The Role of Instagram as an Agent for Socialization in Integrated Islamic School at SMP IT Abu Bakar Yogyakarta: A Netnography Study

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	In the digital era, social media platforms have become essential tools for educational institutions to communicate, engage, and shape public perception. This study explores the role of Instagram as an agent of socialization within the context of an Integrated Islamic School, specifically SMP IT Abu Bakar Yogyakarta. This type of research is descriptive-qualitative using a netnography approach. This research analyzes the visual and textual content posted on the school's Instagram account, along with user interactions such as comments and likes, to understand how values, identity, and community norms are constructed and transmitted in a digital space. Findings indicate that Instagram functions beyond mere promotion; it actively contributes to the process of value internalization among students, parents, and prospective stakeholders. The platform serves as a medium for reinforcing Islamic identity, showcasing school culture, and facilitating participatory engagement that reflects the broader educational mission of the institution. Through curated content and interactive features, the school extends its influence into the digital realm, transforming Instagram into a space of informal yet meaningful socialization. This study highlights the evolving role of social media in contemporary Islamic education and emphasizes the need for intentional and value-driven digital communication strategies. It also presents a novel application of netnography in analyzing religious educational contexts, contributing to the understanding of how traditional institutions adapt to digital environments while maintaining their ideological foundations.

1. Introduction

We are now entering a time when digital and technological information are becoming more deeply integrated into many areas of life. A digital presence is

important for individuals, governments, and institutions. (Saufa, 2023; Sintani et al., 2021). The digital age and advancements in online technology have fostered a new culture of collaboration, social interaction, and communication. (Gqwabaza & Maqoqa, 2024). Cyberspace provides a platform for digital communities to come together, celebrating diversity and exploring perspectives that may not be accessible in the physical world. (Jatmiko, 2021).

The advancement of digital technology in the last ten years has brought significant changes in how humans communicate and interact socially (Wong et al., 2022). As one of the main outcomes of this technological revolution, social media has become the primary platform for social interaction, especially among teenagers and the younger generation (Su'ada & Yuniawan, 2023). In Indonesia, social media platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, and TikTok are widely popular among junior high school students, including those in Islamic schools such as SMP IT Abu Bakar Yogyakarta. Instagram, in particular, is one of the fastest-growing platforms, with its global user base projected to reach 1.32 billion (Takhar et al., 2023). Indonesia ranks fourth in the world with 89.15 million users (Wijayanti, 2023). This phenomenon serves as a reason to use Instagram in this research to identify its role as an agent of socialization at SMP IT Abu Bakar Yogyakarta.

Fuller and Jacobs (Azionya & Nhedzi, 2021; Sabila & Albari, 2023) state that social media is one of the agents of socialization that functions as a communication tool in public spaces, as it can reach a wider, larger, and more diverse audience. As formal educational institutions, schools play an important role in achieving national goals. Schools are born and developed from efforts to create efficiency and effectiveness in providing education to the community (Pradana et al., 2020). Education is essential for sustaining life as responsible citizens and underpins vital lifelong roles, making a nation's quality of life closely tied to its educational level (Mangone & Picarella, 2021).

As a religious-based educational institution, SMP IT Abu Bakar Yogyakarta is committed to not only focusing on academic education but also on the moral and social development of students. In this context, social media has a unique role as an agent of socialization that can influence the social development, values, and identity of students. Socialization, which was previously heavily influenced by family, school, and the surrounding environment, is now beginning to shift with the presence of social media as the main platform for students to interact, build relationships, and learn new values (Sivakumar et al., 2023). Although social media provides many positive opportunities in strengthening communication and learning, there are also concerns about the negative impacts that may arise, such as disruptions in learning, the spread of values that are not in line with Islamic principles, as well as the risk of cyberbullying (Wang, 2024). Therefore, it is important to understand how social media plays a role in shaping the social behavior of students in Islamic schools such as SMP IT Abu Bakar Yogyakarta, as well as its impact on their social interactions and education.

In the contemporary digital era, SMP IT Abu Bakar Yogyakarta encounter various challenges in the process of socializing educational values and constructing Islamic identity. A primary issue lies in the limited effectiveness of

traditional communication methods-such as printed banners, school bulletins, and face-to-face meetings-which are often unable to reach broader audiences efficiently and require considerable time and financial resources. Furthermore, many Integrated Islamic School lack a coherent digital marketing strategy, resulting in suboptimal visibility of the institution's vision, mission, and unique educational offerings to prospective students and parents. Another significant constraint is the limited capacity of human resources responsible for public communication, as school administrators and publicity teams frequently lack formal training in digital marketing and content management. In response to these challenges, social media platforms such as Instagram have emerged as strategic tools for modern educational institutions. Instagram, as a visual and interactive platform, enables schools to disseminate information effectively, foster engagement among stakeholders-including students, parents, alumni, and the wider community-and construct a dynamic digital presence. Given the increasing competition among private educational institutions and the growing shift in societal behavior toward digital engagement, the adoption of Instagram by Integrated Islamic Schools represents a necessary adaptation to enhance outreach, strengthen value-based education, and promote Islamic teachings in a format that is both relevant and accessible.

The role of schools is considered very important for the progress and development of society and the security of needs (Şahin Kölemen, 2024). According to Patrick J. Wolf (Iner, 2021), choosing a school is a commitment and responsibility of parents, especially from elementary school until junior high school. Parents always want to give the best for their children, including providing the best education. All efforts are made by parents for their children to gain the best education and learning experience for a better future. Formal education has made footing for the future of their children (Deepika Goyal, 2024). Therefore, choosing a school is an important first step.

There are some studies related to the role of social media and the study of netnography. The first research conducted by Aulia Putri Medina (2020), highlights the use of social media as a medium for da'wah by Rohis's members at SMAN 8 Yogyakarta. The purpose of the study is to see the phenomenon of social events that occur in the virtual space of Rohis at SMAN 8 Yogyakarta. The social media platform used by members Rohis SMAN 8 Yogyakarta is Line. To support da'wah activities at school, members Rohis SMAN 8 Yogyakarta formed a group online with the name "Never Ending Syar'i". The group functioned to coordinate hold spirit activities and share information da'wah (Saptoni, 2020).

A netnography study on *halal* awareness conducted by Khasanah's (2020) indicates that *social media acts as an agent for halal socialization and plays a role in shaping halal awareness of Muslim communities.* Another research was conducted by Muammar (2022), who was focused on Instagram as a medium of communication between parents and children during Covid-19 pandemic. He found that the object of virtual communities is focused on three virtual communities, namely: *@ayahbunda_*, *@parentalk.id*, and *@gaia_parenting* accounts. It shows that effective strategies are needed in communication between parents and children regarding children's health during the pandemic (Muamar, 2022).

The study conducted by Jamilus and Deviana (2022) investigated the role of Instagram as a communication medium for disseminating flagship programs and activities at SMAN 1 Pulau Panjang. The findings reveal that Instagram demonstrates considerable potential as a tool for socialization, as its functional features align with seven key elements of effective communication: credibility (trustworthiness of the source), context (relevance to the target audience and situational appropriateness), content (quality and substance of the message), clarity (clear and comprehensible delivery), continuity and consistency (sustained and coherent messaging over time), channels (suitability of the platform for the intended purpose), and capability of the audience (the recipients' ability to access and interpret the message). These attributes contribute to the platform's effectiveness in facilitating engagement between the school and its stakeholders. Moreover, the study emphasizes the necessity of strategic management and systematic planning to ensure that the dissemination of educational programs and institutional activities is executed in a structured, consistent, and goal-oriented manner.

Despite the growing body of literatures on social media usage in educational and religious contexts, there remains a limited number of studies that specifically examine the role of Instagram as an agent of socialization within the framework of Integrated Islamic Education. Much of the existing research primarily addresses the application of social media in religious activities, parent-child communication, or institutional promotion, without thoroughly investigating how Instagram is strategically utilized to construct Islamic identity, internalize educational values, and facilitate community engagement within the environment of Integrated Islamic Schools. This gap underscores the necessity for further in-depth and contextually grounded research that critically explores the function of Instagram as a digital space for socialization within Islamic educational institutions.

2. Method

The method used in this research is a descriptive qualitative method with a netnography approach. The netnography method, according to Kozinets (Febry, 2023), is a method that sees that within the internet space, there is a society and its own culture, so the researcher participates virtually in their research. Data taken in this study comes from two sources, namely online observations conducted for one month and interviews with the school's social media program coordinator and team. In-depth online interviews via Zoom were also conducted with the school principal and representatives of the student-parent committee.

Through an ethnography approach, we observed chat forums, images, videos, communities, and audiovisuals. The netnography approach is chosen because it allows researchers to explore the role of Instagram in the socialization process directly in the digital environment (Cibele Dametto & Jordi Bonet Mart, 2024).

Data was collected from the Instagram social media platform commonly used by stakeholders of SMP IT Abu Bakar, through the account *smpitabubakar*. Observations are made on the content posted, interactions, comments, and activities in the online community. Researchers may passively join social media groups, forums, or communication platforms used by students, to observe how

social interactions occur in educational and non-educational contexts. In addition to text, media in the form of images, videos, and links shared by the school's social media coordinator on social media also become important data sources.

The focus of the research is on the followers of the account *smpitabubakar*, especially students and parents. They are the main participants whose digital behavior is observed. To complement the analysis, there may be involvement from teachers or parents who also participate in social media. Observations are conducted without direct intervention, with the researcher observing conversations and interactions naturally on the chosen platform. Data collection also includes content analysis of posts, comments, and conversations that occur on social media. Each element relevant to the socialization process is identified and analyzed in depth.

Data was analyzed using a thematic analysis approach, where patterns, themes, and categories related to socialization are identified from the collected data. The researcher then provides an interpretation of how social media acts as an agent of socialization among school members, including how they interact, build social identities, and communicate with other account followers. Validation of the results is carried out using triangulation techniques, possibly by combining netnography observation results with interviews or discussions with the principal, social media coordinator, and representatives of the student parent committee, to ensure the accuracy of the interpretation.

This netnography is divided into two stages. *In the first stage*, the researcher is directly involved and makes field notes regarding the activities of the *smpitabubakar* account on Instagram. In *the second stage*, we systematically collect posts from the period of January 2024 to June 2024. In total, there are 956 posts, including visual content (photos and videos), text (captions and comments), as well as numerical data (number of comments and likes). We then select the posts that receive the highest engagement for each category, measured based on the number of likes (the top 7 posts) and the number of comments (the next top 7 posts). Since some of them overlap, we examine a total of 956 posts. This is done to avoid data overload (Campana et al., 2020) and to acknowledge that the most popular posts provide indications of content that is appealing to the audience of the *smpitabubakar* account and is likely to be replicated in the future. The emerging themes are those highlighted by their appeal to the audience.

Apart from that, online interviews were conducted with informants who were active followers of the *smpitabubakar* Instagram account. The final stage is to analyze and conclude the results.

This research was conducted with strict adherence to ethical standards at every stage-from planning and data collection to analysis and dissemination. Data was collected and analyzed transparently, avoiding bias and ensuring accuracy. Respect for participants is central to our research, with a strong emphasis on ensuring confidentiality and protecting sensitive information. Furthermore, we uphold ethical publication practices by avoiding plagiarism, accurately representing findings, and acknowledging all contributions.

3. Result and Discussion

SMP IT Abu Bakar is a school that carries full-day and boarding concepts. The implemented curriculum at school is a national curriculum with added Islamic spirit with a load of Islamic boarding schools. The motto of the school is "guiding completely by heart so that you can be pious and triumphant."

Through this motto, it is seen that the competitive advantage of SMPIT Abu Bakar is the development of a student's character who is pious and virtuous, supported by competent academic and non-academic achievements. In addition, SMPIT Abu Bakar has superior products in the form of distinctive or superior school programs, namely *pesantren* content such as Arabic language, *tahsin*, *tahfidz*, *sirah nabawiyah*, and *tafsir* Al Qur'an. Furthermore, these superior programs are supported by competent human resources, especially certified Tahsin and *tahfidz* teachers.

This research discussed the role of social media and its function as an agent of socialization for school marketing using the *smpitabubakar* account on Instagram as a research object for the period between January to June 2024. In the initial period of June 2024, the *smpitabubakar* account on Instagram had 6,414 followers with a total of 956 posts. The research focused on posts uploaded by the *smpitabubakar* account based on the number of interactions with a post. From the results of observations made from January to June 2024, there were 98 posts. The post categories contained in the *smpitabubakar* account consist of student enrollment 2024, academic activities, non-academic activities, academic achievements, non-academic achievements, National Holidays, Al Quran Team, testimonials from alumni, alumni, and profiles of SMPIT Abu Bakar Yogyakarta. The distribution of *smpitabubakar* posts can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Instagram Post Distribution (January to June 2024)
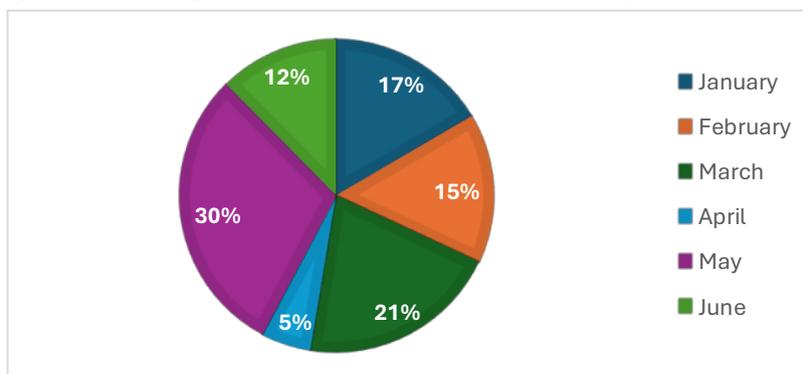
Source: Processed by the researcher based on *smpitabubakar* data, 2024

Based on the distribution of posts over 6 months, it can be analyzed that the marketing admin of SMP IT Abu Bakar posted the most posts in May 2024, namely 30% of posts consisting of various activities. The most posted activity categories in October can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Category Distribution and Number of Posts

No	Category	Number of Posts
1.	Student Enrollment 2024	4 posts
2.	Academic Activities	39 posts
3.	Non-Academic Activities	33 posts
4.	Academic achievement	9 posts
5.	Non-Academic Achievement	2 posts
6.	Abu Bakar SMPIT profile	1 post
7.	National big Day	16 posts

Table 1 indicates that the most frequent posts are related to academic activities consisting of Literacy Fridays, English practice days, practical exams, end-of-year assessments (PAT), project activities to strengthen the profile of Pancasila students (P5), Ramadhan Tarhib, and study tour. However, the post that was most liked by followers of the *smpitabubakar* Instagram account in June was the 23rd anniversary of SMPIT Abu Bakar Yogyakarta which was posted on June 13, 2024. This content received a response of 576 likes and 11 comments, according to Figure 2 below.

Figure 2. Dies Natalis Ceremony at SMP IT Abu Bakar Yogyakarta
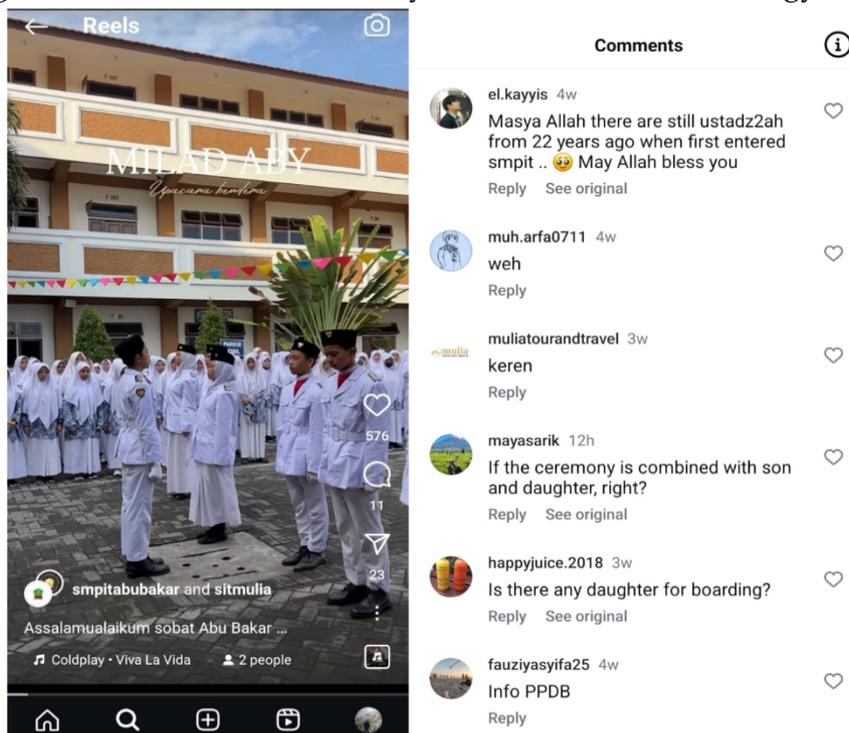
Source: Screenshot from *smpitabubakar* Instagram account, 2024.

This shows that engagement between the school and account followers is very good. Apart from that, followers like post categories related to student activities and academic and non-academic achievements. The number of 576 likes shows that the school's social media marketing section is very effective in strengthening the internal market and has strategic value in capturing new markets, in this case as an effective socialization media material in increasing the number of students, especially during the New Student Admissions period.

The findings of the Segmentation, Targeting, and Positioning analysis of SMPIT Abu Bakar school based on the 2023/2024 Academic Year Curriculum Document, based on observations, interviews with the principal, and interviews with parents of students, can be identified in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Segmenting, Targeting, and Positioning SMPIT Abu Bakar

Segmenting	Targeting
Geographic segmentation, the school's consumers/customers come from the Yogyakarta City area, primarily dominating the full-day classes, and even from outside the Yogyakarta area, especially for the Boarding classes. Demographic segmentation, the backgrounds of the students are very diverse, coming from both public elementary schools and Islamic elementary schools, while the backgrounds of the students' parents are from middle to upper-income families. Psychographic segmentation, based on the quality education report card data of SMPIT Abu Bakar Yogyakarta, shows a literacy ability achievement of 2.79 (above the minimum competency) and a numeracy ability achievement of 2.39. (above the minimum competency) Psychographic segmentation, the majority of students show good interest and motivation in learning.	Segment size, from geographic segmentation, prioritizes marketing for various regions in Indonesia. For demographic segmentation, the focus is on students aged 12-13 years. The growth of the segment, in line with the community's awareness of the importance of education and Islamic character, the concept of full-day and/or boarding schools, has led to a significant increase in prospective students wanting to attend Islamic schools. SMPIT Abu Bakar Yogyakarta optimizes its classes for the boarding program, which includes 3 girls' classes and 3 boys' classes, totaling 192 students. Meanwhile, for the full-day program, there is only 1 girls' class and 1 boys' class, totaling 64 students.
	Positioning
	Positioning by attributes, SMPIT Abu Bakar Yogyakarta positions itself as an excellent A-accredited school. Positioning according to benefits, the school has outstanding programs and character development so that an Islamic personality can be formed. According to users, the school positions itself as the best school, producing students who excel in academics, non-academics, and Islamic studies. Positioning is based on price or quality. Based on the school fees for the full-day class, SMPIT Abu Bakar is among the more expensive options compared to its competitors.

SMPIT Abu Bakar understands that the education market, especially the integrated Islamic school market, is increasing, particularly as a result of the influences of modernization and globalization. The trend of parents wanting to enroll their children in private Islamic schools with a curriculum or superior Islamic programs and character development for students is highly sought after by parents (Rasyadi, 2021).

Based on the situational analysis, SMPIT Abu Bakar Yogyakarta has strengths from its strategic location, which is far from the main road, thus greatly supporting learning. The number of learning groups is filled, even surplus, and it has human resources in education where the majority have completed PPG and some have S2 qualifications, adequate facilities and infrastructure (equipped with various laboratories, Wi-Fi, LCD, and CCTV), and has a YouTube channel and Instagram with a considerable number of followers and subscribers compared to similar institutions. Its weakness in managing social media is that it does not yet have a professional social media staff and is still optimizing the existing human resources.

Efforts to build a positive image are an important strategy to meet the needs of stakeholders, especially in advancing Islamic educational institutions. Modern society tends to be interested in organizations that have a good image (Riyadi et al., 2023). Therefore, creating a good impression in the eyes of the public becomes a crucial aspect in enhancing the reputation of Islamic educational institutions, and this positive impression can be developed through effective promotional strategies implemented by SMP IT Abu Bakar Yogyakarta.

The objectives of the socialization or promotion strategy applied at SMPIT Abu Bakar Yogyakarta have clear and measurable short-term and long-term goals. Such as increasing the surplus of registration for PPDB from year to year, an increase in brand awareness as a leading school based on its indicators, namely the best ASPD score ranking in Yogyakarta City, and an increase in community involvement, especially the school committee, in supporting school programs and activities. Even based on interviews with the principal regarding the vision for the future, namely an internationally standard school, is greatly supported by the existence of laboratories to optimize the abilities of students at SMPIT Abu Bakar Yogyakarta.

The market segment that SMPIT Abu Bakar Yogyakarta aims to reach is the upper-middle class segment. This is evident from the relatively high tuition fees compared to similar integrated Islamic schools. Optimization of the middle segment is achieved through the existence of full-day classes, which only have 2 classes, and the upper economic segment is optimized through 6 boarding classes.

The geographical segmentation of the SMPIT Yogyakarta market is no longer too oriented towards the segment from the city of Yogyakarta because the market is very broad, even from various other islands, including Sumatra, Sulawesi, Kalimantan, and Papua. The student intake at SMPIT Abu Bakar is very good, as seen from the literacy skills score of 97.78 and the numeracy score of 86.67.

The social media team is specialized according to their respective functions. The social media team of 15 people is very effective in handling very busy school events. The content that is often socialized by the school on the Instagram platform, according to the school principal of SMPIT: "The achievements of the school will make people more interested, one of which is through the tagline, and we convey it through achievements. In addition, testimonials from alumni are also very important." He further explained that the content that is often socialized is related to school achievements and testimonials from alumni. Meanwhile, according to the social media coordinator, the content that is often socialized by the school on the Instagram account as he stated that: "For the content that is often uploaded, many are related to school activities, habituation activities, and motivational events, usually the ongoing activities are divided among the responsible parties."

This indicates that the content that is often socialized by the school is related to school activities, motivational events, competition assistance, and ongoing activities, whether academic or student-related at that time. According to the representative of the parent committee that: "Currently, the information received is related to academic activities and activities in each class that are informed to the parents." It means that the content that is often uploaded is related to academic activities and other activities that are informed to each class. He continues saying that: "Usually, during school events, whether academic or extracurricular, there are many comments. For example, social service activities distributing food packages to the community, or PTS activities that are informed in the group." Therefore, the content that is often uploaded is related to academic moments, student activities, social service activities, and PTS activities.

The social media team at SMPIT Abu Bakar, referred to as the content creator team, consistently crafts main messages that reflect good values, namely: religiousness, nationalism, social responsibility, and cleanliness (especially with P5 content, national holiday ceremonies, daily habits, activities, and clean Friday), and school excellence (*Tahsin* & *tahfidz* content, student achievements, school literacy activities). In addition, the social media team also creates relevant and engaging content such as podcasts (once a month), teacher articles, student poetry, crossword puzzles on the website, and cultural carnival videos on Instagram and YouTube. In its implementation, the social media team also collaborates and partners with several organizations and institutions. Several collaborations have been carried out, including with web developers for creating the school profile, the BNNK related to the "*Sekolah Bersinar*" program (free from drugs), the Puskesmas related to health education, LAZNAS D.I Yogyakarta related to humanitarian donations and the police.

To optimize social media outreach, the school implements an educational marketing strategy using three innovative approaches. *First*, the external marketing strategy consists of forming a social media team and an enrollment team, setting prices according to the class (full-day and boarding) and providing discounts according to the registration term, distributing information about school activities through WhatsApp groups for parents, and publishing activities and achievements through social media platforms. *Second*, the internal marketing

strategy involves sharing best practices among educators in social media marketing, as well as training students through extracurricular journalistic activities as a team that assists in covering school events. *Third,* the interactive strategy involves the WA center of SMPIT Abu Bakar Yogyakarta related to PPDB and class WA groups aimed at strengthening the interaction between customers (parents) and educators, as well as the school principal. This is because every WA group always includes the school principal. Thus, it expands new markets or new customers and retains old customers.

The social media team coordination meeting with the principal is held once a week and once a month with the deputy head of public relations and personnel. Meanwhile, content supervision is conducted daily or according to project targets. To facilitate the evaluation of the social media team's performance, there is a performance recap form for content creators that will later be accumulated with an additional honorarium. Meanwhile, for long-term marketing commitments, SMPIT Abu Bakar Yogyakarta is committed to optimizing social media platforms and developing the school website, especially research articles from teachers. This is because SMPIT Abu Bakar aims to build a foundation as a role model research school, particularly related to classroom action research (CAR).

The standard for measuring the success of school socialization or promotion according to the school principal of SMPIT Abu Bakar is stated as follows:

> So far, the measurement of success has been limited to when there is a new student admission (PSB) where many registers and the PSB is always fulfilled in the first wave. However, I don't feel optimal at this moment. So far, it's just about how many people are interested in SMPIT Abu Bakar. Another important indicator is through Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube, as seen from the number of likes and interactions on social media platforms. The content that often receives a lot of interaction is related to all the activities shared by the school. Maybe later it will be developed related to the alumni network. How to publish through the alumni network. Yesterday, the alumni network board was just formed.

This quote indicates that the standard measure of the success of socialization is the number of students who register during the new student admission process (Widiyati & Prihantoro, 2023). *The second* indicator is the number of likes and interactions on social media platforms (Salsa Widya, 2022). Meanwhile, the standard measure of the success of school socialization according to the social media coordinator is stated below:

> To measure the success of the school's socialization strategy so far, it is assessed through the consistency of activities uploaded on Instagram, through evaluation meetings, and responses from comments and shares measured from parents and students. Including one of them with the number of PPDB registrations. Even for this year, there are 9 classes, and there are still interested parties, but the location cannot accommodate them, so there are 11 classes. The student enrollment participants are from Yogyakarta, Kalimantan, Sumatra, and Papua, among others. We also

accept boarding for 3 boys, 2 full-day boarders, and for girls, 3 boarders, 1 full-day boarder.

It means that the standard measure of the success of the school's socialization or promotion is consistency in uploading activity content, and secondly, the response from comments and shares made by parents and students. *Thirdly*, the number of students enrolling in the school. Meanwhile, the standard measure of the success of the school's socialization through Instagram, according to one representative of the parent-teacher committee is stated that: "From the results seen and followed on Instagram, it is quite successful, but the note is that what is posted on social media should be good when it is done well. However, if it is just content without showing the reality, then that is not good." This indicates that the standard measure of the success of the school's socialization through Instagram is when there is consistency between what is displayed in the Instagram content and the actual conditions. The supporting factors in the school's socialization at SMPIT Abu Bakar, are the presence of a social media team that is specialized according to their respective social media platforms, receiving financial support from the foundation and the school management team, facilities and infrastructure that supports marketing (internet connection and event coverage equipment), and additional remuneration for social media team members.

For the challenges and obstacles faced in the school's socialization according to the principal of SMP IT Abu Bakar is as follows:

> If the challenges are many, *the first* is the school." Boarding schools in Yogyakarta are increasing, so their publications need to be more intensive. Conveying the achievements and advantages of the school. Because in Yogyakarta, there are five boarding schools. *The second* challenge now is the presence of Generation Z. So, we need to create interesting programs that become their priority. Therefore, the publications must also be engaging, not just focusing on the ASPD scores. Like something interesting related to life skills that need to be created so that when published, they will want to see what we publish. From the foundation, the activity budget is supported by the foundation, so funding is not an obstacle because it is sufficient. Regarding the PR team, there are obstacles, such as one person not being able to handle many things, so we are looking for more people. We haven't found someone specifically for content creation, like a YouTuber, because they want flexible hours, not full-time at school, and they don't like the formalities of professional content creators. So, it is optimized from the existing human resources. For example, there is a Musrifah who became a content creator due to her previous educational background. For now, her needs are already met.

Based on this quote, *the first* challenge faced is the competition among Islamic boarding schools because there are five boarding schools in one rayon. *The second* challenge is the development of programs that are appealing to Generation Z (Gen Z), so that they are interested in the school's programs. *The third* challenge is the human resources of content creators whose main task is to be teachers (Hidayat, 2021). Meanwhile, the challenges and obstacles to the school's

socialization or promotion strategy, according to the social media coordinator is as follows:

> The challenge is related to the creativity of presenting new ideas, the challenge of having to teach and create content, and the consistency that must be maintained. "To share roles related to the challenges, there is a division of teams for Instagram, podcast, web, and magazine among the 15, but in practice, they help each other. The TikTok team and Instagram flyer team share their work. So, it is a team effort. The school magazine content is published twice a semester, one printed for study tour guests and the other uploaded on the website. Its content includes short stories, featured figures, crossword puzzles, and a writing corner for teachers as well. To overcome the obstacles faced, the school usually conducts an evaluation, then discusses how to resolve them, and the public relations department allocates a budget to address the issues."

This illustrated that the challenges and obstacles faced in the educational marketing strategy are, *first*, creativity in presenting new ideas in social media content; second, the conflict of role division between being a teacher and a content creator, and *third*, the synergy of the content creator team, which is divided into several parts, namely the podcast team, web, magazine, TikTok, Instagram, and flyers to be shared according to the schedule (Solechan & Afifah, 2022). Meanwhile, the challenges and obstacles in school outreach according to one representative of the parent-teacher committee is: "For future challenges, the school also needs to post alumni activities, where the graduates work, where they study, and the testimonials from alumni that are currently being gathered." It means that the challenges and obstacles faced by SMPIT Abu Bakar Yogyakarta are related to the addition of posts about alumni activities and the tracer study of school graduates regarding their work and studies.

The student community at SMP IT Abu Bakar Yogyakarta engages with Instagram beyond recreational purposes, utilizing the platform as a complementary medium for educational support, identity development, and social interaction. Students actively contribute to the school's digital ecosystem by sharing or reposting content related to Islamic and national commemorative events, academic and extracurricular achievements, as well as milestones in *Tahsin* and *Tahfiz* programs through visual media such as photographs, videos, and Instagram Stories. Moreover, their engagement with official institutional content-evident in actions such as commenting, liking, and sharing school posts and stories-demonstrates an active form of digital participation that reinforces institutional visibility and communal identity. In this context, Instagram serves not only as a space for personal expression and development, but also as a virtual environment that fosters collective identity and the transmission of Islamic values among students.

4. Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that Instagram functions not only as a communication tool but also as a significant agent of socialization within the context of Integrated Islamic Schools, particularly SMP IT Abu Bakar Yogyakarta.

Through a netnography analysis of the school's Instagram account, it was revealed that the platform serves multiple roles: reinforcing institutional identity, transmitting Islamic values, facilitating community engagement, and shaping perceptions among students, parents, and prospective stakeholders.

The visual and textual content shared by the school reflects a deliberate effort to construct a digital identity that aligns with its educational philosophy - one that integrates academic excellence with character and moral development rooted in Islamic teachings. Moreover, interactions such as comments, shares, and likes to contribute to a participatory digital culture where users actively engage with and internalize the school's messages and values.

These findings indicate that social media platforms like Instagram have become essential components of contemporary educational ecosystems, especially in institutions aiming to maintain cultural and religious relevance in a digital society. This study contributes to the growing discourse on digital socialization in education and highlights the importance of understanding how traditional educational values are adapted, negotiated, and reinforced in online spaces.

Instagram plays a transformative role in redefining how socialization occurs within Islamic educational contexts, making it imperative for schools to strategically manage their digital presence while remaining grounded in their core pedagogical and ethical principles.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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