

Digital Living Qur'an and Audience Engagement with *Riko The Series* on YouTube in Indonesian Muslim Family Contexts

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Abstract

Purpose: This study aims to analyse audience engagement with Qur'anic content in *Riko The Series* on YouTube as a digital form of Living Qur'an. It examines how Qur'anic values are received, interpreted, and reproduced by audiences through comment culture, digital traces, interaction, and family-based viewing practices. **Methodology:** This study employed a qualitative netnographic design. The data were collected from three selected episodes of *Riko The Series*, thirty purposively selected YouTube comments, digital engagement metrics, semi-structured interviews with six audience informants, and one interview with a member of the production team. The data were analysed through four netnographic dimensions: digital cyberculture, digital traces, audience interaction, and immersive engagement. **Findings:** The findings show that the comment space of *Riko The Series* contains Islamic invocations, Qur'anic references, hadith citations, prayers, moral advice, and personal reflections. Digital trace data reveal different engagement patterns across episodes: *Kambing Putih Riko* generated the highest views and likes, while *Tanaman Bertasbih* produced the highest number of comments. Interview data further show that the series encouraged Qur'anic reflection, children's imitation of Islamic expressions, parent-child religious discussion, and audience feedback for future content development. **Implications:** This study suggests that Islamic animation can support informal Qur'anic learning within Muslim families when accompanied by parental mediation, reliable references, and careful comment moderation. **Originality:** The originality of this study lies in its netnographic analysis of audiences as active digital actors who participate in producing and circulating Qur'anic meanings through YouTube-based Islamic animation.

Keywords: Audience engagement; digital Living Qur'an; Islamic animation; netnography; YouTube.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of digital media has fundamentally reshaped religious practice in the twenty-first century, particularly in Muslim-majority Indonesia. YouTube has become one of the most influential digital spaces for religious communication, with Indonesia recording approximately 143 million YouTube users in early 2025 and ranking among the four most active YouTube nations globally (We Are Social, 2025). This development indicates that YouTube no longer functions merely as an entertainment platform or information channel, but also as a space where Islamic identities are formed, Qur'anic teachings are circulated, and everyday religious practices are mediated beyond the traditional boundaries of mosques, pesantren, and majlis ta'lim. In this context, digital platforms have become active arenas of da'wah, religious learning, and lived Islamic practice (Campbell, 2020).

This transformation is closely related to the development of the Living Qur'an in digital space. The concept of Living Qur'an, which refers to the study of how Qur'anic values are embodied, practised, and reproduced in Muslim social realities, has gained increasing scholarly attention in recent decades (Qudsy, Abdullah, Jubba, Prasojo, & Tanadi Taufik, 2023; Rafiq, 2021; Supriyanto & Zaman, 2023). However, when Qur'anic values move into digital environments, they are no longer expressed only through recitation, memorisation, rituals, or community practices, but also through animated narratives, YouTube comments, digital likes, and audience participation. Children's Islamic animation is therefore an important site for

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examining how Qur'anic values are transmitted and lived in contemporary digital culture. *Riko The Series*, an Indonesian 3D Islamic animated series launched on YouTube in February 2020, has attracted over 3.22 million subscribers and accumulated more than 838 million total views across 579 uploaded videos as of May 2025. These figures show that *Riko The Series* is not merely children's entertainment, but a significant digital medium through which Qur'anic values are introduced, received, and potentially practised by Muslim families and young audiences in Indonesia.

Research on digital religion, online Islamic communities, Living Qur'an practices, and Islamic educational media has expanded significantly in recent years. First, studies on digital religion and online Islamic communities have shown that digital platforms are not merely technological tools, but spaces where religious authority, identity, learning, and community formation are continuously negotiated. Campbell and Evolvi (2020) and Campbell and Cheong (2022) demonstrate that digital religion studies examine the intersection between religious practice and emerging technologies, particularly how online and offline religious experiences increasingly overlap. In the Indonesian Islamic context, Husein and Slama (2018) highlight the rise of social media da'wah, while Solahudin and Fakhruroji (2020) show how internet-based Islamic learning reshapes religious authority and encourages new forms of religious populism. Other studies also indicate that Muslim youth, digital influencers, and online communities use social media to access Islamic knowledge, construct religious identity, and participate in public religious discourse (Larsson & Willander, 2025; Pabbajah, Jubba, Abdullah, Pabbajah, & Juhansar, 2021; Zaid, Fedtke, Shin, El Kadoussi, & Ibahrine, 2022). These studies confirm that digital media has become a significant arena for contemporary Islamic expression, but they tend to focus on authority, da'wah, learning practices, or community formation rather than on how audiences interpret Qur'anic values through participatory engagement with Islamic animation.

Second, studies on Living Qur'an in digital space have examined how Qur'anic values, interpretation, education, and memorisation are mediated through digital platforms. Previous research has discussed Qur'an journaling practices on Instagram (Farahdiba, 2024), da'wah strategies on TikTok (Aldar, 2023), digital Qur'anic reception through various online channels (Zuhri, 2021), digital tafsir through mobile applications (Khaerani, Rusmana, & Fitriani, 2023), and Qur'anic exegesis on online Islamic platforms (Iskandar & Khaerani, 2024). Other studies have shown that digital platforms support Qur'anic education by improving accessibility, flexibility, and learner participation, while also raising questions about authority, sacredness, and the limits of digital mediation (Ali & Isnaini, 2024; Fajrie, Arianto, Surya, & Aminulloh, 2023; Genç & Yilmaz, 2025; Syahir, Abidin, Sa'ari, & Rahman, 2025; Zohdi, Al-Hafdi, & Alhalafawy, 2024). These studies have expanded the scope of Living Qur'an research from offline ritual and communal practices to digital learning, interpretation, and religious participation. However, they have not sufficiently examined how Qur'anic values are reproduced through audience comments, likes, testimonies, and interactive responses in Islamic children's animation on YouTube.

Third, studies on Islamic animation and children's education have emphasized the importance of animated and audiovisual media in transmitting moral, religious, and cultural values to young audiences. Research on Islamic edutainment animation shows that animated stories can function as effective tools for introducing Islamic virtues, supporting early childhood learning, and offering religiously appropriate alternatives to secular children's media (W. M. W. Isa et al., 2015; Moll, 2009; Waheed, Ahmad, & Bhatti, 2025). Other studies demonstrate that interactive animation, augmented reality, mobile games, and digital storytelling can strengthen children's engagement with Islamic learning materials, including Hijaiyah letters, religious manners, and moral education (W. A. R. W. M. Isa, Suhaimi, Misron, Bohary, & Amin, 2020; Pradibta, Nurhasan, Pramesti, & Suryadi, 2019; Zubaedi, Hakim, & Asiyah, 2020). In relation to *Riko The*

Series, previous studies have discussed its moral content, educational values, and Qur'anic message framing. Nevertheless, existing research has paid limited attention to the audience as active digital agents who interpret, negotiate, and reproduce Qur'anic meanings through YouTube comment culture. Therefore, this study addresses this gap by applying a netnographic framework to analyse audience engagement with *Riko The Series*, focusing on digital cyberculture, digital traces, interaction, and immersive engagement as expressions of Living Qur'an in the digital age.

This study aims to analyse audience engagement with Qur'anic content in *Riko The Series* on YouTube through a netnographic framework. Specifically, it examines four dimensions of engagement: digital cyberculture, digital traces, audience interaction, and immersive engagement. The dimension of digital cyberculture is used to identify the religious symbols, Qur'anic expressions, and communicative patterns that appear in the comment space. Digital traces are examined through likes, comments, views, and other measurable forms of audience participation. Audience interaction is analysed to understand how viewers respond to, interpret, and extend Qur'anic messages through comments and discussions. Meanwhile, immersive engagement is explored to identify the cognitive, affective, and behavioural impacts of the series on viewers, particularly children and Muslim families. Through these dimensions, this study seeks to explain how YouTube-based Islamic animation contributes to the formation of digital Living Qur'an practices in contemporary Indonesian Muslim society.

This study argues that audience engagement with *Riko The Series* on YouTube constitutes a digital form of Living Qur'an. Qur'anic values in this context are not only transmitted through animated narratives, but are also interpreted, negotiated, and reproduced through comments, likes, audience testimonies, and family-based viewing practices. This argument is grounded in the concept of Living Qur'an, which views the Qur'an as a living social force embodied in Muslim everyday practices (Rafiq, 2021); digital religion theory, which explains how religious practices are reshaped by digital media affordances such as interactivity, visibility, and networked participation (Campbell, 2020; Hoover, 2006); and participatory culture theory, which positions audiences as active co-producers of meaning rather than passive media consumers (Jenkins, 2006). Methodologically, this argument is examined through Kozinets' netnography, particularly the dimensions of cyberculture, digital traces, interaction, and immersive engagement (Kozinets & Gambetti, 2021; Kozinets, 2015). Based on this theoretical foundation, the study proposes that YouTube comment culture around Islamic animation can function as a participatory religious space where Qur'anic meanings are socially produced and lived in digital form.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a qualitative netnographic design to examine audience engagement with Qur'anic content in *Riko The Series* on YouTube. The unit of analysis was audience engagement with Qur'anic messages in three selected episodes of *Riko The Series*, as reflected in YouTube comments, digital traces, interaction patterns, and interview narratives. The study was multidisciplinary in orientation, integrating Islamic studies, cultural anthropology, and communication science. Islamic studies was used to interpret the Qur'anic values and Living Qur'an practices embedded in the digital engagement; cultural anthropology informed the examination of online audience culture; and communication science supported the analysis of media interaction, audience participation, and digital platform affordances. Netnography was selected as the primary methodological approach because the research object was located in a digital field site where religious meanings, social interactions, and community practices were mediated through online communication (Kozinets & Gambetti, 2021; Kozinets, 2015).

The research site was the official YouTube channel of *Riko The Series*. Three episodes from Season 2 were purposively selected as primary data sites: *Tanaman Bertasbih* [Plants that Glorify God], Episode 20, uploaded on 3 July 2020 and grounded in QS. Al-Isra: 44 (Riko The Series, 2020c); *Kambing Putih Riko* [Riko's White Goat], Episode 24, uploaded on 31 July 2020 and grounded in QS. Al-Hajj: 34 (Riko The Series, 2020a); and *Main Layang-Layang* [Flying Kites], Season 2 Episode 06, uploaded on 13 November 2020 and grounded in QS. Al-Hijr: 22 (Riko The Series, 2020b). These episodes were selected based on two considerations. First, they had active and accessible comment sections, unlike several other episodes whose comments had been disabled. Second, they represented different Qur'anic themes, including natural science, ritual worship, and environmental ethics, allowing comparison of audience engagement across different types of Islamic animated content.

Data were obtained from five sources: the three selected video episodes, YouTube comments, digital engagement metrics, semi-structured interviews with audience informants, and an interview with one member of the production team. Digital engagement metrics included likes, comments, views, subscriber information, and upload patterns, recorded according to the date of access. Digital observation was conducted over a six-month period from July to December 2025. During this period, the researcher systematically observed the selected episodes, documented comment patterns, recorded recurring Islamic expressions, identified peer-to-peer interaction, and noted audience responses to Qur'anic content. The researcher did not intervene in the comment space and did not initiate interaction with viewers, in order to preserve the natural dynamics of the digital field.

Comment analysis was conducted on thirty selected comments drawn from the three episodes. The comments were selected purposively by considering three criteria: the number of likes received, thematic relevance to the Qur'anic message of the episode, and variation in audience response patterns. To reduce selection bias, the sample included not only appreciative comments, but also reflective comments, theological questions, personal testimonies, and interactional responses among viewers. The selected comments were distributed proportionally across the three episodes based on the density and relevance of comment activity. These comments were then categorised and coded using the qualitative analysis model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, which consists of data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing (Huberman, Miles, & Saldana, 2014).

Semi-structured online interviews were conducted between October and November 2025 through Google Meet and direct messaging. The informants consisted of six audience members and one member of the production team. Audience informants were selected through snowball sampling from active viewers and comment contributors who had engaged with *Riko The Series*. They represented different viewer positions, including students, young adults, and parents who had watched the series with children. Interviews explored viewing experiences, interpretations of Qur'anic messages, perceived educational impact, children's behavioural responses, and the role of family discussion after watching the episodes. Sampling was stopped when the interview data reached thematic saturation, indicated by the repetition of key themes and the absence of substantially new categories in the later interviews.

The data analysis was structured around four dimensions of netnography: cyberculture, digital traces, interaction, and immersive engagement (Kozinets & Gambetti, 2021; Kozinets, 2015).

Cyberculture was analysed by examining religious symbols, Qur'anic expressions, linguistic registers, and shared meanings in the comment space. Digital traces were analysed through measurable audience engagement, including likes, comments, views, and other platform-based indicators. Interaction was examined through the relational and discursive patterns among viewers, including responses, questions, peer explanations, prayers, and expressions of solidarity. Immersive engagement was analysed through interview narratives that revealed cognitive, affective, and behavioural impacts of the series on viewers, especially children and Muslim families.

In addition to netnographic analysis, a secondary framing analysis was applied to the selected episodes to contextualise how Qur'anic messages were constructed in the animated narratives before being received by audiences. Entman's framing model—problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation—was used to identify how each episode framed Qur'anic values, moral lessons, and religious meanings (Entman, 1993). This framing analysis did not function as the main analytical framework, but as a supporting layer that helped connect production-level message construction with audience-level reception and participation.

This study followed netnographic ethical principles, including ethical entrée, transparency of observation, privacy protection, and informed consent for interview participants (Kozinets & Gambetti, 2021). YouTube comments analysed in this study were taken from publicly accessible comment sections; however, all usernames were anonymised to protect user privacy. Direct quotations from comments were translated or paraphrased where necessary without changing their substantive meaning. The study did not collect private data from children. Any information concerning children's responses to *Riko The Series* was obtained through adult informants, particularly parents or family viewers. All interview participants provided verbal and written consent before participation.

RESULTS

Islamic Symbolic Expressions in the Comment Space

The netnographic observation of selected YouTube comments on *Riko The Series* shows that the comment space contains a distinctive form of Islamic digital cyberculture. The comments include more than entertainment-based appreciation; they also contain Islamic invocations, Qur'anic vocabulary, hadith references, moral advice, prayers, and affective religious expressions. To protect user privacy, the selected comments were anonymised and coded as C1, C2, and C3. The quotations below are presented as primary data, translated by the author where necessary.

As shown in Figure 1, C1 uses the comment section to express religious appreciation, moral reflection, hadith-based advice, and prayer for the production team. The comment begins with an Islamic invocation and develops into a reflection on how every living creature glorifies Allah:

“Bismillahirrahmannirrahim. Masya Allah tabarokallah Riko and the Riko animation crew. This episode teaches all of us that every living creature glorifies Allah; even plants glorify Him. Then what about human beings, who were created perfectly but still remain arrogant because of what they possess?” (C1, YouTube comment, translated by the author).

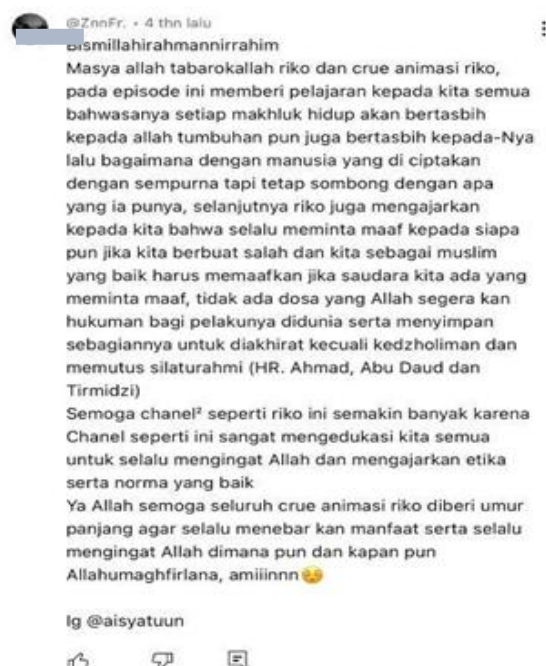


Figure 1. Islamic invocation, moral reflection, hadith reference, and prayer in an audience comment on *Riko The Series*.

In the same comment, C1 also extends the episode's message into moral advice about forgiveness, humility, and maintaining kinship relations. The commenter refers to hadith sources to reinforce the importance of avoiding injustice and preserving social bonds. The comment ends with a prayer for the channel and the animation crew, asking that they may continue to educate audiences, spread benefit, and remind viewers to remember Allah. This shows that C1 uses the comment section not only to appreciate the animation, but also to articulate religious values through advice, textual reference, and *du'a*.

A similar pattern appears in Figure 2. C2 opens the comment with Arabic-Islamic expressions such as *Assalamualaikum*, *Masya Allah*, and *Tabarakallah*. The comment then develops into a theological reflection on the glorification of Allah by all created beings:

"Assalamualaikum. Masya Allah, Tabarakallah. How extraordinary is the wisdom conveyed by this story, and it also reminds us all that every creature created by Allah glorifies Him. We as human beings, who were also created by Allah, should also glorify Him." (C2, YouTube comment, translated by the author).



Figure 2. Arabic-Islamic expressions and theological reflection in an audience comment.

Figure 2 shows that the viewer does not only praise the episode, but also connects its message with humility and devotional practice. C2 further refers to the virtue of reciting *Subhanallah wa bihamdih*, indicating that the audience may use the comment space to connect the animated narrative with hadith-based religious reflection. This pattern suggests that comments can become a medium through which viewers extend the religious message of the episode using Islamic vocabulary and textual references.

In Figure 3, C3 presents another form of Islamic symbolic expression by connecting the Qur'anic message of "*Tanaman Bertasbih*" with scientific explanation. The comment explicitly refers to QS. Al-Isra: 44 and links the idea of plant glorification with scientific claims about plant sounds:

"Masya Allah, Tabarakallah. This *Riko The Series* video is very inspiring and educational for children in particular and for all people in general, because every episode presents scientific knowledge contained in the Qur'an. In this episode, it proves that all plants created by Allah always remember Allah, as stated in QS. Al-Isra: 44" (C3, YouTube comment, translated by the author).

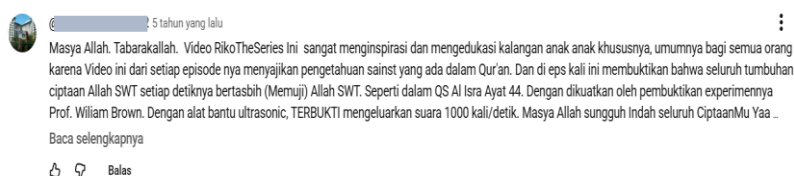


Figure 3. Qur'anic reference and science-religion elaboration in an audience comment on "*Tanaman Bertasbih*"

The same comment further elaborates the Qur'anic message by mentioning ultrasonic signals produced by plants. Although this scientific claim requires separate verification outside the scope of the

Results section, its presence in the comment is important as primary data because it shows how viewers connect Qur'anic teaching, natural phenomena, and scientific explanation in their response to the episode.

Figures 1, 2, and 3 show that the comment space of *Riko The Series* contains recurring forms of Islamic symbolic expression. Viewers use invocations such as *Bismillah*, *Masya Allah*, *Tabarakallah*, and *Assalamualaikum*; refer to Qur'anic verses and hadith; offer moral advice; and express prayers for the production team. These patterns indicate that audience responses are not merely general appreciation, but are shaped by religious language, Qur'anic references, devotional expressions, and moral reflection.

Digital Trace Patterns of Quantified Engagement

This section presents the digital traces of audience engagement with three selected episodes of *Riko The Series*. The data were obtained from YouTube platform documentation, including subscriber count, upload dates, views, likes, comments, and access dates. At the time of observation, the official YouTube channel of *Riko The Series* had approximately 3.67 million subscribers. These platform-based metrics are used to describe measurable forms of audience participation and to compare engagement patterns across episodes with different Qur'anic themes.

Table 1. Digital Traces of Audience Engagement with Selected Episodes of Riko The Series

Episode	Qur'anic Theme	Upload Date	Views	Likes	Comments	Access Date
<i>Tanaman Bertasbih</i>	QS. Al-Isra: 44 / Natural science	3 July 2020	4,654,663	approx. 20,000	1,400	28 Dec 2025
<i>Kambing Putih Riko</i>	QS. Al-Hajj: 34 / Ritual worship	31 July 2020	9,031,408	approx. 36,000	1,000	28 Dec 2025
<i>Main Layang-Layang</i>	QS. Al-Hijr: 22 / Environmental ethics	13 Nov 2020	4,589,634	approx. 17,000	813	28 Dec 2025
Total	—	—	18,275,705	approx. 73,000	3,213	—

Note. Source: Author's documentation from the official YouTube channel of *Riko The Series*, accessed 28 December 2025. The number of likes is presented approximately because YouTube displays likes in rounded figures.

As shown in Table 1, the three selected episodes of *Riko The Series* accumulated a total of 18,275,705 views, approximately 73,000 likes, and 3,213 comments. *Kambing Putih Riko* recorded the highest number of views and likes, with 9,031,408 views and approximately 36,000 likes. This was followed by *Tanaman Bertasbih*, which received 4,654,663 views and approximately 20,000 likes, and *Main Layang-Layang*, which received 4,589,634 views and approximately 17,000 likes. In terms of comment activity, however, *Tanaman Bertasbih* generated the highest number of comments, with 1,400 comments, followed by *Kambing Putih Riko* with 1,000 comments and *Main Layang-Layang* with 813 comments. These figures show that the episode with the highest number of views and likes did not necessarily produce the highest number of written audience responses.

The data show different patterns of audience engagement across the three episodes. *Kambing Putih Riko* stands out as the episode with the strongest overall quantitative reach, as it received the highest number of views and likes among the selected episodes. In contrast, *Tanaman Bertasbih* generated the

highest number of comments despite having fewer views and likes than *Kambing Putih Riko*. This indicates that audience engagement in *Tanaman Bertasbih* was more visible through written responses, while engagement in *Kambing Putih Riko* was more visible through viewing and liking activity. *Main Layang-Layang* recorded the lowest figures in all three indicators, namely views, likes, and comments. Overall, the comparison shows that each episode produced a different engagement profile across views, likes, and comments.

Each episode also represents a different Qur'anic theme, and the digital trace data show that audience engagement appeared across these varied thematic contexts. *Tanaman Bertasbih* is connected to QS. Al-Isra: 44 and presents the theme of natural science through the idea that all creation glorifies Allah. This episode generated 1,400 comments, the highest number of written responses among the three episodes. *Kambing Putih Riko* is related to QS. Al-Hajj: 34 and presents the theme of ritual worship through the meaning of sacrifice, recording the highest number of views and likes. Meanwhile, *Main Layang-Layang* refers to QS. Al-Hijr: 22 and introduces environmental themes through children's everyday play activities. Although it recorded the lowest number of views, likes, and comments among the selected episodes, it still shows measurable audience engagement. These data indicate that Qur'anic themes in *Riko The Series* generated different forms of platform-based audience responses across the three episodes.

The digital trace data show that audience engagement with *Riko The Series* is visible through measurable platform-based indicators, including views, likes, and comments. The three selected episodes collectively attracted more than 18 million views, approximately 73,000 likes, and 3,213 comments, indicating sustained audience attention toward Qur'anic animation on YouTube. However, the distribution of engagement differed across episodes: *Kambing Putih Riko* showed the strongest reach through views and likes, while *Tanaman Bertasbih* generated the most active written responses through comments. These quantitative traces provide an empirical basis for examining how viewers further interact with, interpret, and extend Qur'anic messages in the comment section, which will be discussed in the following sub-section.

Audience Interaction with Qur'anic Messages

The coding of thirty selected comments across the three analysed episodes identified five dominant forms of audience interaction with Qur'anic messages in *Riko The Series*. These interaction patterns include emotional-religious expression, reflective-theological elaboration, personal testimony and behavioural impact, community interaction and questioning, and appreciative solidarity and prayer. The data were drawn from selected YouTube comments, comment threads, audience questions, comments that added Qur'anic or hadith references, and comments that reported personal or family experiences after watching the episodes.

As shown in Table 2, audience interaction with Qur'anic messages in *Riko The Series* appeared in five main forms. The first form was emotional-religious expression, which appeared through praise, gratitude, and Islamic expressions such as *Masya Allah*, *Alhamdulillah*, and *Tabarakallah*. The second form was reflective-theological elaboration, in which viewers extended the message of the episode by adding Qur'anic verses, hadith references, moral interpretation, or scientific explanation. The third form was personal testimony and behavioural impact, shown through comments and interview notes that reported changes in children's religious habits or family discussions after watching the series. The fourth form was community interaction and questioning, where viewers addressed questions to the production team or

other viewers. The fifth form was appreciative solidarity and prayer, expressed through gratitude, support, and du'a for the animation crew and the continuation of the channel.

Table 2. Typology of Audience Interaction with Qur'anic Messages in *Riko The Series*

Interaction Type	Description	Primary Data	Episode
Emotional-religious expression	Praise and affective responses using Islamic expressions such as <i>Masya Allah</i> , <i>Alhamdulillah</i> , and <i>Tabarakallah</i>	Selected comments containing religious praise and gratitude	Ep. 20, Ep. 24, Ep. 06
Reflective-theological elaboration	Comments that add Qur'anic verses, hadith, moral interpretation, or scientific explanation to extend the episode's message	Comments referring to QS. Al-Isra: 44, hadith, and scientific explanation about plant glorification	Ep. 20
Personal testimony and behavioural impact	Comments reporting personal experiences or changes in children's religious behaviour after watching the series	Comments and interview notes mentioning children's worship habits, memorisation, or Islamic expressions	Ep. 06, Ep. 24
Community interaction and questioning	Questions addressed to the production team or other viewers, showing expectation of response or discussion	Comment threads containing questions about episode content, plants, or religious messages	Ep. 20
Appreciative solidarity and prayer	Expressions of gratitude, support, and du'a for the production team and other viewers	Comments praying for the <i>Riko</i> animation crew and supporting the channel's educational mission	Ep. 24, Ep. 20

Note. Source: Author's coding of thirty selected YouTube comments on *Riko The Series*.

The data show four main patterns of audience interaction with Qur'anic messages in *Riko The Series*. First, emotional-religious expression appears as the most common response, shown through Islamic phrases such as *Masya Allah*, *Alhamdulillah*, and *Tabarakallah*, which indicate that viewers frame the animation as religiously meaningful content. Second, reflective-theological elaboration is visible in comments that extend the episode's message by adding Qur'anic verses, hadith references, moral interpretation, or scientific explanation, especially in responses to *Tanaman Bertasbih*. Third, personal testimony appears in comments and interview notes describing how children or family members responded to the series, such as imitating Islamic expressions, asking religious questions, or showing interest in moral lessons. Fourth, community interaction is reflected in audience questions and prayers directed to the production team or other viewers, showing that the comment section also becomes a space for inquiry, support, and appreciation. Based on these patterns, the preliminary conclusion is that audience interaction with *Riko The Series* is not limited to passive appreciation, but includes religious expression, interpretive expansion, personal experience, and communal response to Qur'anic messages.

These findings indicate that the comment section of *Riko The Series* functions as more than a space for audience reaction; it becomes a digital arena where Qur'anic messages are received, extended, and connected to everyday religious experience. The presence of Islamic expressions, Qur'anic and hadith

references, personal testimonies, questions, and prayers shows that viewers engage with the animation through religiously meaningful communication. These findings show that audience interaction with *Riko The Series* appeared through observable practices in the comment section. Viewers responded with Islamic expressions, added Qur'anic and hadith references, shared personal or family experiences, asked questions, and offered prayers for the production team. The data indicate that the comment section was used for expressing religious understanding, extending the message of the episode, and connecting Qur'anic content with everyday experiences.

Immersive Engagement and Reported Impacts

This section presents interview-based findings on the deeper impacts of audience engagement with *Riko The Series*. The data were drawn from semi-structured online interviews with six audience informants and one member of the production team, supported by selected testimonial comments found in the YouTube comment section. The audience informants consisted of students, parents, and young professionals who had watched *Riko The Series* and engaged with its Qur'anic messages either individually or with family members. The interviews were used to identify how viewers experienced the series beyond passive viewing, particularly in terms of cognitive reflection, affective attachment, and behavioural influence. Through these data, this sub-section examines how Qur'anic animation on YouTube may shape viewers' understanding, emotional responses, family discussions, and everyday religious practices.

The interview data show that audience engagement with *Riko The Series* extended beyond watching the episodes as children's entertainment. Informants described the series as a medium that encouraged reflection, religious curiosity, family discussion, and the imitation of simple Islamic practices. These impacts appeared most clearly in three areas: viewers' cognitive engagement with Qur'anic meanings, children's behavioural responses, and family-based religious interaction.

Cognitive engagement was visible when viewers used the episodes as an entry point for further reflection on Qur'anic messages. This was especially evident in responses to "*Tanaman Bertasbih*," where the theme of plants glorifying Allah encouraged some viewers to search for the meaning of the cited verse and relate it to broader ethical questions. One informant explained, "After watching the episode about plants glorifying Allah, I tried to look up the verse and read more about its meaning. It made me think about how humans should treat nature more responsibly" (I1, male student, 27 years old, interview, October 14, 2025, translated by the author). This statement indicates that the episode did not only communicate Qur'anic values through animation, but also stimulated further knowledge-seeking and moral reflection among viewers.

The impact of the series was also reported in children's everyday religious behaviour. Parents described that children did not merely remember the storyline, but began to imitate some of the Islamic expressions and manners presented in the episodes. One mother stated, "My child started to say *Bismillah* more often before doing activities. Sometimes, after watching Riko, he also asked why Muslims should do certain practices" (I2, mother, interview, November 9, 2025, translated by the author). This testimony shows that the animation functioned as a trigger for simple religious habits and opened opportunities for parents to explain Islamic practices in ways that were accessible to children.

In several families, watching *Riko The Series* became a shared activity that supported religious conversation between parents and children. Rather than being consumed individually, the episodes were used by parents as material for discussing moral lessons after viewing. As one parent explained, "We usually watch the episodes together. After watching, I ask my child what lesson Riko learned in the story, and that becomes a simple religious discussion at home" (I4, parent viewer, interview, November 11, 2025,

translated by the author). This pattern suggests that the series helped transform screen time into a family-based learning moment, where Qur'anic values were discussed through everyday language.

The production-side interview also shows that audience engagement influenced the development of later content. A member of the production team noted that "some episode ideas came from audience responses and suggestions, especially topics close to children's daily lives, such as circumcision, dental health, and other childhood concerns" (PT1, production team member, interview, November 14, 2025, translated by the author). This indicates that audience feedback was not only received as appreciation, but also became part of the production team's consideration in selecting future themes.

Table 3. Forms of Immersive Engagement and Reported Impacts

Form of Immersive Engagement	Primary Evidence	Reported Impact	Data Source
Cognitive-theological engagement	Viewers searched for Qur'anic verses and their meanings after watching the episode	Increased curiosity about Qur'anic messages and reflection on moral responsibility toward nature	Audience interview, I1
Behavioural-religious engagement	Parents observed children imitating Islamic expressions and practices after watching the series	Children became more familiar with <i>Bismillah</i> , Islamic manners, and questions about religious practices	Parent interview, I2
Affective-family engagement	Families watched the episodes together and discussed the moral lessons afterward	The series became a medium for parent-child religious conversation at home	Parent interview, I4
Production-audience feedback	The production team received audience suggestions for future episode themes	Audience responses contributed to topic selection related to children's everyday concerns, such as circumcision and dental health	Production team interview, PT1

Note. Source: Author's interview data. Informants were anonymised, and quotations were translated by the author.

Table 3 shows that immersive engagement occurred at several levels. At the cognitive level, viewers used the episodes as a starting point for further reflection on Qur'anic meanings. At the behavioural level, parents reported that children imitated simple Islamic expressions and practices. At the family level, the series became part of parent-child religious conversation. At the production level, audience responses also contributed to the development of future content. These findings indicate that the impact of *Riko The Series* extended beyond digital viewing and entered everyday religious learning practices among Muslim families.

These findings show that audience interaction with *Riko The Series* appeared through several observable practices in the comment section. Viewers responded to the episodes with Islamic expressions, added Qur'anic and hadith references, shared personal or family experiences, asked questions, and offered prayers for the production team. The data indicate that the comment section was not only used for general appreciation, but also for expressing religious understanding, extending the message of the episode, and

connecting Qur'anic content with everyday experiences. These interaction patterns provide a basis for examining deeper audience impacts through interview data in the following sub-section.

DISCUSSION

The findings show that audience engagement with *Riko The Series* is formed through the interplay of symbolic, quantitative, interactive, and experiential dimensions. In the YouTube comment space, viewers express their engagement through Islamic invocations, Qur'anic references, hadith citations, prayers, and moral reflections, indicating that the comments are shaped by religious language and meaning. The digital trace data further demonstrate that the selected episodes attracted substantial attention through views, likes, and comments, although each episode generated a different pattern of engagement. While *Kambing Putih Riko* showed the strongest reach through views and likes, *Tanaman Bertasbih* stimulated more written responses in the comment section. Beyond these measurable indicators, the audience also actively interpreted and extended the Qur'anic messages by connecting them with religious knowledge, moral advice, scientific explanation, and personal experience. Interview data further reveal that engagement with the series moved beyond the YouTube platform into knowledge-seeking, children's imitation of Islamic expressions and manners, family-based religious discussion, and audience feedback that informed later content development. These findings suggest that *Riko The Series* functions as Islamic children's media that facilitates the reception, discussion, and everyday articulation of Qur'anic values in Muslim family life.

The emergence of Islamic cyberculture in the comment space of *Riko The Series* can be understood as part of a digital form of Living Qur'an. The comment section allows viewers to make Qur'anic values visible through Islamic invocations, Qur'anic references, hadith citations, moral advice, prayers, and personal testimonies. These practices show that the Qur'an is present as a message embedded in the animated narrative and as a living social force articulated through everyday Muslim communication in digital space (Rafiq, 2021). YouTube's affordances also shape this process by providing interactive and networked features through which viewers can respond, affirm, question, and extend religious meanings. This supports digital religion theory, which explains that religious practices in online environments are reshaped by media affordances such as visibility, interactivity, and participation (Campbell, 2020; Hoover, 2006). At the same time, the active role of viewers in adding interpretations, sharing experiences, and offering prayers reflects the logic of participatory culture, where audiences participate in the production and circulation of meaning rather than remaining passive consumers (Jenkins, 2006). Through Kozinets' netnographic lens, these comment practices can be read as cybercultural traces of an online religious community, in which Qur'anic meanings are expressed, negotiated, and socially reproduced through digital interaction (Kozinets & Gambetti, 2021; Kozinets, 2015).

The different patterns of digital traces across the three episodes indicate that audience engagement on YouTube operates through different modes of participation. The high number of views and likes on *Kambing Putih Riko* suggests that episodes connected to familiar ritual themes, such as sacrifice and Eid al-Adha, may generate broader reach and affective approval because the theme is already embedded in Muslim religious memory and annual worship practices. In contrast, *Tanaman Bertasbih* generated the highest number of comments, showing that an episode combining Qur'anic teaching, natural phenomena, and scientific explanation may encourage more discursive engagement. While views and likes reflect visibility, reach, and approval, comments provide a space for viewers to ask questions, add Qur'anic or hadith references, and elaborate religious meanings. This distinction is important in digital religion studies because platform affordances shape different forms of religious participation, from silent affirmation to

active interpretation (Campbell, 2020; Hoover, 2006). From a participatory culture perspective, comments represent a more active form of audience involvement because viewers do not merely consume the content but contribute to the circulation and expansion of its meaning (Jenkins, 2006). Through a netnographic perspective, these variations in views, likes, and comments can be read as digital traces that reveal different intensities and forms of audience engagement within an online religious media environment (Kozinets & Gambetti, 2021; Kozinets, 2015).

These findings extend previous studies in three related areas. In digital religion studies, Campbell (2020), Hoover (2006), Husein and Slama (2018), Solahudin and Fakhruroji (2020), Zaid et al. (2022), and Larsson and Willander (2025) have shown that digital platforms reshape religious authority, Islamic learning, online piety, and community formation. This study supports that argument, but adds that religious participation in digital media also occurs through children's Islamic animation and its audience comment culture. In the field of digital Living Qur'an, previous studies have examined Qur'anic reception through journaling, TikTok da'wah, digital tafsir, online Islamic platforms, Qur'an applications, and digital Qur'anic interpretation (Rafiq, 2021; Farahdiba, 2024; Aldar, 2023; Khaerani et al., 2023; Iskandar & Khaerani, 2024; Ali & Isnaini, 2024; Fajrie et al., 2023). The present study contributes to this literature by showing that Living Qur'an in digital space is also formed through audience responses to popular Islamic animation, beyond formal interpretation and religious learning platforms. Meanwhile, studies on Islamic animation and children's education have emphasized the role of animated media in transmitting moral, religious, and cultural values to young audiences (Moll, 2009; Isa et al., 2015; Pradibta et al., 2019; Zubaedi et al., 2020; Waheed et al., 2025). This study differs from those works by shifting the focus from content and educational value to audience engagement, showing how viewers interpret Qur'anic messages, add religious references, share family experiences, and connect animation with everyday Islamic practice.

The novelty of this study lies in its shift from analysing Islamic animation as media content to examining audiences as active digital actors in the production of Qur'anic meaning. Previous studies on Islamic animation have generally focused on moral messages, educational values, or narrative content, while studies on digital da'wah have often emphasized religious authority, platform use, or online preaching practices. In contrast, this study examines audiences as active digital actors who participate in the circulation of Qur'anic meanings. Through this approach, the study shows that digital Living Qur'an is formed through the production of Qur'anic messages by content creators and through audience participation in interpreting, extending, discussing, and practising those messages in digital and family contexts. Thus, the main contribution of this study is to demonstrate that the YouTube comment culture surrounding *Riko The Series* functions as an empirical site for understanding how Qur'anic values are socially circulated and lived through participatory digital media.

These findings also invite reflection on both the educational potential and the risks of using YouTube as a space for Islamic learning. On the positive side, *Riko The Series* shows that YouTube can support informal Islamic education within the family by providing accessible, visual, and child-friendly Qur'anic content. This aligns with studies showing that parents use Islamic YouTube animation to introduce religious virtues to children and to provide safer alternatives to general entertainment content (Waheed et al., 2025). The findings also resonate with research on interactive Islamic learning media, which emphasizes that digital tools can complement traditional religious education by making Islamic values more engaging for children (Sarlan, Ahmad, Ahmad, & Astrini, 2021; Sarlan et al., 2016). In family contexts, the series can become a medium for shared viewing, parent-child discussion, and religious habit formation, similar to studies showing how digital platforms support family-based religious language and Qur'anic learning practices (Sari & Moore, 2024). However, the use of YouTube also requires critical

mediation. The same platform that enables Qur'anic learning may expose children to algorithmic recommendations, commercial content, unverified religious claims, or inaccurate science-religion explanations. Previous studies have noted that YouTube democratizes access to Islamic knowledge but also raises concerns about credibility, religious authority, and the qualifications of online religious educators (Abd Razzak, Mohamed, & Ab. Rahim, 2024; Maemonah, Purnama, Rohinah, Aziz, & Faza Muhammadkan Bastian, 2022). Therefore, while *Riko The Series* demonstrates the constructive potential of Qur'anic animation for family-based Islamic learning, its use should be accompanied by parental guidance, careful content selection, and responsible moderation of comment spaces.

At the same time, the use of YouTube as a space for Qur'anic learning also carries potential dysfunctions. Public comment sections may become vulnerable to unverified religious claims, inaccurate science-religion explanations, misinformation, or emotionally charged responses that are difficult to moderate. Studies on YouTube comment sections have shown that misinformation can spread through user commentary, gain engagement, and persist despite moderation efforts, especially when comments contain emotionally persuasive or partially credible claims (Ha, Graham, & Gray, 2022; Humprecht & Kessler, 2024; Jiang, Robertson, & Wilson, 2019; Suter, Shahrezaye, & Meckel, 2022). Although these studies do not focus specifically on Islamic children's animation, their findings are relevant because religious comment spaces may also be exposed to similar risks when viewers add unsupported interpretations, questionable scientific claims, or sectarian opinions. Research on religious misinformation in social media further indicates that misleading religious content can intensify social tension and shape public perception when it circulates without verification (Al-Zaman & Noman, 2023). In the case of children's media, these risks become more significant because young viewers depend on parents and adults to mediate digital content. YouTube's algorithmic and commercial environment may direct children from educational Islamic animation to unrelated or inappropriate content, while comment sections may expose families to claims that require theological or scientific clarification. Therefore, the positive role of *Riko The Series* as a medium of Qur'anic learning should be accompanied by parental guidance, careful moderation, verified religious references, and digital literacy practices that help families distinguish between educational engagement and potentially misleading information.

The findings of this study have practical implications for Islamic content creators, parents, educators, and future researchers. For content creators, *Riko The Series* demonstrates the importance of designing Qur'anic animation that is educational, child-friendly, and capable of stimulating family discussion. Episode descriptions can be strengthened by including Qur'anic verses, hadith references, and verified explanatory sources so that viewers have access to reliable religious and scientific information. Comment sections also need to be moderated carefully to maintain a safe, informative, and constructive discussion space, while audience questions and suggestions can be used as input for future episode development. For parents and educators, Islamic animation can be used as a complementary medium for religious learning when accompanied by shared viewing, reflective questions, and clarification of religious or scientific messages after watching. Parents can ask children what moral lesson they learned, how the episode relates to daily Islamic practice, and whether any part of the content needs further explanation. For researchers, these findings indicate the need to further develop netnography as a method for studying digital Qur'anic reception, especially by comparing audience engagement across YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, and other platforms. Future studies may also examine the long-term impact of Islamic animation on children's religious understanding, family learning practices, and the formation of digital Muslim communities.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that audience engagement with *Riko The Series* on YouTube represents a digital form of Living Qur'an. The findings show that Qur'anic values are received and lived through four interconnected forms of engagement: Islamic cyberculture in the comment space, digital traces of quantified participation, interactive responses to Qur'anic messages, and immersive engagement in family-based religious learning. Viewers expressed Islamic invocations, Qur'anic references, hadith citations, prayers, moral advice, and personal reflections in the comment section. The digital trace data also show different patterns of audience engagement across the selected episodes. *Kambing Putih Riko* generated the highest number of views and likes, while *Tanaman Bertasbih* produced the highest number of comments. This indicates that views and likes reflect reach and approval, whereas comments reveal more discursive and interpretive forms of engagement. Interview data further show that *Riko The Series* encouraged viewers to reflect on Qur'anic meanings, stimulated children's imitation of simple Islamic expressions, supported parent-child religious discussion, and provided feedback for future content development.

The main contribution of this study lies in its netnographic reading of Islamic animation as a participatory space of digital Living Qur'an. Previous studies on Islamic animation have generally focused on moral messages, educational values, or narrative content, while studies on digital religion and Living Qur'an have often examined da'wah, online religious authority, digital tafsir, Qur'anic applications, or social media-based religious practices. This study contributes to these discussions by shifting attention to audiences as active digital actors who interpret, extend, and reproduce Qur'anic meanings through comments, likes, testimonies, and family-based viewing practices. By combining Living Qur'an, digital religion, participatory culture, and netnography, this study shows that Qur'anic values in digital media are socially circulated through both platform-based interaction and everyday family practices. In this sense, *Riko The Series* becomes an empirical example of how Islamic children's media can support Qur'anic reception, religious learning, and digital Muslim participation in contemporary Indonesia.

This study has several limitations. First, the analysis focused only on three selected episodes of *Riko The Series*, so the findings cannot represent all episodes or all forms of Islamic animation on YouTube. Second, the comment analysis was limited to thirty selected comments and therefore cannot capture the full diversity of audience responses across the entire channel. Third, the interview data were based on six audience informants and one production team member, which means that the findings provide an exploratory rather than generalizable account of audience experience. Fourth, this study did not measure the long-term impact of Islamic animation on children's religious understanding or behaviour. Future research may expand the dataset by analysing more episodes, comparing *Riko The Series* with other Islamic animation channels, and examining audience engagement across platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube Shorts. Further studies may also investigate the long-term role of Islamic animation in shaping children's religious literacy, family-based learning, and the development of digital Living Qur'an practices among Muslim communities.

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