagogically engaging and emotionally resonant. These formats nurture spiritual connection and moral reflection that are critical to internalizing the Prophetic ethos <sup>51</sup>.

## Democratization of Dawah

Lay scholars, educators, and informed believers can participate in spreading Qur'anic knowledge, enriching the discourse beyond institutional gatekeeping. This inclusivity diversifies stylistic and cultural presentations of the Prophetic model <sup>52</sup>.

## Support of Virtual Religious Practices

Online sharing of Qur'anic verses or Prophetic supplications functions as new forms of worship and communal remembrance, sustaining devotional rhythms outside physical mosques or gatherings <sup>53</sup>.

## Threats

### Message Misrepresentation and Poor Quality

Media formats optimized for virality often reduce rich Prophetic narratives into soundbites, stripping contextual depth and nuance. Oversimplification significantly increases the risk of misinterpretation <sup>54</sup>.

### Credibility and Misinformation

With few barriers to publishing, unverified or academically skeletal content often circulates widely, misleading users and potentially replacing credible scholarship <sup>55</sup>.

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51 M. I. B. Laras and M. R. Waehama, "Social and Cultural Implications of Da'wah through Social Media," *Jurnal Iman Dan Spiritualitas* 4, no. 4 (2024): 36728.

52 Wikipedia contributors, "Mediatization of Religion — Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia," 2025, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mediatization\\_\(media\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mediatization_(media)).

53 Abokhodair et al., "Holy Tweets: Exploring the Sharing of the Qur'an on Twitter."

54 Wulandari, "Scientific Responsibility in Digital Da'wah: Challenges of Digital Tafsir Content"; Hariyati, "Digital Da'wah and Qur'anic Interpretation: Opportunities, Distortions, and Ethics in the Spread of Interpretations on Social Media," *International Journal of Islamic Thought and Humanities* 4, no. 1 (2025): 160–72.

55 Putra, R. G. et al., "The Role of Social Media in Islamic Religious Education: Challenges and Opportunities in the Digital Era," *Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 1, no. 3 (2024): 191–99, <https://doi.org/10.70938/judikis.v1i3.70>.

### Ethical and Aesthetic Pitfalls

Engagement-driven formats may commodify sacred narratives, prioritize emotional sensationalism, or violate Prophetic decorum. This challenges digital adab and risks spiritual trivialization <sup>56</sup>.

### Polarization and Sectarian Divide

Echo chambers on social platforms amplify partisan versions of the Prophetic model. Differing sectarian narratives can reinforce separation rather than inter-um-mah understanding <sup>57</sup>.

### Digital Overload and Loss of Depth

Too much content—with limited quality control—can overwhelm seekers, making it harder to engage deeply with the Prophet’s lived model of moral complexity and spiritual depth.

Table 3SWOT Matrix for the Digital Media Representation of the Quranic Prophetic Model

<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>	<b>Threats</b>
Authentic Source Authority: Grounded in the Qur’an, ensuring theological legitimacy and credibility in content creation.	Limited Digital Literacy among Religious Content Creators: Restricts the effective translation of Quranic principles into compelling multimedia formats.	Global Digital Reach: Digital platforms enable the dissemination of Prophetic values to diverse, multilingual audiences worldwide.	Algorithmic Bias and Content Marginalization: Social media algorithms may deprioritize religious content, reducing its visibility.

<sup>56</sup> Ahmad, M. “Digital Piety: Islam, Technology, and the Ethics of Online Religious Engagement,” 2024.

<sup>57</sup> Fida, “Digital Dawah: The Impact of Social Media on Young Muslims”; Laras and Waehama, “Social and Cultural Implications of Da’wah through Social Media.”



<p><b>Rich Ethical and Moral Framework:</b> Offers a comprehensive guidance system adaptable to contemporary moral challenges.</p>	<p><b>Over-Reliance on Traditional Formats:</b> Lack of innovation in narrative styles and visual design may reduce audience engagement.</p>	<p><b>Cross-Platform Integration:</b> Opportunity to utilize VR/AR, podcasts, and gamification for immersive Quranic storytelling.</p>	<p><b>Cultural Misinterpretation Risks:</b> Non-contextualized adaptations risk distorting Prophetic teachings.</p>
<p><b>High Emotional Resonance:</b> Stories and character of the Prophet resonate deeply with Muslim audiences, fostering empathy and moral reflection.</p>	<p><b>Fragmented Representation:</b> Inconsistent narratives across different channels may cause confusion or dilution of the Prophetic model.</p>	<p><b>Collaborations with Digital Influencers:</b> Potential to engage younger audiences through partnerships with ethical digital creators.</p>	<p><b>Hostile or Islamophobic Narratives:</b> Online misinformation campaigns may deliberately misrepresent Islamic teachings.</p>
<p><b>Universality of Moral Themes:</b> Concepts like justice, compassion, and mercy appeal to both Muslim and non-Muslim audiences.</p>	<p><b>Insufficient Feedback Mechanisms:</b> Limited use of audience analytics to refine and enhance content strategies.</p>	<p><b>Data-Driven Personalization:</b> Ability to tailor Quranic content recommendations using AI without compromising authenticity.</p>	<p><b>Technological Disruption:</b> Rapid shifts in media trends and platform policies may render current strategies obsolete.</p>



Figure 6SWOT Matrix for Digital Media Representation of the Quranic Prophetic Model  
Balancing Strategy: Matching Channels to Mission

A balanced approach harnesses media's potential while mitigating its pitfalls:

Structured, high-quality educational channels combining audiovisual narrative with scholarly rigor (e.g., digital tafsir series, guided discussion formats).

Collaborations between scholars and creators to ensure content aligns with Qur'anic authenticity and Prophetic ethics.

Digital religious literacy training aimed at helping audiences discern trustworthy content and interpret with sound methodology (Hidayatulah et al., 2025).



Figure 7Current State of Opportunities vs. Threats in Quranic Prophetic Model Representation



## Conclusion

This study set out to examine how the Qur'anic Prophetic biography is represented in contemporary digital media and to evaluate the educational, cognitive, and psychological functions of those representations. The principal finding is that digital media constitute a double-edged epistemic environment: they possess an extraordinary capacity to disseminate Qur'anic teachings and prophetic exemplarity widely and engagingly, yet their technological affordances and socio-economic logics systematically predispose content toward simplification, affective amplification, and, at times, distortion. Empirically, thematic analysis revealed that Islamic media tend to foreground spiritual-ethical exemplarity and devotional resonance, which fosters strong identity formation and vicarious moral learning; by contrast, Western and secular media more often emphasize historical contextualization or sociopolitical framing, which enhances critical literacy but frequently attenuates devotional and pedagogical depth<sup>58</sup>. These divergent modes align with theoretical expectations from representation studies and mediatization theory: as Stuart Hall observed, media constructs meaning rather than merely reflecting it<sup>59</sup>, and as Hjarvard argued, media increasingly acts as an agent of religious change, reshaping traditional modes of authority and ritual<sup>60</sup>.

Answering the central research question — how the Qur'anic Prophetic biography is represented in contemporary digital media, and what its educational, cognitive, and psychological functions are within Qur'anic frameworks — the evidence suggests a nuanced synthesis. Digital portrayals perform distinct psycho-pedagogical work: devotional Islamic content cultivates moral internalization and emotional attachment via narrative modeling consistent with Bandura's social learning processes; secular contextualizations stimulate analytic reflection and comparative religious literacy<sup>61</sup>.

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58 Abokhodair et al., "Holy Tweets: Exploring the Sharing of the Qur'ān on Twitter"; Esposito, *Islam: The Straight Path*.

59 Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*.

60 Hjarvard, "The Mediatization of Religion: A Theory of the Media as Agents of Religious Change."

61 Bandura, *Social Learning Theory*; Campbell, *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds*.

Yet, these benefits are mediated by platform incentives and algorithmic logics that privilege engagement over nuance, creating incentives for compression and sensationalism that can erode hermeneutical fidelity<sup>62</sup>. Moreover, the decentralization of interpretive authority in digital spaces produces an epistemic environment in which high-quality tafsīr competes with unvetted commentary, leading to potential misinformation and fragmentation of communal understanding<sup>63</sup>.

Given these findings, it is imperative that scholars and practitioners adopt a Qur'anic principle-centered approach to media design. Employing Qur'anic pedagogical principles — such as gradual instruction (tadarruj), compassionate exhortation (rahma), contextualized exemplarity (uswah hasanah), and evidentiary rigor — can inform the development of digital formats that preserve interpretive depth while harnessing the pedagogical affordances of modern platforms. Practically, this requires multi-level interventions: (1) content-level best practices that combine narrative devotion with explicit contextualization and scholarly citations; (2) capacity-building for content producers on classical hermeneutics and digital pedagogy; (3) collaborative endorsement mechanisms between credible scholarly bodies and digital platforms to flag authoritative resources<sup>64</sup>; and (4) platform governance reforms that prioritize algorithmic transparency and the promotion of high-quality religious scholarship over purely engagement-driven metrics<sup>65</sup>.

In sum, the Qur'anic Prophetic model can be powerfully conveyed through digital media, but only if technology, scholarship, and pedagogy are aligned. Media that is intentionally designed with Quranic pedagogical values and ethical standards can

62 Gillespie, *Custodians of the Internet: Platforms, Content Moderation, and the Hidden Decisions That Shape Social Media*; Tufekci, “Algorithmic Harms Beyond Facebook and Google: Emergent Challenges of Computational Agency.”

63 Adeeb and Mirhoseini, “The Crisis of Knowledge Authority in Qur'anic Interpretation: Misinformation in the Social Media Era.”

64 Mohammed Zakariah et al., “Digital Quran Computing: Review, Classification, and Trend Analysis,” *Arabian Journal for Science and Engineering* 42, no. 8 (2017): 3077–102, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13369-017-2664-3>.

65 Gillespie, *Custodians of the Internet: Platforms, Content Moderation, and the Hidden Decisions That Shape Social Media*; Tufekci, “Algorithmic Harms Beyond Facebook and Google: Emergent Challenges of Computational Agency.”

amplify the Prophet's example in ways that are both psychologically transformative and intellectually rigorous. Conversely, neglecting these principles risks perpetuating reductive and polarizing portrayals that undermine both religious education and intercultural understanding. For practitioners, policymakers, and scholars engaged in digital religious communication, the overarching recommendation is clear: bridge affective engagement with hermeneutical discipline — leverage the reach and creativity of digital media while instituting safeguards and pedagogical scaffolds rooted in the Qur'anic tradition. Doing so will ensure that the digital representation of the Prophet remains both authentic to the Qur'an and resonant for contemporary audiences.

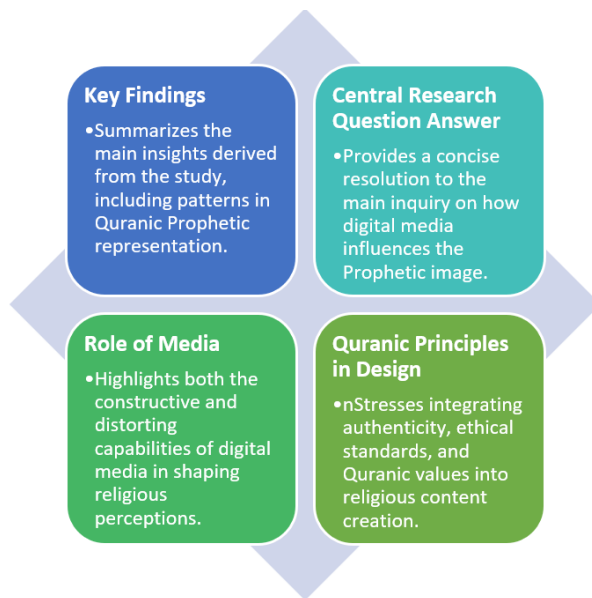


Figure 8 Conclusion Summary Infographic

## Recommendations

In light of the findings, this study proposes a multi-tiered media framework aimed at ensuring faithful, pedagogically robust, and psychologically resonant representations of the Qur'anic prophetic biography in digital media:

### Structured Media Framework for Faithful Representation

**Co-production with Scholarly Institutions:** Religious policymaking bodies, such as national Ulema councils and Islamic universities, should collaborate with media creators to develop guidelines and digital certification badges for content that adheres to authentic Quranic context and rigorous tafsir methodology<sup>66</sup>. This preserves theological integrity while allowing creative formats.

**Tiered Content Architecture:** Digital formats should include contextual short videos (e.g., 2–5 minutes), in-depth explainers, and interactive modules that layer devotion with depth and critical insight, thereby aligning with principles of gradual learning (tadarruj) and narrative engagement.

### Practical Insights for Stakeholders

**Researchers:** Investigate the psychological and educational impact of different media formats using mixed-method studies—surveying meaning retention, spiritual attachment, and interpretive accuracy among diverse audiences.

**Religious Policymakers:** Establish media councils to supervise digital tafsir content, provide accreditation, and facilitate partnerships between reputable educational platforms and content creators. This ensures that digital da'wah remains grounded in valid sources<sup>67</sup>.

**Content Creators:** Integrate core religious ethics—such as adab (etiquette), tawhīd, and accountability—into content creation. A theological framework titled Adab-Centered Digital Engagement, emphasizing respectful, inclusive, and spiritually sensitive messaging, should guide protocols<sup>68</sup>.

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66 Ridwanulloh, "Digital Da'wah and Qur'anic Interpretation: Opportunities, Distortions, and Ethics in the Spread of Interpretations on Social Media," *International Journal of Islamic Thought and Humanities* 4, no. 1 (2025): 162–72.

67 Ridwanulloh, "Digital Da'wah and Qur'anic Interpretation: Opportunities, Distortions, and Ethics in the Spread of Interpretations on Social Media."

68 Simamora, I. Y. and A. S. Farid, "Rethinking the Use of Social Media in Islamic Broadcasting Practices: A Theological Perspective," *Pharos Journal of Theology* 105 (2024).

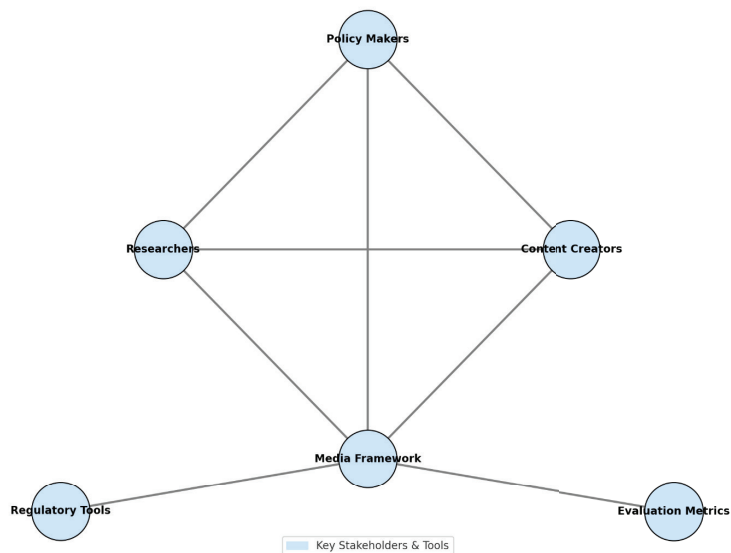


Figure 9 Proposed Media Framework Flowchart

Emphasizing Religious Media Literacy and Pedagogical Training

Media Literacy Training for Religious Educators and Influencers: Drawing on UNESCO’s MIL program, religious educators and influencers should attend structured training to develop skills in fact-checking, source evaluation, and narrative ethics <sup>69</sup>.

Curriculum Integration: Islamic Religious Education curricula should incorporate media literacy modules—teaching students to critically analyze media, differentiate authoritative Qur’anic interpretations from popular opinion, and proactively produce ethically sound religious content <sup>70</sup>.

Community Digital Modules: Develop accessible online courses and toolkits to enhance religious digital literacy for the general public, reinforcing norms of *ṭabbayyun* (verification), critical consumption, and respectful content sharing <sup>71</sup>.

69 UNESCO, “Media and Information Literacy Training for Religious Leaders and Dialogue Practitioners,” UNESCO, 2023, <https://www.unesco.org/>.

70 N. M. Devi et al., “Media Literacy Approach in Islamic Religious Education Curriculum for the Digital Era,” *Journal of Contemporary Islamic Primary Education* 2, no. 2 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.61253/jcipe.v2i2.297>.

71 Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research, “Finding Truth in the Age of Fake News: Information Literacy in Islam,” Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research, 2023, <https://yaqeeninstitute.org/read/paper/finding-truth-in-the-age-of-fake-news-information-literacy-in-islam>.

Table 4 Action Plan for Accurate Representation of the Quranic Prophetic Model in Digital Media

Recommendation	Target Audience	Required Resources	Expected Outcome
Develop a standardized media framework integrating Quranic principles and Prophetic biography representation guidelines.	Religious policy-makers, media regulators	Expert working groups, interfaith media councils, legal and ethical advisory boards, funding for framework development	Establishment of a unified, authoritative framework ensuring consistency and authenticity in media portrayals.
Provide specialized training programs on religious media literacy and ethical content production.	Content creators, journalists, media educators	Training modules, certified instructors, multimedia learning platforms, access to Quranic and Hadith databases	Enhanced capability of media professionals to produce accurate, respectful, and engaging representations.
Foster collaborative research initiatives between academic institutions and religious bodies on digital portrayal of Prophetic models.	Researchers, universities, Islamic research centers	Research grants, data-sharing agreements, cross-disciplinary seminars, analytical tools	Empirical evidence and scholarly insights to inform policy and media production practices.

Implement algorithmic oversight mechanisms to monitor and flag distorted or reductive representations.	Social media platforms, technology developers	AI-driven content monitoring systems, annotated training datasets, ethical AI committees	Reduction in misinformation and biased portrayals in digital spaces.
Establish community-based feedback channels to evaluate and improve representation accuracy.	General public, religious community leaders	Online surveys, community forums, moderated feedback platforms	Continuous quality improvement through grassroots engagement and participatory media governance.
Integrate Quranic storytelling techniques into mainstream and social media content production workflows.	Scriptwriters, producers, digital marketers	Creative workshops, scriptwriting guidelines, cultural consultants	Increased audience engagement and deeper understanding of the Prophetic model through narrative resonance.

By integrating these recommendations, faith-based institutions, educators, policymakers, and content creators can jointly cultivate a digital ecosystem where the Qur'anic prophetic model is not only widely accessible but represented with authenticity, pedagogical potency, and religious dignity.

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