

# STRENGTHENING THE DIGITAL SKILLS OF GENERATION Z SANTRI THROUGH TRAINING ON THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AS A MEANS OF BUILDING PERSONAL BRANDING

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**Abstract:** *The low level of digital literacy among Generation Z Islamic boarding school students is a major obstacle to utilizing technology for effective da'wah. This program aims to provide an understanding of digital literacy and equip students with practical skills in processing creative content to build personal branding. The novelty of this program lies in its intervention targeting traditional Islamic boarding schools with limited infrastructure, an area that is often overlooked in mainstream digital literacy studies. The activities were carried out using a Service Learning (SL) approach, combined with Kurt Lewin's stages of change, to systematically transform students' behavior on social media. The implementation method consisted of four main stages: problem investigation, strategy preparation, action (including vision clarification, behavior change through technical training, and refreezing through assignments), and self-reflection. The results of the activity showed a significant increase in students' understanding of the urgency of personal branding and mastery of digital skills, such as copywriting, graphic design, and video editing, with practical implications for students' ability to produce consistent, independent creative da'wah content. Theoretically, this program demonstrated that the Service Learning method is effective when used in a pesantren environment to accelerate technological adaptation and foster a positive digital identity among Generation Z students.*

**Keywords:** *Digital Skills; Generation Z; Personal Branding; Social Media.*

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Received: December 27, 2025; Revised: March 6, 2026; Accepted: March 27, 2026; Published: April 15, 2026

## INTRODUCTION

The increase in the number of internet users is undeniable evidence of technological development. The emergence of smartphones has been a major factor in the rapid growth of internet usage across all segments of society. Survey data from the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) found that internet usage in Indonesia in 2023 reached 78.19 percent, meaning 215,626,156 Indonesians out of a total population of 275,773,901 used the internet (Yati, 2023).

The increase in internet users in Indonesia has also been accompanied by greater social media use among the public. There are approximately 167 million active social media users in Indonesia in 2023, equivalent to 60.4% of the total population. This data is based on the 2023 global digital survey conducted by the We Are Social agency based in New York (Widi, 2023). Social media users are predominantly teenagers born between 1997 and 2012, known as Generation Z. In addition to chatting, they spend much time online on social media (Kalita & Goswami, 2025). On the other hand, the increase in internet users must be matched by an increase in good digital skills so that the internet can bring maximum benefits to every user. Digital skills are one of the four pillars of digital literacy that are currently the focus of development for all stakeholders of the Indonesian government.

Currently, Indonesia's digital skills index score is 3.52 on a scale of 1 to 5 (Kominfo, 2023). This score is still moderate, so it must be improved, requiring significant effort from all stakeholders. One indicator of digital skills is the ability to utilize social media and chat applications. These skills are essential to keep up with the rapid flow of information through chat applications and social media (Ratri & Aviyanti, 2025). Access to information and education on the use of social media for Generation Z students at Islamic boarding schools is urgently needed so that these young people can use these platforms effectively. One way to do this is to organize training sessions that improve digital skills.

Santri, as agents of Islamic preservation and change, play a very significant role in preserving Islamic teachings and culture. For this reason, santri, who are predominantly Generation Z, must be prepared and trained as early as possible in a range of skills to respond to the challenges of the times. Not only must they be equipped with religious skills, but also with a range of digital skills characteristic of a modern, civilized society. However, although the government is targeting an increase in digital literacy nationwide, there is a significant gap in its implementation in traditional Islamic boarding schools. While students are positioned as agents of digital change, access to and the development of digital literacy curricula in this environment remain hampered. It is due to several factors, including the negative perception of the internet and social media among boarding school administrators and the lack of information and understanding among students about the benefits of social media for them (Syakur et al., 2024).

The implementation of this activity is an intervention targeting traditional Islamic boarding schools with limited infrastructure. This area is often overlooked in mainstream digital literacy studies, which generally focus on adolescents in urban formal schools with unlimited infrastructure.

Given these circumstances, it is necessary to train students to use social media to build personal branding and improve their digital literacy. It can be done by providing training in digital

skills, such as copywriting, graphic design, and video editing, which have practical implications for students' ability to produce creative religious content. The target audience for this activity is students at Islamic boarding schools in Pragaan District, which number 27 institutions according to data from Emis PD-Pontren.

## METHOD

This training activity was held on the first floor of the Radio Swara Dakwah Building in the Al-Amien Prenduan Islamic Boarding School Complex. It was attended by 76 participants, comprising students and/or administrators from Islamic boarding schools in Pragaan Subdistrict aged 8 to 23 years (Generation Z), from 30 institutions/Islamic boarding schools in Pragaan Subdistrict. The following is data on the institutions that participated in this activity.

**Table 2.** Data Table of Institutions Participating in This Activity

No.	Name of The Institution	Address
1	An-Najah I	Jl. Yayasan No. 03
2	Hidayatut Thalibin	Dusun Rembang
3	Al-Asy`Ariyah	Jl. Ketapang Indah No. 1
4	Pp. Agung Damar	Dsn. Talaga Ds. Pakamban Daya Kec. Pragaan
5	As-Syafi'ie	Jl. K. Syafie Itsbat No 01 Karduluk Pragaan
6	Ponpes. Nurul Jali	Dusun Prang Alas Desa Pakamban Daya
7	Pp Nurul Huda	Jl Cempaka Putih No 4 Pp Nurul Huda Pakamban Laok
8	Tmi Al-Amien Prenduan	Jl. Pamekasan-Sumenep Desa Pragaan Laok Kec. Pragaan Kab. Sumenep Jawa Timur 69465
9	Ar-Ruhama'	Jl. Pasar Sabe No. 99 Berruh Karduluk
10	Pondok Pesantren Al-Amien Tegal	Jl. Raya Prenduan Sumenep
11	Pps Bustanul Ulum	Jl Pps Bustanul Ulum Pakamban Daya
12	Pondok Pesantren Putri 1 Al-Amien Prenduan	Jl. Raya Pamekasan-Sumenep No 2a
13	Al-Qororul Makien	Jl. Kh. Ali Mazid Ceccek Ds. Prenduan
14	Pp. Tarbiyatul Islamiyah	Jl. Simpang Iii Dandan Pragaan Daya
15	Darul Ihsan	Dsn. Bakburu
16	Tmi Al-Amien Prenduan	Jl. Pamekasan-Sumenep Desa Pragaan Laok Kec. Pragaan Kab. Sumenep Jawa Timur 69465
17	Al Ihsan	Jl. Kh. Ahmad Fauzi Sirran Dusun Ketapang
18	Darussalam	Jl. Masjid At-Taqwa Dusun Berruh Rt/3/Rw/8
19	Ponpes. Nurul Jali	Dusun Prang Alas Desa Pakamban Daya
20	Nurul Karomah	Jl. Labillah Dusun Bulu Desa Pragaan Daya
21	Hidayatut Thalibin	Dusun Rembang
22	Pps Bustanul Ulum	Jl. Pps Bustanul Ulum Pakamban Daya

No.	Name of The Institution	Address
23	Ar-Ruhama'	Dusun Berruh Desa Karduluk Kec. Pragaan
24	Pps Al Faariqi	Desa Aeng Panas
25	As-Syafi'ie	Jl. K. Syafie Itsbat No 01 Karduluk Pragaan
26	Ar-Ruhama'	Dusun Berruh Desa Karduluk Kec. Pragaan
27	Pp. Tarbiyatul Islamiyah	Jl. Simpang Iii Dandan Pragaan Daya
28	Pps Al Faariqi	Desa Aeng Panas
29	Ar-Ruhama'	Jl. Pasar Sabe No. 99 Berruh Karduluk
30	Pondok Pesantren Putri 1 Al-Amien Prenduan	Jl. Raya Pamekasan-Sumenep No 2a

This program will be carried out using the Service Learning (SL) approach. This approach is based on a learning method in which students take what they learn in class and apply it directly to projects in their environment or community. The service-learning method is carried out by following the stages formulated by Kaye, namely: (1) investigation; (2) preparation; (3) action; (4) reflection; and (5) Demonstration (Kaye, 2004). Here is an explanation of these stages.

**Investigation.** This stage is carried out to determine the actual conditions within the community. It is done by associating with the community to identify existing problems. Activities in this stage also include assessing and analyzing problems within the community through field studies and literature reviews. One technique for analyzing problems is the problem tree and wish tree analysis method.

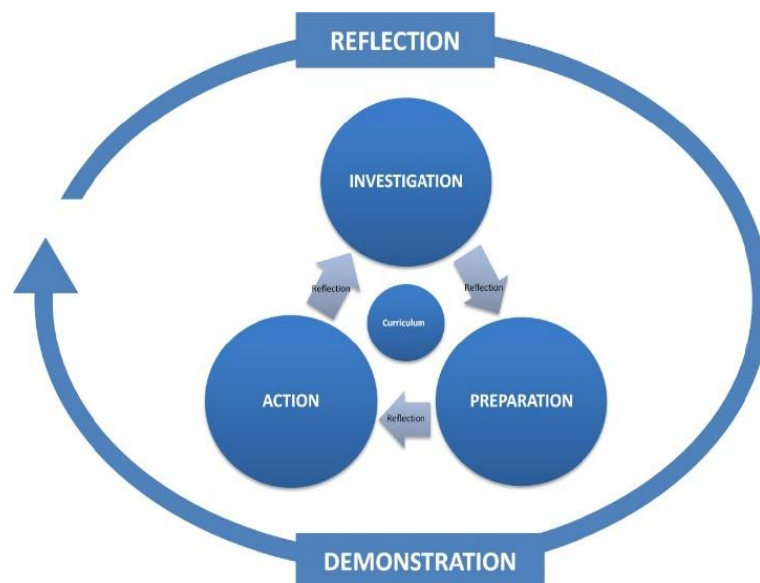
**Preparation.** At this stage, the problems identified in the previous stage are analyzed and discussed with the community service team by conducting focus group discussions. It is done to determine the steps and strategies to address the problems identified in the previous stage. At this stage, a detailed plan of activities and a schedule for their implementation are also determined.

**Action.** At this stage, activities are carried out based on the preparations planned in the previous phase. This phase is easier to understand by adopting Kurt Lewin's stages of change concept: (1) unfreezing; (2) changing; and (3) refreezing (Cummings et al., 2016).

The unfreezing stage is carried out by guiding training participants towards a new reality, leaving behind the past. In this case, participants are directed to develop a new vision aligned with the training objectives. Next, in the change stage, training participants create a vision for the future by defining missions to achieve it. Participants are also guided to develop new attitudes and behaviors by providing concrete examples, and to be critical and selective in their approach to various issues to identify information and problems in society. Furthermore, in the refreezing stage, each participant is allowed to test the suitability of these new attitudes with the realities they face. At this stage, encouragement and the right environment are needed to maintain these new attitudes,

and group cohesion becomes very decisive. Reflection. At this stage, each participant assesses themselves by seeking external feedback to obtain information about their position in society.

Demonstration. This stage is the most vital level of the entire service-learning cycle, where participants not only showcase their final results but also synthesize their entire learning process from investigation, preparation, action, and reflection into a complete and meaningful narrative. In this phase, participants take full responsibility for their learning by transforming their experiences into explicit knowledge that is shared with the public through various media that serve a dual purpose: as a means of education for the wider community and as a tool for metacognitive development for all participants to realize what and how they have learned (Payne-Jackson, 2021).



Source: <https://discoverecsl.wordpress.com/2012/09/10/the-five-stages-of-service-learning/>

**Figure 1.** The process of service learning

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Study on Digital Skills, Personal Branding, and Social Media

Digital skills are one of the four pillars of digital literacy formulated by the Indonesian Ministry of Communication and Information Technology. Digital skills are a fundamental part of digital literacy that everyone must master. Digital skills are a person's ability to know, understand, and use ICT software or hardware, as well as digital operating systems. The following are indicators of digital skills: (1) Basic knowledge of the digital landscape, the internet, and cyberspace; (2) Basic knowledge of search engines, how to use them, and how to select data; (3) Basic knowledge of chat applications and social media; and (4) Basic knowledge of various digital wallet applications, digital transactions, and marketplaces (Astuti, 2025).

Meanwhile, the sub-indicators of basic knowledge about chat applications and social media are as follows: 1) Knowledge of various chat applications and social media. 2) Knowledge of techniques and methods for accessing chat applications and social media. 3) Knowledge of features available in chat applications and social media (Monggilo et al., 2021).

The importance of digital interaction for Generation Z santri can be explained through the theory of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC). This theory views social media not merely as a means of transmitting messages, but as a space for interaction that allows santri to overcome the limitations of space and time in building social influence (Laksana & Fadhillah, 2021). From a CMC perspective, students can utilize platform features to curate messages more deeply than in face-to-face interactions, giving them full control over the formation of their digital identities (Soh et al., 2024). The ability of santri to manage computer-mediated communication is crucial; through active engagement in comment sections, online discussions, and the dissemination of creative content, they are expanding their influence beyond the physical boundaries of the pesantren. It allows pesantren values to be conveyed in a more inclusive and transformative manner to a wider audience in the virtual world.

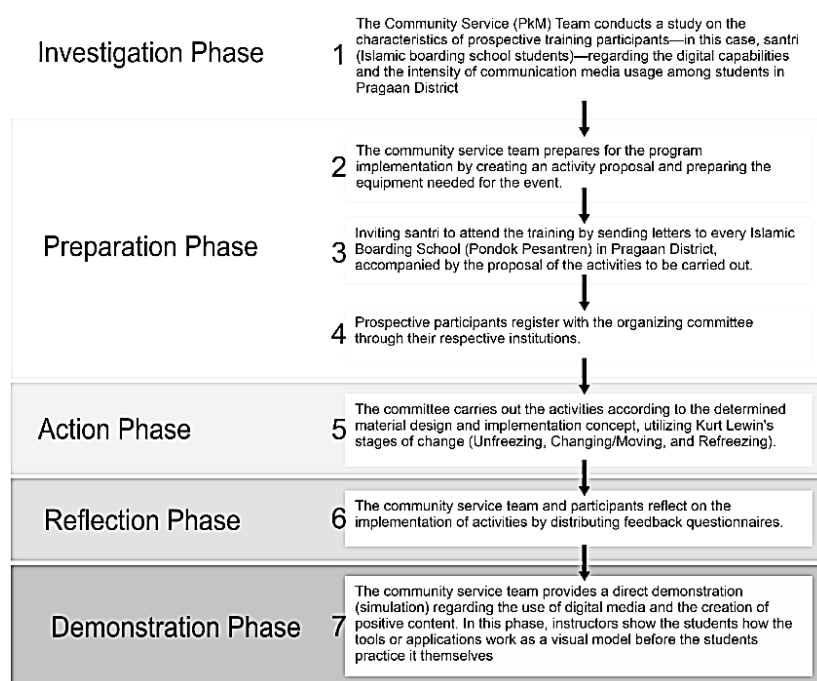
Moreover, personal branding is a process of shaping individuals' and society's perceptions of a person's qualities, including personality, abilities, mastery of values, and other attributes that can elicit positive perceptions, which are ultimately used as weapons in marketing. Furthermore, Raharjo argues that three interrelated factors shape an individual's personal branding: individual competence/skills, style, and standards. Individual competence relates to the specific abilities that a person has mastered, which are used to build an individual's reputation and credibility in the eyes of others. Meanwhile, style is something that makes an individual unique and distinctive. Standards, on the other hand, relate to the extent and level of criteria set by an individual for certain things (Raharjo, 2019).

Meanwhile, social media is a popular phenomenon that attracts significant public attention. Experts have provided various definitions of this technology that is always needed by society today. Social media has enabled strategic communication to meet customers and the public wherever they are and join the conversation. B.K. Lewis provides an overview to give a comprehensive understanding of social media, stating that it is a platform that connects everyone, provides opportunities and space to share and produce content with others, extracts and processes community knowledge, and shares it back (Bobbi Kay Lewis, 2010).

### **The implementation of the Service-Learning approach in Community Service activities.**

This community service activity is implemented using the Service-Learning concept. This

concept can be understood through the following steps: (1) First, the Community Service team conducted a study of the characteristics of prospective training participants, in this case, Islamic boarding school students, in terms of their digital skills and intensity of use of communication media in the Pragaan sub-district; (2) Second, the Community Service team prepared for the implementation of the program by creating a proposal for the implementation of activities and preparing the equipment needed for the event; (3) Inviting santri to participate in the training by sending letters to each Islamic boarding school in the Pragaan sub-district, accompanied by a proposal for the activities to be carried out; (4) Fourth, prospective participants register with the organizing committee through their respective institutions; (5) The committee carries out the activities in accordance with the predetermined material design; (6) The community service team and participants reflect on the implementation of the activities by distributing feedback questionnaires; and (7) The community service team provides a direct demonstration (simulation) regarding the use of digital media and the creation of positive content. In this phase, instructors show the students how the tools or applications work as a visual model before the students practice them themselves. The scheme is shown in the following figure.



Source: Personal Documentation, 2023

Figure 2. Implementation scheme for community service activities

### Implementation of Activities based on Kurt Lewin's stages of change concept

Kurt Lewin divides the concept of change into three stages, each of which is interrelated

with the others, namely the unfreezing stage, the change stage, and the refreezing stage. The following is an explanation of the three stages in accordance with the activities carried out:

### The unfreezing stage

This stage focuses on preparing the organization for change. The primary goal of this stage is to create an urgent sense that change is necessary, not merely an option. It involves dismantling the current status quo, that is, entrenched beliefs, norms, or practices that act as "ice" or resistance. The unfreeze process involves identifying and reducing restraining forces—such as dissatisfaction, fear, or lack of motivation and increasing driving forces, for example, by communicating a crisis, an opportunity, or a vision of a better future. Without an effective unfreeze stage, subsequent change efforts are likely to fail because individuals do not see the need to move beyond their comfort zones (Hussain et al., 2018).

The unfreezing stage was carried out by providing theoretical material on Wednesday, December 13, 2023, from 8:00 a.m. until completion at the Rasda Meeting Building on the 1st floor, with the following material details.

**Table 2.** Table of Materials and Presenters

Material	Presenters
<b>Material 1:</b> The importance of digital literacy for Santri	Ferdiansyah Tetrajaya,SH (Head of the Communication and Information Agency Sumenep Regency)
<b>Material 2:</b> Santri as a digital agent of Islamic preservation and change	Ahmad Zulfikar Ali, M.Kom.I (Lecturer at the Faculty of Da'wah and Ushuluddin, UNIA Prenduan)
<b>Material 3:</b> Understanding social media and personal branding	Agus Saifuddin Amin, M,Si (Lecturer at the Faculty of Da'wah and Ushuluddin, UNIA Prenduan)

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**Source:** Personal Documentation, 2023

The provision of digital literacy materials aims to shake up the status quo or old mindset of students who were previously passive, making them aware of the urgency of digital identity by improving and broadening Generation Z students' understanding and perception of social media and the importance of personal branding in Pragaan District. The theoretical presentation activity was divided into three sessions. The first session discussed the importance of digital literacy for students, with Mr. Ferdiansyah Tetrajaya, SH, Head of the Communication and Information

Agency Sumenep Regency, as the speaker. The speaker began the discussion by describing the current situation of young people and the challenges they face, emphasizing the need for digital literacy to address the increasingly complex challenges posed by technological and information advancement.

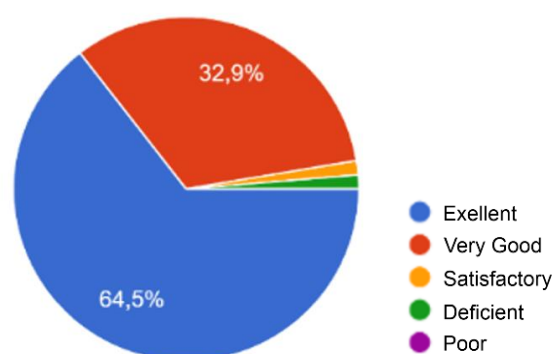


Source: Personal Documentation, 2023

**Figure 3.** Mr. Ferdiansyah Tetrajaya, SH., Head of the Communication and Information Agency of Sumenep Regency, while delivering his presentation

In his presentation, Mr. Ferdiansyah explored and explained the concept of digital literacy for santri, from basic concepts to more detailed, in-depth aspects. The speaker also emphasized the risks and threats students may face when using the internet, reminding all students to understand internet ethics thoroughly and to pay attention to their rights and obligations when surfing the virtual world. Based on his expertise, in-depth knowledge, and experience, Mr. Ferdiansyah not only presented the latest data and facts on digital issues but also provided concrete, practical solutions that students can apply in their daily lives.

The results of the material presented by Mr. Ferdiansyah Tetrajaya, SH., from a total of 76 respondents gave positive responses from training participants, as illustrated in the participant satisfaction survey results in the following graph:



Source: Personal Documentation, 2023

**Figure 4.** Participants' assessment chart for the first presenter Mr. Ferdiansyah Tetrajaya, SH.

The second session of this event was led by Ahmad Zufikar Ali, M.Kom.I, with the theme “Santri as digital agents of Islamic preservation and change.” At the beginning of the session, the speaker emphasized that the duty of a santri is to preach, especially in today's digital era, when santri must take on their role in digital preaching. It marks a paradigm shift in religious outreach methods. Theoretically, this relates to the concept of Digital Da'wah, where cyberspace is not merely a technical tool but a strategic ecosystem for preserving Islamic values (preservation) while also driving social innovation (change) (Qury, 2024).

The speaker's emphasis on the santri's duty to preach in the digital age underscores the urgency of Digital Self-Efficacy. In this perspective, santri are no longer seen as passive consumers of information, but rather as authoritative content producers who have a moral responsibility to color the digital world with moderate narratives. The obligation of santri to take on a role in digital da'wah is a form of adaptation of the santri identity amid the tide of globalization, where social media management skills have become a key instrument in maintaining the relevance of Islamic teachings for Generation Z. Thus, mastery of technology is not merely a technical skill, but an extension of the intellectual and spiritual mission of santri in a new public space (Umar et al., 2023).

Next, the speaker provided rationales for why da'wah must be carried out and why santri must be actively involved in digital da'wah. The speaker emphasized that this is done to balance the proportion of negative content with positive content, especially content with Islamic themes. In addition, the speaker explained the steps students must take in digital da'wah activities, namely using their gadgets to spread da'wah online. It is done by creating creative da'wah content.

In addition, the speaker shared tips and tricks for making preaching successful and appealing to the community, namely by recognizing our own abilities and interests and identifying the target audience for our preaching.

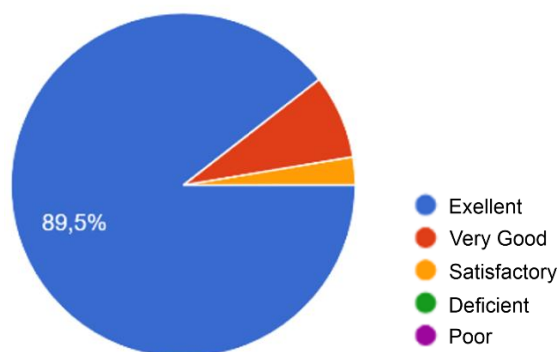


Source: Personal Documentation, 2023

Figure 5. Ahmad Zulfikar Ali, M.Kom.I., (speaker II), delivering his presentation

At the end of the session, the speaker discussed the challenges each participant might face when starting their missionary work. The speaker emphasized that not all our activities will be successful or satisfying, especially for beginners new to the digital world. There will always be challenges and failures because what we are doing is good, and Allah SWT will always test goodness. (Shaikh, 2007).

The results of the material presented by Ahmad Zulfikar Ali, M.Kom.I., from a total of 76 respondents, showed positive responses from training participants, as illustrated in the following participant satisfaction survey results:



Source: Personal Documentation, 2023

Figure 6. Participants' assessment chart for the Second presenter Mr. Ahmad Zulfikar Ali, M. Kom.I

The third session of this event was led by Mr. Agus Saifuddin Amin, M.Si., with the theme of Understanding Social Media and Personal Branding. In the initial discussion, the speaker detailed the currently most dominant social media platforms, including Instagram, Facebook, YouTube,

and TikTok. He guided and instructed participants in understanding the dynamics and features of each platform, and provided insights and guidance on how to interact effectively with audiences and create engaging content. This session not only provided a basic understanding but also sparked participants' curiosity, encouraging them to be more exploratory and creative in their use of social media.

This session focused on personal branding, with Mr. Agus providing a detailed explanation of the importance of building a consistent, positive personal brand in the digital world. He explained how to highlight participants' unique qualities, understand their personal values, and create an interesting and convincing branding narrative. Additionally, participants are encouraged to reflect on and plan their personal steps toward building and managing a strong, distinctive personal brand.



Source: Personal Documentation, 2023

**Figure 7.** Agus Saifuddin Amin (speaker III) is delivering his presentation

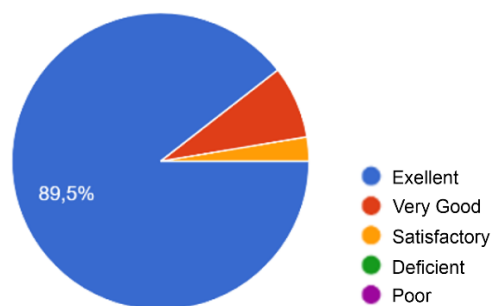
At the end of the session, the presenter allowed each participant to engage in interactive discussions, where they could ask questions and share their views directly with the presenter. This inspiring discussion fostered a collaborative atmosphere in which participants felt encouraged to apply the concepts they had learned in their daily lives. This activity not only left a positive impression but also provided participants with valuable knowledge to face a future increasingly connected through social media, with strong self-awareness.

The discussion of the dominance of platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok is not merely a technical introduction, but rather a strategic effort to understand the characteristics of different 'digital ecosystems'. Theoretically, platform selection is the first step in a Personal Branding Strategy, where each platform has unique algorithms and audience demographics. Explaining the dynamics and diversity of features across platforms enables students

to adapt their messages, showing how the same religious message can be packaged visually on Instagram, narratively on Facebook, or dynamically in short-form on TikTok (Gawer, 2022).

Furthermore, guidelines for effective audience interaction are closely related to the theory of Digital Interactivity (Zhu, 2025). In building personal branding, santri are not only required to produce engaging content but also to manage two-way relationships with audiences to build trust and authority. The stimulation of creativity and curiosity that emerged in this session demonstrates the process of Digital Transformation, in which social media is no longer seen as a mere entertainment tool, but rather as an instrument for building the professional and intellectual reputation of santri in the digital public sphere.

The results of the material presented by Agus Saifuddin Amin, M.Si., from a total of 76 respondents gave positive responses from training participants, as illustrated in the participant satisfaction survey results in the following graph:



Source: Personal Documentation, 2023

Figure 8. Participants' assessment chart for the third presenter Mr. Agus Saifuddin Amin.

### The change stage

Once the status quo is disrupted and resistance begins to diminish, the organization moves to a new state or behavior. This stage involves setting new goals, implementing new structures or processes, and most importantly, employees learning and developing new behaviors and attitudes. This phase is often characterized by uncertainty, chaos, and experimentation, requiring strong support, clear communication, adequate training, and continuous leadership to guide individuals through the transition from the old to the new (Hussain et al., 2018).

The change stage was carried out by providing practical training on Thursday, December 14, 2023, from 8:00 a.m. until completion at the Rasda Meeting Hall on the 1st floor, with the following details:

**Table 3.** Table of Materials and Presenters

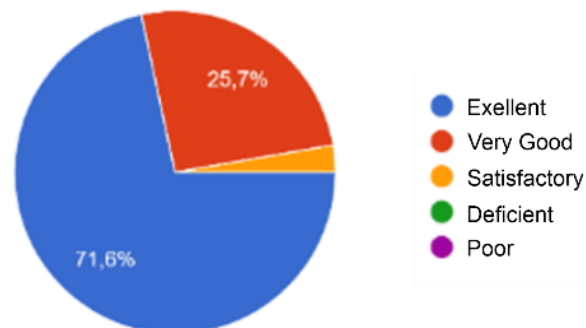
Material	Presenters
<b>Practical training 1:</b> introduction to copywriting (powerful writing techniques)	Dr. Ach. Nurholis Majid, M.Pd. (Lecturer at the Faculty of Tarbiyah, UNIA Prenduan)
<b>Practical training 2:</b> How to Create Image-Based Social Media Content	Ahmad Zulfikar Ali, M.Kom.I (Lecturer at the Faculty of Da'wah and Ushuluddin, UNIA Prenduan)
<b>Practical training 3:</b> How to Create Video-Based Social Media Content	Agus Saifuddin Amin, M,Si (Lecturer at the Faculty of Da'wah and Ushuluddin, UNIA Prenduan)

**Source:** Personal Documentation, 2023

The second day consisted of technical training, which was a behavioral transformation process aimed at developing new competencies. This technical training consisted of practical mentoring focused on improving students' digital skills and on techniques and procedures for using social media to build personal branding. These activities emphasized technical skills, including copywriting, graphic design, and video editing, which were then used as tools for creating social media content to strengthen the students' personal branding.

In this activity, the students were accompanied by three instructors led by Dr. Nurholis Majid, M.Pd. The participants were given direct guidance (on the spot) on the technicalities of creating social media content in the form of written posts, images, and videos using smartphones/ laptops that the participants had prepared in advance.

The results of the training in this session are in the form of participant feedback collected using a survey method, and the results can be seen in the following graph:



**Source:** Personal Documentation, 2023

**Figure 9.** Participants' assessment chart for the practical training and mentoring.

### The Refreezing stage

This stage aims to solidify and stabilize the changes that have occurred, making them the new, permanent norm or status quo. If changes are not refrozen, there is a high risk that the organization will slip back into old ways once the pressure to change is removed. Refreezing is achieved by integrating new practices and behaviors into the organization's culture, reward systems, policies, and formal structures. It ensures that changes are sustainable and become a natural part of daily operations, rather than just a temporary solution (Pregmark, 2022).

The refreezing stage was carried out by providing structured assignment materials to participants on Friday, December 15, 2023, from 8:00 a.m. until completion, with the following task details.

**Table 4.** Table of Participant task description

Task description	Implementers
Training participants are grouped with a maximum of 5 participants and are required to create social media content with the following conditions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Participants determine the main theme of the brand they will focus on.</li> <li>2. Participants create content in the form of 1) Islamic taglines and/or quotes, 2) design images with a da'wah theme, and 3) video content. Each participant must create one piece of work for each category.</li> <li>3. All content must align with the chosen theme.</li> <li>4. The deadline for completing the task is 4:00 PM WIB.</li> </ol>	community service organizing committee

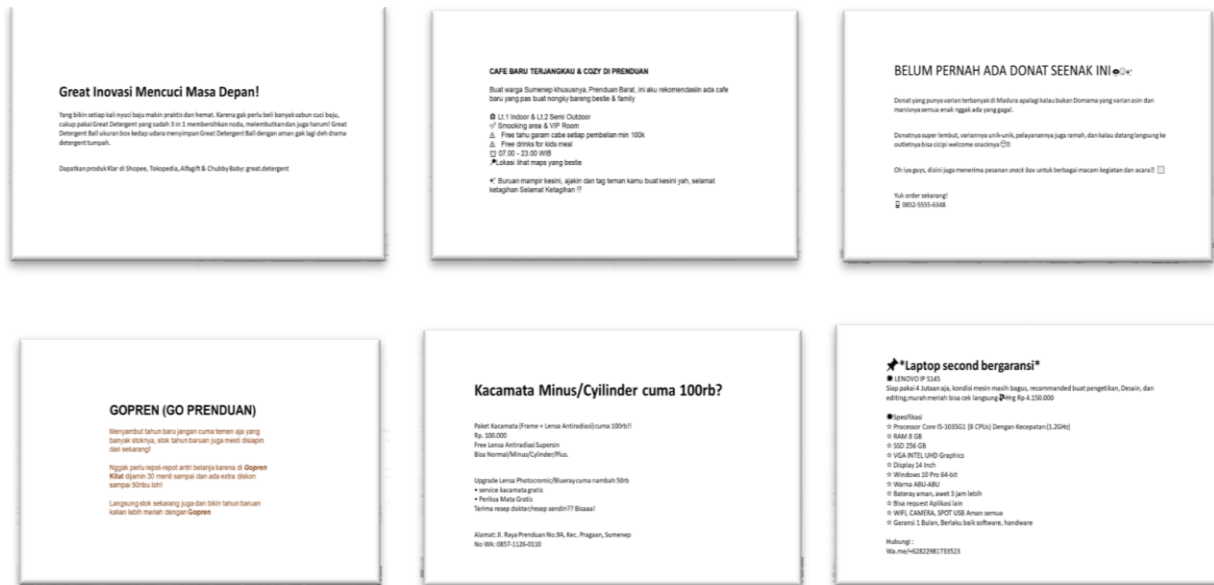
**Source:** Personal Documentation, 2023

The activity on the third day was a structured assignment in which participants were divided into groups to complete tasks given by the committee. The purpose of this activity was to measure the participants' ability to produce social media content. The purpose of grouping participants was to build and foster a collaborative atmosphere among them.

In this context, social media such as Instagram and TikTok not only serve as content distribution channels but also function as a 'digital stage' for santri to engage in self-presentation (Hernández-Serrano et al., 2022). Through visual and audiovisual features, santri can strategically manage impression management to shape positive public perceptions. By creatively showcasing the scientific competence of Islamic boarding schools, santri are building their digital authority. It is in line with personal branding efforts, where every element of content, from speech style to visual aesthetics, is curated in such a way as to show the identity of santri as a moderate, tech-savvy Generation Z that still upholds religious values in the eyes of the wider community (Retnowati et al., 2025).

## Strengthening The Digital Skills of Generation Z Santri Through.....

The results of this activity are written content, graphic images, and videos created by each group. The following works are manifestations of the Impression Management efforts made by students to build their personal brands:



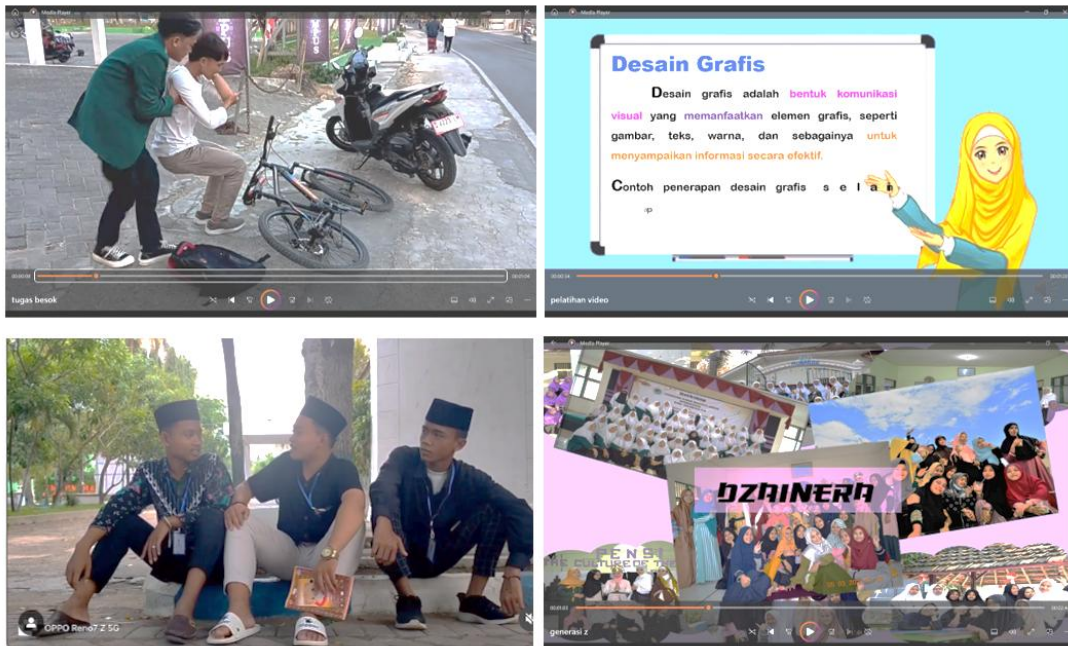
Source: Personal Documentation, 2023

Figure 10. Collection of participants' copywriting works



Source: Personal Documentation, 2023

Figure 11. Collection of participants' Graphic Design works

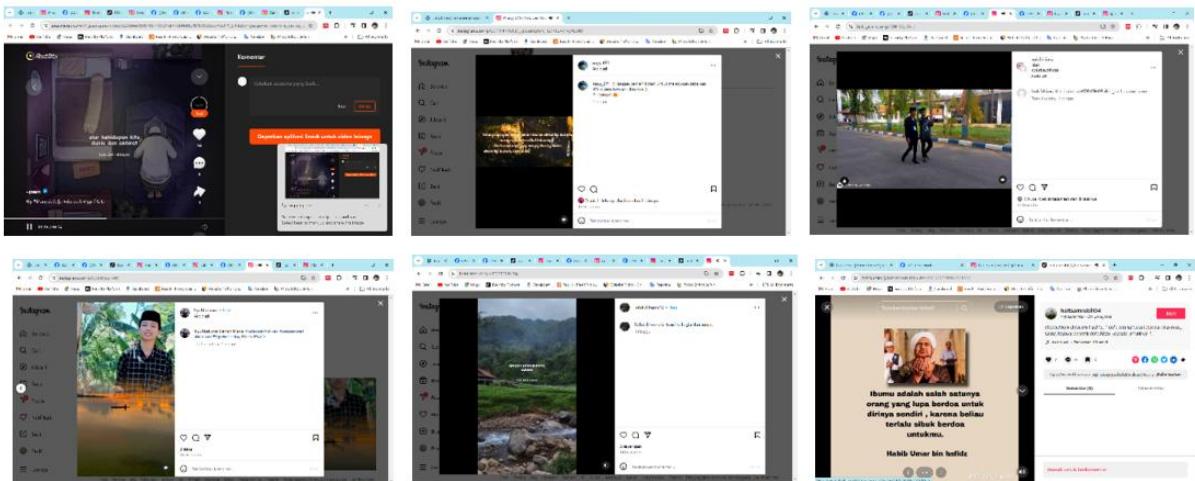


Source: Personal Documentation, 2023

Figure 12. A collection of participants' videography works

The collection of works submitted by participants shows that all material covered during the previous day's mentoring session was well absorbed and can be applied and practiced by all training participants. Although some participants used product objects as technical exercises, the emphasis was on their ability to communicate value through visual aesthetics, which is the main foundation for building Personal Branding on social media (Wu, 2024).

In addition, the freezing stage was conducted by observing the social media activities of students who had participated in the training. The observation was conducted for a week after the training. The results of the activities can also be seen in the committee's observation data, as participants began posting their work on their respective social media accounts. The core of this refocusing stage occurs when students begin to consistently upload content on their personal accounts that reflects their pesantren values. This activity has implications for Digital Self-Efficacy, whereby students now have the confidence to produce religious content independently (Ulfert-Blank, 2022). Here are some screenshots of the participants' social media pages.



Source: Personal Documentation, 2023

Figure 12. Displays of participants' work after training are posted on social media.

### Obstacles and limitations in implementing activities and their solutions

Based on a comprehensive evaluation of this training program, several obstacles were identified and subsequently overcome with practical solutions in the field. The first obstacle was that not all institutions or Islamic boarding schools in Pragaan Subdistrict delegated their students to participate in this activity. In response, the organizing committee increased the participant quota for institutions willing to participate, ensuring the training quota was met.

In addition to institutional participation constraints, there were technical issues, as some students lacked supporting devices such as smartphones or laptops for the practical sessions. The solution implemented was to divide participants into small groups based on the devices they brought, so the learning process could continue collaboratively. Finally, the committee faced the challenge of varying levels of digital skills among participants. To overcome this, the accompanying tutors provided opportunities for participants with higher skills to share their experiences and guide their peers in their groups, thereby fostering a climate of cooperation among the students.

### CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the activities that have been carried out, it can be concluded that: (1) This training program has succeeded in improving and expanding the understanding and perception of Generation Z students in Pragaan District regarding social media and increasing their understanding and awareness of the importance of personal branding; (2) This training program has successfully improved the digital skills of Generation Z students in Pragaan Subdistrict, as well as their techniques and methods for using and utilizing social media as a means of building personal

branding; and (3) Several participants have begun creating religious content in accordance with their respective roles as students.

Therefore, here are some suggestions related to the implementation of this community service activities: (1) Based on the findings during the training, most of the students do not yet have adequate digital skills, so attention is needed from all stakeholders, especially institutions and Islamic boarding schools, to provide further reinforcement for the students; (2) Based on the findings that students have varying levels of digital skills, future community service implementers should pay more attention to the participants' skill levels when considering the requirements for participation; and (3) All educational institutions and Islamic boarding schools should actively involve training participants in promoting the boarding school within the community through creative content shared via social media.

Furthermore, the program's limitations lie in its scope, which covers only one sub-district, resulting in an uneven distribution of the impact of strengthening students' digital skills. As a solution, future programs need to expand their reach to the district or regional level through more extensive collaboration between Islamic boarding schools.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

After the implementation of this community service activity, we would like to express our sincere appreciation and gratitude to all parties who supported and helped us. We also express our gratitude to the Directorate of Islamic Higher Education of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia who has helped and trusted us in funding this program, also to the Communication and Informatics Office of Sumenep Regency who has been willing to help us in delivering materials to participants, also to all levels of functionaries of the Faculty of Da'wah and Ushuluddin especially the Islamic Communication and Broadcasting Study Program who helped us in preparing the materials, we also would like to express our deepest gratitude to our friends at the FDU student executive board who helped us a lot in the process of implementing the event, as well as to all partners and related parties who took an active role in the implementation of this activity.

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