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## Religious Information Literacy in Digital Learning from an Islamic Education Perspective: An Analysis of Ellis's Information Seeking Behavior Model

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*Abstract: This study aims to analyze religious information literacy in digital learning based on the perspective of Ellis's Information Seeking Behavior Model and examine its relevance to the principles of Islamic education. This study uses a qualitative approach with library research. Data was obtained from primary sources in the form of the works of David Ellis and its development by Cox and Hall regarding Information Seeking Behavior. Meanwhile, secondary data was obtained from books, articles, proceedings, and previous research results that discuss digital information literacy. Data collection was carried out through documentation studies, while data analysis used content analysis techniques that include data reduction, categorization, interpretation, and synthesis of various relevant sources. The results of the study indicate that Ellis's Information Seeking Behavior Model, which consists of eight stages (starting, chaining, browsing, differentiating, monitoring, extracting, verifying, and ending) can be used as a conceptual framework for strengthening religious information literacy in digital learning. Furthermore, these stages are also relevant to Islamic educational principles, such as the importance of critical thinking, learning motivation, perseverance in learning, teacher guidance, and continuous learning. Thus, integrating the Ellis Model with Islamic educational principles can provide an alternative framework for religious information literacy in digital learning that is more critical, selective, and responsible.*

**Keywords :** *digital literacy, Islamic education, Ellis Model*

## INTRODUCTION

As time goes by, digital transformation has transformed various aspects of human life, including the acquisition or study of religious knowledge. This diverse religious information can be easily found on various digital platforms, such as YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, Facebook, and Islamic websites (Adedo, 2024). This phenomenon demonstrates that the process of religious learning has undergone a transformation, no longer taking place exclusively through educational institutions or conventional Islamic study groups, but also through inclusive and flexible digital spaces.

Islam also allows freedom of expression in the use of technology as long as it does not violate sharia regulations, as technology has not only positive but also negative impacts. For example, social media makes it easier for people to access the latest news through various media, learn about Islam through YouTube channels or videos by religious figures on TikTok and Instagram, or engage in social and religious activities such as online charity, online Quran *recitation*, and so on (Febriani & Desrani, 2021). However, not all information sourced from the internet can be validated for accuracy, as it sometimes originates from individuals with unclear academic credentials.

In today's digital era, social media is a popular place to find various information. This is evidenced by the number of social media users worldwide, which has reached billions. According to the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII), as of 2018, the number of social media users in Indonesia had reached 171.17 million, with the majority being young people aged 15-19 years. This figure continues to experience significant growth every year (Faridhatun Nikmah, 2019). The Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) revealed that internet users in Indonesia will reach 221 million people by 2024 (APJII, 2024).

Internet technology, which provides various features and platforms, is used by the majority of its users as a source of knowledge and information for studying religion. Therefore, many ustadz, religious figures, and influencers have begun to spread religious teachings through YouTube, TikTok, or Instagram channels, either in the form of videos or writing. These contents do provide a lot of religious knowledge and are more popular because they are easy to access anywhere without having to go directly to the scientific assemblies. This phenomenon, namely studying religion online, is clearly more popular, especially among millennials, who generally prefer to utilize digital technology to seek out various types of information. Consequently, millennials' understanding of Islam is heavily influenced by the information they obtain through internet access (Agama et al., 2021)

However, easy access to religious information does not always guarantee the quality and validity of the information obtained. This presents a new challenge for Islamic education, as the open nature of the internet allows all elements to produce and disseminate religious content without rigorous verification. As a result, students are potentially exposed to inaccurate information, sometimes even containing elements of misinformation and disinformation (Jannah & Inayatillah, 2026). Therefore, the current problem in religious learning in the digital era is no longer related to limited access, but

rather the ability of users or students to select, evaluate, and verify the religious information they obtain.

Based on this, information literacy skills are an important aspect that internet users need to possess, particularly when searching for religious information. The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) defines information literacy as the ability to recognize information needs, locate relevant information, critically evaluate information sources, and use information effectively and responsibly (Dalal et al., 2020). Therefore, strengthening religious information literacy is an urgent need in this digital era to face the increasingly complex flow of digital information.

Thus, studying religion online does provide benefits and convenience for most people. However, to avoid beliefs that violate religion and deviate from the teachings of Islamic law, it is crucial for those seeking religious information online to possess not only good literacy skills but also strategies to achieve these goals so that the resulting religious information is in accordance with Islamic law and can be accounted for. Strategies for studying religion online can be pursued by understanding information search methods to determine the suitability and validity of the information needed. Several information search methods can be used, and these models have been developed by experts, including the Wilson model, the Krikelas model, the Johnson model, the Leckie model, and the Ellis model. However, the Ellis model is the most appropriate for current conditions (Purnama, 2021), because the theory of information seeking behavior is directly related to the information retrieval system developed through research in academic and scientific circles (Purnama, 2021).

There are several studies that discuss studying religious information on the internet, including an article from Ulyn Ni'mah et al., "Utilization of the Internet as a Learning Resource for Islamic Religious Education" (Ni'mah et al., 2019). Then an article from Ahmad Ihsan Syarifuddin and Dzurrotun Afifah Fauziah, "The Phenomenon of Islam and Social Media in Indonesia" (Syarifuddin & Fauziah, 2021). Then a journal from Ni'mah Setya Asih, "The Role of Kiai in Purbalingga Regency in Counteracting Radicalism in Online Islamic Religious Learning Activities" (Asih, 2022). Finally, an article from Suci Rahmadani, "Learning Strategies for Islamic Religious Education in the Digital Era: A Qualitative Literature Review" (Rahmadani, 2024). Several topics discussed in previous studies are quite relevant to this study. First, previous studies have discussed more about the negative impacts of learning religion in the digital space. Second, previous research only described the phenomenon of religious learning in digital spaces without explaining the law specifically.

Thus, most previous research has focused on the use of digital media, the impact of internet use on religious understanding, and efforts to prevent its negative effects. Studies specifically addressing religious learning on the internet from an information literacy perspective are still relatively limited. Furthermore, there is limited research on the use of information-seeking behavior models as a conceptual framework to explain how students acquire, select, and verify religious information they encounter in digital spaces.

Based on this gap, there is a need for a study that not only discusses and highlights the phenomenon of using the internet as a source of learning religious information, but also explains strategies for obtaining religious information that is credible, accurate, and can be accounted for.

One relevant model to explain this process is Ellis's Information Search Behavior Model. This model describes the information search process through several stages: *starting, chaining, browsing, differentiating, monitoring, extracting, verifying, and ending* (Ellis et al., 1993). In contrast to approaches that only emphasize access to information, Ellis's model provides a more comprehensive framework regarding how a person systematically searches for, assesses, and uses information. Therefore, this model has the potential to be applied in the context of religious learning in the digital era to strengthen students' information literacy skills.

Based on this description, this study aims to analyze religious information literacy in digital learning through the perspective of Ellis's Information Seeking Behavior Model and examine its relevance to the principles of Islamic education. This research is expected to provide a conceptual contribution to the development of religious information literacy and become an alternative strategy for religious learning that is more critical, selective, and responsible amidst the rapid flow of digital information.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The approach used in this research is a qualitative approach, which is a research process to understand human or social phenomena by creating a comprehensive and complex picture that can be presented in words, reporting detailed views obtained from informant sources, and carried out in a natural setting (Fadli, 2021). This type of research focuses on the library research process, which is a research activity carried out by collecting information and data with the help of various materials available in the library such as reference books, previous similar research results, articles, and various journals related to the problem to be solved (Sari & Asmendri, 2020).

The data sources in this study consist of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained based on works discussing Ellis's Information Seeking Behavior Model, as well as the development model carried out by Ellis, Cox, and Hall. Meanwhile, secondary data were obtained from various scientific journal articles, books, previous research results, proceedings, and academic documents discussing information literacy, digital learning, Islamic education, information seeking behavior, and the use of the internet as a source of information for religious learning. Data analysis was carried out using *content analysis techniques*. The analysis was carried out through several stages, namely: (1) data reduction by selecting and focusing on information relevant to the research theme, (2) data categorization based on main concepts, such as information literacy, digital learning, Islamic education, and the stages of Ellis's model, (3) data interpretation to find the relevance of Ellis's Information Seeking Behavior Model in religious learning on the

internet, (4) drawing conclusions based on the results of the synthesis of various sources that have been analyzed .

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Religious Information Literacy in Digital Learning

Information technology has advanced rapidly in the digital era, particularly the internet. According to Hendri Pondia, the internet is a collection of computers connected to each other in a network. It's called an interconnected network because it connects computers and computer networks worldwide into a vast network (Syarifuddin & Fauziah, 2021). The internet provides technology users with the opportunity to easily use social media as a place to interact and seek information. Social media has also spread and developed across various age groups, including children.

Learning resources that were previously limited to books and direct guidance from a teacher, in this digital era have undergone changes. Among them are, printed learning resources (books, magazines, encyclopedias, brochures, newspapers, posters, and floor plans), non-printed learning resources (films, slides, videos, models, dolls, and audio cassettes), learning resources in the form of facilities (auditorium, internet, library, study rooms, individual study tables, studios, fields and sports), learning resources in the form of activities (interviews, group work, observation, simulations, and games), learning resources in the form of the environment (parks and terminals) (Ni'mah et al., 2019). The internet also provides a variety of religious information through various platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook. Through these various platforms, one can find a lot of religious information in written or video form. For example, studies of yellow books by several kyai are presented online, including Gus Mus who studies the book *al - Arbain Nawawiyah*, Gus Yahya Cholil Tsaquf who studies the book *Minhajul Abidin* and KH. Ulil Abshar Abdalla who studies the book *Ihya Ulumuddin* (Asih, 2022).

In the world of the internet, online learning is also carried out through several conditions, including: *Browsing* is a general term used when exploring cyberspace or the web, *Chatting* is a facility on the Internet for communicating with other Internet users who are online. Communication can be in the form of text or voice (*chatting voice*), *A teleconference* is a meeting between two or more people conducted via telephone or a network connection. The meeting can be audio-only (*audio conferencing*) or video-only (*video conferencing*), allowing participants to see each other (Ni'mah et al., 2019). While the various conveniences offered by internet platforms are indeed very helpful in developing the knowledge of information seekers, the internet can also have negative impacts on its users, such as fraud, information manipulation, the potential for radicalism in religion, and so on (Asih, 2022). Therefore, in the phenomenon of learning religion on the internet, it is crucial to have a strategy for learning religion on the internet and not only be guided by the information presented online, but also supplemented with knowledge sourced from a teacher who is an expert in the field so that the religious information obtained is accurate and does not violate sharia.

## Principles of Religious Information Literacy from an Islamic Education Perspective

Seeking knowledge in Islam is obligatory as explained in the Word of Allah:

وَمَا كَانَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لِيَنْفِرُوا كَافَّةً فَلَوْلَا نَفَرَ مِنْ كُلِّ فِرْقَةٍ مِنْهُمْ طَائِفَةٌ لِيَتَفَقَّهُوا فِي الدِّينِ وَلِيُنذِرُوا قَوْمَهُمْ إِذَا رَجَعُوا إِلَيْهِمْ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَحْذَرُونَ (١٢٢)

Meaning: " *And it is not appropriate for all of the believers to go (to the battlefield). Why don't some of each group of them go to deepen their religious knowledge and to warn their people when they have returned, so that they can protect themselves.*" (QS. at-Taubah :122)

This verse is the origin of the obligation to seek knowledge (Al-Qurtubhi, 1998). Meanwhile, the reason for this verse being revealed is because the Prophet's companions fought jihad against the enemy in the Battle of Tabuk without leaving anyone with the Prophet, so that Allah ordered only some to fight jihad and the others were ordered to study religion with the Prophet (Katsir, 2017). Therefore, based on this verse, it can be concluded that seeking knowledge is equivalent to jihad, which is obligatory.

This obligation to seek knowledge is also mentioned in the hadith of the Prophet (Al-Munawi, 2007):

طَلَبُ الْعِلْمِ فَرِيضَةٌ عَلَى كُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ

"*Seeking knowledge is obligatory for every Muslim.*"

Based on the evidence of the Qur'an and the hadith, a Muslim is obliged to seek knowledge because knowledge is an intermediary (*wasilah*) to know what is permissible and what is forbidden in Islam and guides a person to piety, as stated by Muhammad bin al-Hasan bin Abdullah in his Sya'ir (Al-Zarnuji, 2009):

تَعَلَّمَ فَإِنَّ الْعِلْمَ زِينٌ لِأَهْلِهِ \* وَفَضْلٌ وَعُنْوَانٌ لِكُلِّ الْمَحَامِدِ  
وَكُنْ مُسْتَفِيدًا كُلَّ يَوْمٍ زِيَادَةً \* مِنَ الْعِلْمِ وَاسْبَحْ فِي بُحُورِ الْفَوَائِدِ  
تَفَقَّهُ فَإِنَّ الْفَقْهَ أَفْضَلُ قَائِدٍ \* إِلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَى وَأَعْدَلُ قَاصِدٍ  
هُوَ الْعِلْمُ الْهَادِي إِلَى سُنَنِ الْهُدَى \* هُوَ الْحِصْنُ يُنْجِي مِنْ جَمِيعِ الشَّدَائِدِ  
فَإِنَّ فَتْيَهَا وَاحِدًا مُتَوَرِّعًا \* أَشَدُّ عَلَى الشَّيْطَانِ مِنْ أَلْفِ عَابِدٍ

Meaning : "*Study because knowledge is an adornment for its owner and a virtue is also a sign for every praiseworthy thing. Make your days to increase knowledge, and dive into the ocean of knowledge that gives benefits. Study religious knowledge, because it is the most important (excellent) knowledge. Knowledge that can guide towards goodness and piety, and the straightest knowledge to study. It is the knowledge that shows the straight path, namely the path of guidance. It is like a fortress that can save humans from everything "Therefore, a person who is skilled in religious knowledge and is devout is more difficult for Satan than tempting a thousand people who are experts in worship but are stupid."*

Studying religious knowledge is not only an obligation but also has various benefits, as explained in the words of Allah SWT:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا قِيلَ لَكُمْ تَفَسَّحُوا فِي الْمَجَالِسِ فَافْسَحُوا يَفْسَحِ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ وَإِذَا قِيلَ انشُرُوا فَاَنْشُرُوا فَاَنْشُرُوا يَرْفَعِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مِنْكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ دَرَجَاتٍ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ خَبِيرٌ (١١)

Meaning: "O you who believe, when it is said to you, "Give room in the assemblies," make room, surely Allah will make room for you. When it is said, "Stand up," (you) stand up. Allah will surely elevate those who believe among you and those who have been given knowledge to a certain degree. Allah is All-Aware of what you do." (QS. al-Mujadalah :11)

The obligation and virtue of seeking knowledge lead Muslims to study religion from various sources, freeing them from *the temptations* of seeking knowledge and attaining a high standing in the sight of Allah. This is especially true in the digital age, where all religious information is easily accessible through websites. However, Muslims often forget that seeking religious knowledge to gain beneficial and reliable knowledge requires several conditions, as quoted by Ali ibn Abi Thalib in the book *Ta'lim Muta'allim* (Al-Zarnuji, 2009):

أَلَا لَا تَنَالُ الْعِلْمَ إِلَّا بِسِتَّةٍ \* سَأْنِيكَ عَنْ مَجْمُوعِهَا بَيَانٍ  
دَكَاةٍ وَحِرْصٍ وَاصْطِبَارٍ وَ بُلْعَةٍ \* وَ إِشَادٍ أُسْتَاذٍ وَ طُولِ زَمَانٍ

Meaning: "Know that you will not acquire knowledge except with these six things, namely: intelligence, enthusiasm, patience, having provisions (funds), guidance or guidance from a teacher, and a long time."

To obtain beneficial religious knowledge that is in accordance with Islamic law through digital media, the six conditions in this poem must be fulfilled, including:

#### 1. Critical Thinking Skills (دَكَاةٍ)

Intelligence can be defined as being smart and astute, responding quickly to a problem, and easily understanding an explanation. From this explanation, it can be concluded that intelligence is the perfection of the human mind in solving a problem (Alwi, 2022). This intelligence is also defined as reason, because Allah has bestowed upon humans the glory of reason, enabling them to distinguish between good and evil, as stated in Allah's word:

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ وَحَمَلْنَاهُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَرَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَى كَثِيرٍ مِمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا تَفْضِيلًا (٧٠)

Meaning: "And indeed We have glorified the children of Adam, We carried them on land and in the sea, We gave them sustenance from the good things and We have given them perfect advantages over most of the creatures that We have created ..." (QS. al-Isra':70).

The glory of humans in this verse is interpreted by Imam Alusi in his book with several interpretations, including reason (Al-Alusi, 2003). Therefore, with the intelligence that Allah has bestowed upon Muslims, they should be smart in choosing the shows or

teachings they will follow when studying religion via the internet. Because internet sites often display false information that comes from people who have minimal understanding of religion, it causes misunderstanding and division (Nisa, 2024).

## 2. Motivation to Learn (جزْصِ)

Pursuing religious knowledge must be accompanied by a strong spirit or desire, because to be able to understand religious knowledge requires a long process. So it is impossible to obtain it just casually (Hajjaj, 2011). Meanwhile, in learning religion through the internet, this spirit is applied to an attitude of always being selective in choosing shows and guidance from religious figures, because if not selective, internet use can result in users being exposed to various ideologies that are dangerous for adolescent development, such as radicalism, drug problems, fights between teenagers and other juvenile delinquent behavior, even teenagers are also vulnerable to problems of religious radicalism (Putri et al., 2022).

## 3. Diligence in Verifying Information (اصْطَبَارِ)

*Ishtibar* (اصْطَبَارِ) is the *mashdar form* of *madhi isthabara* (اصْطَبَرَ) which comes from the root word *sabara* (صَبَرَ) means to be patient, to endure, to be unhurried, and to restrain oneself (Warson, 2002). Patience is a strength, a positive force that drives the soul to fulfill an obligation. Patience is also a force that prevents someone from committing a crime. Patience in Sufism is a state of mind that is strong, stable, and consistent in its stance. The soul is unwavering, its stance does not change no matter how difficult the challenges faced. Furthermore, Imam Al-Ghazali, as quoted by Quraish Shihab, defines patience as the determination to carry out religious guidance in the face of the temptations of lust (Raihanah, 2016).

Patience is crucial for those seeking knowledge, ensuring they understand what they're learning without rushing and remaining mentally strong when they encounter difficulties. Especially when studying religion online, patience is essential for millennials, as they possess unique characteristics that set them apart from other generations. Key characteristics of the millennial generation include:

- a. *technology reliant* or technology believer;
- b. *image driven* or forming self-identity;
- c. *multitasking* or all-rounder;
- d. *open to change* or open to change;
- e. *confident* or self-assured;
- f. *team-oriented* or team-oriented;
- g. *information rich* or information rich;
- h. *impatient* or impatient; and
- i. *adaptable* or easy to adapt (Putri et al., 2022).

Based on these key characteristics, they tend to desire practicality in studying religion, often ignoring reference sources and relying solely on the internet as their sole source, without seeking further information from books or other scriptures. Therefore, when studying religion online, it's crucial to cultivate patience so that the knowledge gained is useful and clearly articulated.

#### 4. Digital Resource Readiness (بُلغَة)

Costs here are expenses or capital in seeking knowledge, meaning that people who seek knowledge need costs, but these costs do not mean they need a lot of money, because costs in this case are simplicity and the ability to meet the needs of life (Intan, 2021). Like the stories of scholars who spent money to pursue knowledge, one popular story is that of Imam Malik, who dismantled the roof of his house and sold the wood to finance his education.

قَالَ ابْنُ الْقَاسِمِ: أَفْضَى بِمَالِكٍ طَلَبُ الْعِلْمِ إِلَى أَنْ نَقَضَ سَقْفَ بَيْتِهِ فَبَاعَ حَشَبَهُ، ثُمَّ مَالَتْ عَلَيْهِ الدُّنْيَا

*"Ibn Qasim said: Seeking knowledge also caused Imam Malik to dismantle the roof of his house and sell its wood. Then after that the world came to him."*

A similar story came from a young man who came to Habib Abdullah al-Haddad complaining about the lack of sustenance he had, then he ordered the young man to take a book and study it (Ali bin Hasan Baharun, 2008).

Likewise, paying money for the religious learning process for a teacher is considered a form of honoring a teacher, as was done by the mother of Rabi'ah ar-Ra'yi (Imam Malik's teacher) who donated 30,000 dinars for her child's education (Al-Shafadi, 2000).

قَالَتْ أُمُّهُ: أَيُّمَا أَحَبَّ إِلَيْكَ: ثَلَاثُونَ أَلْفَ دِينَارٍ أَوْ هَذَا الَّذِي هُوَ فِيهِ مِنَ الْجَاهِ؟ قَالَ: لَا وَاللَّهِ إِلَّا هَذَا. قَالَتْ: فَإِنِّي قَدْ أَنْفَقْتُ الْمَالَ كُلَّهُ عَلَيْهِ. فَقَالَ: وَاللَّهِ مَا ضَيَّعْتِهِ.

*"Rabi'ab's mother said to her husband: Which do you prefer, 30,000 dinars or the position she (Rabi'ab) has now? Her husband said: By Allah, I prefer this (Rabi'ab's position of knowledge). Rabi'ab's mother said: I have spent all my wealth to get what I have now. Her husband said: By Allah, you have not wasted it."*

Based on the explanation above, not having material things or having little sustenance is not a barrier for someone to seek knowledge, because if someone has the intention to seek knowledge, Allah will make it easy for them to obtain that material things.

#### 5. The Role of Teachers as Learning Guides (إِرشَادِ أُسْتَاذِ)

The process of understanding religious knowledge will not be perfect without the guidance of a teacher. Because, without the guidance of a teacher, the understanding that

is studied through a book or book is feared to be wrong. As stated by Abu Yazid al-Busthami (Al-Qusyairi, 2000):

ثُمَّ يَجِبُ عَلَى الْمُرِيدِ أَنْ يَتَأَدَّبَ بِشَيْخِهِ، فَإِنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ أُسْتَاذٌ لَا يُفْلِحُ أَبَدًا. هَذَا أَبُو يَزِيدٍ يَقُولُ: مَنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُ أُسْتَاذٌ  
فَأَمَامَهُ الشَّيْطَانُ.

This means: "Then, it is obligatory for a student to be good to his teacher, so that when he does not have a teacher, he will never be fortunate. This is as Abu Yazid said: Whoever does not have a teacher, then his teacher is Satan."

Meanwhile, the process of studying religious knowledge with a teacher can be obtained in various ways, including by means of *al-kasbi* (sought) or by means of *al-sima'i* (listening) (Wahiddin, 2021):

- a. *Al-Kasbi* knowledge is knowledge that is obtained through a process of studying diligently and continuously, as well as reading or discussing with a teacher so that mistakes can be corrected.
- b. The science of *sima'i* is knowledge acquired by studying with scholars and listening to matters related to religion and the world. The path of *sima'i* cannot be achieved unless one loves scholars, associates with them, sits with them, and seeks their explanations.

Based on the explanation above, the guidance of a teacher is crucial for understanding religious knowledge. Learning alone without guidance can lead to erroneous understandings or violations of Islamic law.

## 6. Continuous Learning (طُولُ زَمَانٍ)

The process of seeking religious knowledge cannot be completed in a short time. Gaining such knowledge requires several stages and validation of its truth. Therefore, when studying religion online, you must be selective in choosing the content you consume and seek clarification from other sources to validate its accuracy.

### Source Credibility and Teacher Authority in Digital Learning

The advent of the digital era has made it easier for everyone to access information, especially religious advice, perspectives, and laws, through videos and text. However, sometimes the religious information presented is not contextual, leading to misinformation (Hariati et al., 2025). Therefore, when searching for religious information online, it is crucial to pay attention to the online teacher or presenter of the material.

Imam al-Ghazali argued that a teacher who can be entrusted with the task of educating is one who is not only intelligent and intellectually perfect, but also has good morals and is physically strong. With a perfect intellect, a teacher can possess a wide range of knowledge in depth, and with good morals, he can be an example and role model for his students, and with physical strength, he can carry out the task of teaching, educating, and guiding his students (Sukmiati, 2017). Likewise, the Qur'an explains:

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وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا

Meaning: "Do not follow that which you have no knowledge of. Indeed, the hearing, the sight, and the conscience, all of these will be questioned about ." (QS. Al-Isra': 36)

Imam al-Alusi explains the interpretation of this verse in his book, that this verse gives a signal to be selective and careful in choosing the information that they use as a reference source in order to avoid errors (Al-Alusi, 2003).

The command to be selective in choosing a teacher to follow is also explained in a hadith:

إِنَّ هَذَا الْعِلْمَ دِينٌ فَانظُرُوا عَمَّنْ تَأْخُذُونَ دِينَكُمْ

Meaning: "This knowledge is part of religion, so pay close attention to who you take religious knowledge from" (Hadits Darimi Nomor 425, n.d.).

In the *syuruhul hadith*, it explains the criteria for teachers who should be used as role models (Al-Munawi, 2007). The following is the explanation:

### 1. Believe

It's important to know a teacher's faith before studying with them. This faith allows them to not only provide religious understanding but also exemplify it through *their behavior*. Furthermore, their beliefs do not deviate from Islamic law.

### 2. Expert in his field

A teacher must be an expert in the subject they are teaching, so that what they teach will not lead to misunderstandings. When religious understanding is conveyed by those who are not experts, it will only lead to damage and destruction, as mentioned in a hadith:

إِذَا وَسَّدَ الْأَمْرُ إِلَى غَيْرِ أَهْلِهِ فَانْتَظِرِ السَّاعَةَ

Meaning: "When a matter is handed over to someone who is not an expert, then wait for destruction" (Al-Asqalani, 2006).

### 3. The Nature of Compassion

This compassionate quality is worthy of a teacher, as it fosters a student's enthusiasm for learning without feeling intimidated. As the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) commands us to be gentle with both students and teachers:

قال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم لَيْتُوا لِمَنْ تُعَلِّمُونَ وَلِمَنْ تَتَعَلَّمُونَ مِنْهُ

Meaning: "The Messenger of Allah said: Be gentle with those you teach (students) and those from whom you learn (teachers)." HR. Abi Hurairah

Thus, a teacher's compassionate nature can be seen through his interactions with the people around him and other living beings.

#### 4. Authoritative (*muru'ab*)

*Muru'ab* is an attitude of maintaining behavior to remain in the most optimal state, so as not to cause harm intentionally and not receive abuse (Al-Mawardi, 1985). Therefore, this attitude is important for a teacher to have, because with an authoritative attitude, a teacher will be respected by his students. Meanwhile, authority itself consists of two types (Pidria et al., 2023).

##### a. Inborn authority

This authority can be seen from a person's appearance, for example, neat dressing, good writing style, having a handsome body shape, a clear voice, which creates an inherent authority in a person.

##### b. Inner authority

This authority is supported by a person's internal state, including: having a sense of love, caring about others, acting wisely and fairly, and obeying existing standards and keeping promises.

#### 5. *Iffab's* Characteristics

*Iffab* is an attitude of restraining oneself from bad behavior and restraining oneself from the urges of lust (Miskawaih, 2009). Thus, with this attitude, a teacher will be able to control himself when dealing with his students.

#### 6. Proficient in teaching and providing understanding

A good teacher is one who is skilled at teaching and providing understanding to their students. This can only be achieved if a teacher possesses a wealth of knowledge, so that any misunderstandings their students may have are addressed (Gunawan, 2020). Likewise, a teacher with extensive knowledge will not easily disagree with opinions that differ from their own; instead, they will first analyze those opinions.

#### 7. Morals

Morality is the most important attitude a teacher must possess, because knowledge without morality is like fire without firewood, and morality without knowledge is like a body without a soul. Teaching with good morality will be more easily accepted by students, because *lisanul hal afshabu min lisanul maqal* (giving a good example is better than just theory). Because of the importance of morality for a teacher, the *introduction* to the book *Hasyiyah al-Bajuri* states:

إِذَا جَمَعَ الْمُعَلِّمُ ثَلَاثَ خِصَالٍ فَقَدْ تَمَّتِ النِّعْمَةُ عَلَى الْمُتَعَلِّمِ: الصَّبْرُ وَالتَّوَّاضِعُ وَحُسْنُ الْخُلُقِ

Meaning: "when a teacher has these 3 things, a student will receive truly perfect blessings: patience, *tawadhu'* (low self-esteem), and good character" (Al-Bajuri, 2010).

## Ellis' Information Seeking Behavior Model in Religious Information Literacy

The phenomenon of religious learning on the internet demonstrates that people currently have extensive access to a wide variety of sources of religious information. However, this ease of access is not always accompanied by the ability to select or verify the religious information obtained (Syam & Prasetya, 2022). Discussions on the importance of critical thinking skills, learning motivation, persistence in verifying information, teacher guidance, and selecting credible sources indicate that the main challenge for religious learning in the digital era is how information is sought, selected, evaluated, and used appropriately and wisely. Therefore, a conceptual framework is needed that can systematically explain the information search process, so that those seeking religious information on the internet are not merely consumers of information but also able to critically evaluate the sources of religious information they access.

In information science, this process is known as information-seeking behavior . This concept explains how a person identifies information needs, explores various sources, evaluates the relevance of the information, and then uses the information obtained to solve the problem at hand (Kumala & Wulandar, 2021). In the context of digital-based religious learning, information-seeking behavior is crucial because it can help information seekers obtain religious information that is more valid, credible, and in accordance with the principles of Islamic education.

Kuhlthau (1991) defines information-seeking behavior as a constructive effort (constructive action) by users who actively seek information in an effort to broaden and improve their understanding of a particular problem or subject. This information-seeking behavior occurs due to the demand for information (Salsabila & Syahri, 2023). In a broader context, everyone actually needs information to support their activities, work, or even life as a whole (Hasana et al., 2023). Various information-seeking models have been developed by experts, including: the Wilson model, the Krikelas model, the Johnson model, the Leckie model, and the Ellis model. In fact, the Ellis model is the most appropriate to current conditions (Alhusna & Masruroh, 2021).

The following is Ellis's (1989) information search behavior model which consists of six stages, including *starting*, *chaining*, *browsing*, *differentiating*, *monitoring*, *extracting* (Meho & Tibbo, 2003). Then in 1993, the Ellis model was developed by the Cox and Hall model, namely by adding *verifying* and *ending* (Ellis et al., 1993). This is the explanation:

1. *Starting* (preparation): This stage is the initial stage of information seeking. This stage typically involves determining the topic of discussion. Therefore, at the *Starting stage*, someone studying religion online begins to determine what religious information they need.
2. *Chaining* (references): This is the activity of following a series of citations or references between materials. Thus, someone studying religion online at this stage searches for

- and identifies the necessary religious information based on reference sources found in reading books or *websites* .
3. *Browsing* : This is a semi-directed activity in searching for information. This browsing can be done *manually* or through electronic media. Examples of manual *browsing* include activities in information centers such as libraries, print media or newspapers, magazines, and so on. Meanwhile, *browsing* through electronic media can be done by searching on Google (Purnama, 2021).
  4. *Differentiating* (sorting information): This stage involves sorting the information obtained. At this stage, information seekers will identify the information gathered during *the browsing stage* and then select the most robust and accurate information sources.
  5. *Monitoring* : This is the activity of monitoring the development of sources related to the desired information. At this stage, the information seeker focuses on matters or information related to their problem and monitors its development through various sources, such as books, reviews by scholars or researchers, and the web.
  6. *Extracting* (review): This is an activity of searching for in-depth and relevant information from sources that have been selected and monitored.
  7. *Verifying* : This stage involves checking the accuracy of the information found. This is especially true for information obtained from the internet, as it is so easily accessible. Therefore, it is crucial for information seekers to *verify* information to ensure accuracy.
  8. *Ending* (Final Stage): *Ending* is the final stage in information-seeking behavior. Information searches can be considered complete when the desired information has been obtained and fulfilled.

Based on Ellis's eight-stage information-seeking behavior model developed by Cox and Hall, the process of obtaining religious information on the internet does not stop at the search activity alone but also includes the process of evaluating, monitoring, and verifying the information. These stages demonstrate that religious information literacy requires critical thinking skills, diligence in examining data sources, and teacher guidance. Therefore, information obtained from the internet is not immediately accepted but rather goes through several stages to become accurate and appropriate information. Thus, the principles of Islamic education previously explained are strongly relevant to Ellis's stages of information-seeking behavior.

## CONCLUSION

Rapid digital developments have transformed religious learning patterns, from one dominated by face-to-face interactions to one that utilizes various digital platforms to access religious information. While offering easy access to religious information, the digital space also presents challenges in the form of an abundance of information that may not be valid, credible, or in accordance with sharia principles. Therefore, religious information literacy skills are an important competency for information seekers to possess so that they are able to verify and use the information critically and responsibly.

This study shows that Ellis's Information Seeking Behavior Model can be a relevant conceptual framework in strengthening religious information literacy in digital learning. The eight stages of Ellis's model, namely *starting*, *chaining*, *browsing*, *differentiating*, *monitoring*, *extracting*, *verifying*, and *ending*, provide systematic guidance in the information seeking process, so that the religious information obtained is not immediately accepted, but rather through several processes, selection, evaluation, and verification first. In addition, these stages are relevant to the principles of Islamic education, namely critical thinking skills (*dzakā*), learning motivation (*hirs*), persistence in verification (*isthibār*), readiness of learning resources, the role of teachers as guides, and continuous learning. Thus, the integration between Ellis's Model and the principles of Islamic education produces a framework for religious information literacy that not only emphasizes technical skills in searching for information, but also builds critical, ethical, and responsible attitudes in utilizing religious information in the digital era.

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