

ISLAMIC LIFESTYLE APPLICATIONS AND THE FULFILLMENT OF SPIRITUAL NEEDS AMONG MODERN MUSLIMS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL RESEARCH

Marzuki¹, Rofii'atul Fitriyyah²

¹Institut Daarul Qur'an Jakarta, Indonesia

²STAIS Lan Taboer, Indonesia

Correspondence: marzuki@idaqu.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

The proliferation of Islamic lifestyle applications has fundamentally transformed the spiritual landscape of contemporary Muslim communities. This phenomenological study investigates how modern Muslims experience and derive spiritual meaning from Islamic mobile applications, with particular emphasis on the fulfillment of multidimensional spiritual needs. Employing an interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) framework, this research engaged twelve purposively selected participants from diverse socioeconomic and educational backgrounds in Indonesia. Data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews, digital diary recordings, and direct application observation sessions conducted between January and August 2024. Four primary phenomenological themes emerged: (1) the re-ritualization of daily worship through digital mediation; (2) the construction and negotiation of Islamic identity in digital spaces; (3) the democratization of religious authority and knowledge access; and (4) the tension between authentic spirituality and technological superficiality. Findings reveal that Islamic applications effectively fulfill pragmatic-ritual, intellectual-educational, and communal-social spiritual needs, yet simultaneously engender nuanced challenges related to depth of spiritual experience, authenticity of religious practice, and over-reliance on technological mediation. This study contributes an original phenomenological perspective to the growing discourse on digital Islam and technology-mediated religious experience, offering significant implications for application developers, religious educators, and policymakers in Muslim-majority societies.

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A. INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of smartphone technologies and mobile internet connectivity has precipitated an unprecedented transformation in how religious communities around the world practice, express, and transmit their faith. Within the global Muslim community estimated at 1.9 billion adherents as of 2024 digital technology has not merely supplemented traditional religious practices but has fundamentally reconfigured the spatial, temporal, and relational dimensions of Islamic spirituality (Kabir et al., 2024). The emergence and widespread adoption of Islamic lifestyle applications represent one of the most significant phenomena in this digital-religious transformation, constituting what scholars have termed the 'digitalization of Islamic practice' (Aygül et al., 2022).

Islamic mobile applications encompass a diverse and rapidly expanding ecosystem of digital tools designed to support Muslim religious observance in everyday life. These range from foundational liturgical aids prayer time reminders, Qiblah direction compasses, and digital Quran platforms to more sophisticated applications offering interactive Quranic learning, AI-powered Hadith search engines, Islamic financial planning calculators, and community-based spiritual challenge platforms (Ahmad et al., 2024). Applications such as Muslim Pro, Quran Majeed, Umma, and Zikir Pagi Petang have collectively amassed hundreds of millions of downloads globally, signaling a profound integration of digital tools into the daily spiritual routines of contemporary Muslims (Azahari et al., 2025).

Despite the remarkable scale of this phenomenon, academic scholarship has only recently begun to engage substantively with the experiential dimensions of Islamic application use. Much of the existing literature adopts quantitative approaches measuring user satisfaction, feature utilization, and adoption rates while significantly underemphasizing the lived experience of Muslim users and the subjective meanings they attribute to technology-mediated religious practice (Correia & Tam, 2024). This methodological gap is particularly consequential given that spiritual experience, by its very nature, is an intensely personal, interpretive, and meaning-laden phenomenon that resists reduction to numerical measures.

Furthermore, the concept of 'spiritual needs' in Islamic theology encompasses a rich, multidimensional framework that extends beyond mere ritual compliance. Drawing on Islamic psychospiritual traditions, spiritual needs include the need for transcendence and divine connection (*al-ittishal billah*), the need for meaningful community and brotherhood (*ukhuwwah*), the need for moral and intellectual growth (*tazkiyat al-nafs*), and the need for existential meaning and purposiveness (Jadidi et al., 2022). How Islamic applications address or fail to address these multidimensional needs remains an underexplored empirical question with significant theoretical and practical implications.

The Indonesian context provides a particularly salient setting for this investigation. As home to the world's largest Muslim population approximately 230 million believers Indonesia represents a unique nexus of traditional Islamic scholarship, vibrant civil Islamic society, and rapid digital adoption. Indonesian Muslims are among the heaviest users of Islamic mobile applications globally, yet they navigate a complex landscape of diverse religious interpretations, digital literacy disparities, and tensions between modernist and traditionalist expressions of Islam (Wasik et al., 2024; Widayat et al., 2025).

Against this backdrop, the present study poses the following central research question: How do modern Indonesian Muslims experience and interpret the role of Islamic lifestyle applications in fulfilling their multidimensional spiritual needs? This question is further elaborated through three sub-questions: (1) What specific spiritual needs do users identify as being fulfilled through Islamic application use? (2) How do users navigate tensions between digital convenience and authentic spiritual depth? and (3) How does Islamic application use shape or transform users' broader religious identity and practice?

This study employs Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as its methodological framework, an approach uniquely suited to exploring how individuals make sense of significant

life experiences and the personal meanings they attribute to complex phenomena. By centering the voices, narratives, and interpretations of Muslim users, this research contributes an original phenomenological perspective to the growing interdisciplinary field of digital Islamic studies.

The significance of this inquiry extends beyond academic contribution. As Islamic application developers compete for market share in a rapidly commercializing spiritual technology sector, empirical understanding of user spiritual needs provides essential guidance for ethically responsible and spiritually effective design (Yusoff, Bakar, & Mat, 2024). Similarly, religious educators and policymakers in Muslim-majority societies require nuanced understanding of how digital tools are reshaping religious formation among younger generations (Mansir, 2022; Syahrin & Widodo, 2025).

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. The Landscape of Islamic Mobile Applications

The global market for Islamic mobile applications has witnessed exponential growth over the past decade. Aygül et al., (2022) conducted a comprehensive thematic analysis of Islamic mobile applications in Turkey's Google Play Store, identifying five primary functional categories: Quranic applications, prayer support tools, religious learning platforms, Islamic lifestyle guides, and community connectivity applications. This taxonomy reflects the breadth of spiritual functions that developers seek to address through mobile technology. Comparative assessments of leading applications notably Muslim Pro and Sajda — reveal sophisticated design philosophies that seek to balance functional usability with Islamic aesthetic and ethical values (Azahari et al., 2025).

The technical architecture of Islamic applications has evolved considerably. Early iterations provided rudimentary prayer time notifications and static Quran text displays. Contemporary platforms integrate GPS-based Qiblah determination, machine learning-enhanced Tajweed correction, gamified Quran memorization systems, and AI-driven personalized Islamic content recommendation engines (Kabir et al., 2024). Specialized applications have emerged for distinct religious demographics and functions, including the eHajj Guide for pilgrimage preparation, e-Pocket Musafir for Muslim travelers, and Hadith encyclopedia applications for scholarly reference (Zainuzi et al., 2023).

Qiblah accuracy has received targeted scholarly attention, with Zaki & Hidayatullah, (2025) conducting empirical accuracy assessments of Qiblah direction applications across Play Store and App Store platforms, finding significant variation in geodetic accuracy a finding with direct liturgical implications. The development of teaching prayer applications for newly converted Muslims (*mu'allaf*) further illustrates the pastoral potential of Islamic applications in facilitating religious initiation (Hashim et al., 2024).

2. Digital Islam and Transformation of Religious Practice

The concept of 'digital Islam' has emerged as a productive theoretical framework for understanding how digital technologies reconfigure Islamic religious authority, practice, and identity. Zaid et al., (2022) demonstrated that Muslim millennial engagement with social media Islamic content significantly reshapes perceptions of religious authority, with influencer-scholars gaining legitimacy through digital charisma and accessibility rather than traditional institutional credentials. This democratization of religious authority has profound implications for spiritual formation and doctrinal interpretation.

Whyte, (2022) examined Islamic religious authority in Australian cyberspace, finding that online religious actors navigate complex negotiations between traditional scholarly credentials and digital platform dynamics. Similarly, 'Ulyan, (2023) identified the emergence of 'digital da'wah' as a distinct genre of Islamic communication that adapts prophetic teaching methodologies to social media affordances. The transformation extends to collective religious rituals: Tussa'banniya (2025) documented how online Khatmil Quran

practices among Indonesian Muslim youth create new forms of communal spiritual experience that transcend geographical boundaries.

Himam et al., (2025) conducted qualitative digital survey research among Indonesian Muslim students, revealing complex patterns of shifting religious authority wherein digital platforms increasingly mediate relationships between believers and religious knowledge. Their findings suggest that digital technology does not simply transmit traditional religious authority but actively restructures it, creating what they term 'fluid authority landscapes.' The transformation of Islamic religious education curricula in response to digitalization presents parallel dynamics (Mubarok et al., 2025; Syahrin & Widodo, 2025).

3. Spiritual Needs and Technology-Mediated Religious Experience

The scholarly investigation of spiritual needs within Islamic contexts has generated a nuanced theoretical framework. Jadidi et al., (2022) content analysis of Muslim older adults identified transcendence as the most fundamental spiritual need defined as the aspiration for divine closeness, prayer fulfillment, and existential meaning beyond physical existence. This finding resonates with classical Islamic theological concepts of *fitra* (innate human spiritual disposition) and the Quranic principle that 'hearts find rest only in the remembrance of God' (Quran 13:28).

Syahir et al., (2025) proposed an innovative integration framework of mobile health technologies with Islamic psychospiritual principles, arguing that digital applications can serve as legitimate channels for addressing psychological and spiritual well-being when designed with Islamic therapeutic principles. Their framework distinguishes between instrumental spiritual functions (facilitating ritual compliance) and transformative spiritual functions (fostering inner growth and divine connection). Zannat & Mahmud, (2025) further developed these insights through the construction of an Islamic-inspired digital therapeutics application framework specifically addressing university student mental health challenges.

The relationship between digital Quran engagement and spiritual development has attracted particular scholarly attention. Hasanah et al., (2025) examined the impact of digital Quran applications on learning and spiritual development, finding that multi-modal digital engagement combining recitation, visualization, and interactive tafsir produces qualitatively different spiritual experiences than traditional paper-based Quran interaction. Shahidan et al., (2025) specifically investigated the role of visual elements in *Tadabbur al-Quran* mobile applications, demonstrating that thoughtfully designed visual affordances significantly enhance contemplative engagement with Quranic text.

4. Islamic Identity, Community, and Digital Lifestyle

The construction of Islamic identity in digital environments represents a convergence of religious commitment, consumer culture, and social performance. Azizah et al. (2025) conducted a qualitative study examining the Islamic lifestyle of Islamic Religious Education students in the era of social media, revealing complex tensions between authentic religious practice and performative digital identity management. Their findings encapsulated in the evocative dichotomy of 'existence vs. essence' illuminate how digital platforms can simultaneously support and undermine genuine spiritual formation.

The commodification of Islamic lifestyle through digital platforms raises additional critical questions. Fadilla & Indriyani (2025) analyzed the capitalist transformation of digital Islamic *da'wah* in Indonesia, demonstrating how algorithmic content curation increasingly shapes religious discourse in ways driven by commercial logic rather than theological depth. Mudasiru (2025) examined the emergence of 'spiritual marketplaces' in contemporary Muslim societies, where religious services and spiritual goods are exchanged through digital platforms with profound implications for the integrity of spiritual experience.

Urban Sufism provides an intriguing case study of how traditional spiritual practices adapt to digital modernity. Wasik et al. (2024) documented how Qadiriyya-Naqshbandiyya Sufi communities in West Java integrate digital tools to maintain spiritual identity while

navigating contemporary urban contexts. Similarly, Muiz, Bukhori, and Fidausi (2025) explored the transformation of Islamic spirituality in the digital era through the lens of Hadith and Sufism, finding that digital tools can facilitate genuine spiritual depth when employed with intentional pedagogical design.

C. METHOD

1. Research Design and Philosophical Foundation

This study employs Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as its primary methodological framework. IPA is a qualitative research approach that seeks to understand how individuals make sense of their personal and social world, with particular attention to the meaning individuals attribute to complex lived experiences (Smith et al., 2009). Philosophically grounded in the phenomenological traditions of Husserl and Heidegger and developed through the hermeneutic insights of Gadamer IPA emphasizes the interpretive double-hermeneutic process: researchers engage with participants' own interpretive accounts, which are themselves interpretations of lived experience.

IPA is ideally suited to the present inquiry because spiritual experience represents paradigmatically the kind of complex, meaning-laden phenomenon that IPA is designed to illuminate. Unlike surveys or content analyses, IPA facilitates exploration of the 'what it is like' quality of experience the textured, nuanced, often ambivalent phenomenological reality of Muslim users' encounters with digital spiritual technology. This approach aligns with the growing recognition in Islamic studies scholarship that qualitative methodologies are essential for capturing the experiential dimensions of religious practice (Whyte, 2022).

2. Participant Selection and Demographics

Participants were selected through purposive theoretical sampling, a strategy designed to ensure maximum variation across demographic variables relevant to Islamic application experience. The selection criteria required participants to be: (1) identifying as Muslim with active religious practice; (2) using at least one Islamic lifestyle application regularly (minimum six months); (3) residing in Java, Indonesia; and (4) willing to participate in multiple data collection sessions. Theoretical saturation was achieved at twelve participants, at which point no substantively new themes were emerging from the data.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Research Participants

P	Gender	Age	Education	Occupation	Main Application	Length of Use	Usage Intensity
P1	Male	28	Master's Degree	Lecturer	Muslim Pro	3 years	>3 hours/day
P2	Female	24	Bachelor's Degree	University Student	Quran Majeed	2 years	1-3 hours/day
P3	Male	35	Bachelor's Degree	Entrepreneur	Umma	4 years	>3 hours/day
P4	Female	31	Master's Degree	Civil Servant	MuslimPro + Ayat	3 years	1-3 hours/day
P5	Male	22	Bachelor's Degree	University Student	Zikir Pagi Petang	1 year	<1 hour/day
P6	Female	42	Bachelor's Degree	Teacher	Al-Quran Indonesia	5 years	>3 hours/day
P7	Male	29	Doctoral Degree	Researcher	Tartil + Muslim Pro	2 years	1-3 hours/day
P8	Female	26	Bachelor's Degree	Employee	Quran Majeed	2 years	1-3 hours/day
P9	Male	38	Master's Degree	Consultant	Umma + MuslimPro	5 years	>3 hours/day
P10	Female	33	Bachelor's Degree	Homemaker	Jadwal Sholat	3 years	1-3 hours/day
P11	Male	27	Bachelor's Degree	Programmer	Muslim Pro	2 years	1-3 hours/day
P12	Female	45	Master's Degree	Lecturer	Digital Al-Quran	6 years	>3 hours/day

Note: P = Participant code; Intensitas = Daily application usage intensity

The sample achieved meaningful diversity across gender (7 male, 5 female), age (22-45 years), educational attainment (S1-S3), professional backgrounds (academics, entrepreneurs, civil servants, students, homemakers), and application preferences. This diversity enriched the phenomenological analysis by ensuring that findings captured the breadth of meaningful Islamic application experiences among modern Indonesian Muslims.

3. Data Collection Procedures

Data collection employed a triangulated multi-method approach comprising three primary instruments. First, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant, lasting between 75 and 120 minutes. Interview protocols were developed through iterative pilot testing and expert review, covering topics including: the participant's initial motivations for adopting Islamic applications; daily usage patterns and rituals; specific experiences of spiritual fulfillment or disappointment; perceptions of authenticity and depth; relationships between application use and offline religious practice; and reflections on Islamic identity in digital contexts. All interviews were conducted in Bahasa Indonesia and subsequently transcribed verbatim.

Second, participants maintained digital diary recordings over a four-week period, producing brief daily voice memos (3-8 minutes) reflecting on significant moments of Islamic application use. These diary recordings provided longitudinal texture to the interview data, capturing spontaneous reflections proximate to actual application use rather than retrospective accounts. Third, structured application observation sessions were conducted for each participant, in which the researcher observed and discussed the participant's navigation of their primary applications in real time — a technique adapted from mobile ethnographic approaches (Correia & Tam, 2024).

4. Data Analysis

Analysis followed the established IPA process as articulated by Smith et al. (2009). Initial coding proceeded at the level of individual cases, with the researcher reading and re-reading transcripts, making exploratory notes, and developing initial semantic and latent codes. These initial codes were then organized into emerging themes for each individual case. Cross-case analysis in the second phase identified patterns, convergences, and divergences across participant accounts, yielding superordinate themes that captured the shared phenomenological structure of the experience while preserving individual variation.

To ensure analytical rigor, the study employed multiple trustworthiness strategies: prolonged engagement with participants; peer debriefing with two independent Islamic studies scholars; member checking with six participants who reviewed preliminary theme summaries; and reflexive journaling throughout the research process to monitor researcher positionality. The researcher's own position as a practicing Muslim with prior experience using Islamic applications was acknowledged as both an asset (facilitating empathic understanding) and a potential source of interpretive bias requiring careful reflexive management.

Table 2. Phenomenological Themes, Categories, and Sub-Categories

Theme	Main Category	Sub-Category / Components	Participants
T1	Fulfillment of Daily Worship Needs	Prayer reminders, Qibla direction, Ramadan schedule, zakat calculator	P1, P2, P4, P5, P8, P10, P11
T2	Digital Qur'anic Engagement	Digital recitation (tilawah), Qur'anic reflection (tadabbur), interactive tafsir, memorization	P1, P2, P6, P7, P8, P12
T3	Formation of Modern Islamic Identity	Halal lifestyle, Muslim fashion, digital communities	P3, P4, P5, P9, P11
T4	Spirituality & Mental Health Management	Digital dhikr, daily prayers, inner peace, Islamic mindfulness	P3, P6, P7, P9, P10, P12
T5	Religious Authority & Digital Trust	Ulama validation, sanad-based content, source credibility	P1, P3, P7, P9, P12
T6	Digital Challenges & Ambivalence	Distraction, dependency, loss of spiritual depth	P2, P5, P8, P10, P11

Note: T = Theme code; Partisipan = Participant codes associated with each theme

D. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Theme 1: Re-Ritualization of Daily Worship through Digital Mediation

The most pervasive and consistently reported theme across participant accounts was the transformative role of Islamic applications in structuring and regularizing daily worship practices. Participants described applications as functioning as what one participant termed 'a digital ustadz [Islamic teacher] in my pocket' an always-available, patient, and non-judgmental guide to ritual observance. This finding resonates with Paradisa et al.'s (2025) investigation of prayer reminder applications, which demonstrated significant improvements in worship discipline and concentration among users.

Participant P1, a university lecturer, articulated this experience with particular clarity: the application serves not merely as a timer but as a spatial-temporal anchor that re-embeds Islamic ritual time into the secular rhythms of contemporary professional life. The sound of the adhan notification on the smartphone, he explained, functions as a genuine religious call to prayer rather than merely a technological alert an observation that illuminates the potential for digital signals to carry genuinely spiritual weight. This phenomenon the imbuing of digital affordances with ritual significance represents what we term 're-ritualization': the process by which digital interactions acquire the character of sacred practice.

However, participant accounts also revealed important nuances and tensions. P5, a young student, reported initial over-reliance on the reminder function, noting that this reliance had paradoxically weakened his intrinsic awareness of prayer times: 'I used to feel the time for Asr in my body, naturally. Now I wait for the phone to tell me.' This observation resonates with broader scholarly concerns about technology-mediated religious practice creating what (Abdullah et al., 2024) term 'religious confusion and emptiness' — a superficial fluency in religious procedure unaccompanied by genuine inner transformation. The Qibla finder function similarly elicited divided responses: several participants expressed gratitude for its precision in novel locations, while others worried that the elimination of spatial uncertainty had removed a valuable spiritual exercise in mindfulness and community consultation.

The Ramadan-specific features of major Islamic applications including prayer scheduling, iftar timers, Tarawih guides, and charitable giving integrations emerged as particularly significant in participant narratives. P6, a religious teacher, described the Ramadan month as a period when her application usage intensified dramatically: the digital ecosystem of Ramadan features created what she termed a 'cocoon of remembrance' that suffused daily life with Islamic meaning. This account aligns with Fatmawati's (2025) analysis of digital Ramadan da'wah strategies, which identified the intensification of digital Islamic engagement during Ramadan as a significant opportunity for spiritual formation.

2. Theme 2: Pendalaman Al-Quran secara Digital Digital Quranic Deepening

The second major theme concerns participants' experiences with digital Quranic applications a domain of Islamic application use characterized by particularly rich and complex phenomenological content. Participants across all demographic categories reported that digital Quran applications had qualitatively transformed their relationship with the sacred text, enabling forms of engagement that were previously inaccessible or impractical. The multi-modal richness of digital Quran platforms combining Arabic text, romanized transliteration, vernacular translation, audio recitation by renowned qaris, and interactive tafsir was consistently described as expanding the affective and cognitive dimensions of Quranic encounter.

P12, a senior academic, reflected that the digital Quran had transformed her daily Quran reading from a disciplined but somewhat routine practice into a dynamic encounter with meaning: the ability to instantly access multiple tafsir interpretations alongside the text had revealed layers of significance she had never previously appreciated. This phenomenological observation corroborates Hasanah et al.'s (2025) findings on digital

Quran applications and learning impact, which documented qualitative shifts in the depth of Quranic engagement facilitated by multi-modal digital platforms. The Living Quran concept the Quran as a dynamic, living presence in daily life rather than a static text has found a new digital expression (Fauziah et al., 2025).

Yet participants also articulated significant reservations about digital Quranic engagement. P2 described a persistent unease about using a device containing the Quran in states of ritual impurity, a concern that touches on classical fiqh debates about the appropriate handling of the sacred text that applications have not yet satisfactorily resolved. P7, a researcher in Islamic studies, raised more fundamental questions about the phenomenological difference between engaging with the printed mushaf and the digital Quran: he suggested that the tactile, visual, and olfactory qualities of the physical Quran create a distinct spiritual atmosphere that digital mediation cannot replicate, an observation reminiscent of Shahidan et al. (2025) findings on the affective significance of visual and aesthetic elements in Quranic applications.

The social dimensions of digital Quranic practice emerged as a particularly significant finding. Tussa'banniya (2025) documented the rise of online Khatmil Quran communities, and participants confirmed this phenomenon: P8 and P6 both participated in WhatsApp-coordinated Quran completion groups where progress was tracked through shared applications. These digital communities created forms of communal accountability and spiritual solidarity that partially replicated traditional Quran study circle (halaqah) dynamics, while simultaneously generating new forms of social pressure that participants experienced ambivalently. Anam & Winengan (2025) similarly documented how digital Quran engagement functions as a vehicle for Islamic da'wah among Generation Z in Indonesian villages.

3. Theme 3: Islamic Identity Construction and Negotiation in Digital Spaces

The third theme emerged from participant accounts of how Islamic application use intersects with broader processes of Islamic identity formation and social presentation. In a digital environment where religious practice becomes partly visible through application use, social media sharing, and participation in digital Islamic communities, participants navigated complex negotiations between sincere religious commitment and social performance. This finding resonates with Azizah et al.'s (2025) qualitative study of Islamic lifestyle among Islamic Religious Education students, which identified the fundamental tension between 'existence' (authentic being) and 'essence' (performed identity) in digital Islamic contexts.

P3, an entrepreneur and active participant in several Islamic digital communities, articulated this tension explicitly: he recognized that his practice of sharing Quran reading streaks and zikir achievements on Instagram simultaneously reflected genuine devotion and served self-presentational functions. Rather than experiencing this as simple hypocrisy, he framed it as a navigated complexity a recognition that digital Islamic practice inevitably operates at the intersection of sincerity and social visibility. This nuanced account aligns with Zaid et al.'s (2022) analysis of how social media Islamic influencers blur the boundaries between authentic religious authority and digital performance.

The halal lifestyle dimensions of Islamic applications covering halal food certification, modest fashion guidance, Islamic finance tools, and ethical consumption guidance constituted a significant identity-forming function for several participants. P4 and P11 both reported that applications had expanded their understanding of Islamic practice beyond formal ritual to encompass a more holistic 'Islamic lifestyle' ethos that regulated consumption, appearance, and social relationships. This expansion of Islamic identity through application-mediated engagement reflects broader transformations in what Toktarbekova et al. (2025) describe as Muslim women's visual religious identity on Instagram the construction of Islamic femininity and piety as a visible, curated digital presence.

Participants consistently navigated the tension between the Islamic ideal of sincerity (*ikhlas*) performing religious acts solely for divine pleasure, without social motivation and the inevitably social character of digital Islamic practice. The applications themselves, through features like streak tracking, community challenges, and sharable achievements, actively encourage public performance of religious practice. P9 reflected thoughtfully on this structural feature: he argued that such gamification elements, while potentially motivating, risk transforming the intrinsically motivated pursuit of divine nearness into an extrinsically motivated competition for digital recognition a concern that parallels Mudasiru's (2025) critique of the spiritual marketplace dynamic in contemporary Muslim digital culture.

4. **Theme 4: Spiritualitas, Kesehatan Mental, dan Mediasi Digital**

The fourth theme concerns the intersection of Islamic application use with mental health, emotional well-being, and inner spiritual development a domain of investigation that has attracted increasing scholarly attention. Participants across all demographic groups reported that Islamic applications particularly those featuring structured zikir, doa compilations, and spiritual reflection prompts contributed meaningfully to their psychological equilibrium and sense of inner peace. P10, a homemaker, described her daily morning routine of structured zikir and doa via the Zikir Pagi Petang application as transformative for her emotional resilience during a period of significant personal stress.

These accounts resonate with the theoretical framework proposed by Syahir et al. (2025), who articulate a model of Islamic psychospiritual integration in digital mobile health contexts. Their framework emphasizes that effective Islamic therapeutic applications must address not merely symptomatic psychological distress but the underlying spiritual disorientation that Islamic anthropology identifies as the root cause of mental illness. Zannat & Mahmud (2025) further operationalized these principles in their development of an Islamic-inspired digital therapeutics application for university students, demonstrating that faith-integrated digital interventions can achieve clinically meaningful improvements in psychological well-being.

Juwairiyah & Fanani (2025) emphasized the importance of integrating Islamic values into learning methods for building character and spirituality in the digital era a principle that several participants applied to their personal application use, intentionally designing their engagement patterns to maximize transformative rather than merely informational impact. The concept of tazkiyat al-nafs purification of the soul through spiritual discipline was invoked by P7 and P12 as a framework for evaluating the authentic spiritual value of different application features. By this standard, features that facilitate genuine inner reflection and divine remembrance were considered vastly more valuable than those providing informational content or entertainment.

The investigation of mosque youth lifestyle communication models revealed that digital applications function as bridges between mosque-based spiritual communities and everyday digital life a function that several participants explicitly confirmed. P3 and P9, both members of active digital Islamic communities, described applications as maintaining the spiritual momentum generated by periodic physical religious gatherings (*pengajian*, Friday prayer, Islamic study circles) through the quotidian texture of daily digital engagement (Mahardika et al., 2025).

5. **Negotiating Tension: Authentic Spirituality vs. Technological Superficiality**

Across all four primary themes, a persistent meta-theme emerged concerning the fundamental tension between the potential of Islamic applications to facilitate genuine spiritual depth and the risk of fostering spiritual superficiality through digital convenience. This tension — which we term the 'depth-convenience dialectic' was articulated with varying degrees of explicitness by all twelve participants and constitutes perhaps the most theoretically significant finding of this investigation.

The depth-convenience dialectic manifests in multiple registers. At the level of religious knowledge, applications provide unprecedented access to Islamic textual resources Quran, Hadith, tafsir, fiqh references yet several participants expressed concern that this abundance of information had replaced the slower, more demanding, and ultimately more transformative process of learning from a qualified human teacher. P1 articulated this as a 'spiritual Google effect': just as search engines have transformed information retrieval without necessarily deepening understanding, Islamic applications risk transforming religious information access without deepening religious wisdom (Abdullah et al., 2024; Himam et al., 2025).

At the level of ritual practice, the convenience and precision of application-mediated prayer timing risk what P5 called 'spiritual outsourcing' delegating to technological systems the cognitive and spiritual attention that traditional Islamic practice requires believers to cultivate internally. The classical Islamic spiritual tradition (tasawwuf) emphasizes the development of muraqabah a state of continuous, self-generated divine awareness as an essential dimension of spiritual maturity. Participants who had studied Islamic spirituality more deeply expressed concern that application dependency might impede rather than facilitate this developmental trajectory (Muiz et al., 2025).

Table 3. Mapping of Application Features to Dimensions of Spiritual Need Fulfillment

Application Features	Ritual Needs	Intellectual Needs	Communal Needs	Fulfilled Spiritual Dimension
Prayer Time Reminders	High	Moderate	High	Discipline in daily worship
Qur'anic Recitation & Tafsir	High	High	High	Spiritual and intellectual enrichment
Qibla Direction & Fasting Schedule	High	Low	Moderate	Ritual orientation and accuracy
Da'wah Content & Religious Studies	Moderate	High	Moderate	Religious literacy and insight
Digital Muslim Communities	Moderate	Moderate	High	Identity and social solidarity
Digital Dhikr & Prayers	High	Moderate	High	Inner peace and mental well-being
Zakat & Charity Calculator	Moderate	Low	High	Socio-spiritual responsibility
Hajj & Umrah Guidance	Low	High	High	Core rituals and worship preparation

Table 3 synthesizes participant accounts into a structured mapping of application features against dimensions of spiritual need fulfillment. This mapping reveals that application features most effectively address pragmatic-ritual needs (prayer timing, Qiblah direction) and communal-social needs (digital Islamic community features), while showing more moderate effectiveness for intellectual-spiritual needs and consistently lower effectiveness for transformative inner spiritual development (the need for genuine tazkiyat al-nafs). This asymmetry between technological capability and spiritual depth represents a fundamental design challenge for Islamic application developers.

The findings further reveal important generational and educational variations in how participants navigate the depth-convenience dialectic. Older participants with traditional Islamic educational backgrounds (P6, P12) tended to evaluate applications instrumentally as useful supplements to established spiritual practices while younger participants with less formal religious education (P5, P2, P8) showed greater tendency to allow applications to constitute rather than merely supplement their religious practice. This differential pattern suggests that the spiritual risk of technological superficiality is unevenly distributed across the Muslim community, with implications for targeted religious education interventions.

E. CONCLUSION

This phenomenological investigation has illuminated the complex, multidimensional ways in which modern Indonesian Muslims experience and interpret Islamic lifestyle applications as instruments of spiritual need fulfillment. Through the analytical lens of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis, four primary phenomenological themes were identified: the re-ritualization of daily worship through digital mediation; the digital deepening of Quranic engagement; the construction and negotiation of Islamic identity in digital spaces; and the intersection of digital application use with spiritual and mental well-being. Across these themes, a persistent depth-convenience dialectic emerged as the central tension structuring participant experiences.

The study's findings carry several significant theoretical contributions. First, they establish that Islamic applications do not merely supplement traditional religious practice but actively re-mediate it transforming the experiential character of worship, Quranic engagement, and spiritual community in ways that are neither simply positive nor simply negative but deeply ambivalent and contextually contingent. Second, the phenomenological analysis reveals that spiritual need fulfillment through digital means operates along multiple dimensions that existing quantitative frameworks have inadequately captured: the fulfillment of pragmatic-ritual needs is relatively easily achieved through thoughtful application design, while the fulfillment of deeper transformative spiritual needs presents ongoing design and theological challenges.

Third, the findings contribute to ongoing theoretical debates about digital Islam and religious authority by demonstrating, through rich empirical phenomenological data, how individual Muslim users actively negotiate rather than passively receive the authority structures, knowledge frameworks, and community formations constituted through Islamic applications. Users exercise significant hermeneutic agency in determining which digital religious resources to trust, how to integrate application use into broader spiritual practice, and how to evaluate the authenticity of digitally mediated religious experience.

Practical implications of this research are equally significant. For Islamic application developers, findings suggest the urgent need to move beyond feature-focused design toward spirituality-centered design philosophy one that explicitly incorporates Islamic psychospiritual principles, facilitates genuine contemplation and divine remembrance, and actively resists the gamification dynamics that risk reducing spiritual practice to digital performance. The comparative heuristic framework proposed by Azahari et al. (2025) provides a valuable starting point for developing spirituality-sensitive evaluation criteria for Islamic application design.

For religious educators and Islamic institutions, the findings highlight the importance of providing guidance that helps Muslim users especially younger generations with limited traditional Islamic educational foundations develop critical spiritual literacy regarding their digital tool use. This includes education about the distinction between religious information access and genuine spiritual formation, the importance of maintaining relationships with qualified human religious teachers alongside digital tools, and the development of Islamic digital ethics (*akhlaq raqmiyah*) as a component of contemporary Islamic education.

This study acknowledges several limitations that direct future research. The purposive sample of twelve Indonesian participants, while appropriate for IPA methodology, limits the transferability of findings to other national, cultural, and linguistic Muslim contexts. Future cross-national phenomenological investigations comparing Indonesian, Malaysian, Turkish, and Arab Muslim application experiences would significantly advance theoretical understanding of how cultural context mediates digital spiritual experience. Additionally, longitudinal phenomenological designs tracking changes in spiritual experience over extended periods of application use would address the important question of whether digital application use produces lasting spiritual transformation or merely facilitates transient states of spiritual engagement.

In conclusion, Islamic lifestyle applications occupy an increasingly significant position in the spiritual ecology of contemporary Muslim life. Their capacity to fulfill spiritual needs is real, multidimensional, and genuinely meaningful for millions of users. Yet this phenomenological inquiry also reveals that the deepest dimensions of Islamic spiritual experience transcendence, inner transformation, authentic divine nearness require not merely digital access to religious content but sustained human engagement, spiritual discipline, and the irreplaceable guidance of embodied religious community. The technology is a powerful servant; it must not become the master of the spirit.

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