DIGITAL PEDAGOGY OF SUFISM: A QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS OF 300 YOUTUBE VIDEOS FROM TAREKAT IDRISIYYAH

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Abstract

The growing use of digital media has changed how Sufi teachings are presented and accessed, including within established Sufi orders. This study examines how Tarekat Idrisiyyah uses YouTube as a space for Sufi learning, with particular attention to its teaching formats, major themes, and audience engagement. The study analyzed 300 videos published on the order's official YouTube channel between 2024 and 2026 using Qualitative Content Analysis. Video metadata were collected using Python, yt-dlp, and Pandas. At the same time, the content was coded through a combination of deductive categories based on Digital Religion theory and themes that emerged from the data. The analysis shows that Tarekat Idrisiyyah combines established forms of Sufi instruction with formats adapted to digital media. Monologue-based *halaqah* teaching dominated the corpus (89.0%), while Shorts accounted for 43.7% of the videos and dialogic formats for 10.3%. Five main themes emerged, with Contemporary Sufism being the most prominent (58.3%), followed by *Tazkiyatun Nafs* (18.3%), *Adab & Authority of the Mursyid* (11.7%), *Amaliyah & Devotional Practices* (10.0%), and *Socioeconomic Ecosystem* (1.7%). Interestingly, content on *Adab & Authority of the Mursyid* received the highest average number of views (581.0), despite accounting for a smaller share of the videos. These findings suggest that digitalization has not displaced the traditional structure of Sufi authority but has enabled it to be presented, accessed, and maintained in a networked environment.

Keywords: *digital pedagogy; digital Sufism; Tarekat Idrisiyyah; religious authority; YouTube.*

INTRODUCTION

The way Muslims acquire and apply religious knowledge has fundamentally transformed with digital innovation, with YouTube emerging as one of the most significant channels for contemporary religious communication. In the Islamic context, this platform not only disseminates da'wah but also serves as an interactive, flexible, participatory, and ever-expanding learning space for content development and user interaction. Because of their quick access, visual presentation styles, and ease of participation through debate, live broadcasts, and sharing capabilities, platforms, audiences, and aesthetics are increasingly mediating religious authority for youth and digital audiences (Chen et al., 2026; Hadi et al., 2025; Al-Zaman, 2022; Lohlker & Wahid, 2026; Sukma et al., 2025).

In theory, the best religious digital pedagogy develops methodical, introspective, dialogical, and spiritually significant learning in addition to imparting lessons (Chen et al., 2026; Hadi et al., 2025; Susanti et al., 2024). Social media is viewed in the study of digital Islam as a space for

authority negotiation, where religious actors modify their pedagogical approaches for new audiences and create virtual religious communities through interaction, presence, and symbolic identification (Ibrahim, 2024; Lohlker & Wahid, 2026a; Whyte, 2022).

This ideology is even more complicated in the context of Sufism because spiritual transmission encompasses not only religious knowledge but also authorization, inner experience, depth of meaning, and murshid-worship relationships, which are traditionally based in offline togetherness but are increasingly mediated in virtual spaces (Lohlker & Wahid, 2026a; Wahyudi et al., 2025).

Empirical evidence, however, indicates that the transition to the digital realm also entails considerable ambivalence. Research has demonstrated that while digital media increases the reach of Islamic education and da'wah, it also promotes the monetization of religion, the fracturing of authority, speaker competition, and the simplification of spirituality (Asri et al., 2025; Fauzi et al., 2026; Wahyudi et al., 2025).

This change is seen in the Sufi tradition in the transition from the "quiet road" to the "public road" in cyberspace, which makes Sufism's identity more approachable and transparent but also runs the risk of weakening the esoteric aspect that has always been central to the Sufi experience(Azhimov et al., 2026a; Hidayati, 2022).

Although YouTube offers lectures, tutorials, short videos, live broadcasts, and Q&A sessions on a pedagogical level, research also reveals that the use of its interactive elements is frequently not optimal for creating deeper cognitive engagement (Hadi et al., 2025; Ibrahim, 2024; Sukma et al., 2025).

There is now a glaring research gap. Few studies explicitly examine Sufism's digital pedagogy as an instructional practice through modes of delivery, learning formats, teaching themes, and patterns of audience engagement within a single, integrated research design. Most existing studies focus on digital Islam at the public level, online religious authority, or the representation of Sufism on social media Asri et al., 2025; Azhimov et al., 2026a; Chen et al., 2026).

Additionally, rather than concentrating on particular orders as producers of spiritual knowledge with unique authority structures, genealogy, and teaching, research on Islamic YouTube

has mostly concentrated on general trends in videos, algorithmic optimization, the growth of religious knowledge, or Muslim influencers(Al-Zaman, 2022; Hasan et al., 2025; Zaid et al., 2022).

Even more narrowly, there has been no study that systematically mapped 300 YouTube videos of the Idrisiyyah Order to examine how Sufi teachings are pedagogized, which themes are most dominant, and how the audience's virtual responses reflect acceptance of religious authority and spiritual instruction.

The research offers significant chances for academic contribution. Religious discourse forms, rescue tales, visual components, comments as informal learning spaces, and algorithms as agents that influence the visibility and acceptance of da'wah have all been analyzed in several recent studies (Azizah et al., 2026; Chen et al., 2026; Hasan et al., 2025).

Virtual spaces can be acceptable locations for ritual experiences, the spiritualization of authority, and the mediation of barakah, according to another study of digital Sufi groups. This opens up new interpretations of how the tariqat negotiates traditions in a platform setting (Azhimov et al., 2026b; Wahyudi et al., 2025).

Based on these advancements, this study offers novelty by linking three layers of analysis that are often isolated: audience engagement patterns, the thematic discourses of Sufi teachings, and digital pedagogical formats as markers of authority reception in a sizable corpus of Tarekat Idrisiyyah videos on YouTube.

The Idrisiyyah Tarekat is a strategic case for understanding how Sufi authority, spiritual instruction, and Islamic pedagogy are changing within the platform media ecology, making this research crucial. Studying the tarekat on YouTube is becoming crucial to understanding how spiritual legitimacy is created, preserved, and accepted in the digital public sphere as representation styles, upload consistency, user interaction, and algorithmic logic increasingly define digital religious authority (Fauzi et al., 2026; Lohlker & Wahid, 2026a).

Additionally, because it demonstrates that online religious learning involves more than just information transfer- it also involves affective formation, self-reflection, and the potential to change religious behavior, this research is pertinent to the study of digital Islamic education (Amatulloh et al., 2025; Azizah et al., 2026; Sukma et al., 2025).

In light of this, the study's three main objectives are to investigate the Idrisiyyah Tarekat's digital pedagogy on YouTube. The teaching forms and delivery strategies that comprise the digital pedagogy of the Idrisiyyah Order are first defined in this study. Second, this study maps the dominant themes in their digital Sufi teachings. Third, this study looks at virtual audience interaction patterns to understand how religious authority and spiritual teaching are accepted, negotiated, and validated in the digital sphere.

RESEARCH METHOD

To methodically examine, classify, and interpret both explicit and implicit meanings in digital audiovisual religious content, this study used a qualitative research design with Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) (Krippendorff, 2019; Schreier, 2020). QCA was chosen because it enables systematic identification of themes and patterns in qualitative communication materials while accounting for their contextual significance. The approach was employed in this study to determine the fundamental themes of modern Sufi discourse and to develop a typology of digital teaching modes. Individual videos posted on Tarekat Idrisiyyah's official YouTube channel (@IdrisiyyahID) served as the unit of analysis.

Three specific inclusion criteria were used to guide a purposive sampling strategy: (1) videos released between 2024 and 2026; (2) content centered around spiritual lectures, mystical guidance, interactive Q&A sessions, or stories about the order's socioeconomic Ecosystem; and (3) full availability of critical metadata, such as video ID, title, duration, view count, and publication date. A final corpus of 300 videos was produced by using these criteria. The chosen corpus was then analyzed as a cohesive collection of digital religious content to find trends in audience interaction, topic discourse, and instructional delivery.

Data collection was conducted through automated metadata extraction using custom Python scripts, with yt-dlp and pandas employed to retrieve and organize the relevant YouTube data. The dataset included video IDs (VID-001 to VID-300), URLs, titles, video duration, and view counts. Based on duration, the corpus was categorized into three formats: Shorts, Medium-length, and Long-form videos. This metadata extraction process provided the structural information required to examine the relationship between video format and the identified digital pedagogy modes.

Deductive categories from Digital Religion theory were combined with inductive themes from the dataset's first immersion to create an extensive codebook. Two main analytical axes were operationalized in the codebook. The first was Digital Pedagogy Modes, which included Narrative/Documentary, Dialogue/Podcast/Q&A, and Monologue/Halaqah. The second was Sufi Discursive Themes, which included Tazkiyatun Nafs, Amaliyah & Devotional Practices, Adab & Spiritual Authority, Socioeconomic Ecosystem, and Contemporary Sufism. Contextual evaluation and transcript excerpting were used to methodically assess each film. Analytical memos, representative verbatim quotations, and pertinent coded segments were arranged in a qualitative matrix.

To identify structural patterns in the distribution of instructional modes and thematic categories, descriptive frequencies were computed. These patterns were then combined with qualitative interpretation and theme synthesis. The study used data triangulation, cross-referencing quantitative metadata with qualitative transcripts, peer debriefing among academic colleagues, and a transparent audit trail maintained through Python log archives and preliminary coding sheets, to increase research trustworthiness and analytical rigor. These methods offered a methodical foundation for tying the movies' digital features to the educational patterns and substantive meanings found through QCA (Krippendorff, 2019; Schreier, 2020).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

An empirical explanation of how Tarekat Idrisiyyah arranges, delivers, and disseminates Sufi teachings via its official YouTube channel is provided by the analysis of the 300-video corpus. Three interrelated aspects of the digital Sufi pedagogy identified through qualitative content analysis are used to present the findings. The first dimension focuses on the various pedagogical approaches and multimedia formats used to convey Sufi teachings. The second dimension examines the thematic aspects of digital Sufi discourse, identifying the main topics that define the teachings' substance and how they are distributed across the corpus. By analyzing video consumption trends in connection to the content's thematic distribution, the third dimension tackles virtual audience involvement.

When combined, these three aspects offer an organized description of the digital pedagogical activities found in the corpus. The relationship between instructional delivery methods and video formats is first examined, followed by an examination of the thematic makeup of Sufi teachings. To identify discrepancies between the amount of content generated and the degree of audience consumption, it then takes audience engagement patterns into account. The results are evaluated in light of the features of the digital Sufi content identified during the research and presented descriptively.

1. Digital Pedagogy Modes and Formats

Tarekat Idrisiyyah uses a hybrid educational approach, combining traditional, authoritative religious instruction with modern digital media formats, according to an analysis of the 300-video corpus.

Table 1. *Distribution of Instructional Delivery Modes across Video Length Categories* *($N = 300$)*

Delivery Mode	Shorts (<2 min)	Medium (2–15 min)	Long (>15 min)	Total Videos (N)	Percentage (%)
Monologue (Halaqah)	123	130	14	**267**	**89.0%**
Dialogue (Podcast/Q&A)	80	20	31	**31**	**10.3%**
Narrative (Documentary/Vlog)	0	0	2	**2**	**0.7%**
Total	**131 (43.7%)**	**150 (50.0%)**	**19 (6.3%)**	**300**	**100.0%**

According to the data, 89.0% (n=267) of all videos featured a single-speaker, monologue-style delivery that was modeled after traditional halaqah settings. This structural preference

emphasizes that the primary mode of information transmission remains magisterial, instructional teaching by the Mursyid (spiritual master) or assigned academics.

At the same time, a purposeful micro-pedagogical approach is evident in the widespread use of YouTube Shorts (<2 minutes), which make up 43.7% (n=131) of the dataset. This format optimizes for quick social media consumption by distilling intricate spiritual theory into bite-sized, approachable information (pithy wisdom). 10.3% (n=31) of the corpus consists of dialogic formats (podcasts/Q&A), which serve as an interactive bridge to address the public's real-world spiritual quandaries.

2. Thematic Dimensions of Digital Sufi Discourse

The instructional content was qualitatively coded into five main theme groups, each with different levels of audience involvement and production volume.

Table 2. *Thematic Distribution of Sufi Teachings and Engagement Metrics ($N = 300$)*

Primary Sufi Theme	Total Videos (N)	Percentage (%)	Cumulative Views	Average Views (Mean)
Contemporary Sufism	175	58.3%	58,777	335.9
Tazkiyatun Nafs (Purification of the Soul)	55	18.3%	15,426	280.5
Adab & Authority of the Mursyid	35	11.7%	20,336	581.0
Amaliyah & Devotional Practices	30	10.0%	9,774	325.8
Socioeconomic Ecosystem	5	1.7%	1,470	294.0
Total	**300**	**100.0%**	**105,783**	**352.6**

a. Contemporary Sufism (58.3% / $n = 175$)**:** Representing the vast majority of the channel's output, this category focuses on translating classical Sufi principles into practical frameworks for modern life. Key sub-themes include ethical living, psychological resilience, social harmony, and the synthesis of religious faith with rationality. Verbatim Evidence: "This Is Proof That Islamic Teachings Are Not Rigid, But Flexible" (VID-003); "The Way Out of the Backsliding of Muslims! Return to Sufism" (VID-011).

b. Tazkiyatun Nafs (18.3% / $n = 55$)**:** This theme centers on spiritual purification, the management of spiritual ailments (such as pride, ostentation, and envy), and the systematic disciplines of spiritual practice (*riyāḍah*). Verbatim Evidence*: "Understanding the 4 Pillars of Riyadah to Draw Closer to Allah"* (VID-005); *"The True Karamah Is Consistency in Worship"* (VID-001).

c. Adab & Authority of the Mursyid (11.7% / $n = 35$)**:** These teachings emphasize spiritual etiquette (*adab*), the indispensability of guidance under a qualified spiritual master (*Mursyid*), and the preservation of authentic chains of transmission (*sanad*). Verbatim Evidence*: "Good Manners Are More Valuable Than Much Knowledge"* (VID-013); *"The Importance of Reasonableness in Spiritual Education"* (VID-020).

d. Amaliyah & Devotional Practices (10.0% / $n = 30$)**:** Instructional guidance outlining specific liturgical rituals, intercessory prayer (*tawasul/wasilah*), remembrance of God (*dhikr*), and eschatological reflections. Verbatim Evidence: *"Even Though the Prophet Has Passed Away, Is It Still Permissible to Use Him as a Wasila?"* (VID-002).

e. Socioeconomic Ecosystem (1.7% / $n = 5$)**:** Discourses highlighting "Sufi-preneurship" and the economic self-reliance initiatives developed by the order.

3. Virtual Audience Engagement Dynamics

Across the entire dataset of 300 videos, the content generated 105,783 views. A closer examination of the engagement metrics reveals an illuminating divergence between production volume and audience consumption.

Despite accounting for only 11.7% of all videos produced, lessons centered on Adab & Authority of the Mursyid had the highest average engagement, with 581.0 views per video, well above the corpus mean of 352.6 views. This result indicates that content that upholds spiritual legitimacy, ancestry, and master-disciple ethics is in high demand among devoted followers and spiritual seekers. On the other hand, with 58,777 views, or 55.6% of all views, Contemporary Sufism produced the highest cumulative audience, indicating its efficacy as a wide-ranging public engagement approach.

DISCUSSIONS

1. Hybrid Digital Pedagogy: Re-Spatializing the *Halaqah*

The predominance of YouTube Shorts at 43.7% and the monological teaching approach at 89.0% point to the development of a mixed digital education. This tendency is consistent with the observation that modern Sufi organizations and actors are renegotiating the link between inherited traditions, new media, and new pedagogical approaches rather than just transferring teachings to digital media (Hafil et al., 2025; Siregar & Susilawati, 2026).

Therefore, without immediately eliminating the established teaching framework, the digital realm expands the arena of transmission of teachings beyond the physical confines of pesantren, assemblies, or zāwiyah (Shadiqin & Jamil, 2024; Siregar & Susilawati, 2026; Wahyudi et al., 2025).

The continuation of one-way lectures suggests that, notwithstanding the relocation of the halaqah to a virtual setting, the magisterial authority of the Mursyid remains the focal point of spiritual instruction. These results align with research demonstrating that Sufi leaders and organizations frequently use social media to uphold rather than undermine traditional beliefs and authorities (Hidayati, 2022; Taufik & Taufik, 2021).

Simultaneously, the use of short formats like Shorts demonstrates adaptation to the logic of the platform, since digital media favors information that is concise, easy to consume, and audiovisual so that lessons can still reach a larger audience (Dzikriyah et al., 2026; Hafil et al., 2025; Sulthon et al., 2025).

89.0% of monologues affirm the continuity of instructional hierarchy in digital Sufi transmission (Siregar & Susilawati, 2026). 43.7% of YouTube Shorts reflect the adaptation of the teachings to micro-formats and quick access typical of digital platforms (Hafil et al., 2025; Muharrifah & Sikumbang, 2025). This model synthesizes traditional mentorship and digital dissemination (Siregar & Susilawati, 2026).

2. *Applied Sufism*: Discursive Shifts in the Digital Public Sphere

The theme of Contemporary Sufism, which predominates at 58.3%, indicates a shift in how Sufi knowledge is packaged in the digital public sphere. The percentage of esoteric or ceremonial content, at just 10.0%, shows that applied Sufism, that is, Sufism discussed in relation to modern life issues, is more frequently displayed on digital platforms. This tendency is consistent with the finding that Sufi educators are currently translating traditional concepts, such as terms related to psychology, self-development, and spiritual well-being, into languages recognizable to contemporary generations (Siregar & Susilawati, 2026).

As a result, Sufism is now portrayed as a useful framework for understanding mental health, ethics, and faith-reason links rather than as an austere path distinct from society. This result is consistent with research demonstrating that digital media promotes the contextualization of teachings, the negotiation of pious identity, and the adaptation of Islamic spirituality to the demands of diverse audiences and urban lifestyles (Asri et al., 2025; Muharrifah & Sikumbang, 2025).

Within this framework, digitization also expands public access to Sufi teachings, making knowledge that was once more limited to special circles more open and democratized (Sulthon et al., 2025; Waheed et al., 2024; Wahyudi et al., 2025). The dominance of 58.3% of Contemporary Sufism marks the strengthening of practical orientation in digital da'wah (Asri et al., 2025; Siregar & Susilawati, 2026). The small portion of ritual-esoteric content (10.0%) indicates a selection of discourse suited to a wide audience (Asri et al., 2025). Sufism is positioned as a source of ethics,

calmness, and self-reflection in modern life (Dzikriyah et al., 2026; Muharrifah & Sikumbang, 2025).

3. Preserving Spiritual Authority through Digital Mediatization

The finding that content about Adab and the Mursyid Authority averaged 581.0 views per video, even though the number of uploads was smaller, suggests that digitization does not always lead to the decentralization of authority. Research from a variety of sources reveals a more contradictory pattern: digital media can support individuals with sand, trustworthiness, and interpretive integrity while simultaneously creating opportunities for negotiation, pluralization, and rivalry over authority (Andok, 2024; Sulthon et al., 2025).

In this context, the strong interest in authority can be interpreted as both a digital public search for legitimate authority amid the deluge of online religious claims and the core congregation's need for daily spiritual alignment (Lohlker & Wahid, 2026a; Whyte, 2022).

The discovery that many religious actors uphold authority by stressing sanad, etiquette, and continuity between offline and online rituals supports this interpretation. Genealogy affirmation, ethical preparedness, and ties to classical traditions are crucial factors for preserving legitimacy in virtual settings in the study of Indonesian digital Sufism (Siregar & Susilawati, 2026; Sulthon et al., 2025).

Therefore, digital democratization in this case does not invalidate traditional authority, but rather reproduces it in a more visible, documented, and accessible form (Hidayat & Zein, 2022; Lohlker & Wahid, 2026a; Sulthon et al., 2025).

581.0 views per video on the theme of authority shows the high appeal of spiritual legitimacy-based content (Lohlker & Wahid, 2026b; Muharrifah & Sikumbang, 2025). Despite the abundance of online authority, digital viewers still appear to be seeking sanad, manners, and legitimacy (Sulthon et al., 2025; Whyte, 2022). Digitalization is therefore more accurately understood as the hybridization of authority rather than the erosion of traditional authority (Andok, 2024; Lohlker & Wahid, 2026a; Siregar & Susilawati, 2026).

Overall, this material shows that the media practice of the Idrisiyyah Tarekat does not remove the basic structure of Sufi transmission, but rather adapts it to the logic of digital platforms. In that framework, the data on 89.0%, 43.7%, 58.3%, 10.0%, and 581.0 views confirm that what is taking

place is not only the digitization of da'wah but also the restructuring of Sufi learning spaces, discourse, and authority in the era of network media.

CONCLUSIONS

According to the study's findings, digitalizing Sufi pedagogy is more complicated than just switching from in-person to online religious education. In the context of Tarekat Idrisiyyah, digitalization is a process of institutional and pedagogical adaptation in which the affordances of networked media are used to selectively reformulate inherited Sufi transmission mechanisms. The continued existence of halaqah-based authority alongside dialogic and short-form digital formats shows that technology-mediated learning need not entail the rejection of traditional pedagogical hierarchies. Rather, old Sufi knowledge can remain available while maintaining its institutional and spiritual direction, thanks to the digital environment's new spatial and communicative arrangements.

More broadly, the study suggests that the relationship between digitalization and religious authority is more complex than a linear movement from traditional authority toward decentralization. Digital media has the potential to both increase the public's access to religious knowledge and strengthen the authority of established spiritual figures. In this way, Tarekat Idrisiyyah's digital pedagogy exemplifies a process of continuity through transformation: the basic framework of Sufi authority is still identifiable, but the medium shifts, the educational forms adjust, and the discourse becomes more widely accessible. By suggesting that the digital transformation of institutionalized Sufism is better understood as a process of re-spatialization, discursive adaptation, and hybridization of authority rather than just as the digitization of da'wah, the study therefore advances the field of digital religion scholarship.

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