

Keyboard, Pulpit and Belonging

Türkiye's Digital Salafi Ecosystem

Prof. Dr. Hilmi Demir
Zeynep Yıldız



Authors:

Prof. Dr. Hilmi Demir

Faculty Member, Department of History, TOBB ETÜ

Director, TEPAV/OAS

President, URAD

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-3065-3356>

Zeynep Yıldız

Research Associate, TEPAV

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-2578-8801>

This report was prepared with the support and contributions of the Economic Policy Research Foundation of Türkiye (TEPAV) and the International Radicalism Observatory Association (URAD).

Keyboard, Pulpit, and Belonging:

Türkiye's Digital Salafi Ecosystem

Prof. Dr. Hilmi Demir

Zeynep Yıldız

A TEPAV & URAD Report

June 2026, Ankara

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	7
1. INTRODUCTION	9
2. CONTEXT AND CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY	12
2.1. The Concept of Salafism	13
2.2. Salafism and Social Perceptions in Türkiye	19
2.3. Religiosity, Pluralism, and Radical Attitudes	26
2.4. Digitalization, Youth, and Salafi Networks	29
3. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK	31
4. METHODS AND DATA SOURCES	37
5. DIGITAL VISIBILITY AND CONTINUITY OF CONTENT PRODUCTION	41
6. CONTENT AND DISCOURSE THEMES	47
6.1. Black-and-White Dichotomies and Discourses of Certainty	49
6.2. Al Ghuraba, Belonging, and the Appeal of Counterculture	50
6.3. Emotional Mobilization and Discourses of Victimhood	51
6.4. Everyday Religious Outreach	52
7. ENGAGEMENT WITH YOUNGER AUDIENCES, DIGITAL BELONGING, AND DISCURSIVE ADAPTATION	58
7.1. Content Directed at Children and Early Adolescents: The Case of Bizim Dünyamız	60
7.2. Young Adults, Privacy, and Everyday Moral Guidance	63
7.3. The Hasbihal Format: Face-to-Face Gatherings, Question-and-Answer Sessions, and Digital Belonging	65
7.4. School, Family, Sin, and the Pursuit of Religious Knowledge	68
7.5. Interim Assessment	73
8. ANALYSIS OF AUTHORITY TYPES AND STRUCTURAL TYPOLOGIES	74

8.1. Person-Centered Charismatic Authority	81
8.2. Institutional and Association-Based Authority	83
8.3. The Virtual Madrasa and Lesson Archive Model	85
8.4. Hybrid Network Authority and Cross-Platform Referrals	87
8.5. Interim Assessment	90
9. PLATFORM DIVERSITY AND THE DIGITAL COMMUNICATION NETWORK	90
9.1. YouTube Video Descriptions and Cross-Platform Referrals	97
9.2. Platform Functional Differentiation	99
9.3. The Multilayered Digital Communication Network	101
10. GEOGRAPHIC REACH AND SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION	103
10.1. From the Local Gathering to Digital Circulation: The Hasbihal Example	109
10.2. Institutional Spaces, Associations, and Digital Reach	110
10.3. Transnational Reach and Indicators of International Engagement	111
10.4. Interim Assessment	112
11. SCOPE AND METHODOLOGICAL NOTES	113
12. ASSESSMENT FROM A MONITORING AND POLICY PERSPECTIVE	114
12.1. Policy Recommendations	118
12.2. Comparative Policy Experiences and Implications for Türkiye	124
12.3. Proposed Indicator Set for Monitoring	126
13. CONCLUSION AND OVERALL ASSESSMENT	128

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Classification Criteria Used for Identifying Salafi Digital Outreach Actors.....	19
Table 2. Findings on Salafism and Doctrinal Identities in Türkiye, 2016–2020.....	22
Table 3. Demographic and Regional Profile of Respondents Identifying as Salafi, 2020.....	23
Table 4. Trust in Diyanet’s Religious Views, 2020.....	24
Table 5. Comparative Reading of the TEPAV Survey Data and the YouTube Dataset.....	25
Table 6. Analytical Linkages among Digitalization, Youth, and Salafi Networks.....	31
Table 7. The Multilayered Structure of the Salafi Digital Outreach Ecosystem.....	35
Table 8. Analytical Dimensions and Indicators Used in the Analysis of Salafi Digital Outreach Networks.....	36
Table 9. Scope of the Dataset and Key Variables Coded.....	40
Table 10. Subscriber Counts, Growth Rates, and Performance Metrics by Actor, 2024–2026.....	43
Table 11. Channel Groups by Subscriber Growth Trajectories, 2024–2026.....	44
Table 12. Analytical Significance of Content and Discourse Themes.....	48
Table 13. Discourse Themes, Religious Guidance Functions, and Risk Indicators Requiring Monitoring.....	53
Table 14. Comparison of TEPAV Findings and Discourse Themes in the YouTube Dataset.....	57
Table 15. Mechanisms of Engagement with Younger Audiences.....	59
Table 16. Content Formats, User Profiles Engaged, and Digital Functions.....	70
Table 17. Quantitative Distribution of Structural Typologies, Total Subscribers, and Authority Characteristics, 2026.....	77
Table 18. Actor Typology According to the Functions of the Virtual Madrasa, Digital Television Channel, and Hybrid Network.....	78
Table 19. Distribution of Platform Diversity and Communication Strategy.....	91
Table 20. Distribution of Cross-Platform Referral Channels.....	92
Table 21. Cross-Platform Network Connections and Digital Referral Capacity of Selected Actors.....	93
Table 22. Aggregate Subscriber Visibility and Spatial Characteristics by Geographic Centers Associated with the Actors, 2026.....	106
Table 23. Comparative Interpretation of the TEPAV Regional Findings and the Spatial Connections Identified in the YouTube Dataset.....	108
Table 24. Prioritization Matrix for Open-Source Monitoring and Analysis.....	116
Table 25. Preventive Policy Areas and Intervention Instruments for Salafi Digital Outreach Networks.....	121
Table 26. Proposed Indicator Set for Monitoring Salafi Digital Outreach Networks.....	127

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. The Visibility and Profile of Salafism in Türkiye, TEPAV Survey, %	21
Figure 2. Groups with Radical Religious Attitudes by Social Exclusion Status in Türkiye, 2016–2020	27
Figure 3. Most Visible YouTube Channels by Subscriber Count (Thousands), 2026	42

LIST OF IMAGES

Image 1. Child-Oriented Entertainment and Competition Content on the Bizim Dünyamız YouTube Channel	61
Image 2. Circulation of Face-to-Face Hasbihal Gatherings on YouTube in the Halis Hoca ile Hasbihal Series	66
Image 3. The Hasbihal Format and the Theme of Everyday Guidance in the Video “Kötü Alışkanlıklar Nasıl Bırakılabilir?” (How Can Bad Habits Be Overcome?)	67

Abstract

This study examines Salafi digital outreach actors operating on YouTube, one of the leading social media platforms, using open-source data. The analysis focuses on channel structures, content themes, methods of reaching younger audiences, models of religious authority, cross-platform redirection practices, indicators of geographical reach, and policy-related monitoring needs. The primary aim of the study is not to label these digital networks directly as forms of radicalization or as security threats, but rather to provide an analytical account of how they gain visibility, which user groups they engage with, what forms of authority they produce, and through which platforms they maintain continuity.

The report's findings indicate that, within the networks examined, YouTube functions not merely as a video-sharing platform, but also as a central point of contact for religious guidance, belonging, the production of authority, and cross-platform redirection. When lessons, sermons, question-and-answer sessions, informal religious conversations, animations for children, content on privacy and morality aimed at young adults, and material addressing school, family, the pursuit of religious knowledge, marriage, harmful habits, and everyday religious guidance are considered together, it becomes clear that digital outreach activities cannot be reduced to a single, uniform content model.

Reaching younger audiences emerges as one of the study's key findings. Claims of providing "clean and halal content" for children, question-and-answer formats such as *Çocukça Sorular* ("Childlike Questions"), animated content, discussions of privacy and digital *fitnah* aimed at young adults, and informal religious conversations addressing topics such as harmful habits, university life, the pursuit of religious knowledge, and family relationships all indicate that youth-oriented themes are continuously reproduced across diverse content formats. However, this finding should not be interpreted as evidence of direct influence or radicalization. Open-source YouTube data do not allow for verification of viewers' actual ages, their individual levels of influence, or their offline behaviors.

The study shows that the actors examined operate through different models of authority. While some channels gain visibility around person-centered, charismatic religious teachers, others are grounded in institutional structures such as associations, foundations, madrasas, or study circles. There are also cases in which YouTube functions as a virtual madrasa where regular lesson series are archived. These forms of authority are often not separate from one another; rather, they operate within hybrid networks in which person-centered charisma, institutional structures, lesson archives, and cross-platform redirection are closely intertwined.

Platform diversity emerges as a key factor in enhancing the continuity of these networks. While YouTube serves as a repository for long-form content and archived lessons, Telegram facilitates announcements and content circulation, WhatsApp enables direct communication, websites provide institutional information and publications, books and magazines ensure the continuity of text-based materials, and Instagram and X support rapid visibility and the dissemination of current issues. This structure demonstrates that digital outreach is not confined to a single platform, but instead operates within a multilayered communication architecture in which different platforms perform complementary functions.

Digital platforms also extend the geographical reach of local religious activities. Informal religious gatherings, questions from followers in different cities and abroad, links to associations and madrasas, and indicators of contact with the Turkic republics and other countries demonstrate that digital outreach networks do more than generate online visibility. They also bring local gatherings, institutional spaces, and cross-border contacts into digital circulation. However, open-source data is insufficient to draw definitive conclusions about the level of organization or the capacity for influence associated with these contacts.

From a policy perspective, the study proposes a differentiated approach that does not criminalize the sphere of religious expression, while monitoring concrete risk indicators such as outreach to younger audiences, redirection to closed platforms, exclusionary group identities, narratives of social disengagement, the legitimization of violence or criminal activity, and cross-platform mobilization. For Türkiye, an appropriate policy framework should be based not on prohibitive and generalizing measures, but on open-source monitoring, digital literacy, family and school support, counter-narrative development, cross-platform network mapping, and multidisciplinary expert teams.

In conclusion, the Salafi digital outreach actors operating on YouTube provide an important case for understanding how contemporary forms of digital religious authority are produced, sustained, and expanded across multiple platforms. Beyond producing content, these networks reconstruct relationships of religious guidance, belonging, education, communication, and redirection through digital platforms. Accordingly, they should be assessed not merely in terms of view counts or subscriber numbers, but through a comprehensive evaluation of their content themes, models of authority, engagement with younger audiences, cross-platform connections, geographical reach, and open-source risk indicators.

1. Introduction

Digital platforms have become increasingly prominent spaces for the production, circulation, and dissemination of religious discourses to diverse audiences. The literature on digital religion demonstrates that online religious activities cannot be understood merely as the transfer of traditional practices to the internet; these spaces can also transform religious expression, organization, authority, and community relations. In this context, YouTube, Telegram, X, Instagram, and independent websites should be regarded not only as channels for sharing content, but also as digital spaces in which religious discourse circulates, relationships with followers are established, and religious authority is reproduced.

Digitalization has significantly transformed how religious knowledge is produced and circulated. While mosques, madrasas, traditional scholars, and institutional religious structures continue to play a central role in shaping religious knowledge, digital platforms have made access to that knowledge more individualized, interactive, immediate, and aligned with platform logics. Gary R. Bunt's concept of *Cyber Islamic Environments* demonstrates that online Islamic spaces are not merely channels for transmitting religious information. They also serve as spaces for engaging with religious authority, asking religious questions, seeking fatwas and interpretations, constructing religious identities, and fostering a sense of communal belonging.¹ Within this framework, the digital environment is more than a technical space for the dissemination of religious content. It is also a space in which questions of who produces religious authority, through which means, and within what kinds of relationships with followers are continuously negotiated and redefined.

Video-centered platforms such as YouTube enable religious discourses to circulate not only through text, but also through multiple modes, including voice, facial presence, oratory, visual design, comment sections, livestreams, short-form videos, question-and-answer formats, and cross-platform redirection. Susanne Stadlbauer's approach, which examines Salafī content on YouTube through the concept of "*hybrid third spaces*," suggests that these platforms create new spaces of religious interaction that transcend the boundaries between physical religious institutions and individual religious practice.² Within these spaces, users can participate in networks of religious knowledge and belonging through religious teachers, online

¹ Gary R. Bunt, *Islam in the Digital Age: E-Jihad, Online Fatwas and Cyber Islamic Environments* (London: Pluto Press, 2003); Gary R. Bunt, *Islamic Algorithms: Online Influence in the Muslim Metaverse* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2024).

² Susanne Stadlbauer, "'Rewriting the Script': Hybridic Third Spaces of Salafism on YouTube," book chapter submission to *Third Spaces of Digital Religion*, Center for Media, Religion, and Culture, April 13, 2015.

communities, comment sections, redirection to Telegram and WhatsApp, websites, and networks of books and magazines, without being confined to traditional religious institutions.

In the context of Türkiye, Salafi digital networks should be examined not only in terms of the technical dimensions of online religious content production, but also in relation to the growing social visibility of Salafism, evolving forms of religious belonging, youth profiles, and the search for alternative sources of religious authority. A large-scale field study conducted by TEPAV in 2016 and 2020³ shows that the proportion of individuals identifying as Salafi remains limited within the general population, but increased from 1.1 percent in 2016 to 3.6 percent in 2020. Given the limited size of the Salafi sample in the 2016 survey, this change should be interpreted with caution. Nevertheless, the finding suggests that Salafism should be monitored as a small yet increasingly visible category of religious belonging in Türkiye.

The same study found that respondents identifying themselves as Salafi were concentrated particularly among younger age groups, while the 2020 data highlighted Southeastern Anatolia and the Mediterranean as the most prominent regions. These findings suggest that Salafism should be understood not only as a theological issue, but also in relation to youth, regional belonging, the search for religious knowledge, and digitalization. Building on this perspective, the present study examines Salafi digital outreach actors operating on YouTube not merely through platform-based metrics, but also in relation to data on religious belonging and public perceptions in Türkiye. In doing so, it does not equate open-source YouTube data with field research measuring the social profile of Salafism in Türkiye. Rather, it offers a comparative framework for analyzing digital visibility, engagement with younger audiences, the production of religious authority, and geographical reach.

This transformation is particularly significant for younger users. Questions related to the uncertainties of modern societies, identity formation, tensions within families and schools, social media use, privacy, peer relationships, gaming, consumer behavior, and everyday conduct have become prominent themes in digital religious guidance content. Research on online Salafi ecosystems indicates that such content should be analyzed not only through the lens of violence or security, but also in terms of religious identity, practical religious guidance, question-and-answer mechanisms, everyday morality, and the production of belonging.⁴ Accordingly, engagement with younger audiences should be examined beyond the framework

³ Hilmi Demir, Feride İnan, Berat Yücel and Ömer Faruk Can, *Türkiye'de Çoğulculuk Radikalleşmeyle Yüzleşiyor: TEPAV Müslüman Çoğunluklu Bir Ülkede Din ve Radikal Tutumlar Araştırması* (Ankara: Türkiye Ekonomi Politikaları Araştırma Vakfı, 2024), 93, 96, figs. 89, 93, and 94.

⁴ Jakob Guhl and Milo Comerford, *Understanding the Salafi Online Ecosystem: A Digital Snapshot* (London: Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2021).

of radicalization alone. It should also be analyzed in terms of how digital religious authority responds to young people's search for meaning, certainty, guidance, and belonging.

At the same time, digital platforms have become an important field of research for examining not only religious guidance and digital outreach, but also the dissemination of radical and violent extremist discourses. In particular, online actors affiliated with Daesh or al-Qaeda have been found to develop a range of tactics to evade the content moderation systems of digital platforms. Recent studies of TikTok highlight techniques such as *audio camouflage*, in which audio tracks are altered, or titles are disguised; *meme infiltration*, whereby extremist messages are embedded within popular culture and gaming aesthetics; *blurred intent*, which involves visually obscuring prohibited figures and symbols; the use of coded emojis and symbols; and *bait-and-switch*, in which content that initially appears harmless gradually shifts toward extremist messaging.⁵ These techniques demonstrate how extremist messages can be concealed within platform aesthetics, humor, gaming culture, the language of short-form video, and everyday patterns of digital media consumption.

At this point, maintaining an analytical distinction is essential. Not every Salafi text, every digital outreach video, or every form of moral or religious guidance should be interpreted as an indicator of radicalization. At the same time, digital platforms can create important spaces for engaging with religious authority, seeking religious responses to everyday concerns, fostering a sense of community, connecting with younger audiences, and, in some cases, redirecting users to more closed online or offline networks. Although it cannot be argued that Salafism is, in itself, a cause of violence, it is reasonable to suggest that there is a relationship between Salafi discourse and processes of violence and radicalization. Against this backdrop, the present study does not equate the actors examined with crime, violence, or radicalization. Rather, it analyzes their digital visibility, the circulation of religious discourse, the production of religious authority, and their capacity to engage with younger audiences through open-source YouTube data.

This report examines Salafi digital outreach actors operating on YouTube within the broader ecology of digital religion and digital platforms. These actors are considered not merely as content producers, but in relation to their interactions with digital platforms, offline institutions, forms of religious authority, cross-platform redirection practices, and the

⁵ Gilad Karo, Tom Divon, and Blake Hallinan, "The TikTok Caliphate: How Jihadist Supporters Exploit Algorithmic Recommendations and Evade Content Moderation," *Social Media + Society* 12, no. 1 (2026); Marco Lombardi, Miron Lakomy, Alessandro Bolpagni, and Silvano Lucini, "Under the Radar: Exploring the Salafi-Jihadi Terrorist Information Ecosystem on TikTok," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* (2026).

relationships of belonging they cultivate with younger audiences. Accordingly, the analysis moves beyond technical indicators such as subscriber numbers and view counts to examine how digital outreach produces a broader ecosystem, a distinct sphere of religious authority, and adaptive forms of religious discourse.

The study aims to analyze, through open-source YouTube data, the visibility of these actors, their content themes, modes of engagement with younger audiences, models of religious authority, cross-platform network structures, and indicators of geographical reach. The study's analytical framework draws on an approach that conceptualizes radicalization as a multidimensional process shaped by the interaction among identity, belonging, grievance, the search for meaning, social networks, and ideological legitimation.⁶ Within this framework, YouTube data are treated not as direct evidence of influence or radicalization, but as open-source indicators of digital visibility, the circulation of discourse, and potential opportunities for engagement. Accordingly, the study bases its analysis on open-source data and indicators of digital visibility.

2. Context and Conceptual Background of the Study

This section outlines the study's social, academic, and digital context. It begins with an overview of the concept of Salafism and its major currents, followed by an examination of public perceptions of Salafism in Türkiye, alongside TEPAV's field research findings. The final part discusses how digitalization has transformed religious authority, belonging, and engagement with younger audiences, and explains why the study focuses specifically on Salafi digital networks.

Salafism began to gain greater visibility and become a subject of public debate in Türkiye after 2014. A review of the Council of Higher Education's National Thesis Center shows that six theses on the subject were completed in faculties of theology between 1993 and 2006, while a total of 16 theses were produced across different disciplines after 2013. A similar pattern can be observed in the İSAM Database of Theology Articles. While 24 articles on the subject were published across all journals up to 2014, the number of studies published between 2015 and 2026 reached 1,048.⁷ These figures indicate that Salafism began to attract increasing

⁶ Hilmi Demir, "Radikalleşme: Teröre Giden Yol," TEPAV, April 25, 2017, <https://tepav.org.tr/tr/blog/s/5868>; Hilmi Demir and Oğuz Demir, *Yeni Nesil Çeteler ve Radikalleşme: Çeteler Çocuklarımızı Nasıl Çalıyor?* (Ankara: Anadolu Ay Yayınları, 2026).

⁷ İSAM, "İlahiyat Makaleleri Veri Tabanı, 'Selefilik' arama sonucu," accessed June 23, 2026, <https://makale.isam.org.tr/search?f.isPartOf=%C4%B0ilahiyat%20Makaleleri%20Veri%20Taban%C4%B1,equal&spc.page=1&query=selefilik&f.dateIssued.min=2014>.

attention within academic circles from 2014 onward. Salafism first became the subject of systematic research as a religious identity in Türkiye in a 2016 study by TEPAV.⁸

Existing field research and the broader body of scholarship indicate that Salafism has begun to establish its own social base, become increasingly localized, and develop into organized religious communities in Türkiye. Building on this body of research, the present study seeks to understand and explain the Salafi digital ecosystem. The internet has enabled Salafi networks to extend beyond physical spaces into virtual and digital environments, allowing them to develop their own communication spaces and digital habitats. Before turning to the study's findings, it is useful to clarify what is meant by Salafism in this report.

2.1. The Concept of Salafism

Following the emergence of Daesh in 2014, academics and subject-matter experts found themselves engaged in an intensive debate on Salafism. During this period, numerous historical and conceptual analyses of Salafism appeared across a wide range of sources. At the same time, however, considerable uncertainty emerged regarding what the concept actually encompasses. For this reason, clarifying what is meant by *Salafism* is a fundamental conceptual issue that must be addressed as the basis for the present study.⁹

When referring to Salafism, it is first necessary to clarify whether the term denotes an organization, an ideology, a school of thought, or a broader social and religious movement. Accordingly, a brief discussion of its historical and theological foundations is essential.

It is generally accepted that the term *salaf* refers to the first three generations of Muslims, namely the *Ṣaḥābah* (*Companions of the Prophet*), the *Tābi'ūn* (*Successors*), and the *Tābi' al-Tābi'īn* (*Successors of the Successors*), who are regarded as the pioneers of the Muslim community and were described by the Prophet Muhammad as “the best of generations.” However, one of the most debated questions among researchers today is whether what is now referred to as *Salafism* represents a straightforward continuation of the pure and uncorrupted faith of these first three generations, or whether it is instead a modern, radical, and ideological movement that emerged much later.¹⁰

⁸ TEPAV, “Türkiye’de radikal dini tutumlar azalma eğiliminde,” February 12, 2024, accessed June 23, 2026, <https://tepav.org.tr/tr/haberler/s/10714>.

⁹ Hilmi Demir, “Nedir bu Selefilik?,” TEPAV, accessed June 23, 2026, <https://tepav.org.tr/tr/blog/s/6281..>

¹⁰ Hilmi Demir, “19. Yüzyıl Sonrasında Selefilik’in Tarif ve Tasnifi Sorunu,” in *Güncel Dinî Meseleler İstisare Toplantısı-XIX: Selefilik ve Tarihî Arka Planı*, edited by Mustafa Mehmetoğlu and Muhammed Sait Yiğit, 80 (Ankara: Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı Yayınları, 2025).

Contemporary Salafi writings tend to draw on the lexical and historical connotations of the term *salaf* to present Salafism as an unbroken religious tradition extending back to the earliest period of Islam. From the early nineteenth century onward, however, particularly with the emergence of Wahhabism in the Arabian Peninsula, Salafism became increasingly prominent and gradually evolved into a comprehensive and ideological interpretation of Islam encompassing nearly every aspect of religious life. In this respect, Salafism not only expanded the boundaries of the traditionalist *Ahl al-Ḥadīth* (*People of Hadith*) tradition that emerged during the early centuries of Islam and the textualist Hanbali theological tradition, which until the nineteenth century had the smallest following among the major schools of Islamic jurisprudence, but also eventually extended beyond those boundaries.

To understand how Salafism differs from the *Ahl al-Ḥadīth* tradition and the Hanbali school, it is necessary to examine its core theological concepts. While classical *Ahl al-Ḥadīth* thought was primarily concerned with issues such as the *khbarī* (*scriptural*) attributes of God, including whether Allah is above the heavens, the theological and doctrinal core of modern Salafism is centered on the concept of *tawḥīd*.

Salafi doctrine does not regard *tawḥīd* merely as a fundamental article of faith that every Muslim is expected to affirm. Rather, it positions *tawḥīd* as a foundational concept governing the relationship between Allah and society, law, politics, and the individual. For this reason, *tawḥīd* can be regarded as the central concept across all major Salafi currents that have emerged since the nineteenth century, including puritan, political, and jihadist strands. Whereas in classical Islamic theology *tawḥīd* was primarily associated with theological questions concerning the oneness of Allah and the creation of the universe, within Salafi discourse it gradually evolved into a concept that also defines political and social order.

To substantiate their doctrinal claims, Salafis divide *tawḥīd* into three principal categories: *Tawḥīd al-Rubūbiyyah* (the Oneness of Lordship), *Tawḥīd al-Ulūhiyyah*, also referred to as *Tawḥīd al-ʿIbādah* (the Oneness of Worship), and *Tawḥīd al-Asmāʾ wa al-Ṣifāt* (the Oneness of the Divine Names and Attributes). This threefold classification was developed into a more systematic and rigid doctrine, particularly in the writings of Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Wahhāb, the founder of Wahhabism, and his followers.

Tawḥīd al-Rubūbiyyah refers to the belief that Allah alone is the Creator, Sustainer, and Lord of the universe. According to Salafi doctrine, however, this belief alone is not sufficient to make a person a true adherent of *tawḥīd*. This is because, within the Salafi interpretation, the Meccan polytheists during the time of the Prophet Muhammad also acknowledged Allah as the Creator and Lord.

Tawḥīd al-Ulūhiyyah, also referred to as *Tawḥīd al-'Ibādah*, is based on the principle that all acts of worship should be directed exclusively to Allah. According to Salafi doctrine, this is the point at which the fundamental distinction between a true adherent of *tawḥīd* and a *mushrik* (polytheist) emerges. Praying to an angel, a prophet, or a righteous person other than Allah, seeking their intercession or mediation, and practices such as *tawassul* and *istighāthah* are regarded as acts that violate *Tawḥīd al-Ulūhiyyah*. Consequently, within the Salafi interpretation, such practices are considered forms of *shirk* that place a person outside the bounds of true *tawḥīd*.

Tawḥīd al-Asmā' wa al-Ṣifāt refers to affirming the names and attributes of Allah as they are described in the Qur'an and the Sunnah, without allegorical interpretation (*ta'wīl*), negation, alteration, or likening them to those of created beings. According to this understanding, the divine attributes are accepted exactly as they appear in the revealed texts and are not subjected to reinterpretation through rational speculation.

The Salafi threefold classification of *tawḥīd* should not be understood merely as a theological taxonomy. Rather, it has evolved into an ideological framework, particularly through its use in expanding the boundaries of the concept of *mushrik* (polytheist) and declaring dissenting Muslims to be outside the fold of Islam. According to the Salafi argument, the polytheists accepted *Tawḥīd al-Rubūbiyyah* but rejected *Tawḥīd al-Ulūhiyyah*. Consequently, within this interpretation, Muslims who visit shrines, seek intercession, or engage in practices such as *tawassul* and *istighāthah* may likewise be classified as *mushrikūn*.

This claim, however, cannot be substantiated within the classical *kalām* tradition. Although the concepts of *rubūbiyyah* and *ulūhiyyah* appear in the works of foundational Sunni scholars such as Imām al-Māturīdī, they are not presented as mutually exclusive and doctrinally distinct categories in the manner asserted by Salafi thinkers. According to al-Māturīdī, these two attributes are inseparable aspects of Allah's essence. Had the polytheists genuinely affirmed *rubūbiyyah*, the Qur'an would not have condemned them for associating partners with Allah in matters relating to His lordship. Indeed, the Qur'an explicitly states that the polytheists attributed daughters, spouses, and partners to Allah and denied the Hereafter. This, in turn, indicates that they did not truly believe in Allah as the sole Creator, the absolute Sovereign, and the one and only Lord. Accordingly, the distinction developed in the tradition of Ibn Taymiyyah and Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb represents a later theological construction rather than a doctrine found in early Islamic theology. In this sense, a significant portion of the meanings that Salafis attach to the concept of *tawḥīd*, a term that occupies a central place in

their discourse, does not originate in the conceptual framework of the early Muslim scholars whom they refer to collectively as the *salaf*.

One of the clearest indications of Salafism's departure from the classical tradition is the expansion of the meaning attributed to the concept of "worship." Following Ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, Salafism did not confine worship to its classical meaning, but extended it to the realms of sovereignty, legislation, and political authority. According to this understanding, directing prayer exclusively to Allah is not sufficient. Accepting the rule of any authority other than Allah, complying with secular laws, or obeying human-made legislation may likewise be regarded as forms of *shirk*.

This interpretation places particular emphasis on the verse in Surat al-Tawbah that states, "They have taken their scholars and monks as lords besides Allah." Salafis have interpreted this verse in a manner that treats obedience to rulers, religious scholars, or human-made legal systems as a direct form of *shirk* and a violation of exclusive worship. In this way, the principle that worship must be devoted solely to Allah was expanded to encompass the authority to legislate and govern the state. This approach also provided a basis for classifying even legal and administrative practices from the Ottoman period, such as *örf-i sultânî* (sultanic customary law), as *kufir* and *shirk* because they implied the exercise of legislative authority independently of Allah.

In traditional Sunni jurisprudence, however, no such direct and inseparable relationship is established between obedience and worship. In *al-Ālim wa al-Muta'allim*, Imām Abū Ḥanīfah states that a believer who sins by following Satan or his own desires cannot be regarded as having worshipped Satan merely because of that sinful act. This is because worship entails more than simple obedience. It encompasses spiritual elements such as devotion, submission, aspiration, hope for divine reward, fear of Allah, and conscious servitude. If every act of obedience were considered an act of worship, then anyone who sinned would necessarily be regarded as having left the fold of Islam. Accordingly, classifying sinful Muslims or those who comply with human-made laws as unbelievers because obedience itself constitutes worship reflects an approach that, according to this perspective, is closer to Kharijite reasoning than to the mainstream Sunni tradition.

From this perspective, the reformulation of *tawḥīd* and worship developed within Salafism may be understood as a modern rearticulation of the Kharijite tendency in the Islamic tradition. The issue extends beyond the practice of *taḳfīr* alone. The more significant concern lies in the designation of fellow Muslims as *mushrikūn* (polytheists). This is because, within Islamic theology, declaring a Muslim to be an unbeliever (*kāfir*) and declaring that person to

be a *mushrik* carry distinct theological implications and are not equivalent in status. One of the most far-reaching claims advanced in contemporary Salafī discourse is that present-day Muslims are engaged in a form of *shirk* considered even more severe than that attributed to the pre-Islamic Arab polytheists.

By contrast, in the Qur'an and the classical kalām tradition, the concept of *shirk* primarily refers to pagan Arab polytheists and adherents of other religions. The characterization of Muslim communities, who perform the prescribed prayers, direct their worship to Allah, and belong to the *ahl al-qiblah* (those who face the qiblah in prayer), as *mushrikūn* is not an established position within classical Islamic theology. Salafīs, however, have extended Qur'anic verses revealed concerning polytheists who mocked religion, denied the Hereafter, and associated partners with Allah to Muslims who visit shrines, seek intercession, or live under modern state systems. According to this perspective, this methodological shift has provided the theological foundation for radical and violent movements that regard the lives and property of Muslim communities as licit.

The concept of *manhaj*, which is frequently invoked in Salafī discourse, should also be reconsidered in this context. Salafīs often assert that “we do not have a *madhhab*; we have a *manhaj*,” thereby presenting themselves as standing above the established schools of Islamic law. In Salafī literature, however, *manhaj* is rarely used to denote an academic methodology or a method for interpreting the hadith. Rather, it generally refers to a body of doctrinal principles, that is, a comprehensive creed. Because they reject adherence to any particular *madhhab*, Salafīs avoid describing their position as a school of law. Instead, they invoke “our *manhaj*” to articulate a fixed set of doctrinal principles. Within this framework, little room is left for interpretation, flexibility, or methodological pluralism.

In conclusion, post-nineteenth-century Salafism cannot be regarded as a simple continuation of the classical *Ahl al-Ḥadīth* tradition, Hanbali jurisprudence, or the legacy of the *al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ*. Its threefold classification of *tawḥīd*, its expansion of the concept of worship by linking it to sovereignty and political authority, and its characterization of *ahl al-qiblah* as *mushrikūn* all indicate that the movement represents a significant departure from the classical Islamic tradition.

For this reason, portraying contemporary Salafism as a benign representation of the *Ahl al-Ḥadīth* tradition within the broader framework of Sunni Islam is problematic from both scholarly and theological perspectives. Salafism largely regards the historical intellectual heritage of Islam, including the traditional schools of law, *kalām*, and Sufism, as innovations (*bid'ah*) that should be eliminated. In this respect, contemporary Salafism is better understood

not as the natural continuation of the *Ahl al-Ḥadīth* tradition, but as a modern movement that emerged from it while gradually diverging from its historical foundations. Against this background, the emphasis placed by Salafi preachers on the Qur'an and the Sunnah should be scrutinized. Within this discourse, Qur'anic verses are often detached from their classical interpretive contexts and assigned new meanings, some of which, according to this perspective, may be employed to construct internal enemies, justify *takfīr* against fellow Muslims, and reinforce exclusionary boundaries.

Nevertheless, Salafism should not be regarded as a monolithic, homogeneous, or inherently violent movement. Rather, different Salafī orientations can be identified across different contexts, including scholarly (*‘ilmī*), missionary (*da‘wah*), political, and jihadist currents. For this reason, establishing an automatic or linear relationship between Salafism and radicalization is analytically problematic. A more appropriate approach is to examine the specific contexts in which Salafi discourse functions as a source of religious guidance, and the contexts in which it generates exclusionary boundary-making, social disengagement, or redirection toward more closed networks.

In this study, the term “*Salafī digital outreach actor*” is not used to impose a broad external label on the actors under examination. Rather, it serves as an analytical category for classifying patterns of religious discourse, self-identification, institutional affiliations, content themes, and platform practices observed in open-source data. This classification is not based solely on a channel's use of particular religious concepts. Instead, the selection and classification of the actors draw on multiple indicators considered together, including the actors' own statements, the names of their channels and affiliated institutions, descriptions found in open-source materials, recurring discursive markers such as *tawḥīd*, *‘aqīdah*, *shirk*, *bid‘ah*, Sunnah, *ṭāghūt*, criticism of Sufism, criticism of the Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyānet), and sectarian or doctrinal boundary-making, as well as their connections to madrasas, associations, publishing houses, and study circles, together with their networks across platforms beyond YouTube, including Telegram, WhatsApp, websites, books, and magazines. Accordingly, this study does not directly associate these actors with radicalization or violence. Rather, it examines them through the lens of their open-source digital visibility and their relationship to Salafi outreach discourse.

This classification is based on a multiple-indicator approach. The inclusion of an actor in the dataset was not determined by a single word, a single video title, or an isolated news report. Instead, classification required the convergence of multiple indicators, including self-identification, discursive repertoire, institutional or publishing affiliations, the format of

religious lessons and outreach activities, cross-platform redirection practices, and indicators of visibility in open-source data. This approach enables a more nuanced and differentiated assessment of the positions of specific actors within the Salafī digital outreach ecosystem, without treating the broader sphere of religious expression as inherently risky. The principal criteria for including Salafī digital outreach actors in the dataset are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Classification Criteria Used for Identifying Salafī Digital Outreach Actors

Criterion	Description	Data Source
Self-identification and explicit statements	The actor's self-positioning through concepts such as tawhīd, Sunnah, salaf, Ahl al-Sunnah, da‘wah, or similar terms.	Channel descriptions, websites, video content
Discursive indicators	Recurring themes such as tawhīd, ‘aqīdah, shirk, bid‘ah, Sunnah, tāghūt, sovereignty, criticism of Sufism/tāriqahs, and criticism of the Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet).	Video titles, descriptions, and content samples
Institutional affiliations	Connections with madrasas, associations, publishing houses, bookstores, study circles, educational networks, or da‘wah organizations.	Websites, channel links, and open-source news reports
Content format	Religious lessons, sermons, question-and-answer sessions, informal religious conversations, and series on ‘aqīdah, fiqh, tafsīr, and hadith.	YouTube channel archives
Cross-platform network	Redirection from YouTube to Telegram, WhatsApp, X, Instagram, websites, books, magazines, and PDF archives.	Channel descriptions and embedded links
Open-source verification	Identification of the actor's association with Salafī circles in academic publications, media reports, or other publicly available sources.	Academic studies, news sources, and reports
Analytical boundary	Classification does not imply an attribution of radicalization, violence, or unlawful activity.	Methodological note

Note. Table 1 summarizes the open-source indicators used to classify the actors examined in this study as Salafī digital outreach actors. These criteria were not employed to associate the actors with radicalization, violence, or unlawful activity. Rather, they served as analytical indicators for assessing the actors' digital visibility, discursive repertoire, production of religious authority, and position within the cross-platform Salafī digital outreach ecosystem.

2.2. Salafism and Social Perceptions in Türkiye

One of the first comprehensive sets of empirical findings on the social diffusion of Salafism in Türkiye was presented in the TEPAV report titled *Türkiye’de Çoğulculuk*

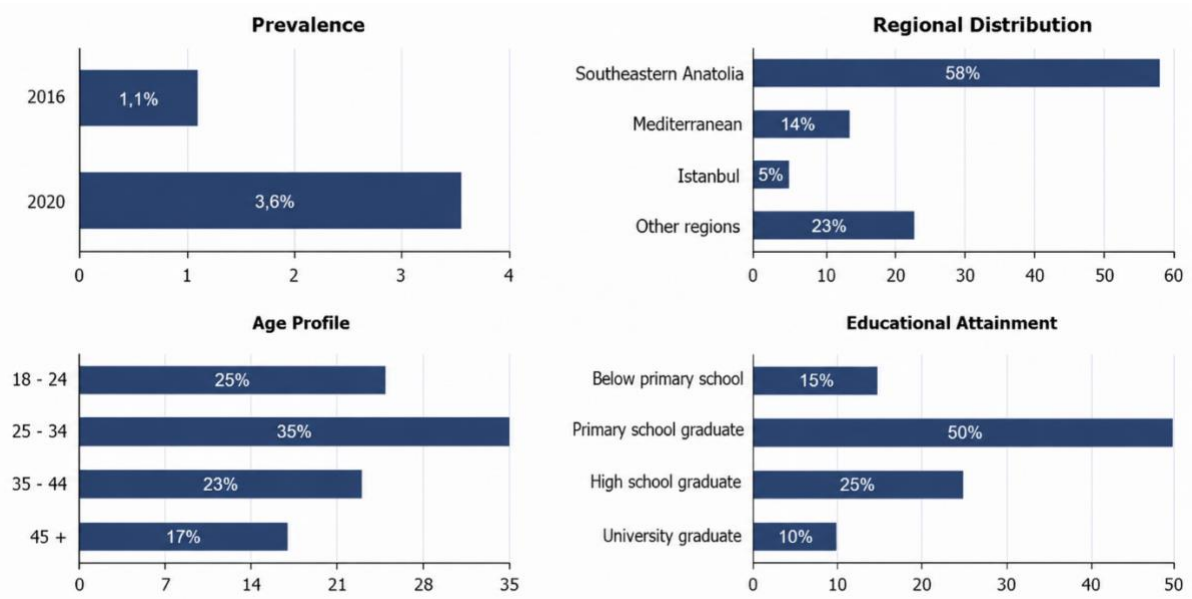
Radikalleşmeyle Yüzleşiyor: Müslüman Çoğunluklu Bir Ülkede Din ve Radikal Tutumlar Araştırması. The study provides an important comparative basis for examining religious identities, forms of religiosity, doctrinal affiliations, pluralism, and radical religious attitudes in Türkiye.¹¹

According to the findings, the proportion of respondents in Türkiye who identified as Salafi when asked about their denominational preference in matters of belief or doctrine increased between 2016 and 2020. When the question about the school of belief or doctrine respondents followed was first included in the 2016 survey, 1.1 percent of the sample identified as Salafi. This figure rose to 3.6 percent in 2020. The finding indicates that Salafism remains a numerically limited category of religious affiliation across Türkiye, while also showing that its visibility increased notably during the 2016–2020 period.¹²

The 2020 data further indicate that respondents who identified as Salafi were concentrated within particular age groups, regions, and educational backgrounds. Among those identifying as Salafi, 35 percent were between 25 and 34, 25 percent were between 18 and 24, and 23 percent were between 35 and 44. This distribution suggests that a substantial proportion of those identifying as Salafi belonged to younger and young adult age groups. Regionally, Southeastern Anatolia stood out, accounting for 58 percent of respondents who identified as Salafi, followed by the Mediterranean Region with 14 percent. The corresponding figure for İstanbul was 5 percent, while all other regions recorded shares below 10 percent. In terms of educational attainment, approximately half of those identifying as Salafi had completed high school, about one-quarter had completed primary school, and the proportion holding a university degree was relatively small. The prevalence of Salafi affiliation, together with its age, regional, and educational profile as identified in the TEPAV survey, is summarized in Figure 1.

¹¹ Hilmi Demir, Feride İnan, Berat Yücel ve Ömer Faruk Can, *Türkiye’de Çoğulculuk Radikalleşmeyle Yüzleşiyor: TEPAV Müslüman Çoğunluklu Bir Ülkede Din ve Radikal Tutumlar Araştırması* (Ankara: Türkiye Ekonomi Politikaları Araştırma Vakfı, 2024).

¹² Demir et al., *Türkiye’de Çoğulculuk Radikalleşmeyle Yüzleşiyor: Müslüman Çoğunluklu Bir Ülkede Din ve Radikal Tutumlar Araştırması*, 93 (fig. 89).

Figure 1. The Visibility and Profile of Salafism in Türkiye, TEPAV Survey, %¹³

Source: Hilmi Demir, Feride İnan, Berat Yücel, and Ömer Faruk Can, *Türkiye’de Çoğulculuk Radikalleşmeyle Yüzleşiyor: Müslüman Çoğunluklu Bir Ülkede Din ve Radikal Tutumlar Araştırması*, 93, 96.

Note. Figure 1 summarizes the prevalence of Salafi affiliation in Türkiye, as well as its age profile, regional distribution, and educational attainment, based on findings from TEPAV’s *Türkiye’de Çoğulculuk Radikalleşmeyle Yüzleşiyor* survey conducted between 2016 and 2020. The prevalence figures refer to the overall survey sample, whereas the regional distribution, age profile, and educational attainment data are based exclusively on respondents who identified as Salafi in the 2020 survey.

Equally noteworthy is the increase in the proportion of respondents who reported not knowing their school of belief or doctrine, rising from 59.3 percent in 2016 to 70.5 percent in 2020. This finding suggests that knowledge of one's school of belief or doctrine has weakened in Türkiye and that religious affiliations are increasingly taking shape in more fluid, fragmented, and exploratory forms. In this context, Salafi digital outreach actors may be able to appeal not only to established, relatively closed religious circles, but also to a broader group of users seeking religious knowledge. A comparison of Salafi affiliation and knowledge of respondents' school of belief or doctrine in Türkiye between 2016 and 2020 is presented in Table 2.¹⁴

¹³ Demir vd., *Türkiye’de Çoğulculuk Radikalleşmeyle Yüzleşiyor*, 93, 96.

¹⁴ Demir et al., *Türkiye’de Çoğulculuk Radikalleşmeyle Yüzleşiyor*, 93, fig. 89.

Table 2. Findings on Salafism and Doctrinal Identities in Türkiye, 2016–2020

Indicator	2016	2020	Change	Significance for the Study
Respondents identifying as Salafi	1,10%	3,60%	Increase	Indicates that Salafi affiliation remains limited but has become increasingly visible.
Respondents who did not know their school of belief or doctrine	59,30%	70,50%	Increase	Indicates growing uncertainty regarding doctrinal knowledge and affiliation.
Respondents identifying as Maturidi	14,60%	8,60%	Decrease	Points to a weakening trend in traditional doctrinal affiliations.
Respondents identifying as Ash‘ari	8,20%	5,00%	Decrease	Points to a weakening trend in traditional doctrinal affiliations.

Source: Hilmi Demir, Feride İnan, Berat Yücel, and Ömer Faruk Can, *Türkiye’de Çoğulculuk Radikalleşmeyle Yüzleşiyor: Müslüman Çoğunluklu Bir Ülkede Din ve Radikal Tutumlar Araştırması*, 93, fig. 89.

The age, regional, and educational profiles presented in Figure 1 are also particularly significant in light of this study’s focus on youth and digital networks. The fact that approximately 60 percent of those identifying as Salafi were between the ages of 18 and 34 suggests that engagement with younger audiences should be examined not only through the lens of security or radicalization, but also in relation to religious guidance, belonging, digital authority, and everyday practices. Similarly, the concentration observed in Southeastern Anatolia and the Mediterranean Region suggests that Salafism is not evenly distributed across Türkiye and should also be analyzed in terms of specific geographic concentrations. The 2020 findings on the age, educational, and regional profiles of respondents who identify as Salafi are summarized in Table 3.¹⁵

¹⁵ Demir et al., *Türkiye’de Çoğulculuk Radikalleşmeyle Yüzleşiyor*, 96, figs. 93–94.

Table 3. Demographic and Regional Profile of Respondents Identifying as Salafi, 2020

Dimension	Findings	Significance for the Study
Age distribution	18–24 years: 25%; 25–34 years: 35%; 35–44 years: 23%; other age groups: 17%	Indicates that Salafi identity is concentrated particularly among youth and young adults.
Youth concentration	Approximately 60% of respondents identifying as Salafi were between the ages of 18 and 34.	Supports the study's focus on engagement with younger audiences and digital belonging.
Educational attainment	Approximately half were high school graduates, about one-quarter were primary school graduates, and fewer than 10% held a university degree.	Indicates that Salafi affiliation should also be analyzed in relation to educational attainment.
Regional distribution	Southeastern Anatolia: 58%; Mediterranean Region: 14%; İstanbul: 5%; other regions: 23%	Indicates that Salafi identity exhibits a concentration in particular regions rather than being evenly distributed across Türkiye.
Methodological note	The number of respondents identifying as Salafi in 2016 was too limited to permit meaningful demographic and regional analysis.	Accordingly, the demographic and regional profile presented in this study is based primarily on the 2020 survey data.

Source: Hilmi Demir, Feride İnan, Berat Yücel, and Ömer Faruk Can, *Türkiye’de Çoğulculuk Radikalleşmeyle Yüzleşiyor: Müslüman Çoğunluklu Bir Ülkede Din ve Radikal Tutumlar Araştırması*, 96, figs. 93–94.

Findings concerning official religious authority are also important for understanding digital Salafî networks. In the 2020 survey, 46 percent of respondents in the overall sample stated that they trusted the views and fatwas issued by the Presidency of Religious Affairs (Diyanet) on religious matters, 35 percent stated that they partially trusted them, and 16 percent reported that they did not trust them.¹⁶ These findings indicate that Diyanet’s social legitimacy has not disappeared entirely, while also revealing a space in which alternative religious interpretations and sources of authority may gain influence alongside official religious authority. Accordingly, criticism directed at Diyanet, the secular system, or other religious authorities in YouTube-based Salafî content should be understood not merely as theological polemics, but also as part of the construction of alternative religious authority in digital environments. The 2020 findings on trust in Diyanet’s religious views are presented in Table 4.

¹⁶ Demir et al., *Türkiye’de Çoğulculuk Radikalleşmeyle Yüzleşiyor*, 47, fig. 43.

Table 4. Trust in Diyanet's Religious Views, 2020

Response	Percentage
Trust	46%
Partially trust	35%
Do not trust	16%
No response	3%

Source: Hilmi Demir, Feride İnan, Berat Yücel, and Ömer Faruk Can, Türkiye’de Çoğulculuk Radikalleşmeyle Yüzleşiyor, 47, fig. 43.

These findings indicate that Salafism in Türkiye should be understood as a category of belonging that remains limited in scale while becoming increasingly visible. Since the TEPAV survey was not continued after 2020, no directly representative field data are available to determine how this trend evolved in subsequent years. Nevertheless, the YouTube data analyzed below show that some Salafi digital outreach actors experienced an upward trend in digital visibility and subscriber growth during the 2024–2026 period. YouTube figures should therefore not be treated as a direct digital equivalent of the prevalence of Salafi affiliation in society, but rather as open-source indicators of the online visibility capacity of Salafi digital outreach actors.

At this point, the methodological distinction is particularly important. While the TEPAV survey provides representative survey data on individuals’ religious identities, affiliations, and social attitudes, the present study examines the digital visibility of actors, the continuity of their content production, their discursive repertoires, and their cross-platform network structures using open-source YouTube data. Accordingly, this study does not assume that trends observed in society are directly mirrored in digital environments. Rather, it adopts a cautious comparative approach, examining representative data on social affiliation and attitudes alongside open-source evidence on digital visibility and discourse.¹⁷ This approach allows examination of both the parallels and the divergences between the limited yet increasingly visible presence of Salafi

¹⁷ The TEPAV survey and the YouTube open-source dataset compiled for this study are based on different types of data. While the TEPAV survey provides representative survey data, the YouTube dataset draws on open-source indicators of channel visibility, continuity of content production, discursive repertoires, and cross-platform connections collected for the 2024–2026 period.

affiliation in Turkish society and the digital visibility of Salafî outreach actors on YouTube. The principal dimensions of this comparison are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5. Comparative Reading of the TEPAV Survey Data and the YouTube Dataset

Comparative Dimension	TEPAV Survey Data (2016–2020)	YouTube Dataset (2024–2026)	Analytical Interpretation	Methodological Limitation
Visibility of Salafi affiliation	The proportion of respondents identifying as Salafi increased from 1.1% in 2016 to 3.6% in 2020.	Some Salafi digital outreach actors experienced growth in subscribers and digital visibility during the 2024–2026 period.	The limited yet increasing visibility of Salafi affiliation in society can be examined alongside the growing visibility of Salafi actors in digital environments.	The survey measures individuals' self-identification, whereas the YouTube dataset measures actors' digital visibility.
Doctrinal affiliation and the search for religious knowledge	The proportion of respondents who reported not knowing their school of belief increased from 59.3% in 2016 to 70.5% in 2020.	The dataset contains extensive content on <i>'aqidah</i> , <i>tawhîd</i> , <i>shirk</i> , <i>bid'ah</i> , <i>Sunnah</i> , <i>fiqh</i> , and question-and-answer sessions.	Doctrinal uncertainty and the search for religious knowledge provide important context for understanding why digital religious guidance may resonate with certain audiences.	It cannot be inferred that individuals who reported not knowing their school of belief are the same individuals who follow these channels.
Youth profile	According to the 2020 survey, approximately 60% of respondents identifying as Salafi were between the ages of 18 and 34.	The dataset includes content specifically directed at children, young adults, students, families, and seekers of religious knowledge.	The concentration of younger respondents supports further examination of themes such as youth, schooling, family, privacy, and harmful habits within YouTube content.	The actual ages of YouTube audiences cannot be verified using open-source data.
Regional visibility	In 2020, 58% of respondents identifying as Salafi were located in Southeastern Anatolia and 14% in the Mediterranean Region.	The dataset identifies distinct patterns of spatial visibility across cities and the institutional affiliations of individual actors.	The survey provides a regional social profile, whereas the YouTube dataset offers a basis for examining digital and institutional patterns of spatial visibility.	Survey regions and the cities or institutional affiliations associated with YouTube actors do not measure the same phenomenon.

Official religious authority	Forty-six percent of respondents trusted Diyanet's religious views, 35% partially trusted them, and 16% did not trust them.	The dataset includes criticism of Diyanet, alternative religious authorities, networks of religious instruction, and cross-platform forms of religious guidance.	Although trust in official religious authority persists, digital platforms also facilitate the emergence of alternative forms of religious authority.	The Diyanet findings are based on the overall survey sample rather than on respondents identifying as Salafi.
Social pluralism and boundary drawing	The TEPAV survey shows that diverse attitudes coexist within society regarding secularism, democracy, different religious beliefs, and lifestyles.	The YouTube dataset emphasizes dichotomies such as truth versus falsehood, Sunnah versus <i>bid'ah</i> , <i>tawhīd</i> versus <i>shirk</i> , faith versus <i>kufir</i> , and the <i>ummah</i> versus its enemies.	Digital Salafi discourse may produce a sharper language of boundary drawing than that observed in broader societal trends.	YouTube discourse should not be regarded as representative of Turkish society as a whole.

Source: Hilmi Demir, Feride İnan, Berat Yücel, and Ömer Faruk Can, *Türkiye’de Çoğulculuk Radikalleşmeyle Yüzleşiyor*, 47–59, 93–96; open-source YouTube dataset compiled by the authors, 2024–2026.

2.3. Religiosity, Pluralism, and Radical Attitudes

The vast majority of people in Türkiye regard religion as an important or very important part of their lives. However, the TEPAV survey data do not indicate that high levels of religiosity automatically translate into radical or exclusionary religious attitudes across society. On the contrary, the comparison between 2016 and 2020 shows that pluralistic attitudes toward different beliefs and lifestyles strengthened, while radical religious attitudes remained limited.¹⁸

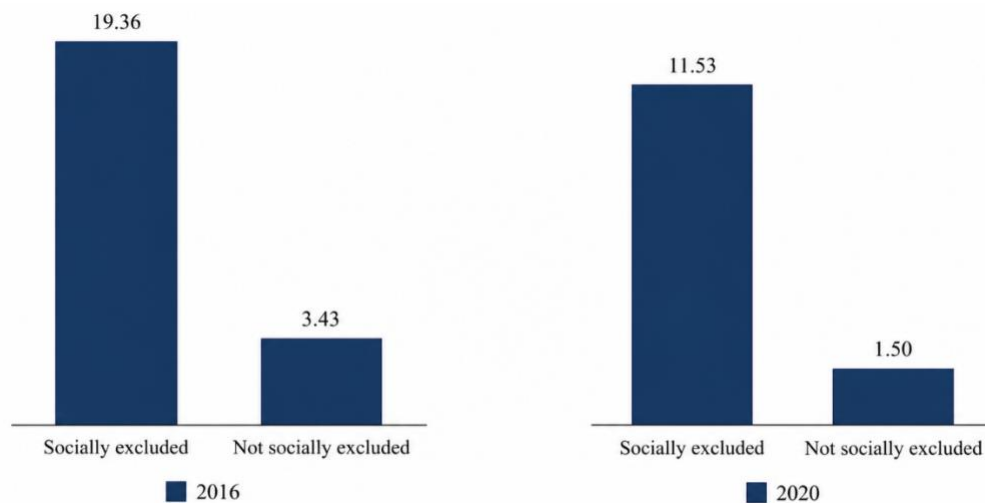
One of the clearest indicators of a relatively flexible and pluralistic approach to religion in Türkiye concerns views on the relationship between morality and religiosity. A large majority of respondents stated that a person who is not religious can nevertheless be moral. This proportion stood at 71 percent in 2016 and 68 percent in 2020. Similarly, the proportion of respondents who believed that their own beliefs and practices represented the “most correct way” of living Islam declined from 47 percent in 2016 to 36 percent in 2020. These findings

¹⁸ Hilmi Demir, Feride İnan, Berat Yücel ve Ömer Faruk Can, *Türkiye’de Çoğulculuk Radikalleşmeyle Yüzleşiyor: TEPAV Müslüman Çoğunluklu Bir Ülkede Din ve Radikal Tutumlar Araştırması* (Ankara: Türkiye Ekonomi Politikaları Araştırma Vakfı, 2024), 76–80.

suggest that, although religious affiliation remains strong in Türkiye, an attitude grounded in absolute religious exclusivism has not become dominant across society.¹⁹

Among participants with higher levels of religiosity, the tendency to distance themselves from those who do not share their beliefs or to regard those who do not perform the daily prayers as sinful may be stronger than the overall average. However, *takfir*, one of the strongest indicators of ideological radicalism, remained highly limited. In 2020, only 3 percent of religious respondents considered those who neglected their religious obligations to be unbelievers. Among the general population, the proportion of respondents classified as holding radical religious attitudes, as measured by an ideological radicalism index, including indicators such as support for imposing Sharia rules, replacing existing laws with Islamic rules, and *takfir*, declined from 4 percent in 2016 to 2 percent in 2020.²⁰ The relationship between social exclusion and radical religious attitudes is summarized in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Groups with Radical Religious Attitudes by Social Exclusion Status in Türkiye, 2016–2020²¹



Source: Adapted from Hilmi Demir, Feride İnan, Berat Yücel, and Ömer Faruk Can, *Türkiye’de Çoğulculuk Radikalleşmeyle Yüzleşiyor*, 77, fig. 73.

Note. Figure 2 illustrates the relationship between social exclusion and radical religious attitudes based on the findings of the TEPAV survey (2016 and 2020). In 2016, the proportion of respondents exhibiting radical religious attitudes was 19.36% among those who reported

¹⁹ Demir et al., *Türkiye’de Çoğulculuk Radikalleşmeyle Yüzleşiyor*, 55–59.

²⁰ Demir et al., *Türkiye’de Çoğulculuk Radikalleşmeyle Yüzleşiyor*, 76, fig. 72.

²¹ Demir et al., *Türkiye’de Çoğulculuk Radikalleşmeyle Yüzleşiyor*, 77, fig. 73.

experiencing social exclusion, compared with 3.43% among those who did not. In 2020, these proportions declined to 11.53% and 1.50%, respectively.

As shown in Figure 2, social exclusion emerges as an important contextual variable in understanding radical religious attitudes. The findings on social exclusion are therefore particularly significant. The TEPAV survey shows that radical religious attitudes were more prevalent among respondents who felt excluded from society. In 2016, the proportion of respondents with radical religious attitudes was 19 percent among those who reported experiencing social exclusion, compared with 3 percent among those who did not. In 2020, these proportions were measured at 12% and 2%, respectively. This finding suggests that radical religious attitudes should be assessed not only in relation to doctrinal differences, but also alongside experiences of social exclusion, loss of belonging, and social disconnection.

Taken together, these findings indicate that religiosity and conservatism in Türkiye can generally coexist with pluralistic forms of cultural religiosity. The findings of the TEPAV survey for the 2016–2020 period show that radical religious attitudes remained limited across society and declined. At the same time, the limited yet increasing visibility of Salafī affiliation suggests that Salafism in Türkiye should be understood not as a dominant trend spreading throughout society, but rather as a form of visibility concentrated within particular social, regional, and digital contexts.

Within this context, it is not possible to conclude that Turkish society as a whole has become radicalized. A more cautious interpretation is that, while radical religious attitudes have remained limited across society, Salafī discourse and Salafī actors have become more visible within particular social and digital contexts. Digital platforms have played an important role in increasing this visibility. Through YouTube, Telegram, WhatsApp, websites, and other social media platforms, Salafī digital outreach actors have established sustained engagement with relatively small but consistent follower communities.

Accordingly, the YouTube-based analysis presented in the following chapters should not be regarded as a direct continuation or a one-to-one digital equivalent of the TEPAV field surveys conducted between 2016 and 2020. Rather, it should be understood as a complementary open-source analysis that contributes to a more integrated understanding of both the social visibility of Salafī affiliation in Türkiye and the Salafī digital outreach networks operating across digital platforms.

2.4. Digitalization, Youth, and Salafi Networks

Digitalization has fundamentally transformed how religious knowledge is produced, disseminated, and acquires authority. Traditionally, religious learning and guidance were mediated through mosques, madrasas, study circles, teacher–student relationships, and institutional religious structures. Today, however, YouTube, Telegram, WhatsApp, Instagram, X, and independent websites have made religious content more widely accessible, rapidly disseminated, and continuously available. This transformation does not imply the disappearance of religious authority. Rather, it demonstrates that religious authority is being reconstructed in new forms across digital platforms. On YouTube, lectures, sermons, question-and-answer sessions, informal conversations (hasbihal), short videos, and live broadcasts not only facilitate the dissemination of religious knowledge but also enable regular engagement with followers, reinforce a sense of belonging, and direct users toward other digital or offline networks.²²

This transformation is particularly significant for younger users. The TEPAV survey found that a substantial proportion of respondents identifying as Salafi were concentrated within the 18–34 age group, suggesting that youth should receive particular attention in discussions of Salafism in Türkiye.²³ At the same time, the open-source YouTube data used in this study do not allow for the direct identification of viewers' actual ages, their individual levels of influence, or their offline behaviors. Accordingly, engagement with younger audiences is examined not through demographic age data, but through the analysis of content formats, modes of address, themes of everyday religious guidance, question-and-answer mechanisms, content directed at children and young people, and discussions of family, school, privacy, harmful habits, the pursuit of religious knowledge, and digital media use.

In the YouTube ecosystem examined, engagement with younger audiences is not limited to videos explicitly labeled as “youth” content. Animated and entertainment content aimed at children, claims to provide “clean and halal content,” question-and-answer formats centered on children’s questions, narratives on privacy and morality directed at young adults, and everyday topics such as school, family, state education, sin, repentance, marriage, the pursuit of religious knowledge, and harmful habits all indicate that the language of digital

²² Heidi A. Campbell and Ruth Tsuria, eds., *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in Digital Media*, 2nd ed. (New York and London: Routledge, 2022); Gary R. Bunt, *Islamic Algorithms: Online Influence in the Muslim Metaverse* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2024).

²³ Hilmi Demir, Feride İnan, Berat Yücel, and Ömer Faruk Can, *Türkiye’de Çoğulculuk Radikalleşmeyle Yüzleşiyor: TEPAV Müslüman Çoğunluklu Bir Ülkede Din ve Radikal Tutumlar Araştırması* (Ankara: Türkiye Ekonomi Politikaları Araştırma Vakfı, 2024), 96, fig. 94.

outreach engages directly with the practical lives of young people and their families. These forms of content should not be interpreted as direct indicators of radicalization. Rather, they are more appropriately understood as forms of digital religious authority that respond to young users' searches for meaning, guidance, certainty, moral direction, and belonging.²⁴

Another important characteristic of Salafi digital networks is that they are not confined to a single platform. YouTube often functions as a venue for long-form lectures, sermons, question-and-answer sessions, and archival content, while Telegram facilitates announcements and content circulation, WhatsApp enables direct communication, and websites provide institutional information and publication archives. Links to books and magazines support text-based continuity, whereas Instagram and X enhance rapid visibility and the circulation of current issues. Accordingly, Salafi digital outreach networks extend beyond YouTube channels alone. They constitute a multilayered ecosystem of religious communication and belonging in which online and offline forms of engagement operate together.²⁵

For this study, the relationship between digitalization and youth is significant for three reasons. First, digital platforms enable younger users to access religious knowledge more rapidly, in more fragmented forms, and in increasingly personalized ways. Second, question-and-answer sessions, *hasbiha* conversations, comment sections, and cross-platform referral mechanisms allow users to become more than passive consumers of content by enabling them to ask questions, receive guidance, and develop a sense of belonging. Third, content directed at children and young people demonstrates that religious outreach is no longer conveyed solely through sermons or formal lectures aimed at adults, but is also adapted to areas such as family life, school, media use, privacy, gaming, harmful habits, and everyday morality. Accordingly, the following chapters examine engagement with younger audiences not by claiming to directly identify users' ages, but through open-source content indicators and digital engagement mechanisms. The relationship between digital religious authority, engagement with younger audiences, and cross-platform referral mechanisms is summarized in Table 6.

²⁴ Jakob Guhl and Milo Comerford, *Understanding the Salafi Online Ecosystem: A Digital Snapshot* (London: Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2021).

²⁵ Gary R. Bunt, *Islam in the Digital Age: E-Jihad, Online Fatwas and Cyber Islamic Environments* (London: Pluto Press, 2003); Bunt, *Islamic Algorithms*.

Table 6. Analytical Linkages among Digitalization, Youth, and Salafi Networks

Analytical Dimension	Indicator in the YouTube Dataset	Significance for the Study
Digital religious authority	Lectures, sermons, question-and-answer sessions, <i>hasbiha</i> conversations, and live broadcasts	Indicates that relationships involving religious teachers, study circles, and religious guidance are being reproduced in digital environments.
Engagement with younger audiences	Content for children and themes relating to school, family, privacy, harmful habits, the pursuit of religious knowledge, and marriage	Indicates that engagement with younger audiences is established not only through videos addressed directly to young people, but also through themes of everyday guidance.
Production of belonging	Comment sections, question-asking practices, <i>hasbiha</i> gatherings, and emphases on the <i>ummah</i> and brotherhood	Indicates that viewers are positioned not merely as consumers of content, but as participants who develop relationships of belonging.
Cross-platform referral	Links to Telegram, WhatsApp, websites, books, magazines, PDF documents, and social media platforms	Indicates that YouTube visibility is connected to a broader digital and offline outreach network.
Methodological limitation	Viewers' actual ages and individual levels of influence cannot be verified	Findings should be interpreted not as evidence of direct influence or radicalization, but as indicators of outreach capacity and visibility.

Note. Table 6 provides an analytical summary of the relationship among digitalization, youth, and Salafi digital outreach networks based on open-source YouTube data. The indicators presented here are used not as direct evidence of radicalization or influence, but to assess digital religious authority, the production of belonging, engagement with younger audiences, and the capacity for cross-platform referral.

3. Analytical Framework

This study examines Salafi digital outreach actors operating on YouTube without limiting the analysis to technical performance indicators such as subscriber counts, views, and likes. Instead, the analysis considers digital visibility, religious authority, the circulation of discourse, cross-platform referral, and the relationship between online and offline networks together. Accordingly, YouTube data are used not as indicators that directly measure ideological influence or radicalization, but as open-source indicators that provide insight into

actors' capacity for digital visibility, continuity of content production, areas of engagement, and network structures.

In the context of Türkiye, the use of digital platforms as a field of research is also consistent with previous studies examining Salafism via Twitter data. Yusuf Emre Tapan's study of Salafism in Türkiye using Twitter social network analysis demonstrates that digital platforms constitute not only spaces of communication, but also research environments in which the circulation of discourse, relationships among actors, and network structures can be examined.²⁶

Similarly, studies in the Western literature on online radicalization, online extremism, the circulation of propaganda, and cross-platform dynamics have likewise demonstrated that digital data constitute an important field of analysis for open-source research. These studies show that digital platforms can be examined not only as channels of communication, but also as environments in which patterns of content dissemination, interactions among actors, and the organization of digital networks can be systematically analyzed.²⁷

Metrics such as subscriber counts, views, likes, and video upload frequency help assess the extent to which actors are visible in the digital sphere and how regularly they engage with their follower communities. However, these metrics cannot, on their own, be interpreted as indicators of influence, belonging, or ideological transformation. A channel's high subscriber count may demonstrate its capacity for visibility, but it does not provide direct evidence of audience commitment, the meanings viewers attach to the content, or offline behavior. Accordingly, the aim of this study is not merely to identify which channels have the largest number of subscribers, but to examine how this visibility is shaped by the type of actor involved, the platform's structure, patterns of content production, and connections to offline networks.

In digital religion studies, online and offline spheres are often understood not as entirely separate domains, but as interconnected spaces that shape one another. Heidi A. Campbell and Ruth Tsuria's approach to digital religion emphasizes that online religious practices should be considered alongside their offline contexts.²⁸ Consistent with this perspective, many of the

²⁶ Yusuf Emre Tapan, *Turkish Salafism on Twitter: Social Network Analysis* (Master's thesis, Middle East Technical University, 2019).

²⁷ Maura Conway, "Determining the Role of the Internet in Violent Extremism and Terrorism: Six Suggestions for Progressing Research," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 40, no. 1 (2017): 77-98, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2016.1157408>; Paul Gill, Emily Corner, Amy Thornton, and Maura Conway, "What Are the Roles of the Internet in Terrorism? Measuring Online Behaviours of Convicted UK Terrorists," VOX-Pol Network of Excellence, 2015; Karo, Divon, and Hallinan, "The TikTok Caliphate"; Lombardi et al., "Under the Radar."

²⁸ Campbell and Tsuria, *Digital Religion*.

actors examined maintain not only YouTube channels but also connections to associations, madrasas, publishing houses, bookstores, Telegram channels, WhatsApp contact lines, and websites. This suggests that digital visibility is, in some cases, reinforced by broader offline institutional and social networks, rather than existing solely within digital environments.

The role of the Internet in processes of radicalization and violent extremism should likewise not be understood in terms of a simple cause-and-effect relationship. The work of Maura Conway, together with the research of Paul Gill, Emily Corner, and Amy Thornton, demonstrates that the Internet should not be regarded as an independent driver of these processes. Rather, it should be analyzed alongside offline relationships, broader social contexts, and individual motivations.²⁹ Similarly, the studies of Emre Çeliksoy, Steve Ouma, and Ece Özyurt demonstrate that the Internet can serve multiple functions, including the dissemination of propaganda, online training, recruitment, planning, and financing. At the same time, these studies emphasize that, in most cases, online activities should be understood not as replacements for offline activities, but as complements and reinforcements of them.³⁰ Accordingly, in the present study, YouTube metrics are interpreted not as direct measures of radicalization, but as open-source indicators of digital visibility, outreach capacity, and the circulation of discourse.

This cautious approach is also consistent with the *Bathtub Model*, which does not regard radicalization as the automatic outcome of a single cause. The model explains the accumulation of ideological, psychological, and personal motivations over time through the metaphor of a bathtub gradually filling with water. Within this framework, different sources of motivation function as separate “taps” that move an individual closer to a particular threshold. In the digital age, however, the model should be interpreted to account for both online and offline forms of engagement. Individuals are rarely entirely isolated, and relational contexts such as digital networks, online communities, cross-platform referrals, echo chambers, family ties, and wider social environments may accelerate, direct, or reinforce this cumulative process.³¹

At this point, the *Onlife approach* contributes to interpreting the *Bathtub Model* in the context of the digital age. It emphasizes that online and offline life can no longer be adequately

²⁹ Conway, “Determining the Role of the Internet in Violent Extremism and Terrorism”; Gill et al., “What Are the Roles of the Internet in Terrorism?”

³⁰ Emre Çeliksoy and Steve Ouma, “Terrorist Use of the Internet,” *Bilişim Hukuku Dergisi* 1, no. 2 (2019): 243–67; Ece Özyurt, *How Terrorist Organizations Use the Internet* (master’s thesis, İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University, 2021).

³¹ Hilmi Demir, *Türkiye’de DEAŞ Radikalleşmesi, Kadın ve Gençlik Yapılanmaları ve Stratejik Dönüşüm*, ed. Hatice Varol-Dağdelen and Zeynep Yıldız (Ankara: TEPAV, URAD, and the Embassy of Canada to Türkiye, 2026), 11–12.

understood as two distinct domains separated by clear boundaries, since digital interactions are increasingly intertwined with physical, social, and institutional relationships. For the purposes of this study, the *Onlife perspective* enables understanding YouTube videos, referrals to Telegram and WhatsApp, websites, associations, madrasas, publishing houses, study circles, and face-to-face gatherings as distinct points of engagement within the same outreach ecosystem.³²

The analytical approach is structured around four core conceptual dimensions: digital visibility, digital charismatic authority, the virtual madrasa function, and hybrid online–offline network structures. Digital visibility is used to assess the extent to which actors can reach their follower communities, using indicators such as subscriber counts, subscriber growth, view counts, average likes, and the frequency of video production. Digital charismatic authority is employed to interpret how personality-centered channels gain visibility through the direct relationships they establish with followers, personal narratives, modes of address, question-and-answer practices, and continuity of engagement. This framework also enables adapting Weberian discussions of charismatic authority to digital platforms.³³ The virtual madrasa function refers to the use of YouTube as a space for continuous religious education, content archiving, and the production of authority through content on ‘aqīdah, fiqh, hadith, tafsīr, question-and-answer sessions, and structured lecture series. Hybrid network structures, meanwhile, enable examination of how visibility on YouTube is connected to structures such as madrasas, associations, publishing houses, bookstores, study circles, Telegram, WhatsApp, and websites.

These four analytical dimensions were developed by drawing on the literature on digital religion, as well as conceptual frameworks on Salafism, Daesh radicalization, youth radicalization, and digital networks. Within this context, concepts such as the “virtual madrasa,” “digital television channel,” “socio-ideological package,” “Salafi habitat,” “digital hunting,” and “Onlife outreach” make it possible to analyze YouTube-centered Salafi outreach networks not only in terms of content production, but also with regard to belonging, authority, capacity for engagement with younger audiences, cross-platform referral, and forms of online–offline interaction.³⁴

³² Demir ve Demir, *Yeni Nesil Çeteler ve Radikalleşme*.

³³ Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978); Paul Joosse, “Max Weber’s Disciples: Theorizing the Charismatic Aristocracy,” *Sociological Theory* 35, no. 4 (2017): 334-358, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0735275117740402>.

³⁴ Hilmi Demir, “Selefi Radikalleşmesinde İdeolojinin Etkisi,” unpublished report manuscript, 2026; Hilmi Demir and Ceyda Altunay Demir, *Yeni Nesil Çeteler ve Radikalleşme*

This approach suggests that online Islamic environments should be understood not only in terms of content dissemination but also in terms of how they shape religious authority, identity, community relations, access to religious knowledge, and cross-platform movement. From this perspective, when YouTube channels, websites, Telegram groups, WhatsApp contact lines, physical publishing networks, associations, and madrasas are considered together, it becomes evident that these actors are not confined to a single platform. Rather, they are situated within a broader digital religious ecosystem.³⁵

This framework enables examining Salafi digital outreach networks not merely as a numerical listing of YouTube channels, but as a multilayered field of communication that can be analyzed through the lenses of digital religious authority, platform ecology, capacity for engagement with younger audiences, and hybrid network structures. This multilayered framework is summarized in Table 7.

Table 7. The Multilayered Structure of the Salafi Digital Outreach Ecosystem

Dimension	Content	Significance for the Study
YouTube-centered content production	Lectures, sermons, question-and-answer sessions, and hasbihal conversations	Constitutes the primary forms of content through which digital outreach activities are conducted.
Engagement and visibility	Comment sections, likes, views, and follower participation	Increases content visibility and facilitates sustained user engagement.
Cross-platform referral	Telegram, WhatsApp, websites, Instagram, and X	Enables users to move across different digital platforms and expands the outreach network.
Offline institutional and social networks	Associations, madrasas, publishing houses/bookstores, and face-to-face gatherings	Reinforces digital engagement through physical relationships and institutional structures.
Outcome	Hybrid network structure	Digital visibility, cross-platform movement, and offline connections together constitute a multilayered outreach ecosystem.

Note. Table 7 illustrates how YouTube-centered visibility develops into a multilayered digital outreach network through content production, user engagement, cross-platform referral, and offline connections. This structure demonstrates that digital outreach extends beyond mere

³⁵ Bunt, *Islam in the Digital Age*; Bunt, *Islamic Algorithms*.

video sharing; rather, it operates within a hybrid network in which online and offline forms of engagement coexist.

The multilayered structure summarized in Table 7 also provides the basis for identifying the analytical dimensions used in this study. Within this framework, digital visibility, engagement capacity, continuity of content production, type of authority, platform diversity, offline connections, engagement with younger audiences, and *Onlife* outreach are considered together. The core analytical dimensions, their corresponding indicators, and the analytical significance of these indicators are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Analytical Dimensions and Indicators Used in the Analysis of Salafi Digital Outreach Networks

Analytical Dimension	Indicator Used	Analytical Significance
Digital visibility	Subscriber counts; subscriber growth between 2024 and 2026	Indicates a channel's reach and capacity for digital visibility.
Engagement capacity	Average likes, views, and comment activity	Reflects the limited but measurable relationship between viewers and content.
Continuity of content production	Video upload frequency based on the most recent 14 videos	Indicates the level of channel activity and its capacity to maintain regular engagement with audiences.
Type of authority	Personality-centered, institutional, or hybrid structure	Examines whether religious authority is established through personal, institutional, or hybrid forms.
Platform diversity	YouTube, Telegram, websites, X, Instagram, and WhatsApp	Demonstrates the network's flexibility beyond reliance on a single platform.
Offline connections	Madrasas, associations, publishing houses, bookstores, and magazine networks	Indicates that physical settings and institutional connections reinforce digital visibility.
Geographical reach	Urban centers within Türkiye and cross-border connections	Assesses whether the network operates at local, national, or transnational levels.
Virtual madrasa function	Content on 'aqīdah, fiqh, hadith, tafsīr, question-and-answer sessions, and lecture series	Examines YouTube as a space for continuous religious education, content archiving, and the production of religious authority.
Digital television channel function	Regular video broadcasts, serialized content, current affairs discussions, and high viewing capacity	Examines YouTube as a medium for continuous broadcasting and for visibility comparable to that of traditional media.

Digital economy of belonging	References to the <i>Ikhwān</i> , brothers, the <i>ummah</i> , the cause (<i>da'wah</i>), patience, <i>fiṭnah</i> , and steadfastness	Examines the production of belonging, discipline, shared identity, and collective commitment among followers.
Everyday outreach discourse	Topics relating to games, clothing, school, family, friendship, sin, repentance, and everyday behavior	Examines how religious discourse is adapted to the everyday concerns and practical decisions of younger audiences.
Capacity for engagement with younger audiences	Short-form videos, question-and-answer content, everyday themes, and social media referrals	Assesses the potential to establish direct, rapid, and everyday forms of engagement with younger users.
Onlife outreach	Connections among YouTube, Telegram, WhatsApp, websites, madrasas, associations, publishing houses, and study circles	Examines the interconnected nature of online and offline forms of religious engagement.
Salafi habitat	Madrasas, associations, publishing houses, bookstores, neighborhoods, local business communities, and digital platform connections	Examines how digital visibility is embedded within physical, institutional, and social environments.
Platform transition	Referrals from YouTube to Telegram, WhatsApp, Instagram, X, or websites	Assesses the capacity to move followers from open platforms to more controlled spaces of engagement.

Note. Table 8 was developed by the authors based on open-source YouTube channel data, channel descriptions, linked social media accounts, news sources, and other publicly available information related to the actors examined.

4. Methods and Data Sources

This study draws on YouTube channel data obtained from open sources, channel descriptions, linked social media accounts, news sources, and publicly available information concerning the actors examined. The analysis considers subscriber counts and subscriber growth rates for 2024 and 2026. The 2024 data use the dataset developed as part of Hilmi Demir's earlier study as the baseline reference, while the 2026 data reflect the updated levels of visibility identified through open-source research conducted for the present study. Accordingly, the study provides not only a snapshot of YouTube visibility at a single point in time, but also a comparative assessment of changes in the actors' digital visibility between 2024 and 2026.

To examine the continuity of content production and recent performance, the most recent 14 videos on each channel were selected as a sample. These videos were assessed based on upload frequency, average number of likes, view counts, and whether comments were

enabled or disabled. This sampling strategy does not claim to represent the entire archive of each channel. Rather, it is intended to generate comparable open-source indicators of the actors' recent visibility, engagement, and content production patterns.

The selection of the digital sphere as a field of research is also related to the complementary opportunities offered by open-source digital data, particularly in areas where fieldwork is difficult due to security, access, and continuity concerns. In the context of Türkiye, Tapan's social network analysis of Salafism using Twitter data demonstrates that digital platforms can serve as research environments for examining religious movements, the circulation of discourse, and relationships among actors.³⁶

Similarly, in the Western literature, the work of Maura Conway, the joint research of Paul Gill, Emily Corner, Amy Thornton, and Maura Conway, as well as studies published by the VOX-Pol Network of Excellence, an academic research network specializing in online violent political extremism and terrorism, emphasize that Internet data should not be treated as causal evidence in themselves. Rather, they should be used as open-source indicators that provide insight into online behavior, digital visibility, network structures, and the circulation of propaganda.³⁷

This approach is also reflected in recent studies of online extremism and propaganda conducted on platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, X, and Telegram. Research on TikTok examines how short-form video formats, algorithmic recommendation systems, platform aesthetics, and user interactions may contribute to the circulation of radical or violent extremist content.³⁸ Similarly, studies of digital religion and Salafi content on YouTube demonstrate that video-sharing platforms should be understood not merely as spaces for content dissemination, but also as environments in which religious authority, communal belonging, the archiving of religious instruction, and cross-platform referral can be examined.³⁹ Taken together, this body of literature supports the methodological approach adopted in the present study, which analyzes YouTube channel data as both quantitative and qualitative open-source indicators.

The methodology adopted in this study is based on the combined analysis of quantitative and qualitative open-source data. Quantitative data, including subscriber counts, subscriber growth rates between 2024 and 2026, view counts, average numbers of likes, and

³⁶ Tapan, *Turkish Salafism on Twitter*.

³⁷ Conway, "Determining the Role of the Internet in Violent Extremism and Terrorism"; Gill et al., "What Are the Roles of the Internet in Terrorism?"; VOX-Pol Network of Excellence, *Violent Extremism Online: Research and Policy Perspectives* (2023).

³⁸ Karo, Divon, and Hallinan, "The TikTok Caliphate"; Lombardi et al., "Under the Radar."

³⁹ Stadlbauer, "Rewriting the Script"; Guhl and Comerford, *Understanding the Salafi Online Ecosystem*.

video upload frequency, are used to assess the actors' capacity for digital visibility. Qualitative data include channel descriptions, video titles and descriptions, linked social media accounts, news sources, websites, comment sections, and publicly available information about the actors' offline connections. Accordingly, the study interprets YouTube performance not in isolation, but within the broader context of the digital and offline network structures in which these actors operate.

The YouTube data used in this study are not interpreted as direct measures of ideological influence, follower commitment, or levels of radicalization. Metrics such as subscriber counts, views, likes, and comments may provide insight into a channel's visibility and potential outreach capacity; however, they do not permit definitive conclusions about viewers' actual motivations, how they are influenced by the content, or their offline behavior. Accordingly, the study treats these digital metrics not as indicators of causal influence, but as open-source indicators of digital visibility and outreach capacity.

During the data collection process, the official YouTube pages of the selected channels were examined, including channel descriptions, video titles, upload frequency for the most recent 14 videos, view counts, number of likes, whether comments were enabled or disabled, and platform links provided in the description sections. In addition, publicly available information relating to the actors' websites, Telegram, WhatsApp, X, Instagram, and Facebook accounts, as well as their publishing houses, magazines, bookstores, madrasas, and associations, was collected and analyzed. These data enable examination not only of the actors' performance on YouTube but also of the relationships they establish with broader digital and offline networks beyond the platform.

In this study, comment sections are used only as a limited qualitative indicator. Although comments may provide insight into audience responses, expressions of belonging, question-asking practices, and narratives of personal transformation, it is not possible to verify users' ages, identities, sincerity, or offline behavior. Accordingly, comments are interpreted not as evidence of direct influence, but as indicators of discursive reception and user engagement.

This methodological approach is intended to analyze Salafi digital outreach networks not only through numerical performance metrics but also by considering content themes, forms of authority, platform diversity, offline connections, capacity to engage younger audiences, and indicators of geographical reach. Accordingly, the study situates YouTube-centered open-source data within a broader analytical framework encompassing digital religion, platform ecology, and hybrid network structures.

Within this framework, the dataset developed for the study extends beyond basic performance indicators, such as subscriber counts and video counts. It also incorporates variables relating to actor identity, channel affiliations, subscriber changes between 2024 and 2026, recent visibility performance, continuity of content production, comment status, news references, cross-platform referrals, indicators of offline connections, and analytical coding categories. The principal groups of variables included in the dataset, together with their analytical functions, are presented in Table 9.

Table 9. Scope of the Dataset and Key Variables Coded

Variable Group	Variables Coded	Analytical Function
Actor identity	Full name, pseudonym, YouTube channel name, and channel link	Indicates the individual, institution, or channel identity through which the actor's digital visibility is established.
Digital visibility	Subscriber count in 2024, subscriber count in 2026, and subscriber growth rate	Makes it possible to assess the channel's reach capacity and growth trajectory over time.
Recent performance	Views in the most recent 14 days, subscriber growth in the most recent 14 days, average likes, and average comments	Indicates not only the channel's total subscriber strength, but also its recent visibility and engagement capacity
Continuity of content production	Upload frequency based on the most recent 14 videos, total number of videos, and channel creation date	Indicates the channel's level of activity, archival capacity, and potential to maintain regular engagement with followers.
Platform connections	Links to websites, Telegram, WhatsApp, X, Instagram, Facebook, books, magazines, publishing houses, or lectures	Indicates whether the YouTube channel is connected to a broader cross-platform outreach network.
Institutional and spatial connections	Indicators relating to associations, foundations, madrasas, bookstores, publishing houses, cities, or cross-border connections	Makes it possible to assess the relationship between digital visibility and offline institutional or spatial networks.
Open-source context	News coverage, news summaries, and publicly available links	Provides limited open-source indicators of the actors' relationship to public debates, news coverage, or security-related contexts.
Analytical coding	Type of authority, virtual madrasa function, digital television function, youth engagement, and platform transition	Enables quantitative YouTube data to be interpreted together with qualitative and conceptual analysis.

Note. Table 9 was prepared based on the variables included in the YouTube dataset developed for this study. These variables should be interpreted not as direct evidence of influence or radicalization, but as open-source indicators of visibility, outreach capacity, platform connectivity, and the production of digital authority.

5. Digital Visibility and Continuity of Content Production

The first analytical dimension, digital visibility, is assessed through subscriber counts, changes in subscriber numbers between 2024 and 2026, video upload frequency, view levels, and average numbers of likes. Subscriber counts provide an important indicator of a channel's established follower base and its potential outreach capacity. However, subscriber counts alone are insufficient to explain current influence, audience commitment, or levels of ideological transformation. Accordingly, this study considers subscriber counts, the continuity of content production, viewing performance, average number of likes, and connections to networks beyond the platform.

An examination of the data indicates that the channels analyzed do not form a homogeneous structure in terms of their visibility on YouTube. Channels with relatively high subscriber counts, such as Halis Bayancuk, Vasat Kitabevi, İnfitar, and Tevhid Kuşağı, have broader visibility, whereas some channels appeal to smaller but more specialized audience groups. This variation demonstrates that Salafi digital outreach actors do not possess a uniform level of digital reach. While some actors address broad follower bases, others engage with narrower but more regular follower communities. For this reason, video upload frequency, average numbers of likes, viewing performance, and cross-platform referral networks are treated as open-source indicators that complement subscriber counts.

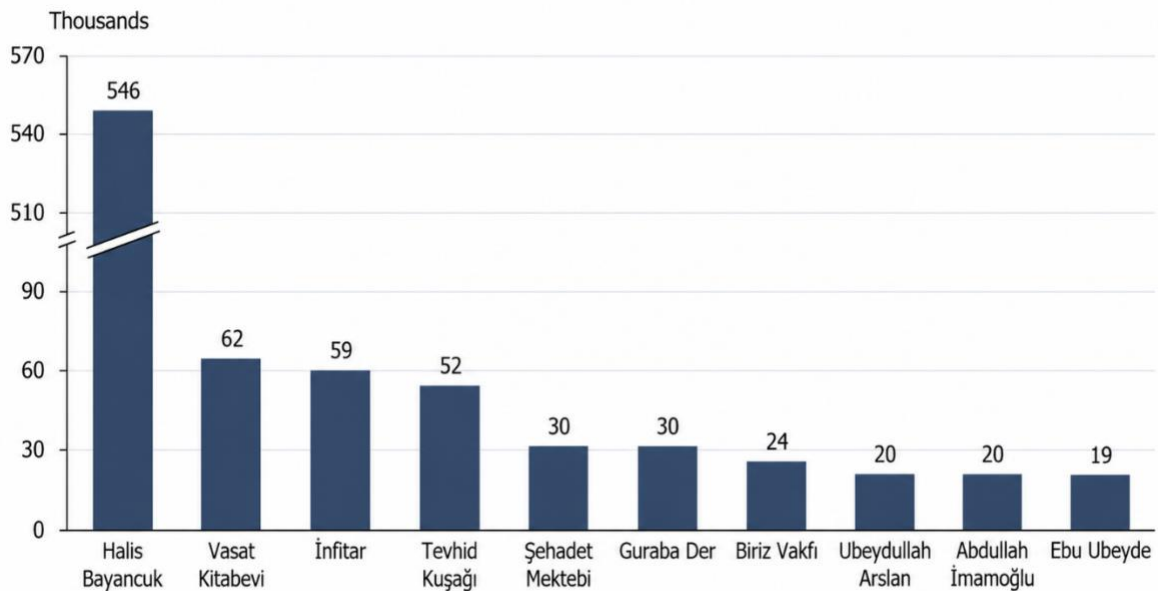
Publicly available YouTube data suggest a relationship between regular content production and digital visibility. For example, the near-daily upload frequency of the Halis Bayancuk channel, together with its recent high viewing levels, suggests that the channel may be considered one of the most visible actors within the network examined. However, this visibility cannot be explained solely by upload frequency. It must also be assessed in relation to the channel's subscriber base, follower loyalty, how its content engages with current issues, and its connections beyond the platform.

An examination of subscriber growth rates indicates substantial variation across the channels in both growth trajectories and the pace of content production. While some channels continue to expand despite already having large subscriber bases, others with smaller or

medium-sized audiences exhibit comparatively higher growth rates. By contrast, some channels display limited growth or signs of stagnation. These findings suggest that highly active channels that publish daily or weekly should not be evaluated on the same basis as channels that publish at much longer intervals. Accordingly, the continuity of content production should be regarded as an important variable associated with digital visibility.

One of the first observations regarding digital visibility is the highly uneven distribution of subscriber counts across the channels examined. While some channels have established very large follower bases, others appeal to smaller but more specialized audiences that nevertheless exhibit clear growth trajectories. As of 2026, the most visible channels by subscriber numbers are shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Most Visible YouTube Channels by Subscriber Count (Thousands), 2026



Note. Figure 3 shows the levels of digital visibility of selected channels included in the dataset, based on their subscriber counts as of 2026. Subscriber count should not be interpreted as a direct indicator of influence or audience commitment, but rather as a limited indicator of a channel's open-source digital visibility and potential outreach capacity.

Figure 3 demonstrates that the Halis Bayancuk channel has by far the highest subscriber count among the channels examined, while the remaining channels display lower but varying levels of visibility. However, subscriber count alone is insufficient for assessing digital visibility. Indicators such as subscriber growth rate, video upload frequency, viewing

performance, average numbers of likes, and comment status are also important for understanding a channel's current level of activity. Subscriber counts, growth rates, and recent performance indicators by actor are presented in Table 10.

Table 10. Subscriber Counts, Growth Rates, and Performance Metrics by Actor, 2024–2026

Actor / YouTube Channel Name	2024 Subscribers (Thousands)	2026 Subscribers (Thousands)	Percentage Change	Upload Frequency for the Most Recent 14 Videos / Performance	Trend and Performance Status
Halis Bayancuk, Halis Bayancuk Hoca	434	546	25,81%	Daily, approximately 1 video per day / Most recent 14 days: 4.4 million views	High visibility / Regular content production
Ramazan Oral, Vasat Kitabevi	63,9	61,8	-3,28%	Approximately 1 video every 35 days / Average likes: 2,355	Decline / Stagnant visibility
Recep Baltacı, Sahih İslam Tevhidi Hareket	NA	56,4	NA	Approximately 1 video every 44 days / Comments disabled	Visible actor with cross-border connections
Mehmet Emin Akın, Medarik	NA	5,7	222,60%	Approximately 1 video every 6.4 days / Average likes: 59	High growth / Regular content production
Hüseyin Cinisli, Tevhid ve Sünnet	5,07	9,49	87,17%	Approximately daily uploads / Average likes: 53	High growth / Active profile
İlyas Aydın, Ebu Ubeyde Hoca	14,5	19,3	33,10%	Approximately 1 video every 30.5 days / Average likes: 274	Steady growth / Long upload intervals
Murat Gezenler, Şehadet Mektebi (School of Martyrdom)	25,2	30,3	20,24%	Approximately 1 video every 11 days / Average likes: 193	Regular following / Moderate growth

Musab Köylüoğlu, Rahmet TV	7,58	7,57	-0,13%	Approximately 1 video every 56 days / Average likes: 72	Stagnation
Taceddin Bayburdi, Tacuddin el Bayburdi	NA	0,557	NA	Approximately 1 video every 7.9 days / Average likes: 9	Micro-channel / Limited reach

Note. The data were compiled and calculated using open-source YouTube metrics for the period 2024-2026, along with the relevant channel-level data tables. **NA** indicates that comparable data were not available for the relevant year.

The indicators presented in Table 10 show that the selected actors differ in subscriber size, growth rates, and content production performance. The broader dataset, however, reveals that the channels differ not only in their current subscriber bases but also in their growth patterns over time. For this reason, changes in subscriber numbers during the 2024–2026 period were analyzed as a separate dimension. The resulting channel groups based on subscriber growth trajectories are presented in Table 11.

Table 11. Channel Groups by Subscriber Growth Trajectories, 2024–2026

Growth Category	Illustrative Actor / Channel	2024–2026 Change	Analytical Assessment
High-growth channels	Tevhid ve Sünnet İlimlerini Yayma Derneği (Association for the Promotion of Tawhid and Sunnah Studies)	87,17%	Indicates that institutionally organized, lesson-centered structures can achieve rapid growth despite having relatively small or medium-sized subscriber bases.
High-growth channels	Ebu Ubeyde Hoca	33,10%	Suggests that person-centered authority can sustain steady growth even with less frequent content production.
High visibility and sustained growth	Halis Bayancuk Hoca	25,81%	Although it has the largest subscriber base in the dataset, the channel continues to grow, a pattern that may be associated with its well-established follower network and regular content production.
High-growth channels	Şehadet Mektebi (School of Martyrdom)	20,24%	Indicates that lesson- and madrasa-centered institutional visibility has created a medium-sized but expanding digital follower base.

Moderate-growth channels	Abdullah İmamoğlu	12,64%	Demonstrates moderate growth among actors whose visibility is associated with themes of youth, criticism of the system, and social morality.
Moderate-growth channels	Yarpuz İslami İlimler Araştırma Merkezi (Yarpuz Center for Islamic Studies)	12,30%	Suggests that institutionally organized religious education and study-circle-based structures can achieve limited but steady growth.
Moderate-growth channels	Davet Minberi	7,58%	Represents an example of moderate growth in visibility through digital broadcasting and cross-platform connections.
Moderate-growth channels	Mehmet Emin Akın	7,55%	Indicates that person-centered religious discourse can generate growth among small- and medium-sized follower communities.
Moderate-growth channels	Zerka Medresesi	6,52%	Suggests that madrasa- and lesson-centered visibility follows a steady but limited growth trajectory.
Moderate-growth channels	Guraba Der (Guraba Association)	6,45%	Indicates the association's continued institutional visibility through its educational archive and organizational identity.
Moderate-growth channels	İnfitar	5,14%	Shows that a channel with an already relatively large subscriber base has maintained limited but positive growth.
Limited-growth channels	ULUDER- Uludağ İslami Eğitim ve Araştırma Derneği	2,67%	Indicates a pattern of limited growth among smaller institutional structures.
Limited-growth channels	İslam Davetçisi Ubeydullah Arslan	1,02%	Represents an actor that has largely maintained its existing follower base while exhibiting only limited growth.
Limited-growth channels	Feyzullah Birşık	0,77%	Displays a subscriber base that is close to stagnation.
Stagnant or declining channels	Rahmet TV	-0,13%	Shows an almost stagnant trend in subscriber numbers.
Stagnant or declining channels	Vasat Kitabevi	-3,28%	Despite its relatively large follower base, its declining trajectory should be further assessed in relation to the continuity of content production and its current digital visibility.

Note. Growth rates are based on the percentage change in subscriber counts from 2024 to 2026 for the channels included in the dataset. These rates should not be interpreted as direct indicators of influence or audience commitment, but rather as open-source indicators of digital visibility and changes in subscriber bases.

Table 11 demonstrates that the digital visibility of the channels examined cannot be explained solely by their total subscriber counts. Although actors such as the Halis Bayancuk channel occupy a dominant position in overall visibility due to their large subscriber bases, it is noteworthy that channels with smaller or medium-sized audiences, such as Tevhid ve Sünnet İlimlerini Yayma Derneği, Ebu Ubeyde Hoca, and Şehadet Mektebi, exhibit higher subscriber growth rates. These findings suggest that analyses of Salafî digital outreach networks should account for both well-established actors with large follower bases and emerging actors with more limited but steadily expanding follower communities.

Taken together, the findings presented in this section indicate that the visibility of Salafî digital outreach actors on YouTube depends not only on subscriber counts, but also on levels of activity, the continuity of content production, audience engagement, growth trajectories, and the capacity to adapt to platform logics. Accordingly, digital visibility should not be assessed solely on a numerical scale, but rather in relation to subscriber bases, growth rates, the continuity of content production, and cross-platform connections. At the same time, the patterns of digital growth observed in YouTube data between 2024 and 2026 should not be interpreted as a direct digital counterpart to changes in the proportion of individuals identifying as Salafî within society. Rather, the limited yet noteworthy increase in self-identified Salafîs between 2016 and 2020 reported in the TEPAV survey provides an important contextual reference for understanding the broader social visibility of Salafî affiliation in Türkiye.⁴⁰ By contrast, the YouTube data analyzed in this study for the period 2024–2026 capture the digital visibility of the actors, changes in their subscriber bases, and the continuity of their content production. Accordingly, no direct causal relationship can be established between the two datasets. Nevertheless, they enable examination, from a comparative perspective, of potential parallels and divergences between the social visibility of Salafî affiliation and the digital visibility of Salafî digital outreach actors.

⁴⁰ Demir et al., *Türkiye'de Çoğulculuk Radikalleşmeyle Yüzleşiyor*, 93, fig. 89.

6. Content and Discourse Themes

The content and discourse themes examined in this section can be interpreted not only as forms of religious discourse produced within individual channels, but also in comparison with broader societal attitudes in Türkiye toward religious authority, pluralism, religious communities (*ṭarīqahs*), and the secular democratic order. The TEPAV survey indicates that public trust in official religious authority has not disappeared and that satisfaction with the secular democratic order remains relatively high.⁴¹ At the same time, the survey suggests that tendencies to maintain social distance from individuals with different beliefs and lifestyles remain prevalent in Turkish society.⁴² This broader context makes it possible to analyze themes observed in the YouTube dataset, such as criticism of the Diyanet, criticism of the secular system, opposition to *ṭarīqahs* and Sufism, and discursive binaries such as truth versus falsehood, Sunnah versus *bid'ah*, *tawḥīd* versus *shirk*, and the *ummah* versus its enemies, not as direct reflections of broader societal attitudes, but rather as a more sharply bounded language of distinction circulating within particular digital religious communities.

A substantial proportion of the channels examined do not merely produce individual sermons or commentary on current issues. Rather, through continuous content on *'aqīdah*, *tawḥīd*, *fiqh*, *ḥadīth*, *tafsīr*, and question-and-answer sessions, they create an ongoing environment for religious instruction. From this perspective, YouTube functions as *a virtual madrasa* for some of these actors. Within this structure, videos can be understood not simply as media content to be consumed, but also as digital instructional materials that are archived, repeatedly accessed, and used to maintain regular engagement with followers.⁴³

In addition to channel performance data, video titles and content themes are also important for understanding the discursive strategies through which actors reach their audiences. Across the channels examined, prominent themes include *tawḥīd*, *'aqīdah*, *shirk*, *ṭāghūt*, sovereignty, the rejection of *ḥadīth*, criticism of the Diyanet, opposition to Sufism, responses to current crises, emphasis on the *ummah*, religious education, sin, repentance, family, peer groups, and youth. These themes suggest that the channels are not limited to the transmission of religious knowledge but also contain discourses shaped by a particular worldview, an emphasis on belonging, a language of boundary-drawing, demonization, opposition, and othering.

⁴¹ Demir et al., *Türkiye'de Çoğulculuk Radikalleşmeyle Yüzleşiyor*, 47–50, figs. 43–49.

⁴² Demir et al., *Türkiye'de Çoğulculuk Radikalleşmeyle Yüzleşiyor*, 55–59, figs. 54–58.

⁴³ Hilmi Demir, “Selefi Radikalleşmesinde İdeolojinin Etkisi,” unpublished report manuscript, 2026; Hilmi Demir and Ceyda Altunay Demir, *Yeni Nesil Çeteler ve Radikalleşme*.

Studies of the online Salafi ecosystem indicate that a substantial proportion of such content is structured around identity formation, general religious concepts, and practical religious guidance. At the same time, some content also displays discursive patterns that are exclusionary, antagonistic, or conducive to social disconnection.⁴⁴ For this reason, content and discourse themes should be analyzed without making direct claims about their effects, to understand the narratives, identity boundaries, and forms of everyday guidance through which digital visibility is constructed.

Within this framework, Table 12 presents the main content and discourse themes identified in the video titles examined, together with their analytical significance.

Table 12. Analytical Significance of Content and Discourse Themes

Theme	Analytical significance
<i>Tawhīd, ‘aqidah, shirk, tāghūt, sovereignty</i>	Indicates the core doctrinal framework, a language of boundary drawing, and claims to religious authority.
Criticism of the Diyanet, Sufism, Shiism, and the rejection of ḥadīth	Indicates the construction of "us" and "them," the production of counter-authority, and a polemical discursive space.
Gaza, Israel, school attacks, and current crises	Indicates how contemporary events are interpreted through religious and political frameworks.
Tafsīr, ḥadīth, fiqh, and question-and-answer sessions	Indicates the virtual madrasa function, continuous religious instruction, and the cultivation of follower engagement.
<i>Ummah, oppression, patience, martyrdom, and the cause (da‘wah)</i>	Indicates emotional mobilization, a discourse of collective belonging, and the construction of shared identity.
Youth, sin, repentance, family, peer groups, and everyday life	Indicates a discourse of everyday religious outreach and the capacity to engage younger audiences.

Note. Table 12 was prepared by the authors based on the dominant themes identified in the video titles and channel content examined.

Table 12 demonstrates that the content examined is shaped not only by doctrinal religious themes, but also by broader issues such as current crises, discourses of belonging, family, youth, sin, repentance, and everyday life. Accordingly, content and discourse analysis should focus not only on what is being communicated, but also on the user needs, forms of belonging, and everyday searches for religious guidance to which these discourses respond. The following subsections examine these themes in greater detail through the lenses of

⁴⁴ Guhl and Comerford, *Understanding the Salafi Online Ecosystem*.

discourses of certainty, the construction of belonging, emotional mobilization, and everyday religious outreach.

6.1. Black-and-White Dichotomies and Discourses of Certainty

One prominent discursive pattern identified in the examined content is the tendency to frame religious and social issues in sharp binary oppositions. Distinctions such as *tawhīd* versus *shirk*, truth versus falsehood, lawful versus unlawful (*ḥalāl* versus *ḥarām*), faith versus unbelief (*īmān* versus *kufr*), *Sunnah* versus *bid'ah*, and the *ummah* versus its enemies constitute not only doctrinal classifications but also provide followers with a clear moral framework through which to interpret the world. For users seeking certainty amid the ambiguity and complexity of contemporary everyday life, such binary distinctions can serve as a powerful form of religious guidance.

Young people's attraction to such discourses of certainty is often associated with the search for a strong sense of identity and belonging within the complex, uncertain, and fragmented conditions of contemporary society. Adolescence and young adulthood are periods in which questions of identity and belonging become particularly salient. During these stages, clear distinctions such as lawful versus unlawful, pure versus impure, and right versus wrong may provide some young people with an organizing framework for navigating an otherwise complex social world.

Comparative studies of the online Salafi ecosystem likewise suggest that this search for certainty is particularly salient among younger users. The fact that some online preachers interpret issues such as Fortnite, supermarket work, eyebrow grooming, swimming pools, and everyday consumer practices through the lens of religious rulings demonstrates that religious guidance is not confined to major theological questions. Rather, it extends into seemingly ordinary aspects of everyday life.⁴⁵

A similar pattern can also be observed in the YouTube channels examined in this study, where everyday issues such as school, family, mobile games, peer groups, privacy, relationships between men and women, sin, repentance, the pursuit of religious knowledge, and marriage become subjects of religious guidance. This suggests that the language of digital religious outreach engages directly with young users' everyday decisions, family-related concerns, school experiences, and social media practices. At the same time, such engagement should not, in itself, be interpreted as evidence of radicalization. Rather, these forms of content

⁴⁵ Guhl and Comerford, *Understanding the Salafi Online Ecosystem*; Anja Zalta, "Online Salafism: The Tension to (Co)Exist in Religious and Ideological Plurality," *Poligrafi* 30, no. 119-120 (2025): 219-239.

provide a normative religious framework that responds to young people's search for certainty, belonging, and guidance.

Black-and-white dichotomies also constitute a powerful language of boundary drawing. On the one hand, this discourse identifies what is considered right, pure, lawful, or authentic; on the other, it defines what is regarded as deviation, *bid'ah*, *shirk*, *ṭāghūt*, or moral corruption. In this way, religious discourse serves not only to transmit religious knowledge, but also to construct a map of belonging that signals to followers the groups with which they should identify, the authorities from whom they should distance themselves, and the social practices from which they should remain apart.

At this point, individual cases of radicalization should be interpreted with caution. Media reports indicating that the 16-year-old perpetrator of a Daesh-linked attack in İzmir had watched videos produced by certain Salafi preachers and stated that this content had influenced him suggest that digital religious material can become a point of reference for some young users. However, such individual cases are not, in themselves, sufficient to establish a direct causal relationship. Accordingly, open-source indicators should be interpreted only in conjunction with individual circumstances, social environments, ideological trajectories, and offline relationships.

6.2. Al Ghuraba, Belonging, and the Appeal of Counterculture

The black-and-white discourse of certainty is, in some cases, intertwined with feelings of being "strangers," marginalized, or separated from mainstream society. In the Islamic tradition, the concept of Al Ghuraba is associated with the idea of a minority, or a group of "strangers," who remain committed to the truth in the face of a morally corrupted world. Within this framework, feelings of marginalization may be transformed not merely into an experience of victimhood, but also into a positive sense of belonging grounded in claims of being chosen, remaining pure, and adhering to the path of truth.⁴⁶

This discourse may offer young people not only a religious belief system, but also a countercultural identity through which they can distance themselves from mainstream society and established cultural norms. For young people who perceive themselves as marginalized, misunderstood, or out of step with mainstream culture, such discourses may transform difference from a perceived weakness into a meaningful source of identity grounded in the

⁴⁶ Rholand Muary, Neila Susanti, and Puteri Atikah, "Salafis and Social Media: The Emergence of Islamic Populism in Indonesia," *Jurnal Sosiologi Agama: Jurnal Ilmiah Sosiologi Agama dan Perubahan Sosial* 18, no. 2 (2024): 151-170, <http://doi.org/10.14421/jsa.2024.182-02>.

claim of being on the path of truth. Within this framework, sharp distinctions such as the "righteous" and the "corrupt," the people of truth and the people of falsehood, and the *ummah* and its enemies may reinforce group belonging.

The case of Indonesia is particularly noteworthy in illustrating how this countercultural appeal can intersect with digital media, youth culture, and popular culture. Studies indicate that some groups associated with Al Ghuroba emerged in connection with former punk, indie, and underground rock musicians who abandoned music, adopted new forms of religious dress and appearance, including practices such as wearing the *niqāb* or cropped trousers, and developed the capacity to reach young audiences through social media and visual communication platforms as part of the construction of a new religious identity.⁴⁷ This example demonstrates that Salafi identity is not always constructed through traditional religious institutions, but may also emerge through a complex yet effective engagement with modern media, popular culture, and youth subcultures.

This comparative example should not be transferred directly to the Turkish context. Nevertheless, it helps illustrate how digital Salafi outreach networks can foster discourses of belonging and counterculture among young users. Similar patterns can also be observed in the YouTube content examined in this study, where concepts such as *being on the path of truth*, *the ummah*, *the cause (da'wah)*, *steadfastness (istiḳāmah)*, *resisting fitnah*, *patience*, and *brotherhood* provide followers not only with religious knowledge but also with a language of collective identity and resilience. Such discourses may offer a powerful framework of belonging, particularly for users who perceive themselves as socially marginalized, uncertain about their place in society, or distanced from mainstream culture.

6.3. Emotional Mobilization and Discourses of Victimhood

Another prominent discursive pattern identified in the content examined is the language of emotional mobilization. Concepts such as the *ummah*, oppression, patience, martyrdom, *the cause (da'wah)*, *fitnah*, brotherhood, victimhood, and resistance enable followers to engage with the content not only at a cognitive level but also on an emotional one. In this way, the discourse extends beyond the transmission of religious knowledge to cultivate a shared sense of suffering, anger, responsibility, and belonging.

Global crises, particularly issues relating to Palestine, Gaza, Israel, the Uyghurs, Islamophobia, or alleged oppression of Muslim communities, can provide powerful emotional

⁴⁷ Muary, Susanti, and Atikah, "Salafis and Social Media," 151–170.

frames within digital religious discourse. However, religious or political concern regarding global injustices is not, in itself, an indicator of radicalization. The point at which risk emerges is when discourses of victimhood evolve into narratives that promote hostility, dehumanization, social disengagement, or the legitimization of violence.

Emotional mobilization does not operate solely through anger. Compassion, mercy, tears, spiritual reverence (*khushū*), childhood, family, *ummah* solidarity, and narratives of religious transformation also serve as important means of establishing emotional connections with followers. In particular, content directed at children, family-oriented videos, and narratives of repentance and abandoning harmful habits create an emotional context through which audiences can relate the content to their own lives. For this reason, emotional mobilization should be understood not as a direct indicator of radicalization, but as an analytical category for examining how narratives of belonging, victimhood, anger, compassion, and transformation are employed within the language of digital religious outreach.

6.4. Everyday Religious Outreach

The overall pattern of content and discourse themes indicates that the language of religious outreach on the YouTube channels examined is constructed not only around abstract religious concepts but also around the concrete realities of everyday life. Topics such as school, family, peer groups, mobile phone use, social media, privacy, gaming, harmful habits, marriage, the pursuit of religious knowledge, and sin represent areas in which religious discourse engages directly with the practical decisions of young people and their families.

This everyday form of religious outreach is also well suited to the affordances of digital platforms. On YouTube, elements such as video titles, thumbnails, comment sections, short-form videos, question-and-answer sessions, and video descriptions enable religious topics to be presented in ways that are more accessible, fragmented, and continuously available for consumption. This suggests that digital religious outreach actors do more than transmit religious knowledge. They also provide guidance that helps organize everyday life, offers rapid responses to followers' questions, and directs users toward broader networks of belonging.

Overall, the analysis of content and discourse themes suggests that YouTube-centered Salafi digital outreach networks operate across three principal dimensions. First, they construct a language of doctrinal boundary drawing through concepts such as *tawhīd*, *ʿaqīdah*, *shirk*, and *ṭāghūt*. Second, they cultivate emotional mobilization and discourses of belonging through concepts such as the *ummah*, oppression, patience, *the cause (daʿwah)*, and brotherhood. Third, they develop a language of guidance that engages directly with young users' everyday lives

through topics such as school, family, gaming, privacy, sin, repentance, and marriage. Taken together, these three dimensions suggest that digital visibility is associated not only with technical performance indicators but also with the capacity of discourse to adapt to the realities of everyday life.

For this reason, content and discourse themes should be evaluated not only in terms of their role in religious guidance, but also in light of the conditions under which they may evolve into discursive patterns warranting closer attention. Table 13 presents these discourse themes, their functions in religious guidance, and the corresponding indicators that may warrant further monitoring.

Table 13. Discourse Themes, Religious Guidance Functions, and Risk Indicators Requiring Monitoring

Discourse theme	Religious guidance / expressive function	Risk indicators requiring monitoring	Analytical assessment
<i>Tawḥīd</i>, 'aqidah, shirk, ṭāghūt, sovereignty	Doctrinal religious knowledge, boundaries of belief, and the construction of religious authority	Takfirist discourse, calls to sever all ties with the social order, or the religious legitimization of violence or criminal acts.	These concepts are not, in themselves, indicators of risk. Risk increases when they are embedded within discourses that promote hostility, exclusion, or the legitimization of violence.
Criticism of the Diyanet, Sufism, Shiism, or other religious authorities	Claims to alternative religious authority and sectarian/doctrinal differentiation	Dehumanization, targeting, or categorization of other religious groups as enemies	Religious criticism may fall within the scope of freedom of expression; however, exclusionary and hostile discursive patterns warrant closer attention.
Family, child-rearing, and school	Religious guidance for families, child protection, and moral education	Discourses encouraging complete withdrawal from school, social environments outside the family, or public life	Family- and child-related content generally serves a guidance function. Risk may emerge when it encourages the systematic disengagement of young people from broader social ties.
Privacy, modest dress, the body, and relationships between men and women	Regulation of everyday life within a framework of religious morality	Excessively controlling, shaming, exclusionary, or socially isolating discourse	Themes relating to privacy and the body constitute important areas of religious guidance for young adults; however, forms of discourse that suppress individual autonomy and social participation warrant careful monitoring.

Social media, mobile phones, the internet, and digital <i>fitnah</i>	Religious guidance and moral discipline concerning digital behavior	The wholesale demonization of the digital sphere or systematic redirection toward closed and unmoderated communication networks	Criticism of social media is not, in itself, an indicator of risk. However, patterns of directing users away from open platforms toward closed and less transparent communication spaces should be analyzed.
<i>Ummah</i>, oppression, patience, the cause (<i>da'wah</i>), and brotherhood	Collective religious belonging, solidarity, and awareness of victimhood	Hostile group identities and the transformation of anger into calls for violence or revenge	Discourses centered on the <i>ummah</i> and victimhood may foster religious solidarity. Risk increases when these narratives evolve into dehumanizing or violence-legitimizing discourse.
Al Ghuraba, marginalization, and narratives of the chosen minority	The construction of religious identity and belonging through difference from mainstream society	Calls to sever all ties with mainstream society, increasing isolation, or the portrayal of out-groups as enemies	Narratives of marginalization and difference may foster a strong sense of belonging among young users; however, forms that deepen social disengagement warrant further assessment.
Sin, repentance, and abandoning harmful habits	Personal transformation, moral renewal, and religious guidance	Complete disengagement from previous social networks, dependence on a single authority, or strengthening of exclusive group belonging	Discourses of repentance and abandoning harmful habits may serve a supportive function. Risk arises when these narratives develop into closed models of belonging that sever ties with the broader social world.
The pursuit of religious knowledge, lessons, the madrasa, and scholarly authority	Religious learning, the pursuit of knowledge, and systematic religious education	Absolute loyalty to a single authority, suppression of critical thinking, or wholesale rejection of alternative sources of knowledge	The virtual madrasa function and archived lessons are important features of religious education; however, the monopolization of knowledge and relationships of unquestioned authority warrant closer monitoring.
Hasbihal conversations, question-and-answer sessions, and personal guidance	Enabling users to seek religious guidance on everyday concerns	The complete dependence of personal life decisions on a closed authority network	Question-and-answer sessions and hasbihal conversations contribute to the construction of digital belonging. Risk may increase when users become dependent on a single, closed authority for resolving complex personal issues.
Commentary on current affairs, school attacks, youth crises, and criticism of the system	Interpretation of social events through religious and moral frameworks	Discourses encouraging complete disengagement from the democratic and social order, or interpretations that legitimize crime or violence	Commentary on current affairs is not, in itself, an indicator of risk. However, crisis narratives warrant closer attention when they amplify anger, social disengagement, or hostility among young audiences.

Cross-platform referrals	Providing users with additional resources, lessons, books, magazines, and communication channels	Intensive and systematic redirection from open platforms to closed Telegram channels, WhatsApp groups, or private communities	Cross-platform referrals are a natural feature of digital religious outreach networks. However, patterns of movement from open platforms toward closed, less transparent communication spaces provide indicators worth monitoring.
Short-form videos, clips, quotations, and rapid-consumption formats	Adapting religious messages to the logic of social media	The circulation of decontextualized, emotionally charged, polarizing, or provocative content	Short-form formats are effective in reaching younger audiences. Risk arises when they reduce complex religious and social issues to simplistic, hostile, or emotionally charged messages.

Note. The indicators presented in this table are not intended to characterize religious expression as inherently risky or criminal. Rather, they are designed to clarify the distinction between forms of religious guidance and discursive patterns that may warrant closer monitoring. Each theme should be evaluated in light of its specific context, the language employed, patterns of platform redirection, the intended audience, and the interaction between online and offline forms of engagement.

Table 13 demonstrates that the digital religious outreach content examined should not be interpreted in a one-dimensional manner. Themes such as *tawhīd*, *‘aqīdah*, family, privacy, the pursuit of religious knowledge, and repentance function, in most cases, as forms of religious guidance and identity formation. At the same time, these themes may become open-source indicators warranting closer attention when combined with patterns such as exclusionary group identities, social disengagement, redirection toward closed networks, unquestioned loyalty to a single authority, or the legitimization of violence and criminal acts. Accordingly, the appropriate analytical approach is not to regard religious expression as inherently risky, but rather to distinguish between different patterns of discourse, network structures, platform transitions, and forms of engagement with young users.

The findings of the TEPAV survey provide an opportunity to interpret these discourse themes in comparison with broader societal trends in Türkiye. For example, 46 percent of respondents reported trusting the Diyanet's opinions and religious rulings (fatwas) on religious matters, 35 percent reported trusting them to some extent, and 16 percent reported not trusting

them. This distribution suggests that the official religious authority continues to enjoy substantial societal legitimacy, while at the same time leaving space for alternative sources of religious authority. Accordingly, criticism of the Diyanet observed in the YouTube dataset should be understood not merely as institutional polemic, but also as part of the broader process through which alternative forms of religious authority are constructed in digital environments.

Similarly, the TEPAV survey's finding that satisfaction with the secular democratic order remains relatively high suggests that criticism of the secular system observed in YouTube content should not be interpreted as reflecting broader societal attitudes in Türkiye. Rather, it is better understood as a countercultural, boundary-drawing narrative circulating within particular Salafî digital communities.⁴⁸ This distinction is important because Salafî digital discourse often operates through sharper binaries of truth versus falsehood, Sunnah versus *bid'ah*, *tawhîd* versus *shirk*, and *îmân* versus *kufr* than those reflected in broader patterns of societal pluralism.

The findings relating to *ṭarîqahs* also reinforce the content analysis. The TEPAV survey indicates that approximately half of the respondents believe that a Muslim should not belong to a *ṭarîqah*, suggesting that skeptical attitudes toward *ṭarîqahs* are not unique to Salafî circles within Turkish society. At the same time, criticism of Sufism and *ṭarîqahs* in the YouTube dataset differs from this broader societal distance by employing a more doctrinal language of boundary drawing centered on concepts such as *bid'ah*, *shirk*, authentic Islam, and *tawhîd*. Accordingly, criticism of *ṭarîqahs* should be distinguished from broader forms of institutional skepticism or social distance and, within Salafî digital discourse, understood as part of an ongoing contest over religious authority and legitimacy.

This comparison does not imply that the YouTube content represents the broader religious or political orientations of Turkish society. Rather, it provides a basis for identifying the points at which Salafî digital discourse overlaps with broader societal trends, and the points at which it develops a sharper language of boundary-drawing and alternative religious authority. Accordingly, content and discourse themes should be situated not only within the context of video titles and channel content, but also within broader debates in Türkiye concerning religious authority, pluralism, and social distance. The principal dimensions of this comparison are summarized in Table 14.

⁴⁸ Demir et al., *Türkiye'de Çoğulculuk Radikalleşmeyle Yüzleşiyor*, 47–50, figs. 44–49.

Table 14. Comparison of TEPAV Findings and Discourse Themes in the YouTube Dataset

Finding from the TEPAV survey	Discourse theme in the YouTube dataset	Analytical comparison	Methodological note
46 percent of respondents trust the Diyanet's opinions on religious matters, 35 percent trust them to some extent, and 16 percent do not trust them	Criticism of the Diyanet, distance from official religious authority, and alternative networks of religious teachers and lessons	Trust in official religious authority has not disappeared. At the same time, the construction of alternative forms of religious authority is visible within YouTube-based networks.	The findings concerning the Diyanet are based on the general sample rather than a Salafi subsample.
High levels of satisfaction with living in a secular country	Criticism of the secular system, <i>ṭāghūt</i> , sovereignty, and the opposition between truth and falsehood	While satisfaction with the secular order remains high within the broader population, some Salafi digital content employs a more sharply articulated discourse opposing the secular system.	YouTube discourse does not represent broader societal trends.
High levels of satisfaction with living in a democratic country	Criticism of democracy and emphasis on sovereignty and alternative forms of legitimacy	A divergence may be observed between general satisfaction with democracy and the language of alternative political legitimacy found within Salafi digital discourse.	This divergence should not be interpreted as a direct indicator of radicalization.
Approximately half of the respondents believe that Muslims should not belong to ṭarīqahs	Criticism of <i>ṭarīqahs</i> and Sufism, with an emphasis on <i>bid'ah</i> and <i>shirk</i>	Skepticism toward <i>ṭarīqahs</i> may also be widespread in society. In YouTube discourse, however, this distance is expressed through a more doctrinal and boundary-drawing language.	Broader societal distance should be distinguished from Salafi doctrinal criticism.
The presence of tendencies toward social distance from individuals with different beliefs and lifestyles	Distinctions between truth and falsehood, <i>īmān</i> and <i>kufr</i> , <i>Sunnah</i> and <i>bid'ah</i> , and <i>tawḥīd</i> and <i>shirk</i>	A comparative reading may be undertaken between broader tendencies toward social distance and the language of religious boundary-drawing found in digital discourse.	The findings on social distance are based on the general sample.
Relatively limited levels of explicit intolerance	Exclusionary group identities and discourses of moral decline and social disengagement	While explicit intolerance appears relatively limited in the broader population, some digital content may employ a sharper language of moral boundary drawing.	Digital content does not represent society as a whole, but instead reveals discursive patterns circulating within particular networks.

Source: Demir et al., *Türkiye'de Çoğulculuk Radikalleşmeyle Yüzleşiyor*, 47–59, 94, figs. 43–49, 54–58, and 91.

7. Engagement with Younger Audiences, Digital Belonging, and Discursive Adaptation

This section examines engagement with younger audiences not through direct age data, but through indicators such as content formats, themes of everyday religious guidance, discourses of belonging, mechanisms of user engagement, and patterns of cross-platform referrals. Because publicly available YouTube data do not reveal viewers' actual ages, the extent of individual influence, or offline behaviors, this analysis does not make claims regarding direct effects or automatic processes of radicalization.

The TEPAV survey provides a broader societal context for examining engagement with younger audiences by showing that a substantial proportion of respondents who identified themselves as Salafi were concentrated in younger and young adult age groups. According to 2020 data, 25 percent of respondents identifying as Salafi were between the ages of 18 and 24, while 35 percent were between 25 and 34.⁴⁹ Accordingly, approximately 60 percent of those identifying as Salafi were between the ages of 18 and 34. This finding, however, does not mean that the audiences represented in the YouTube dataset necessarily belong to these age groups. For the purposes of this study, the survey data provide background for understanding the significance of youth within discussions of Salafism in Türkiye. In the YouTube analysis, engagement with younger audiences is instead assessed through content directed at children, discourses of privacy and morality aimed at young adults, themes relating to school, family, harmful habits, and the pursuit of religious knowledge, as well as hasbihal formats and practices of cross-platform referral.

Rather than attempting to infer the ages of individual viewers, this study analyzes the types of content, forms of discourse, and mechanisms of digital redirection through which engagement with younger users is established. The principal mechanisms for engaging younger audiences are summarized in Table 15.

⁴⁹ Demir et al., *Türkiye'de Çoğulculuk Radikalleşmeyle Yüzleşiyor*, 96, fig. 94.

Table 15. Mechanisms of Engagement with Younger Audiences

Dimension	Content
Audience profile	Children; young adults; families
Content format	Animation; question-and-answer sessions; hasbihal conversations; sermons; lessons; commentary on current affairs
Themes of engagement	School; family; privacy; social media; harmful habits; marriage; the pursuit of religious knowledge
Digital function	Guidance; belonging; moral discipline; engagement with religious authority

Note. The table demonstrates that engagement with younger audiences is established not only through the production of content directed at particular age groups, but also through everyday religious guidance, discourses of belonging, mechanisms of user engagement, and patterns of cross-platform referral.

Table 15 shows that the content examined reaches children, young adults, students, families, and users seeking religious guidance through a variety of formats. Engagement with younger audiences should therefore be assessed not only through videos explicitly focused on youth, but also through question-and-answer sessions, hasbihal conversations, content directed at children, and themes relating to privacy, school, family, digital media use, and everyday religious guidance.

The international literature likewise indicates that online Salafi ecosystems are analyzed not only through the lenses of radicalization and security, but also in relation to identity formation, practical religious guidance, cross-platform circulation, question-and-answer formats, and forms of engagement with younger users. The ISD study of the online Salafi ecosystem shows that a substantial proportion of Salafi content is organized around general religious concepts, identity formation, and everyday religious guidance, and that it offers followers guidance on different areas of life through sermons, question-and-answer formats, short-form videos, comment sections, and cross-platform referrals.⁵⁰

The literature on digital media and youth likewise emphasizes that young people's engagement with digital media cannot be explained solely in terms of technical skills, patterns of platform use, or generational categories. Rather, young people's relationships with digital media are shaped through processes of visibility, belonging, self-expression, cultural

⁵⁰ Guhl and Comerford, *Understanding the Salafi Online Ecosystem*.

participation, and everyday social relationships.⁵¹ Accordingly, engagement with younger audiences should not be reduced to age or demographic characteristics alone. Rather, it should be examined through the interplay of content formats, comment sections, question-and-answer mechanisms, patterns of cross-platform referrals, and the language of everyday religious guidance.

The literature on digital religion likewise suggests that online religious spaces function not merely as platforms for transmitting religious knowledge, but also as environments in which religious authority, identity, belonging, and practical religious guidance are continually constructed and reproduced. Online Islamic content has become increasingly important for accessing religious knowledge, engaging with religious authorities, and seeking interpretation and practical guidance. Within this framework, YouTube may be understood not simply as a technical platform for disseminating lectures and sermons, but as an interactive environment in which users seeking religious knowledge engage with religious scholars, communities, comment sections, and interconnected digital platforms.

Four principal findings emerge from this section. First, content directed at children and adolescents emphasizes "clean and halal content," question-and-answer formats, animation, and forms of religious guidance designed for younger audiences. Second, content aimed at young adults centers on everyday moral issues, including privacy, relationships between men and women, digital *fitnah*, modest dress, the body, harmful habits, and sin. Third, the hasbihal format constitutes a hybrid space linking face-to-face gatherings, question-and-answer sessions, charismatic authority, and forms of digital belonging recirculated through YouTube. Fourth, the video titles produced by different actors within the dataset demonstrate that themes such as youth, school, family, state education, marriage, the pursuit of religious knowledge, and moral discipline are not confined to a single channel. Rather, they recur across multiple channels, collectively forming a broader language of digital religious guidance.

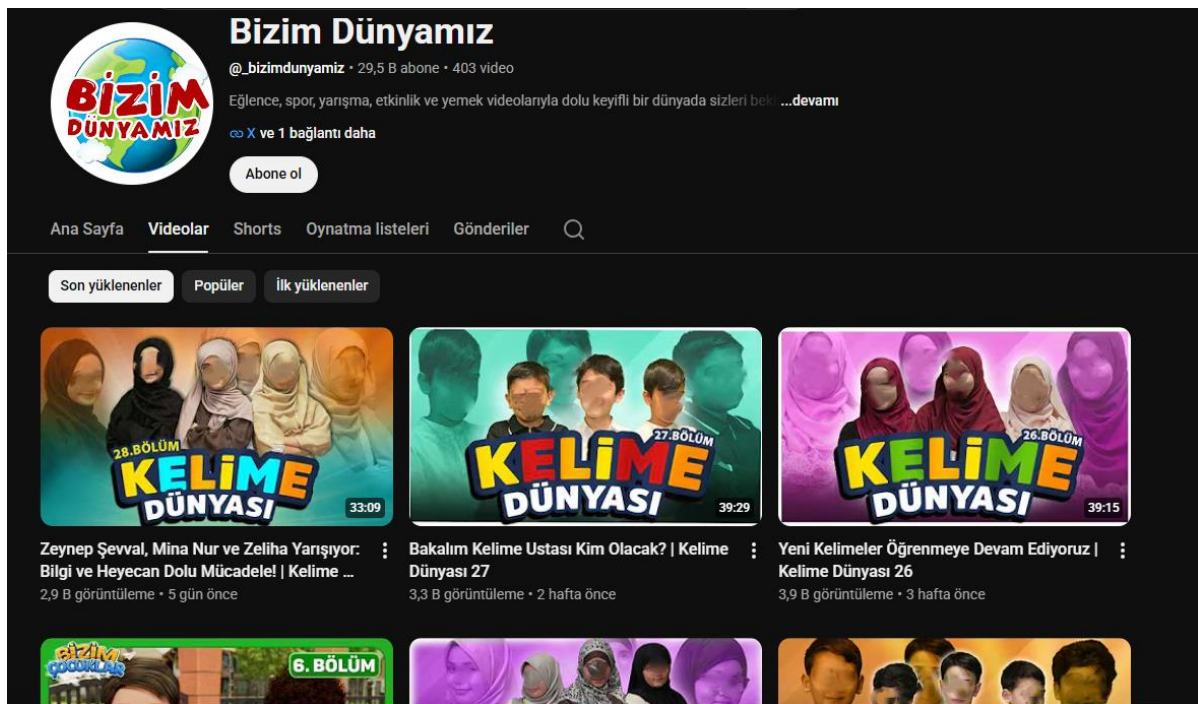
7.1. Content Directed at Children and Early Adolescents: The Case of Bizim Dünyamız

Among the YouTube channels examined, Bizim Dünyamız (Our World) provides one of the clearest examples of content directed at children and early adolescents. By combining content that reflects children's everyday interests, including entertainment, sports,

⁵¹ Gülşen Demir, "Ekranın Ötesindeki Gençlik: Dijital Medya ve Gençlik Söylemlerine Eleştirel Bir Yaklaşım," *Journal of Communication Science Researches* 5, no. 3 (2025): 253-266, <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.16786142>.

competitions, activities, and food-related videos, with religious themes, the channel demonstrates that Salafi digital outreach networks operate through a much broader range of formats than sermons, lessons, or fatwas alone. In this case, engagement with children is established not primarily through explicit ideological narratives, but through the promotion of “clean and halal content,” the presentation of a safe alternative to mainstream media, and the creation of a space for religious guidance in which children can bring their everyday questions to religious authorities.⁵²

Image 1. Child-Oriented Entertainment and Competition Content on the Bizim Dünyamız YouTube Channel



Source: YouTube screenshot, accessed June 10, 2026.

Note. The image shows that word games, competitions, and children's entertainment formats are regularly produced on the *Bizim Dünyamız* channel. The channel description's emphasis on entertainment, sports, competitions, activities, and food-related videos is significant because it demonstrates that engagement with children is established not only through sermons or lessons, but also through content adapted to their everyday interests.

In the video titled “We Asked Halis Bayancuk about the *Bizim Dünyamız* Channel,” Bayancuk’s description of the channel as a space producing “clean and halal content” for children and families indicates that its child-oriented digital content is intended not only to

⁵² Bizim Dünyamız YouTube channel, selected video titles and channel descriptions. Accessed June 14, 2026.

entertain, but also to provide an alternative form of media aligned with religious sensitivities. Within this approach, YouTube functions not merely as a platform on which children are positioned as passive viewers, but as a space of engagement in which families seek safe content for their children and children themselves are encouraged to participate through questions, comments, and suggestions.⁵³

This approach is most clearly reflected in the “Çocukça Sorular” (Children’s Questions) series. Across different episodes, the series addresses topics such as who created Allah, what advice should be given to children whose fathers have not accepted Islam, conflicts between siblings, reluctance to complete tasks assigned by parents, difficulties in memorizing the Qur’an, easier ways of learning the Qur’an, the implications of attending a state school from the perspective of the afterlife, mobile games, family relationships, modest dress, prayer, career aspirations, media consumption, and personal development. The diversity of these topics demonstrates that the language of religious outreach directed at children extends well beyond worship or basic religious instruction, encompassing family life, school, digital life, morality, the body, future aspirations, and everyday behavior. The series also encourages children to submit their questions in the comment section, indicating that the comments function not merely as a passive space for audience responses, but as an active mechanism for collecting questions that inform the production of subsequent content.⁵⁴

This structure may be understood as a socio-digital mechanism through which children and families establish regular engagement with religious authority. In the “Çocukça Sorular” (*Children’s Questions*) series, children do not merely gain access to religious knowledge; they are also incorporated into a framework of religious guidance that shapes which questions are regarded as legitimate, how everyday behaviors are interpreted from a religious perspective, and which authority figures should be consulted. Accordingly, while the question-and-answer format serves an informative function, it is also significant as a form of digital engagement through which children and families establish ongoing relationships with religious authority.

The “Bizim Çocuklar” (*Our Children*) animated series on the *Bizim Dünyamız* channel illustrates another dimension of alternative media production for children. In the animated episode titled “Bizim Çocuklar, Episode 2: The Secret of the Box,” themes such as trust, trustworthiness, responsibility, and Muslim identity are embedded within an adventure narrative designed for children. The video description includes links to *Tevhid Dersleri* (*Tawhīd*

⁵³ Bizim Dünyamız, “Halis Bayancuk Hoca’ya Bizim Dünyamız Kanalını Sorduk!,” YouTube video, accessed June 14, 2026.

⁵⁴ Bizim Dünyamız, “Çocukça Sorular” video series, YouTube, selected episodes, accessed June 14, 2026.

Lessons), Tevhid Dergisi (*Tawhīd Magazine*), Tevhid Gündemi (*Tawhīd Agenda*), Tevhid Kitap (*Tawhīd Books*), Tevhid Meali (*Tawhīd Translation of the Qur'an*), and a WhatsApp contact line, indicating that child-oriented entertainment content is connected to a broader ecosystem of religious publications, education, and communication. In this respect, the animated series functions not merely as an example of child-appropriate entertainment, but as a gateway that directs child viewers and their parents toward a broader ecosystem of digital religious outreach.⁵⁵

Taken together, these examples demonstrate that the *Bizim Dünyamız* channel's content directed at children and early adolescents is significant in three respects. First, the channel presents itself as an alternative media provider for children aligned with religious sensitivities. Second, through its question-and-answer format, children's everyday concerns are directed to religious authority for guidance. Third, its animated and entertainment content is connected to a broader cross-platform religious outreach network. Accordingly, the *Bizim Dünyamız* case illustrates that engagement with younger audiences is established not only through sermons or instructional content, but also through child-oriented media, family participation, question-and-answer mechanisms, and cross-platform referrals.

7.2. Young Adults, Privacy, and Everyday Moral Guidance

Alongside content directed at children and early adolescents, the YouTube channels examined also place considerable emphasis on themes relevant to young adults, including privacy, morality, the body, gender relations, and digital life. Even in videos that are not explicitly youth-oriented, these channels use a language of religious guidance to address issues young users are likely to encounter in their everyday lives, such as relationships, visibility, social media use, modest dress, sexual desire, sin, and personal discipline. Accordingly, engagement with younger audiences is not limited to question-and-answer formats designed for children. It is also established through moral discourses that seek to guide young adults' everyday decisions, perceptions of the body, forms of interpersonal relationships, and patterns of digital behavior.

In this context, Halis Bayancuk's video titled "Kadın ve Erkek Fitnesi" (*The Fitnah Between Men and Women*) is noteworthy for illustrating the relationship between digital life, privacy, and gender relations. The video criticizes interactions between men and women, sexual

⁵⁵ Bizim Dünyamız, "Bizim Çocuklar 2. Bölüm, Kutunun Sırrı," YouTube video, accessed June 14, 2026.

desire, the internet, private messaging through social media, private communications established under the guise of religious outreach, and the pursuit of secret marriages. Bayancuk's statement that "everyone carries their own fitnah in their pocket" frames smartphones and the internet not merely as tools of communication, but as spaces of engagement regarded as religiously and morally risky. Within this discourse, digital technology is portrayed as a space that tests young people's privacy, desires, and religious discipline.⁵⁶

The video titled "*Ey Kadın*" (*O Woman*) provides another example in which discourses surrounding the body, visibility, modesty, and veiling are directed toward young women. The video criticizes women's visibility in the public sphere, as well as issues such as voice, gait, perfume use, body display, and the tendency of modern society to define women's value primarily in terms of their physical appearance. Within this framework, the female body is presented not merely as a matter of individual choice, but as a site through which religious identity, moral boundaries, and the social order are made visible. The video's high view count and the personal narratives of transformation shared in the comment section suggest that this type of content functions not merely as a theoretical sermon, but as a form of religious guidance that viewers actively relate to their own everyday lives.⁵⁷

These examples demonstrate that guidance directed at young adults within Salafî digital outreach networks is often constructed through concrete aspects of everyday life. Issues such as smartphone use, late-night messaging, social media interactions, communication with members of the opposite sex, modest dress, bodily visibility, sin, and privacy become sites through which young people's everyday decisions are reinterpreted within a framework of religious and moral discipline. Accordingly, these videos should be understood not merely as religious advice on relations between men and women, but as part of a broader field of normative guidance on how young adults should position themselves in digital and social life.

An important point for this section is that such content should not be interpreted as a direct indicator of radicalization. Nevertheless, these videos create a space of engagement in which young users consult religious authority on sensitive aspects of everyday life, including privacy, identity, gender, the body, and digital communication, or in which religious authority seeks to regulate these areas. In this respect, "*Kadın ve Erkek Fitnesi*" (*The Fitnah Between Men and Women*) and "*Ey Kadın*" (*O Woman*) are significant because they illustrate how

⁵⁶ Halis Bayancuk Hoca, "Kadın ve Erkek Fitnesi," YouTube video, accessed June 14, 2026.

⁵⁷ Halis Bayancuk Hoca, "Ey Kadın," YouTube video, accessed June 14, 2026.

engagement with young adults is established through discourses of moral discipline, privacy, and digital life.

7.3. The Hasbihal Format: Face-to-Face Gatherings, Question-and-Answer Sessions, and Digital Belonging

The “*Halis Hoca ile Hasbihal*” (*Hasbihal with Halis Hoca*) series provides an important example of the continuity between online content and offline community practices within Salafi digital outreach networks. In this format, Sunday lessons and face-to-face *hasbihal* gatherings are subsequently made available to a wider audience through YouTube. The physical gathering is thereby transformed into content centered on belonging and religious guidance that circulates digitally. In this respect, the *hasbihal* format is not merely a question-and-answer video. Still, a hybrid space of religious outreach in which direct engagement with charismatic authority is made visible, and the experience of offline community life is reproduced on an online platform.⁵⁸

In the early episodes of the series, face-to-face meetings are held after Sunday lessons with followers arriving from different cities and from abroad. These gatherings address a wide range of issues, including maintaining Arabic in the home among Arabic-speaking families, the challenges of conducting *da‘wah* in the Turkic republics, withdrawing from workplaces involving interaction between men and women, communicating with followers with hearing impairments, experiencing exclusion after explaining *tawhīd* to family members, children’s restlessness, the economy, marriage, wedding environments, and how new converts should approach *da‘wah*. This diversity demonstrates that the *hasbihal* format is not limited to theological matters. Rather, it produces a language of guidance extending into everyday areas such as family life, employment, the economy, marriage, disability, migration, language, child-rearing, and social exclusion.⁵⁹

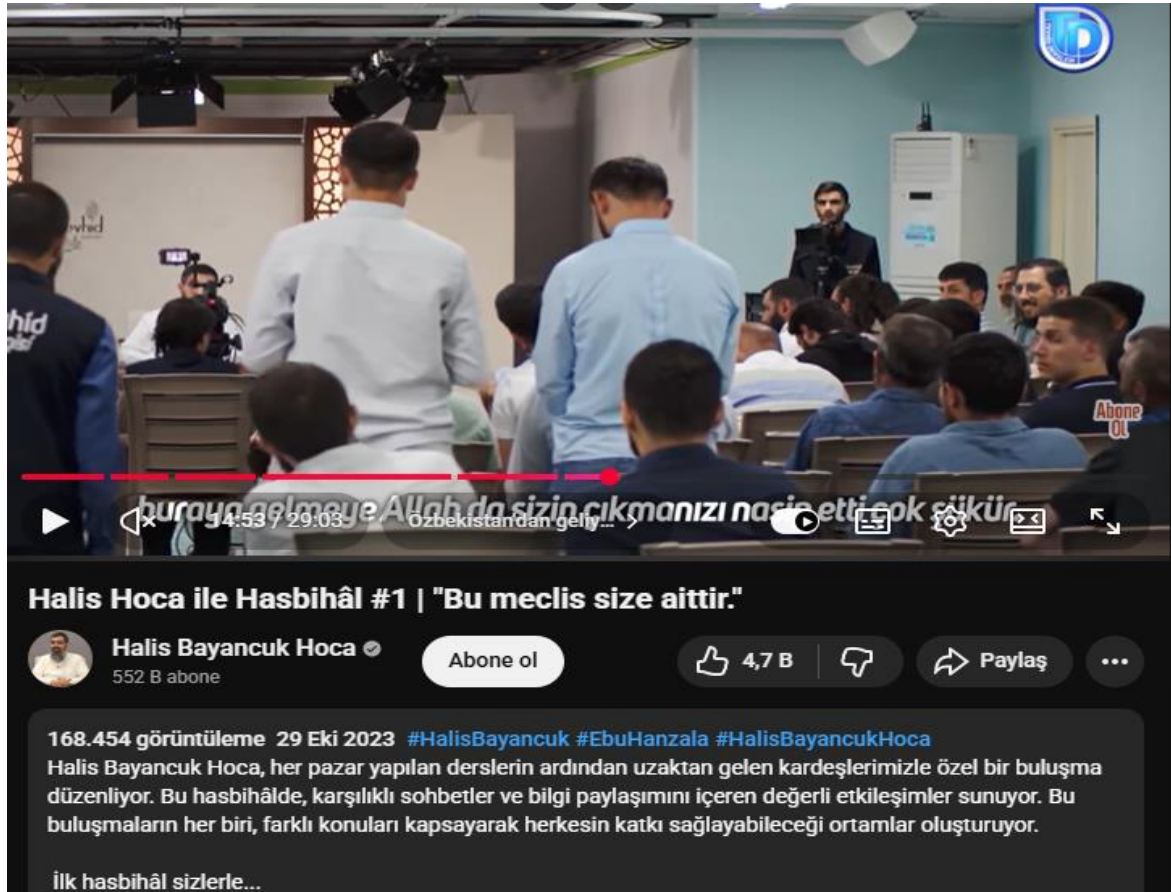
The *hasbihal* format is particularly significant for engagement with younger audiences. Within this format, followers participate not merely as viewers, but as individuals who ask questions, share their own experiences, seek advice, and make their position within the community visible. The YouTube video thus becomes a digital archive of the reciprocal engagement established in the physical gathering. In *hasbihal* videos, the physical community,

⁵⁸ Halis Bayancuk Hoca, “Halis Hoca ile Hasbihal” video series, YouTube, selected episodes, accessed June 14, 2026.

⁵⁹ Halis Bayancuk Hoca, “Halis Hoca ile Hasbihal” video series, YouTube, selected *hasbihal* episodes featuring followers from different cities and abroad, accessed June 14, 2026.

the digital audience, the comment section, and cross-platform referrals converge within the same relationship of authority and belonging.

Image 2. Circulation of Face-to-Face Hasbihal Gatherings on YouTube in the Halis Hoca ile Hasbihal Series



Note. The image shows how a face-to-face *hasbihal* gathering is made available to a wider audience through YouTube. This structure illustrates the hybrid relationship between physical community and digital visibility.

The 2025 episode titled “*Kötü Alışkanlıklar Nasıl Bırakılabilir?*” (*How Can Bad Habits Be Overcome?*) illustrates the themes of youth and everyday guidance more explicitly. In the episode, an eighteen-year-old participant asks how people struggling to abandon harmful habits might do so, a twenty-two-year-old university student raises the question of studying the natural sciences alongside the religious sciences, and child participants discuss the habit of reading the Qur’an and beneficial forms of content. These examples show that the *hasbihal* format brings different age groups into view within the same gathering. The discussion of harmful habits, alcohol, drugs, sin, former social circles, experiences with religious communities, university life, the natural sciences, the religious sciences, child education, and

Qur'an reading within a single episode demonstrates that this format produces a language of practical guidance addressing young users' concerns regarding education, habits, social environment, religious learning, and personal transformation.⁶⁰

Image 3. The Hasbihal Format and the Theme of Everyday Guidance in the Video “Kötü Alışkanlıklar Nasıl Bırakılabilir?” (How Can Bad Habits Be Overcome?)



Note. The image shows that the *hasbihal* format addresses issues such as harmful habits, personal transformation, and everyday religious guidance. Such content is significant because it makes visible on digital platforms young users' search for practical guidance concerning education, habits, social environment, and religious orientation.

Another notable feature of the *hasbihal* format is that it not only provides responses to individual questions, but also makes followers' narratives of transformation and personal struggle visible. The sharing of personal experiences in the comment sections, including struggles with harmful habits, severing ties with former social circles, turning toward religious life, and distancing oneself from one's past, demonstrates that the videos function not merely

⁶⁰ Halis Bayancuk Hoca, “Kötü Alışkanlıklar Nasıl Bırakılabilir? | Halis Hoca ile Hasbihal,” YouTube video, 2025, accessed June 14, 2026.

as recordings of lessons or conversations, but also as spaces of digital belonging in which viewers incorporate their own stories into the language of the community.

Accordingly, the “*Halis Hoca ile Hasbihal*” (*Hasbihal with Halis Hoca*) series should not be understood solely as a conversational or question-and-answer format for engaging younger audiences. Rather, it should be evaluated as a hybrid mechanism of belonging through which members of different age groups direct their questions, concerns, and everyday problems to charismatic authority; the experience of physical community is extended through YouTube; and participants are connected to a broader digital religious outreach network through the comment section and cross-platform links.

7.4. School, Family, Sin, and the Pursuit of Religious Knowledge

The examples of *Bizim Dünyamız*, “*Çocukça Sorular*” (*Children’s Questions*), “*Kadın ve Erkek Fitnesi*” (*The Fitnah Between Men and Women*), “*Ey Kadın*” (*O Woman*), and “*Halis Hoca ile Hasbihal*” (*Hasbihal with Halis Hoca*) illustrate different forms of engagement with younger audiences in detail. At the same time, other channels and videos included in the dataset demonstrate that themes such as youth, school, family, morality, sin, the pursuit of religious knowledge, and marriage are not confined to isolated examples. Rather, they form a broader language of digital religious guidance that recurs across different actors within the Salafi digital outreach ecosystem.

Abdullah İmamoğlu’s video titled “*Suçlu Kim? Gençler mi? Laik Sistem mi?*” (*Who Is to Blame? Young People or the Secular System?*) approaches the issue of youth not only through the lens of individual morality or family upbringing, but also within a broader discussion of the secular system, the social order, and moral decline. Similarly, Biriz Vakfı’s (Biriz Foundation) video “*Okul Katliamı: Boş Verilmiş Gençliğin Ağır Faturası*” (*School Massacre: The Heavy Price of a Neglected Generation*) and Halis Bayancuk’s “*Türkiye’deki Okul Katliamları*” (*School Massacres in Türkiye*) bring together themes of schooling, youth violence, social neglect, and moral crisis. In these examples, the school is presented not merely as an educational institution, but as a space in which young people lose their sense of direction, family and social supervision are perceived to weaken, and a broader moral crisis becomes visible.⁶¹

⁶¹ Abdullah İmamoğlu, “*Suçlu Kim? Gençler mi? Laik Sistem mi?*,” YouTube video, accessed June 14, 2026; Biriz Vakfı, “*Okul Katliamı: Boş Verilmiş Gençliğin Ağır Faturası*,” YouTube video, accessed June 14, 2026; Halis Bayancuk Hoca, “*Türkiye’deki Okul Katliamları*,” YouTube video, accessed June 14, 2026.

The issue of state schools also emerges as a notable theme in the context of digital guidance aimed at younger audiences. Abdullah Yolcu's video on the Guraba Der channel titled "*Çocuklarımızı Devlet Okullarına Göndermemizde Bir Sakınca Var Mıdır?*" (*Is There Any Objection to Sending Our Children to State Schools?*) presents a discussion of state education, parental responsibility, the boundaries of religious education, and concerns about the values children may encounter in the school environment. Although such content appears to be directed primarily at parents, it is directly concerned with children's educational environment, identity formation, and processes of religious socialization. Accordingly, engagement with younger audiences is established not only through videos directly addressed to children and young people, but also through content that provides parents with guidance on their children's education and moral upbringing.⁶²

Biriz Vakfi's video "*İlahi Terbiye: Çocukluk Yılları ve Nübüvvete Hazırlık*" (*Divine Upbringing: Childhood and Preparation for Prophethood*) and its "*Müslüman'ın Kalesi: Aile*" (*The Muslim's Fortress: The Family*) series are significant for their emphasis on childhood, religious upbringing within the family, and the positioning of the family as a protective religious space. In these videos, the family is presented not merely as a social institution, but as the primary environment in which a child's religious identity, moral orientation, and everyday behavior are shaped. In this respect, the theme of the family functions within the language of digital religious outreach as a protective framework against the influences of schools, the street, social media, and peer groups.⁶³

Other examples in the dataset show that themes such as sin, personal discipline, the pursuit of religious knowledge, and marriage, all of which may arise in the everyday lives of younger users, recur across different channels. Abdullah Yolcu's "*Günahın Giriş Yolları: Kalbin Korunması*" (*The Pathways Through Which Sin Enters: Protecting the Heart*), Halis Bayancuk's "*İlim Talebesini Bozan Unsurlar*" (*Factors That Corrupt the Seeker of Religious Knowledge*), Murat Gezenler's "*İlim Talebesi Haddini Bilmelidir!*" (*The Seeker of Religious Knowledge Must Know His Limits!*), Mehmet Balcıoğlu's "*Tüm Rasullerin Ortak Sünneti Evlilik*" (*Marriage: The Common Sunnah of All Messengers*), and İLİM-DER's (Association for Islamic Studies) "*Evlilik İşleriyle Meşgul Olduğu İçin Dört Gün Namazı Terk Eden Adam!*" (*The Man Who Abandoned Prayer for Four Days Because He Was Occupied with Marriage*)

⁶² Guraba Der, Abdullah Yolcu, "Çocuklarımızı Devlet Okullarına Göndermemizde Bir Sakınca Var Mıdır?," YouTube video, accessed June 14, 2026.

⁶³ Biriz Vakfi, "İlahi Terbiye: Çocukluk Yılları ve Nübüvvete Hazırlık," YouTube video, accessed June 14, 2026; Biriz Vakfi, "Müslüman'ın Kalesi: Aile" video series, YouTube, accessed June 14, 2026.

Arrangements!) address themes of personal orientation, religious discipline, marriage, prayer, religious knowledge, and sin, all of which occupy an important place in the everyday lives of young adults. These titles indicate that younger users are directed toward religious authority not only in matters of belief and worship, but also in relation to education, relationships, marriage, time management, and everyday decision-making.⁶⁴

Taken together, these supporting examples demonstrate that, within the Salafi digital outreach networks examined, the issue of youth is not confined to videos explicitly addressing “young people.” Rather, youth is continually reproduced across a range of themes, including school, family, state education, social violence, privacy, sin, the pursuit of religious knowledge, marriage, prayer, and everyday discipline. This indicates that engagement with younger audiences is established not only through content specifically targeted at children or young people, but also through a multilayered content network addressing families, students, seekers of religious knowledge, young adults of marriageable age, and users seeking religious guidance in their everyday lives.

To present these multilayered forms of engagement more systematically, Table 16 summarizes the content formats examined, the user profiles with which they engage, and their digital functions.

Table 16. Content Formats, User Profiles Engaged, and Digital Functions

Content Format	Example Channel / Actor	User Profiles Engaged	Illustrative Themes or Topics	Digital Function	Analytical Assessment
Systematic lesson series	Tevhid ve Sünnet İlimlerini Yayma Derneği, Zerka Medresesi, Şehadet Mektebi	Seekers of religious knowledge, users pursuing religious learning, regular followers	‘ <i>Aqīdah, fiqh, ḥadīth, tafsīr</i> , prayer, the afterlife	Creating a virtual madrasa and lesson archive	In this format, YouTube functions not merely as a video platform but as a learning environment where systematic religious instruction is archived and continuously accessible.

⁶⁴ Abdullah Yolcu, “Günahın Giriş Yolları: Kalbin Korunması,” YouTube video, accessed June 14, 2026; Halis Bayancuk Hoca, “İlim Talebesini Bozan Unsurlar,” YouTube video, accessed June 14, 2026; Murat Gezenler, “İlim Talebesi Haddini Bilmelidir!,” YouTube video, accessed June 14, 2026; Mehmet Balcıoğlu, “Tüm Rasullerin Ortak Sünneti Evlilik,” YouTube video, accessed June 14, 2026; İLİM-DER, “Evlilik İşleriyle Meşgul Olduğu İçin Dört Gün Namazı Terk Eden Adam!,” YouTube video, accessed June 14, 2026.

Sermons and religious talks	Halis Bayancuk Hoca, Abdullah İmamoğlu, Murat Gezenler	General audiences, young adults, users seeking religious guidance	<i>Tawhîd, sin, repentance, society, criticism of the system, morality</i>	Producing a normative religious framework and authority	The sermon-and-religious-talk format provides viewers not only with information but also with a moral and religious framework through which everyday life can be interpreted.
Question-and-answer content	Halis Bayancuk Hoca, Bizim Dünyamız, Guraba Der / Abdullah Yolcu	Children, young people, families, users seeking guidance on personal religious questions	State schools, family, prayer, mobile games, privacy, sin	Directing personal concerns to religious authority	The question-and-answer format transforms users from passive viewers into participants who bring their everyday concerns to religious authority.
Hasbihal sessions and recordings of face-to-face gatherings	Halis Bayancuk Hoca	Young people, university students, families, followers from different cities	Harmful habits, university, the pursuit of religious knowledge, family, former social circles, religious transformation	Bringing offline community experience into digital circulation	The hasbihal format bridges the physical gathering and the digital audience, creating a hybrid space of belonging and religious guidance.
Animated and entertainment content for children	<i>Bizim Dünyamız</i>	Children, early adolescents, parents	Clean and halal content, trust, responsibility, Muslim identity	Alternative religious media and early religious socialization	Child-oriented entertainment content creates a space of digital engagement that responds to families' search for safe content beyond the conventional sermon format.
Privacy and morality content for young adults	Halis Bayancuk Hoca	Young women, young men, young adults using social media	The fitnah between men and women, modest dress, the body, late-night messaging, social media, secret marriages	Framing everyday life within religious and moral discipline	Content focused on privacy and the body reinterprets young adults' digital and social lives through the framework of religious authority.
Family- and school-related content	Biriz Vakfi, Guraba Der, Abdullah Yolcu	Parents, school-age children, young people	State schools, school massacres, family, child-rearing, divine upbringing	Positioning the family as a protective religious framework	Although not always directed at young people themselves, this content frames children's education and socialization as matters of religious guidance through parental engagement.

Commentary on current events and crises	Abdullah İmamoğlu, Halis Bayancuk Hoca, Biriz Vakfı	Young people, families, users following political and social developments through a religious lens	Youth crisis, the secular system, school attacks, social decline	Interpreting current events through religious and moral crisis	Commentary on current affairs constructs a discourse that interprets social developments through religious identity, moral decline, and criticism of the existing system.
Short-form videos and social media-oriented content	Halis Bayancuk Hoca and various individual and institutional channels	Young users who consume content rapidly, social media followers	Short religious advice, quotations, everyday religious reminders	Adapting to platform logic and facilitating rapid circulation	Short-form content enables lengthy lessons and sermons to be adapted to the fast-paced consumption habits of younger users.
References to books, magazines, and websites	Halis Bayancuk Hoca, Tevhid Dersleri, Tevhid Dergisi, Tevhid Kitap, Vasat Kitabevi	Users seeking deeper religious knowledge, regular followers	Books, magazines, Qur'an translations, articles, lesson archives	Connecting video content to a text-based knowledge network	YouTube content becomes part of a more continuous and institutionalized pathway of religious learning through links to books, magazines, websites, and lesson archives.

Note. The table is based on the YouTube channels, video titles, channel descriptions, and platform links examined in this study. The user profiles presented are analytical inferences derived from content themes, modes of address, video formats, and open-source indicators rather than from verified demographic data. Accordingly, the table does not provide evidence of direct influence or radicalization. Instead, it illustrates the forms of engagement established with younger audiences, families, and users seeking religious guidance.

When the content formats summarized in Table 16 are examined through the *Bathtub Model*, the findings suggest that the YouTube networks analyzed do not establish a single ideological point of contact with younger users. Rather, they create a multilayered environment of engagement that can address multiple motivational domains simultaneously. Within the model, the ideological “tap” operates through themes such as *tawhīd*, *‘aqīdah*, *shirk*, *tāghūt*, divine sovereignty, sin, and religious discipline. The psychological and belonging-related “tap” becomes visible through *hasbiha* gatherings, question-and-answer formats, comment sections, close teacher–follower relationships, a sense of community, and narratives of exclusion and belonging. The personal and everyday-life “tap” functions through topics such as school,

family, privacy, harmful habits, the pursuit of religious knowledge, marriage, prayer, and everyday decision-making. Accordingly, the content in the dataset should not be interpreted as evidence of radicalization per se. Rather, it should be understood as a set of digital channels of religious guidance and belonging through which younger users may engage with multiple motivational domains.

Within this framework, YouTube functions, in relation to the *Bathtub Model*, not as a tool that independently causes radicalization, but as a space of engagement in which different motivations may accumulate, be reinforced, and be directed toward other digital or offline networks. In particular, systematic lesson series, question-and-answer content for children and young people, videos on privacy and morality, recordings of *hasbihal* gatherings, family- and school-related content, and cross-platform referral links together form a digital ecosystem capable of simultaneously engaging individuals' ideological, psychological, and personal motivational domains. Stated more cautiously and within narrower analytical limits, the dataset shows how younger users' searches for identity, belonging, discipline, and everyday guidance are addressed through digital platforms, and the conditions under which these forms of engagement may become connected to more closed networks, more intensive relationships with religious authority, or offline forms of engagement.⁶⁵

7.5. Interim Assessment

The examples examined in this section demonstrate that engagement with younger audiences in Salafi digital outreach networks is not established through a single type of content or platform practice. When child-oriented animation and question-and-answer content, privacy- and morality-related discourses for young adults, *hasbihal* gatherings, discussions of school and family, harmful habits, the pursuit of religious knowledge, marriage, and everyday religious guidance are considered together, YouTube emerges as a multilayered space of engagement through which children, young people, parents, and users seeking religious guidance direct questions concerning different areas of their lives to religious authority. However, this space of engagement should not be interpreted as producing a direct or automatic radicalizing effect. Open-source YouTube data do not allow definitive conclusions to be drawn about audience age profiles, the degree of individual influence, or users' offline behavior. Accordingly, engagement with younger audiences should not be reduced to a security-centered discussion of radicalization but should instead be assessed in relation to digital religious

⁶⁵ Hilmi Demir, *Türkiye'de DEAŞ Radikalleşmesi, Kadın ve Gençlik Yapılanmaları ve Stratejik Dönüşüm*, ed. Hatice Varol-Dağdelen ve Zeynep Yıldız (Ankara: TEPAV, URAD ve Kanada Büyükelçiliği, 2026), 11–12.

authority, identity, belonging, guidance, family, school, privacy, the body, social media, and everyday morality.

8. Analysis of Authority Types and Structural Typologies

The YouTube dataset examined demonstrates that Salafi digital outreach actors cannot be assessed within a single organizational or broadcasting model. Some channels are based on person-centered structures organized around a particular religious teacher or preacher, while others are affiliated with more institutional structures, such as associations, foundations, madrasas, publishing houses, or study circles. In addition, some channels use YouTube not merely as a video-sharing platform, but as the visible front of a broader digital outreach network operating through websites, Telegram, WhatsApp, books, magazines, PDF archives, lesson series, and face-to-face gatherings. Accordingly, these actors should be assessed not only in terms of subscriber numbers or video output, but also in terms of the types of authority they produce and the structural networks with which they are affiliated.

The relationship between official religious authority and digital religious authority in Türkiye is central to understanding the Salafi digital outreach networks examined in this study. According to the TEPAV survey, 46 percent of respondents in the overall sample stated that they trusted the views and *fatwas* issued by the Presidency of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*) on religious matters; 35 percent reported partial trust; and 16 percent indicated they did not trust them. These findings suggest that the social legitimacy of official religious authority has not disappeared.⁶⁶ At the same time, the combined proportion of respondents expressing *partial trust* or *no trust* indicates that, alongside official religious authority, there is scope for openness to alternative sources of religious interpretation, guidance, and authority.

In this context, YouTube-based Salafi digital outreach actors may be understood not merely as channels producing religious content, but also as digital structures that generate alternative forms of religious authority. When person-centered religious teacher figures, institutional affiliations with associations and madrasas, virtual lesson archives, question-and-answer and *hasbihal* formats, referrals to Telegram and WhatsApp, websites, and networks of books and magazines are considered together, it becomes evident that religious authority is produced not only through formal institutional structures, but also within digital platforms and cross-platform networks. Accordingly, the authority exercised by the actors examined should

⁶⁶ Demir et al., *Türkiye'de Çoğulculuk Radikalleşmeyle Yüzleşiyor*, 47, fig. 43.

be assessed not only in terms of individual charisma or institutional identity, but also in relation to their digital accessibility, continuity, engagement with followers, capacity to provide religious guidance, and ability to direct users across platforms.

The channels examined in this section are analyzed according to four principal types of authority. The first category is the *person-centered charismatic authority model*. In the Weberian sense, charismatic authority is based on the extraordinary qualities attributed to a particular individual, that individual's capacity to provide guidance, and the personal bonds of commitment established with followers. Within the context of digital outreach, this form of authority is reproduced through the religious teacher's preaching style, personal narrative, question-and-answer practices, the sense of closeness established with followers, and the ability to respond directly to everyday concerns.⁶⁷

The second category is the *institutional or association-based authority model*. In this model, the channel generates institutional visibility around an association, foundation, madrasa, study circle, or publishing network rather than around an individual preacher. The third category is the *virtual madrasa or lesson archive model*. Here, YouTube functions as a digital learning environment where systematic lessons on topics such as 'aqīdah, fiqh, tafsīr, ḥadīth, prayer, the pursuit of religious knowledge, and morality are archived, continuously accessible, and supported through cross-platform connections. The fourth category is the *hybrid network authority model*. Within this structure, YouTube becomes part of a broader *Onlife* outreach ecosystem in which online and offline forms of engagement, association activities, madrasa affiliations, books and magazine publications, and referrals to WhatsApp and Telegram operate together.⁶⁸

This typology does not imply rigid, mutually exclusive boundaries between channels. On the contrary, many channels embody multiple types of authority simultaneously. For example, a person-centered channel may also form part of an institutional network through its affiliations with an association or madrasa; a channel offering a systematic lesson archive may likewise derive authority from the charismatic presence of a particular religious teacher; and *hasbihal* or question-and-answer formats may create a hybrid structure that combines physical community relationships with digital visibility. Accordingly, the analysis that follows does not

⁶⁷ Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978); Paul Joosse, "Max Weber's Disciples: Theorizing the Charismatic Aristocracy," *Sociological Theory* 35, no. 4 (2017): 334-358.

⁶⁸ Hilmi Demir ve Oğuz Demir, *Yeni Nesil Çeteler ve Radikalleşme: Çeteler Çocuklarımızı Nasıl Çalıyor?* (Ankara: Anadolu Ay Yayınları, 2026); Heidi A. Campbell and Ruth Tsuria, eds., *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in Digital Media*, 2nd ed. (New York and London: Routledge, 2022).

seek to assign channels to fixed categories. Rather, it aims to identify which forms of authority are most prominent for each actor and how they are produced within digital platforms.

Within this framework, the analysis of authority types considers whether a channel's visibility is constructed primarily around a person-centered figure, an institutional structure, a lesson archive, or a cross-platform network; the formats through which religious knowledge and guidance are delivered, including sermons, lessons, question-and-answer sessions, *hasbihal* gatherings, short-form videos, animations, live broadcasts, and archived content; and how the YouTube channel is connected to broader offline communities, associations, madrasas, publishing networks, or communication infrastructures. This demonstrates that authority within the Salafi digital outreach networks examined is constructed not only through the production of religious knowledge, but also through visibility, continuity, accessibility, cross-platform circulation, and the forms of engagement established with followers. This analytical approach is further supported by the literature on digital religion, which emphasizes that online Islamic environments reconfigure relationships between religious authority, access to religious knowledge, and practical religious guidance.⁶⁹

The data suggest that, although institution-based structures are more numerous, some person-centered channels stand out more prominently in terms of their total subscriber base and visibility. This indicates that digital religious authority may be shaped not only by the strength of institutional structures but also by the platform visibility, preaching style, continuity, and follower relationships of particular individuals. This distribution is presented in Table 17, which compares person-centered and institution-centered structures in terms of the number of channels, total subscriber reach, and modes of producing authority.

⁶⁹ Gary R. Bunt, *Islam in the Digital Age: E-Jihad, Online Fatwas and Cyber Islamic Environments* (London: Pluto Press, 2003); Gary R. Bunt, *Islamic Algorithms: Online Influence in the Muslim Metaverse* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2024).

Table 17. Quantitative Distribution of Structural Typologies, Total Subscribers, and Authority Characteristics, 2026

Structure Type	Number of Channels	Total Subscribers (thousands)	Representative Actors and Structures	Analytical Assessment
Person-centered, charismatic leader-oriented	7	619,8	Halis Bayancuk, İlyas Aydın, Ubeydullah Arslan, Abdullah İmamoğlu, Mehmet Emin Akın, Feyzullah Bırışık, Musab Köylüoğlu	Authority is primarily exercised through charismatic leadership and the direct, affective, and belonging-oriented relationships established with followers.
Institution-centered, association/bookstore / madrasa-based	13	304,6	Recep Baltacı, Ramazan Oral, Abdullah Yolcu, Murat Gezenler, Yılmaz Şahin, Musa Ebu Cafer, Hüseyin Cinisli, Cihan Elmas, Hizb ut Tahrir Türkiye, Mehmet Balcıoğlu, İLİM DER, Tevhid Kuşağı	These structures tend to produce a more anonymous, institutionalized, and archivable discourse grounded in organizational identity.

Note. The classification and proportions are based on the official names of YouTube channels and the institutional or individual identities they foreground, using the most recent 2026 data available.

Table 17 presents the quantitative distribution of person-centered and institution-centered structures. However, the actors examined cannot be explained solely through the distinction between individuals and institutions. Some channels function as virtual madrasas, while others operate like digital television channels, with regular broadcasting schedules and diverse program formats. In contrast, still others form hybrid network structures that integrate YouTube with websites, Telegram, WhatsApp, associations, madrasas, publishing houses, books, magazines, and face-to-face gatherings. Accordingly, how these actors produce digital religious authority should be assessed not only by whether they are institution-centered or person-centered, but also by the functions they perform. Table 18 presents an actor typology based on the functions of the virtual madrasa, digital television channel, and hybrid network.

Table 18. Actor Typology According to the Functions of the Virtual Madrasa, Digital Television Channel, and Hybrid Network

Actor / Channel	Virtual Madrasa Function	Digital Television Channel Function	Hybrid Network Function	Dominant Form of Authority	Analytical Assessment
Halis Bayancuk Hoca	High	High	High	Person-centered charismatic authority + hybrid network	Creates a multilayered digital outreach ecosystem through lessons, sermons, question-and-answer sessions, hasbihal gatherings, commentary on current affairs, guidance for children and young people, books, magazines, websites, and communication channels.
Tevhid ve Sünnet İlimlerini Yayma Derneği	High	Moderate	Moderate	Institutional instructional authority and virtual madrasa authority	Uses YouTube as a systematic space for religious education and archiving through regular lesson series on tafsir, hadith, fiqh, 'aqidah, prayer, and the afterlife
Guraba Der / Abdullah Yolcu	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Person-centered authority + association-based structure	The religious teacher figure and association identity operate together, producing a hybrid authority structure through themes such as public schooling, sin, family, religious knowledge, and everyday religious guidance.
Şehadet Mektebi / Murat Gezenler	Moderate–High	Moderate	Moderate	Madrasa- and lesson-centered authority	Produces a form of visibility that approximates the virtual madrasa model through the pursuit of religious knowledge, religious discipline, and the continuity of instruction.

Bizim Dünyamız	Low	Moderate	High	Child- and family-oriented digital guidance network	Rather than functioning as a conventional lesson archive, it serves as a gateway that directs families and children toward the broader Tevhid publishing network through child-oriented animation, question-and-answer content, and claims of providing “clean content.”
Biriz Vakfı	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Institutional authority for family, child, and community guidance	Addresses themes such as family, school, youth, child upbringing, and social crises through an institutional language of religious guidance. Its YouTube visibility is supported by its bookstore and publishing activities, with digital visibility operating alongside its publishing network.
Vasat Kitabevi	Low–Moderate	Low	Moderate	Bookstore- and publishing-centered authority	Creates a digital publishing and referral network extending beyond YouTube through its website, Telegram, and social media links. Provides a relatively narrower lesson and religious knowledge network, supported by Telegram and WhatsApp links and open to direct engagement with followers.
Davet Minberi / Musa Ebu Cafer	Moderate	Moderate	High	Cross-platform institutional publishing network	
Medarik / Mehmet Emin Akın	Moderate	Low–Moderate	Moderate	Lesson- and religious knowledge-centered hybrid person/institution structure	

Abdullah İmamoğlu	Low–Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Person-centered ideological/discursive authority	Produces current affairs-oriented discursive visibility through themes of youth, criticism of the system, the secular order, and social morality.
İLİM-DER (Association for Islamic Studies)	Moderate	Low–Moderate	Moderate	Association- and study-circle-centered authority	Performs institutional instructional and guidance functions through content on marriage, prayer, religious knowledge, religious conversations, and religious responsibilities.
Rahmet TV / Musab Köylüoğlu	Low–Moderate	Moderate	Low–Moderate	Person-centered digital broadcasting authority	Produces person-centered visibility through YouTube and social media links, although its network depth appears comparatively limited.
Tevhid Kuşağı	Moderate	Moderate	Low–Moderate	Youth- and outreach-oriented digital broadcasting network	With a visible subscriber base as of 2026, it represents an example that merits further monitoring in terms of youth- and outreach-oriented digital visibility.
Zerka Medresesi	Moderate–High	Low–Moderate	Moderate	Madrassa- and lesson-centered authority	Establishes an institutional religious education network approaching the virtual madrasa model through its madrasa identity and continuity of instruction.

Note. The “virtual madrasa function” refers to the archiving of regular lesson series and content on *‘aḳīdah*, *fiqh*, *ḥadīth*, *tafsīr*, prayer, the pursuit of religious knowledge, and question-and-answer formats. The “digital television channel function” refers to a steady stream of videos, commentary on current affairs, serialized content, diverse program formats, and high visibility.

The “hybrid network function” refers to the integration of YouTube with websites, Telegram, WhatsApp, books, magazines, madrasas, associations, publishing houses, or face-to-face gatherings. This classification is intended not to assign actors to risk categories, but to analytically illustrate the different ways in which digital religious authority is produced.

Table 18 demonstrates that the actors examined cannot be understood within a single model of Salafi digital outreach. While some channels use YouTube primarily as a *virtual madrasa* and lesson archive, others operate more like traditional television channels, with regular broadcasting schedules and diverse program formats. In other cases, YouTube serves as the visible front of a broader hybrid network that integrates websites, Telegram, WhatsApp, books, magazines, associations, madrasas, publishing houses, and face-to-face gatherings. Accordingly, Salafi digital outreach networks should be analyzed not only in terms of the content they produce, but also with reference to their forms of authority, platform structures, continuity of instruction, and the relationships they establish between online and offline forms of engagement.

8.1. Person-Centered Charismatic Authority

The first prominent form of authority identified in the YouTube dataset examined is the *person-centered charismatic authority model*. In this model, a channel's visibility is shaped by the name of a particular religious teacher or preacher, along with that individual's preaching style, personal narrative, question-and-answer practices, and direct engagement with followers. Within these channels, religious knowledge is transmitted not only through texts, institutional structures, or lesson archives, but also through the individual's distinctive style of communication, responses to everyday concerns, commentary on periods of crisis, and guidance on followers' personal questions.

The Halis Bayancuk channel represents one of the most prominent examples of the person-centered charismatic authority model. Lessons, sermons, question-and-answer sessions, *hasbihal* gatherings, commentary on current affairs, and guidance for young people and families are all organized around a single religious teacher figure. Within this structure, followers turn not only to a source of religious knowledge, but also to an authority capable of providing direct guidance on a wide range of issues, including everyday life, family, school, privacy, harmful habits, working life, social media use, and personal transformation. As a result, the channel functions not merely as an archive of religious lessons, but as a digital space

in which a teacher-centered relationship of guidance and belonging is continuously maintained.⁷⁰

Within this model, charismatic authority derives not only from the content of sermons but also from the sense of closeness established with followers. The "*Çocukça Sorular*" (*Childlike Questions*) series, in which children's questions are answered, and the *hasbihal* format, which brings together followers from different cities for face-to-face gatherings that are subsequently recirculated on YouTube, illustrate how charismatic authority is extended through digital platforms. In this type of content, the religious teacher functions not merely as a transmitter of religious knowledge, but also as a guide who listens to followers' everyday concerns, provides direction, legitimizes their questions, and reinforces their sense of belonging within the religious community.⁷¹

A similar pattern of authority production can also be observed in other person-centered examples, such as *Abdullah Yolcu* and *Murat Gezenler*. In these cases, the channel's visibility is established not primarily through the name of an institution, but through the religious teacher's capacity to produce religious knowledge, preaching style, continuity of instruction, and responses to everyday concerns. Video titles such as "*Is There Any Objection to Sending Our Children to State Schools?*", "*Paths Leading to Sin: Protecting the Heart*", and "*A Student of Religious Knowledge Should Know Their Limits!*" demonstrate that person-centered authority operates not only within the traditional domain of preaching, but also in relation to education, family, morality, the pursuit of religious knowledge, and the discipline of everyday life.⁷²

Within the person-centered charismatic authority model, the relationship between followers and the authority figure is strengthened through the accessibility afforded by digital platforms. YouTube videos enable past lessons to be revisited, the religious teacher's views on particular issues to be consulted repeatedly, and users from different age groups to engage indirectly with the same authority figure. In doing so, they extend the charismatic authority of the religious teacher beyond the spatial and temporal boundaries of the traditional study circle or sermon gathering.

⁷⁰ Halis Bayancuk Hoca, selected lesson, sermon, question-and-answer, *hasbihal*, and current affairs commentary videos, YouTube, accessed June 14, 2026.

⁷¹ Halis Bayancuk Hoca, "*Halis Hoca ile Hasbihal*" video series, YouTube, accessed June 14, 2026; Bizim Dünyamız, "*Çocukça Sorular*" video series, YouTube, accessed June 14, 2026.

⁷² Guraba Der, Abdullah Yolcu, "*Çocuklarımızı Devlet Okullarına Göndermemizde Bir Sakınca Var mıdır?*," YouTube video, accessed June 14, 2026; Abdullah Yolcu, "*Günahın Giriş Yolları: Kalbin Korunması*," YouTube video, accessed June 14, 2026; Murat Gezenler, "*İlim Talebesi Haddini Bilmelidir!*," YouTube video, accessed June 14, 2026.

An important point to note about this category is that charismatic authority should not be equated with individual popularity alone. In many cases, the charismatic figure operates within a broader ecosystem that includes associations, madrasas, publishing houses, books, magazines, websites, and communication networks. Person-centered authority is therefore not independent of institutional structures; rather, it is reinforced through organizational networks and publishing activities. Nevertheless, the initial point of engagement for followers is often not the institution itself, but the religious teacher's voice, public presence, interpretation, and capacity to provide religious guidance.

Accordingly, the person-centered charismatic authority model illustrates how authority is personalized and made sustainable within Salafi digital outreach networks. In this model, YouTube functions not merely as a technical platform for content distribution, but as a space for the production of authority that expands the visibility, accessibility, and capacity for religious guidance of the religious teacher.

8.2. Institutional and Association-Based Authority

Alongside the person-centered charismatic authority model, the YouTube dataset examined also reveals prominent forms of institutional and association-based authority. In this model, religious knowledge and guidance are constructed not solely through the visibility of a particular religious teacher, but around an association, foundation, madrasa, study circle, publishing network, or broader institutional identity. The channel name, links provided in the channel description, systematic lesson series, publishing schedules, books, magazines, websites, and referrals to Telegram and WhatsApp together demonstrate how this form of institutional authority is produced through digital platforms.

Biriz Vakfı represents one of the most notable examples of the institutional authority model. The foundation's YouTube content regularly addresses themes such as family, youth, schooling, morality, childhood, divine upbringing, and social crises. Video titles such as "*Okul Katliamı: Boş Verilmiş Gençliğin Ağır Faturası*" ("*School Massacre: The Heavy Price of a Neglected Generation*"), "*İlahi Terbiye: Çocukluk Yılları ve Nübüvvete Hazırlık*" ("*Divine Upbringing: Childhood and Preparation for Prophethood*"), and "*Müslüman'ın Kalesi: Aile*" ("*The Muslim's Fortress: The Family*") demonstrate that the channel does not simply produce individual sermons; rather, it develops an institutional language of religious guidance centered on issues of family, children, schooling, and social morality. Within this model, the

foundation's institutional identity situates its content within a broader vision of education, family, and society.⁷³

Guraba Der and *Abdullah Yolcu* represent a hybrid structure in which person-centered and association-based forms of authority intersect. On the one hand, Abdullah Yolcu's role as a religious teacher is central to the channel's visibility; on the other hand, *Guraba Der*'s institutional identity and organizational affiliations reinforce this authority. Content such as "*Çocuklarımızı Devlet Okullarına Göndermemizde Bir Sakınca Var mıdır?*" and "*Günahın Giriş Yolları: Kalbin Korunması*" guides personal questions and moral conduct while simultaneously circulating within an association-based network of religious authority. This demonstrates that the boundaries between person-centered and institution-based authority are not always clearly defined within Salafi digital outreach networks.⁷⁴

The *Tevhid ve Sünnet İlimlerini Yayma Derneği* channel exemplifies an authority model that more closely reflects the institutional and lesson-centered model. The channel regularly publishes systematic lesson series on topics such as *tafsîr*, *ḥadīth*, *fiqh*, *ʿaqīdah*, prayer, the afterlife, and faith, with content typically organized according to a structured sequence of instruction resembling a traditional study circle. This structure demonstrates that YouTube is used not only for popular sermons or commentary on current affairs, but also as a *digital learning environment* where systematic religious education is archived and continuously accessible. The integration of the channel with its website, social media platforms, and communication channels further indicates that this lesson archive is embedded within a broader institutional network.⁷⁵

İLİM-DER and similar organizations may likewise be regarded as examples that reinforce the digital visibility of institutional authority. Within these channels, content derives its significance not primarily from the popularity of a particular religious teacher, but from its association with religious knowledge, systematic instruction, the madrasa tradition, education, and the continuity of the religious community. When topics such as marriage, prayer, the pursuit of religious knowledge, morality, and everyday religious responsibilities are presented

⁷³ Biriz Vakfı, "*Okul Katliamı: Boş Verilmiş Gençliğin Ağır Faturası*," YouTube video, accessed June 14, 2026; Biriz Vakfı, "*İlahi Terbiye: Çocukluk Yılları ve Nübüvve Hazırlık*," YouTube video, accessed June 14, 2026; Biriz Vakfı, "*Müslüman'ın Kalesi: Aile*" video series, YouTube, accessed June 14, 2026.

⁷⁴ *Guraba Der*, YouTube channel and associated open-source digital platforms, accessed June 14, 2026; Abdullah Yolcu, selected YouTube videos, accessed June 14, 2026.

⁷⁵ *Tevhid ve Sünnet İlimlerini Yayma Derneği*, YouTube channel, selected lessons on *tafsîr*, *ḥadīth*, *fiqh*, *ʿaqīdah*, prayer, the afterlife, and faith, accessed June 14, 2026.

within an institutional framework, they move beyond individual advice and are situated within a more systematic framework of religious education and discipline.⁷⁶

The defining characteristic of the institutional and association-based authority model is that religious knowledge is not confined to the messages conveyed in individual videos. Links provided in video descriptions, including websites, books, magazines, donation pages, communication channels, Telegram, WhatsApp, and other social media platforms, direct viewers toward a broader institutional ecosystem. Through these referrals, YouTube becomes more than a standalone broadcasting platform; it functions instead as one of the principal gateways to the institutional network. After watching a video, viewers may be directed to a website, lesson, book, magazine, communication channel, or face-to-face activity.

Accordingly, the institutional and association-based authority model demonstrates that authority within Salafi digital outreach networks is produced not only by charismatic religious teachers but also by enduring institutional structures. In this model, authority is constructed through systematic instruction, continuity in publishing, institutional identity, cross-platform connections, educational materials, and the continuity of the religious community. As a result, YouTube functions as the institution's digital storefront, lesson archive, announcement platform, and initial point of engagement with followers.

8.3. The Virtual Madrasa and Lesson Archive Model

The third prominent form of authority identified in the YouTube dataset examined is the virtual madrasa and lesson archive model. Within this model, YouTube functions as a digital learning environment in which systematic lesson series are archived, followers can access religious knowledge through a structured sequence of instruction, and users are directed to additional platforms, rather than serving primarily as a venue for commentary on current affairs, short sermons, or standalone question-and-answer content. The production of serialized content on topics such as *'aqidah*, *tafsir*, *hadith*, *fiqh*, prayer, the afterlife, faith, the pursuit of religious knowledge, and morality demonstrates how the logic of the traditional study circle and the madrasa has been transferred to the digital environment.

The concepts of the *virtual madrasa* and the *virtual religious community* provide an important analytical framework for understanding these structures. Within this context, digital platforms function not merely as spaces for the dissemination of religious content, but also as

⁷⁶ İLİM-DER, YouTube channel, selected lesson and religious conversation videos, accessed June 14, 2026; İLİM-DER, "Evlilik İşleriyle Meşgul Olduğu İçin Dört Gün Namazı Terk Eden Adam!," YouTube video, accessed June 14, 2026.

new environments for religious learning in which followers become integrated into a particular organization of religious knowledge, relationships of authority, a shared religious discourse, and forms of belonging. When archived YouTube lessons are considered alongside websites, PDF texts, links to books, WhatsApp groups, Telegram channels, and social media accounts, it becomes evident that these digital outreach networks do more than produce content; they also create an alternative ecosystem of religious education.⁷⁷

The Tevhid ve Sünnet İlimlerini Yayma Derneği channel represents a prominent example of the virtual madrasa and lesson archive model. The channel regularly publishes systematic lesson series on topics such as *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth*, *fiqh*, *‘aqīdah*, prayer, the afterlife, and faith, with content typically archived as part of a continuous sequence of instruction. Lesson series such as "*Namazın Manaları*" illustrate how YouTube is used as a digital learning environment in which classical religious texts, knowledge of religious practice, and foundational religious concepts are presented through a systematic instructional framework. The integration of the channel with its website and links to Instagram, Telegram, X, and WhatsApp further demonstrates that this lesson archive does not remain confined to YouTube, but is connected to a broader institutional and cross-platform network of religious education.⁷⁸

Within this model, lesson content provides viewers not only with immediate religious knowledge but also with a structured, traceable learning pathway. Users can return to earlier lessons, follow a particular topic as a series, and access texts, books, channels, or communication lines through links provided in the video descriptions. In this way, YouTube transcends the temporal and spatial boundaries of the traditional study circle, becoming a continuously accessible archive. This demonstrates how digital religious authority is reinforced through continuity, accessibility, and the possibility of repeated viewing.

Content supported by links to Tevhid Dersleri, Tevhid Dergisi, Tevhid Kitap, Tevhid Meali, and similar platforms also demonstrates that the virtual madrasa model operates within a broader network. In content centered on Halis Bayancuk, the regular inclusion of referrals to these platforms in the descriptions of lessons, *hasbihal* sessions, question-and-answer content, and commentary on current affairs indicates that person-centered charismatic authority and the virtual madrasa model are not entirely separate. In this case, the religious teacher figure, digital

⁷⁷ Hilmi Demir, "Türkiye’de DEAŞ Radikalleşmesi," unpublished report manuscript, 2026; Demir and Demir, *Yeni Nesil Çeteler ve Radikalleşme*.

⁷⁸ Tevhid ve Sünnet İlimlerini Yayma Derneği, "Namazın Manaları" video series and related lesson content, YouTube, accessed June 14, 2026; Tevhid ve Sünnet İlimlerini Yayma Derneği, official website and associated social media accounts, accessed June 14, 2026.

lesson archive, publishing network, and communication channels together form a mutually reinforcing structure of authority.⁷⁹

Another important dimension of the virtual madrasa model is the provision of religious knowledge within an alternative learning structure operating outside traditional institutions. Users can access lessons on YouTube, consult the archive of a particular religious teacher or institution on specific topics, and connect to a broader network of knowledge through links in the video descriptions. This demonstrates that religious authority is produced not only in physical spaces such as mosques, madrasas, or face-to-face study circles, but also through digital platforms. However, this production is not entirely online; it acquires meaning within a hybrid structure that operates alongside madrasas, associations, study circles, books, journals, and face-to-face gatherings.

Therefore, the virtual madrasa and lesson archive model demonstrates how authority is established within the Salafi digital outreach networks examined, through systematic instruction, lesson continuity, and cross-platform referrals. Within this model, YouTube functions as more than a broadcasting platform; it serves as a lesson archive, a virtual madrasa, an institutional repository of knowledge, a space for directing followers to related platforms and resources, and a means of providing continuous access to religious authority.

8.4. Hybrid Network Authority and Cross-Platform Referrals

The fourth form of authority identified in the YouTube dataset examined is the hybrid network authority model. Within this model, YouTube is used not as a stand-alone broadcasting platform but as part of a broader digital outreach network operating alongside websites, Telegram, WhatsApp, books, journals, PDF archives, madrasas, associations, study circles, and face-to-face gatherings. Authority therefore derives not only from the religious teacher appearing in the video or from the channel's name, but also from the continuity established across different platforms, communication channels, publishing materials, and offline engagement.

The digital network centered on Halis Bayancuk represents one of the clearest examples of this hybrid structure. The channel brings together lessons, sermons, hasbihal sessions, question-and-answer content, commentary on current affairs, and guidance aimed at children and young people. Its video descriptions also regularly direct users to *Tevhid Dersleri*, *Tevhid*

⁷⁹ Halis Bayancuk Hoca, YouTube channel; *Tevhid Dersleri*, *Tevhid Dergisi*, *Tevhid Kitap*, *Tevhid Meali*, and associated digital platforms, accessed June 14, 2026.

Dergisi, Tevhid Gündemi, Tevhid Kitap, Tevhid Meali, a WhatsApp contact line, and other social media platforms. This structure demonstrates that the YouTube channel does not operate as an isolated media space, but rather as the visible front of a broader outreach ecosystem linking books, journals, lessons, Qur'an translations, news and current affairs content, communication channels, and community relations.⁸⁰

The hasbihal format is particularly important because it illustrates both the online and offline dimensions of hybrid network authority. Sunday lessons and face-to-face religious gatherings held in physical settings are circulated digitally through YouTube, allowing interactions established in a specific location to reach a much broader audience. The website, book, journal, Qur'an translation, lesson, and WhatsApp links included in the video descriptions do more than enable viewers to watch the content; they direct them toward a broader communication and educational network. In this respect, hasbihal videos function not merely as recordings of religious conversations, but as network nodes where physical community relations, charismatic authority, digital archiving, and cross-platform referrals converge.⁸¹

A similar network logic is also evident in the child-oriented content published by the Bizim Dünyamız channel. In the "Bizim Çocuklar" animated series, themes such as trust, reliability, responsibility, and Muslim identity are addressed through adventure-based narratives designed for children. At the same time, the video descriptions include links to Tevhid Dersleri, Tevhid Dergisi, Tevhid Gündemi, Tevhid Kitap, Tevhid Meali, and a WhatsApp contact line. This indicates that child-oriented entertainment content serves not only as an alternative to age-appropriate media, but also as a transitional space that directs families and younger viewers toward a broader religious publishing and communication network.⁸²

Cross-platform referrals also constitute an important component of authority production in institutional examples such as Tevhid ve Sünnet İlimlerini Yayma Derneği, Guraba Der, and İLİM-DER. In these cases, the YouTube channel typically operates alongside an official website, Telegram channel, social media accounts, lesson archives, publications, and communication channels. As a result, users are directed not merely to an individual video, but to a particular knowledge system, institutional identity, religious educational pathway, and

⁸⁰ Halis Bayancuk Hoca, selected YouTube video descriptions and associated cross-platform referrals, accessed June 14, 2026; Tevhid Dersleri, Tevhid Dergisi, Tevhid Gündemi, Tevhid Kitap, and Tevhid Meali digital platforms, accessed June 14, 2026.

⁸¹ Halis Bayancuk Hoca, "Halis Hoca ile Hasbihal" video series, YouTube, selected episodes and video descriptions, accessed June 14, 2026.

⁸² Bizim Dünyamız, "Bizim Çocuklar 2. Bölüm, Kutunun Sırrı," YouTube video and platform links included in the video description, accessed June 14, 2026.

community network. This structure demonstrates that digital outreach networks extend beyond content production alone; they establish a multilayered referral system that guides followers across multiple points of engagement.⁸³

This hybrid network structure becomes clearer when considered through the Onlife approach, which emphasizes the interpenetration of online and offline spaces. In the examples examined, digital platforms are not detached from physical community relations. A lesson viewed on YouTube may lead to a face-to-face gathering; a text published on a website may direct users to WhatsApp communication; a Telegram announcement may connect them to an association event; and a child-oriented animation may serve as an entry point into a broader publishing network. Salafi digital outreach networks should therefore be understood not merely as online content producers, but as hybrid structures of authority that combine online visibility with offline community practices.⁸⁴

The hybrid network authority model is further characterized by its capacity to accommodate different levels of audience engagement. Users do not necessarily remain passive viewers of video content; they may leave comments, submit questions, communicate through WhatsApp, follow Telegram channels, access books and journals, engage with lesson series, or participate in face-to-face gatherings. These multiple points of engagement reinforce authority not only through the transmission of religious knowledge, but also through continuity, accessibility, repetition, communication, and the cultivation of belonging.

For this reason, hybrid network authority is a central concept for understanding the overall structure of the Salafi digital outreach networks examined in this study. Person-centered charismatic authority, institutional and association-based authority, and the virtual madrasa model do not generally operate as separate forms of authority; rather, they function together within the same network. In this context, YouTube serves not merely as the visible front of the network, but as a strategic gateway directing users to other platforms, publications, lesson series, communication channels, and opportunities for face-to-face engagement. This demonstrates that Salafi digital outreach involves not only the production of online messages but also a multilayered, cross-platform process of authority construction sustained through continuous interaction.

⁸³ Tevhid ve Sünnet İlimlerini Yayma Derneği, Guraba Der, and İLİM-DER, YouTube channels, associated websites, Telegram and WhatsApp announcement channels, and social media referrals, accessed June 14, 2026.

⁸⁴ Demir ve Demir, Yeni Nesil Çeteler ve Radikalleşme; Campbell and Tsuria, Digital Religion; Bunt, Islamic Algorithms.

8.5. Interim Assessment

The typological analysis presented in this section demonstrates that the Salafi digital outreach actors examined cannot be adequately explained through a single model of authority. Person-centered charismatic authority, institutional and association-based authority, the virtual madrasa model, and hybrid network authority do not generally operate as distinct forms; rather, they function in an interconnected manner within the same digital outreach ecosystem. Accordingly, the channels examined should be understood not merely as content producers, but as actors that reconstruct relationships of religious authority, belonging, education, communication, and cross-platform referrals within the digital environment. These findings provide the conceptual foundation for the following section, which examines platform diversity and the structure of digital communication networks.

9. Platform Diversity and the Digital Communication Network

The YouTube dataset examined demonstrates that Salafi digital outreach actors do not operate exclusively on YouTube; instead, they maintain a multilayered communication network encompassing various digital platforms, websites, social media accounts, communication channels, book and journal publications, and offline activities. YouTube should therefore be understood not as an independent broadcasting medium, but as one of the central spaces of visibility within a broader digital outreach ecosystem. Website links, Telegram channels, WhatsApp contact lines, X and Instagram accounts, online bookstores, journal links, PDF archives, and lesson platforms included in video descriptions indicate that viewers are directed from individual videos toward broader institutional or community networks.

Platform diversity is one of the key factors that enhances both the outreach capacity of digital outreach networks and the continuity of their engagement with followers. While YouTube is used for long-form lessons, sermons, hasbihal sessions, and question-and-answer content, Telegram functions as a space for announcements, archiving, and rapid circulation; WhatsApp serves as a channel for direct communication and community referrals; and websites provide access to texts, books, journals, lessons, and institutional information. Platforms such as X and Instagram, by contrast, facilitate shorter, faster, and more visibility-oriented forms of content circulation. In this way, the same actor or institution can use the affordances of different platforms to reach diverse user profiles and draw viewers from individual pieces of content into a broader communication network.

This structure is consistent with findings in the literature on digital religion, which emphasize that online religious authority is reproduced through circulation across multiple platforms. Bunt's concept of Cyber Islamic Environments argues that online Islamic spaces do more than provide access to religious information; they also facilitate engagement with religious authority, shape religious practice, foster community relations, and support the formation of alternative knowledge networks.⁸⁵ The examples examined in this study likewise demonstrate that a YouTube video is rarely an endpoint. Rather, it functions as a gateway directing viewers to other platforms, texts, lessons, publications, and communication channels.

This cross-platform structure is also significant from the perspective of the Onlife approach, which emphasizes the interpenetration of online and offline spaces. In the channels examined, digital content is not detached from physical community relations or institutional activities. A lesson viewed on YouTube may lead to a text on a website; a link in the video description may direct users to a WhatsApp contact line; a Telegram announcement may lead to a face-to-face lesson; and a book or journal link may connect users to a more systematic pathway of religious learning. Platform diversity should therefore be understood not merely as a technical strategy for expanding reach, but as an outreach infrastructure that connects digital and physical forms of engagement.⁸⁶

This section examines platform diversity at three levels. The first level concerns the links included in YouTube video descriptions and the associated referral practices. This level identifies the websites, social media accounts, book and journal links, and communication channels to which viewers are directed from individual videos. The second level focuses on the functional differentiation of platforms. At this level, the specific purposes for which YouTube, Telegram, WhatsApp, websites, X, Instagram, books and journals, and PDF archives are used are assessed. The third level concerns the network structure formed by these platforms collectively. This level analyzes how digital platforms support person-centered authority, institutional structures, the virtual madrasa model, and hybrid community relations. The digital platforms used by the actors examined, along with their principal functions within the network, are summarized in Table 19.

Table 19. Distribution of Platform Diversity and Communication Strategy

⁸⁵ Bunt, *Islam in the Digital Age*; Bunt, *Islamic Algorithms*.

⁸⁶ Demir ve Demir, *Yeni Nesil Çeteler ve Radikalleşme*; Campbell and Tsuria, *Digital Religion*.

Digital Platform	Frequency of Use	Function within the Digital Network Structure
Official websites	70%	Independent data storage, content archiving, and institutional repository
X	55%	Participation in current debates and outreach to broader audiences
Facebook	50%	Maintaining an established follower base and ensuring broad visibility
Instagram	45%	Visual content, short-form posts, and engagement with younger audiences
Telegram	30%	Lesson updates, content announcements, sharing PDF books and journals, and more controlled communication
WhatsApp	20%	Direct information flow, announcements of local lessons, and limited group communication

Note. The table is based on open-source platform links, channel descriptions, and cross-platform referral links identified in the datasets of the actors examined.

Within this framework, platform diversity enhances not only the content production capacity of the Salafi digital outreach networks examined, but also their ability to maintain continuous engagement with followers, archive content, respond to different user needs, increase the visibility of institutions and religious teacher figures, and direct users toward offline community relations. Although YouTube constitutes the central space of visibility within this network, it is not sufficient on its own. The broader structure emerges through a multilayered digital communication architecture in which different platforms complement one another.

Table 20. Distribution of Cross-Platform Referral Channels

Platform	Rate (%)	Significance for the Study
Website	70	The most widely used referral channel. It plays a central role in institutionalizing and archiving content and in enabling users to access more comprehensive information.
X	55	Contributes to the circulation of current announcements and short-form content and to increasing social media visibility.

Facebook	50	Used to disseminate content to different user groups and support social media visibility.
Instagram	45	Strengthens engagement, particularly with younger users, through visual content and short-form posts.
Telegram	30	Enables the formation of more closed communication networks and facilitates direct engagement with followers.
WhatsApp	20	The least frequently used referral channel. It is primarily used for direct communication among smaller groups.

Note. The table presents the distribution of platform referrals included in the description and link sections of the channels examined. Platforms such as websites, X, Facebook, Instagram, Telegram, and WhatsApp demonstrate that YouTube does not function as a stand-alone broadcasting space, but is connected to a broader communication and referral network through multiple digital channels. These rates should not be interpreted as direct indicators of influence or risk, but as open-source indicators of platform diversity and digital network capacity.

Table 20 presents the overall distribution of cross-platform referrals. However, platform diversity does not manifest in the same way across all actors. While some channels establish a more institutionalized network through websites, books, journals, and lesson archives, others rely more heavily on direct communication channels such as Telegram and WhatsApp. Still others enhance their visibility through social media platforms such as Instagram, X, and Facebook. For this reason, cross-platform network connections should also be examined at the level of individual actors. The cross-platform network connections and digital referral capacity of the selected actors are presented in Table 21.

Table 21. Cross-Platform Network Connections and Digital Referral Capacity of Selected Actors

Actor / Channel	Website / Institutional Website	Telegram	WhatsApp	Instagram	X (Twitter)	Facebook	Books / Journals / Lessons / Madrasa Links	Analytical Assessment
Halis Bayanc	Yes	associated networks Yes	Yes	Yes / associated	Yes / associated networks	Yes / ass	Tevhid Dersleri, Tevhid Dergisi,	Represents one of the clearest

uk Hoca				networ ks		ocia ted net wor ks	Tevhid Kitap, Tevhid Meali	examples of a hybrid network, integrating YouTube with person- centered religious authority, publishing networks, books, journals, lesson archives, and communic ation channels.
Vasat Kitabev i	Partial / booksto re website	Not evident	Yes	Yes	Not evident	Yes	Bookstore and publishing activities	Appears to extend beyond YouTube through its identity as a bookstore and publishing outlet.
Abdulla h Yolcu / Guraba Der	Yes / associat ed digital content	Partial	Not evident	Partial	Not evident	Part ial	Guraba Der, lesson content, SoundCloud links	Illustrates a hybrid structure in which the religious teacher figure and the institutiona l identity of the association operate together.
Murat Gezenl er / Şehade t Mekteb i	Partial	Not evident	Not evident	Yes	Yes	Not evident	Şehadet Mektebi lesson network	An example of lesson- and madrasa- centered visibility reinforced through social media connection s.

Abdullah İmamoğlu	Yes	Not evident	Not evident	Yes	Partial	Yes	Köklü Değişim / Değişim TV links	YouTube visibility is reinforced through broader ideological and institutional publishing networks.
Davet Minberi / Musa Ebu Cafer	Yes	Yes	Not evident	Not evident	Yes	Partial	Davet Minberi publishing network	An example of cross-platform visibility generated through website, Telegram, and X connections.
Tevhid ve Sünnet İlimleri ni Yayma Derneği	Yes	Partial	Partial	Partial	Partial	Partial	Lesson series, İman Mescidi, tevhidvesunnet.com	One of the clearest institutional examples of the virtual madrasa and lesson archive model.
Medarik / Mehmet Emin Akın	Not evident	Yes	Yes	Not evident	Not evident	Not evident	Lesson and Islamic knowledge content	Demonstrates a structure that establishes more direct engagement with followers through Telegram and WhatsApp connections
Biriz Vakfı	Yes	Not evident	Not evident	Partial	Not evident	Partial	Suffa Davet links; family- and child-oriented content	Produces institutional visibility through themes of family, children, youth, and social guidance.

Rahmet TV / Musab Köylüoğlu	Yes	Not evident	Not evident	Partial	Yes	Yes	Personal website and blog links	An example of person-centered visibility supported by websites and social media beyond YouTube. Functions as an institutional digital archive centered on its identity as a learning and research center.
Yarpuz İslami İlimler Araştırma Merkezi	Partial	Not evident	Not evident	Not evident	Yes / associated	Yes	Lesson and Islamic learning center links	One of the institutional examples that maintains direct communication capacity through a WhatsApp communication channel.
İLİM-DER	Not evident	Not evident	Yes	Not evident	Not evident	Not evident	Lesson and religious conversation content	An example of a local institutional religious structure supported by social media visibility.
ULU-DER	Not evident	Not evident	Not evident	Not evident	Yes	Yes	Association links	An example in which person-centered visibility is reinforced through social media connections.
Feyzullah Bırışık	Not evident	Not evident	Not evident	Yes	Yes	Yes	Outreach content	

Note. The table is based on open-source platform links, channel descriptions, and publicly available digital traces associated with the actors included in the dataset. “Yes” indicates that a platform link was directly identified in the open-source data; “Partial” indicates that the connection was identified not directly in the channel description but within the associated network or broader actor ecosystem; and “Not evident” indicates that no explicit link was identified in the dataset. These indicators should not be interpreted as evidence of organizational affiliation or influence, but rather as open-source indicators of cross-platform digital referral capacity.

Table 21 demonstrates that the digital platforms examined perform distinct yet complementary functions within the broader outreach network. Websites primarily serve as repositories for content archiving, institutional memory, and text-based resources, whereas social media platforms such as X, Facebook, and Instagram facilitate rapid content circulation and enhance public visibility. Telegram and WhatsApp, in contrast, play a more prominent role in announcements, direct communication, interaction within smaller groups, and more controlled forms of follower engagement. Within this framework, platform diversity strengthens not only the content production capacity of the Salafî digital outreach networks examined, but also their ability to maintain continuous engagement with followers, preserve and archive content, respond to the needs of different user groups, and direct audiences toward offline community relations.

9.1. YouTube Video Descriptions and Cross-Platform Referrals

In the YouTube videos examined, the description section emerges as one of the most visible mechanisms of cross-platform referral. Video descriptions are not merely technical fields providing brief information about the content; rather, they function as strategic spaces that direct viewers to websites, lesson archives, books and journals, social media accounts, Telegram channels, WhatsApp contact lines, and other digital platforms. As such, they should be regarded as important open-source indicators of how YouTube content is connected to a broader digital outreach network.

This referral practice is particularly evident in content centered on Halis Bayancuk. The descriptions accompanying hasbihal sessions, lessons, and question-and-answer videos regularly include links to Halis Bayancuk’s personal website, *Tevhid Dersleri*, *Tevhid Dergisi*, *Tevhid Gündemi*, *Tevhid Kitap*, *Tevhid Meali*, and a WhatsApp contact line. These links

enable viewers not only to watch the video itself, but also to access lesson materials, journals, books, Qur'an translations, current affairs content, and direct communication channels. In this way, the YouTube video ceases to function as an isolated piece of content and instead becomes an entry point into a broader network of publishing, religious education, and communication.⁸⁷

A similar referral structure is also evident in the child-oriented content published by the Bizim Dünyamız channel. The description of the animated video "*Bizim Çocuklar 2. Bölüm, Kutunun Sırrı*" includes links to Tevhid Dersleri, Tevhid Dergisi, Tevhid Gündemi, Tevhid Kitap, Tevhid Meali, and a WhatsApp contact line, demonstrating that child-oriented entertainment content is connected to a broader religious publishing network. This suggests that the production of alternative media for children extends beyond the video itself, serving as a gateway that directs families and younger audiences toward a wider cross-platform outreach ecosystem.⁸⁸

In channels focused on lessons and religious study circles, such as Tevhid ve Sünnet İlimlerini Yayma Derneği, video descriptions primarily serve to maintain institutional connections and the continuity of instruction. The inclusion of websites, social media accounts, Telegram links, and WhatsApp announcement lines in channel or video descriptions indicates that YouTube is used as part of a broader institutional communication network. In such cases, the description section directs viewers not merely to another video, but to a more systematic structure for following lessons and accessing religious knowledge.⁸⁹

In structures such as Guraba Der and İLİM-DER, description sections also constitute an important component of institutional visibility and follower referral. For these channels, YouTube often functions as an initial point of engagement and visibility, while links included in the description sections direct viewers to the relevant association, religious study circle, lesson archive, social media account, or communication channel. Video descriptions thus become an important linking mechanism within digital outreach networks, facilitating the transition between individual pieces of content and the broader institutional structure.⁹⁰

These description sections perform three principal functions in facilitating cross-platform referrals. First, they enhance visibility by directing viewers to the same actor's

⁸⁷ Halis Bayancuk Hoca, selected YouTube video descriptions and associated platform referrals, accessed June 14, 2026; Tevhid Dersleri, Tevhid Dergisi, Tevhid Gündemi, Tevhid Kitap, Tevhid Meali, and WhatsApp contact line links, accessed June 14, 2026.

⁸⁸ Bizim Dünyamız, "Bizim Çocuklar 2. Bölüm, Kutunun Sırrı," YouTube video and platform links included in the video description, accessed June 14, 2026.

⁸⁹ Tevhid ve Sünnet İlimlerini Yayma Derneği, YouTube channel, channel description, video descriptions, and associated social media accounts, accessed June 14, 2026.

⁹⁰ Guraba Der, YouTube channel and associated digital platforms, accessed June 14, 2026; İLİM-DER, YouTube channel and associated digital platforms, accessed June 14, 2026.

presence across multiple digital platforms. Second, they reinforce the religious knowledge presented in the video by connecting it to more enduring resources, including books, journals, lesson archives, Qur'an translations, and official websites. Third, they enable viewers to engage in more direct and sustained communication through platforms such as WhatsApp and Telegram. Taken together, these functions demonstrate that description sections serve not only as technical lists of links, but also as an important referral infrastructure through which digital outreach networks are expanded and maintained.

For this reason, YouTube description sections are central to understanding the platform strategies employed by the Salafi digital outreach actors examined in this study. The recurring links contained in these descriptions reveal which platforms are used in combination, which publishing and communication networks are prioritized, and to which points of engagement audiences are directed. In this respect, video descriptions constitute an important source of open-source data for mapping the structural organization of digital outreach networks.

9.2. Platform Functional Differentiation

Within the digital outreach networks examined, platform diversity does not merely involve reposting the same content across different channels. Rather, each platform performs a distinct function within the broader network. YouTube is primarily used for long-form lessons, sermons, hasbihal sessions, question-and-answer content, animations, and archived materials. Telegram serves as a channel for announcements, rapid circulation, and archive sharing; WhatsApp supports direct communication and community referrals; and websites are used for institutional presentation, texts, books, journals, lessons, and donation infrastructure. Platforms such as X and Instagram, by contrast, facilitate the circulation of shorter, faster, more visual, and visibility-oriented content.

YouTube stands out within these networks as the central platform for visibility and archiving. Long sermons, systematic lesson series, recordings of hasbihal sessions, child-oriented animations, and question-and-answer content can be stored permanently and revisited by users. This makes YouTube not merely a space for immediate content consumption, but also a form of digital memory that provides continuous access to a particular religious teacher, institution, or instructional pathway. Viewers can return to earlier lessons, search for specific

topics, and access content designed for different age groups or areas of interest through the same channel.⁹¹

Telegram and WhatsApp can be regarded as more direct and sustained channels of communication. Telegram channels generally serve functions such as announcements, content sharing, archiving, and follower updates, while WhatsApp contact lists are important for direct communication, submitting questions, joining announcement lists, and facilitating community referrals. These two platforms can transform the one-way viewing experience on YouTube into a more continuous relationship of engagement and communication. Telegram and WhatsApp links may therefore be understood as points of contact that enable viewers to move from the position of passive audience members toward that of more closely connected followers within digital outreach networks.⁹²

Websites, books, journals, Qur'an translations, PDFs, and lesson platforms function as more permanent and systematic repositories of knowledge. While a YouTube video draws viewers' attention to a particular topic, a website or publishing platform connects this interest to a more structured flow of information and materials. From this perspective, links to *Tevhid Dersleri*, *Tevhid Dergisi*, *Tevhid Kitap*, *Tevhid Meali*, and similar platforms are not merely supplementary resources, but components that constitute the institutional memory and text-centered knowledge system of the digital outreach network. Video content is thus connected to a broader learning pathway supported by books, journals, lesson notes, Qur'an translations, and web-based texts.⁹³

Platforms such as Instagram and X primarily function as spaces for visibility, the rapid circulation of short messages, announcements, and immediate interaction. Rather than long-form lessons or sermons, these platforms foreground short excerpts, visual materials, announcements, commentary on current affairs, referral links, and follower engagement. They can direct traffic toward long-form content on YouTube while also helping religious teachers, institutions, and publishing networks maintain an everyday digital presence. In this way, long-form religious content and the rapid circulation of short-form social media content constitute two complementary levels of communication.

⁹¹ Halis Bayancuk Hoca, *Tevhid ve Sünnet İlimlerini Yayma Derneği*, *Guraba Der*, *Biriz Vakfı*, and *İLİM-DER*, YouTube channels, selected video descriptions and associated platform links, accessed June 14, 2026.

⁹² Halis Bayancuk Hoca, *Tevhid ve Sünnet İlimlerini Yayma Derneği*, *Guraba Der*, *İLİM-DER*, and *Bizim Dünyamız*, Telegram, WhatsApp, website, and social media referrals featured across the respective channels, accessed June 14, 2026.

⁹³ The digital platforms of *Tevhid Dersleri*, *Tevhid Dergisi*, *Tevhid Gündemi*, *Tevhid Kitap*, and *Tevhid Meali*, accessed June 14, 2026.

This functional differentiation indicates that digital outreach networks do not use platforms randomly or interchangeably. Each platform responds to a specific need within the network: YouTube provides visibility and archiving; Telegram supports announcements and content circulation; WhatsApp enables direct communication; websites provide institutional information and publications; books and journals ensure text-centered continuity; and Instagram and X facilitate rapid visibility and engagement with current affairs. When these functions operate together, users can move from a single video into a much broader network of religious communication, education, and belonging.

Therefore, the functional differentiation of platforms constitutes one of the principal factors enhancing the continuity of the Salafi digital outreach networks examined in this study. The limitations of any single platform in terms of reach or visibility are complemented by the capabilities of others, allowing content, archives, communication, publications, announcements, and community referrals to reinforce one another within the same network. This multilayered structure demonstrates that digital outreach activities extend well beyond the production of videos. Instead, they operate within a broader communication architecture in which different platforms perform complementary roles to sustain religious authority, communication, and audience engagement.

9.3. The Multilayered Digital Communication Network

The functional differentiation of platforms demonstrates that the Salafi digital outreach networks examined operate within a multilayered communication architecture. Within this architecture, YouTube typically serves as the primary point of visibility and access to content. At the same time, websites, Telegram channels, WhatsApp contact lines, books and journals, social media accounts, and offline activities transform this visibility into more sustained relationships of engagement, learning, and belonging. The digital outreach network is therefore too multifaceted to be understood through any single platform alone.

The first layer of this architecture consists of content visibility and archiving. YouTube serves as the primary platform for permanently storing and making accessible lessons, sermons, recordings of hasbiha sessions, question-and-answer videos, child-oriented animations, and commentary on current affairs. The second layer is the referral and circulation layer. Links included in video descriptions direct viewers to websites, book and journal pages, Telegram channels, WhatsApp contact lines, and other social media accounts. The third layer is the communication and follower engagement layer. Platforms such as WhatsApp and Telegram

enable viewers to move beyond being passive audiences by providing access to more continuous channels of communication and information. The fourth layer consists of offline engagement and community relations. Study circles, hasbihal gatherings, association activities, and face-to-face meetings constitute spaces where digital visibility connects with physical forms of belonging and community participation.

This structure is consistent with findings in the literature on digital religion, which emphasize that online religious spaces function not only as channels for the transmission of religious knowledge, but also as environments in which religious authority, community, belonging, and forms of practical guidance are reconfigured. Bunt's approach to online Islamic environments likewise demonstrates that digital platforms do more than facilitate access to religious information; they also transform how individuals engage with religious authority, seek religious interpretation, and receive practical guidance.⁹⁴ The examples examined in this study likewise demonstrate that a YouTube video is often only the starting point of this process. Through the video, viewers are directed toward a broader network of texts, lesson series, communication channels, publications, and community relations.

The Onlife perspective is also important for understanding this structure. In the examples examined, online and offline spaces are not separate domains, but are closely interconnected. A lesson delivered in a YouTube video is linked to texts available on an official website; a link provided in the video description directs users to a WhatsApp contact line; a Telegram announcement connects audiences to face-to-face activities; and a recorded hasbihal session remains closely tied to the experience of participation in a physical community. Digital outreach networks should therefore be understood not solely in terms of the production of online messages, but also in terms of the continuity they establish between digital platforms and offline community relations.⁹⁵

The multilayered digital communication network also reinforces the production of religious authority. Person-centered religious authority gains visibility through YouTube, while connections to websites, associations, foundations, and madrasas support institutional structures. Lesson archives help maintain continuity of religious knowledge, while platforms such as WhatsApp and Telegram facilitate more direct and sustained engagement with followers. Authority therefore derives not only from the content of religious discourse itself,

⁹⁴ Bunt, *Islam in the Digital Age*; Bunt, *Islamic Algorithms*.

⁹⁵ Demir ve Demir, *Yeni Nesil Çeteler ve Radikalleşme*; Campbell and Tsuria, *Digital Religion*.

but also from the network through which that discourse circulates, the platforms to which it is connected, and the points of engagement toward which followers are directed.

This multilayered structure is also significant for reaching younger audiences and families. A child-oriented animation or question-and-answer video can become connected to a broader publishing network through the links provided in its description. A video addressing issues such as privacy or morality for young adults can develop into a more sustained relationship of guidance through its comment section and cross-platform referrals. Similarly, the hasbihal format can serve as a bridge between face-to-face gatherings and digital audiences. Platform diversity therefore enhances not only the technical capacity for outreach, but also the continuity of engagement with different age groups and user communities.

Therefore, within the Salafi digital outreach networks examined in this study, the cross-platform structure extends beyond the production and dissemination of content. When YouTube, Telegram, WhatsApp, websites, books and journals, social media accounts, and face-to-face forms of engagement are considered together, they constitute an integrated communication architecture that supports digital visibility, religious education, the construction of religious authority, follower referrals, and the cultivation of belonging. This architecture demonstrates that digital outreach activities should be analyzed not solely in terms of video view counts or platform-specific metrics, but also in terms of the continuity, interconnectivity, and referral capacity established across multiple digital platforms.

10. Geographic Reach and Spatial Distribution

The YouTube dataset examined demonstrates that Salafi digital outreach networks should be understood not only in terms of their online visibility, but also through their connections to specific cities, associations, madrasas, face-to-face lessons, and patterns of follower engagement. Digital platforms expand the spatial reach of these actors by enabling content produced within a particular city, association, or study circle to be accessed by audiences across different cities and countries. Geographic reach should therefore not be understood solely in terms of the country in which a channel is registered or the location where a video is recorded. Rather, it should be analyzed as a broader spatial network encompassing the cities referenced in the content, follower participation, face-to-face gatherings, institutional affiliations, and cross-platform referrals.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ Demir ve Demir, *Yeni Nesil Çeteler ve Radikalleşme*; Campbell and Tsuria, *Digital Religion*; Bunt, *Islamic Algorithms*.

One of YouTube's principal functions within this structure is to bring locally based or physically bounded religious activities into digital circulation. A Sunday lesson, hasbihal gathering, or madrasa activity held in a particular city can reach audiences in other cities through recorded videos, allowing a local community practice to acquire national and, in some cases, transnational digital visibility. This demonstrates that online and offline spaces are not separate domains but are closely interconnected. Digital platforms function as mechanisms that extend, archive, and disseminate relationships of religious authority and belonging established in physical settings across broader geographic contexts.

One of the clearest examples of geographic reach is seen in the hasbihal format. Across different episodes of the "*Halis Hoca ile Hasbihal*" series, questions submitted by followers from various districts of Istanbul, different cities across Türkiye, and audiences living abroad are incorporated into the discussions, demonstrating that these sessions extend well beyond the boundaries of a single local gathering. Questions posed by participants physically present at the same venue are subsequently disseminated to a much broader audience via YouTube, allowing a localized form of community engagement to evolve into a digitally mediated communal experience with a wider geographic reach. This structure gives rise to a hybrid spatial network in which followers from diverse geographic locations are connected through a single religious authority figure.⁹⁷

This spatial network is not confined to cities within Türkiye. References in hasbihal sessions to participants joining from abroad, followers residing in different countries, or outreach activities in the Turkic Republics indicate that these digital outreach networks possess a transnational capacity for engagement. The significance of YouTube in this context lies not merely in making videos accessible across national borders, but also in creating a shared digital space where followers' questions, experiences, and expressions of belonging from different geographic locations become visible. In this way, digital platforms expand the spatial imagination of community by connecting geographically dispersed audiences through a common framework of religious authority and engagement.

Connections to associations, foundations, and madrasas also play a significant role in analyzing geographic reach. Organizations such as Biriz Foundation, Guraba Der, the Association for the Promotion of Tawhīd and Sunnah Sciences (*Tevhid ve Sünnet İlimlerini Yayma Derneği*), and İLİM-DER demonstrate that identifiable institutional and spatial

⁹⁷ Halis Bayancuk Hoca, "*Halis Hoca ile Hasbihal*" video series, YouTube, selected episodes featuring followers from different cities in Türkiye and from abroad, accessed June 14, 2026.

networks support YouTube visibility. The websites, social media accounts, Telegram channels, and WhatsApp links associated with these organizations point not only to their online presence, but also to association activities, study circles, educational programs, and opportunities for face-to-face engagement. Geographic reach should therefore be understood in relation to the institutional and spatial infrastructure that underpins these digital connections, rather than as a function of online visibility alone.⁹⁸

At the same time, the limitations of open-source data should be acknowledged. Associating an actor with a particular city, association, or transnational connection does not demonstrate that the actor's audience is primarily located there. Likewise, the appearance of a follower joining from abroad in a video does not, in itself, constitute evidence of a systematic or organized international network. Geographic distribution should therefore be interpreted not as definitive evidence of audience location, but rather as a limited open-source indicator based on the locations, institutional affiliations, publicly available links, and spatial points of engagement that are visibly associated with these actors in publicly accessible content.

The cross-platform structure further reinforces geographic reach. A lesson viewed on YouTube may lead users to direct communication through WhatsApp, announcements of new events via Telegram, lesson archives or book and journal publications on affiliated websites, or recordings of face-to-face gatherings that connect digital audiences with physical community practices. In this way, digital platforms partially overcome geographic distance by enabling users located in different cities or countries to engage with the same content, religious authority figures, and communication network. This interconnected structure becomes particularly illuminating when interpreted through the Onlife perspective, which emphasizes the inseparability of online and offline forms of interaction.⁹⁹

At this point, the relationship between digital visibility and physical spatiality should not be understood as unidirectional. Digital platforms not only make physical activities visible, but also generate pathways that encourage participation in offline settings. A user may first encounter an actor through a YouTube video, subsequently follow the affiliated website or social media accounts, establish direct contact via WhatsApp, and eventually attend a face-to-face lesson or hasbihal gathering. Digital engagement can therefore function as an entry point for offline participation, belonging, and spatial involvement.

⁹⁸ The YouTube channels, websites, social media accounts, and publicly accessible platform links of Biriz Vakfı, Guraba Der, Tevhid ve Sünnet İlimlerini Yayma Derneği, and İLİM-DER, accessed June 14, 2026.

⁹⁹ Demir ve Demir, *Yeni Nesil Çeteler ve Radikalleşme*, 45; Bunt, *Islamic Algorithms*, 112.

The aggregate subscriber visibility associated with the geographic centers linked to the actors, together with the spatial significance of this visibility, is presented in Table 22. The table does not accurately depict the geographic distribution of the audience. Rather, it identifies the cities, institutional centers, transnational connections, and other publicly observable locations associated with these actors in open-source data, illustrating how these spatial reference points are embedded within their broader patterns of digital visibility.

Table 22. Aggregate Subscriber Visibility and Spatial Characteristics by Geographic Centers Associated with the Actors, 2026

Aggregate Subscribers (Thousands)	Analytical Significance of Spatial Visibility	Representative Actor(s) / Institutional Affiliation
659,58	Emerges as one of the most prominent centers within the network in terms of both actor diversity and subscriber visibility.	Halis Bayancuk, Hüseyin Cinisli, Abdullah Yolcu
97,47	Suggests that the digital network should be understood in relation to actors and connections extending beyond Türkiye's borders.	Recep Baltacı, Musa Ebu Cafer
76,5	Indicates that actors associated with İzmir occupy a distinct position within the open-source digital landscape.	Ebu Haris, Vasat Kitabevi
30,3	Points to a sphere of visibility associated with specific local study circles and madrasa centers.	Murat Gezenler, Şehadet Mektebi
28,205	Suggests the presence of Central Anatolia-based networks centered on fiqh, religious scholarship, and institutional dissemination.	Mehmet Emin Akın, Medarik
19,8	Indicates the open-source digital visibility of actors associated with the border region.	Ubeydullah Arslan

Note. Subscriber figures are reported in thousands and are mapped using 2026 data derived from institutional addresses in the YouTube dataset, actor affiliations, and publicly available open-source information. The table does not accurately reflect the geographic distribution of the audience. Rather, it reflects the publicly observable spatial indicators, institutional centers, and geographic associations linked to the actors in the open-source data.

Table 22 highlights that geographic reach should be interpreted not in terms of the precise location of audiences, but rather through the open-source spatial indicators associated with the actors. Istanbul emerges as one of the most prominent centers in terms of both subscriber visibility and actor diversity, while actors associated with Syria, together with centers such as İzmir, Konya, Ankara, and Gaziantep, demonstrate that Salafi digital outreach networks should be understood through their local, regional, and transnational connections. Geographic distribution should therefore not be interpreted as a direct map of audience locations, but rather as a limited open-source indicator reflecting the institutional, spatial, and digital visibility of the actors.

When considered alongside the regional distribution of respondents who identified themselves as Salafi in the TEPAV survey, the cities, institutions, and digital affiliations associated with the YouTube actors examined in this study reveal two distinct dimensions of spatial visibility. The TEPAV survey captures the regional profile of individual self-identification, whereas the YouTube dataset illustrates the cities, institutions, associations, madrasas, publishing houses, and transnational connections through which the actors' digital presence is publicly associated. Consequently, the regional distribution reported in the survey and the geographic affiliations identified in the YouTube dataset do not directly measure the same phenomenon. Taken together, however, the two datasets provide a comparative perspective on how the social and digital visibility of Salafi affiliation is spatially configured across different contexts.

In the 2020 TEPAV survey, 58 percent of respondents who identified as Salafi were in Southeastern Anatolia, while 14 percent were in the Mediterranean region.¹⁰⁰ By contrast, the open-source affiliations identified in the YouTube dataset point to a wider range of locations, including Istanbul, Ankara, Konya, Bursa, Kayseri, Adana, and Germany. This pattern suggests that Salafi digital outreach networks are not confined to the regional concentrations highlighted in the survey data. Rather, they can generate a broader and more polycentric form of visibility through metropolitan centers, associations and madrasa networks, publishing houses, digital platforms, and transnational connections. A comparative reading of the TEPAV regional findings and the spatial affiliations identified in the YouTube dataset is presented in Table 23.

¹⁰⁰ Demir et al., *Türkiye'de Çoğulculuk Radikalleşmeyle Yüzleşiyor*, 96, fig. 93.

Table 23. Comparative Interpretation of the TEPAV Regional Findings and the Spatial Connections Identified in the YouTube Dataset

Spatial Dimension	TEPAV Survey Data	Open-Source Indicator in the YouTube Dataset	Analytical Interpretation	Methodological Limitation
Southeastern Anatolia	In 2020, 58% of respondents who identified themselves as Salafi were concentrated in this region.	The YouTube dataset contains no direct information on the regional distribution of audiences.	The TEPAV data indicate that respondents identifying as Salafi are concentrated in Southeastern Anatolia.	The YouTube dataset does not identify the geographic location of audiences and therefore cannot be directly compared with the survey findings.
Mediterranean Region	In 2020, 14% of respondents who identified themselves as Salafi were located in the Mediterranean region.	The dataset includes open-source indicators for the Mediterranean region, including affiliations linked to Adana.	The Mediterranean emerges as a limited but identifiable area of overlap between the TEPAV findings and the YouTube affiliations.	Actor affiliations should not be interpreted as direct evidence of the regional distribution of Salafi affiliation.
İstanbul	In the TEPAV data, İstanbul accounts for only 5% of respondents who identified themselves as Salafi.	The dataset contains indicators associated with İstanbul-based publishers, associations, channels, and actors.	Although İstanbul appears relatively underrepresented in the regional survey data, it remains a major center for publishing and institutional visibility.	Affiliations linked to İstanbul do not imply that audiences are concentrated in the city.
Ankara and Konya	These cities are not as prominent in the TEPAV survey as Southeastern Anatolia or the	The dataset includes actors, institutions, and publishing networks associated with	They emerge as important centers within the institutional and educational infrastructure of the digital	City-level affiliations cannot be directly equated with the geographic distribution of

	Mediterranean region.	Ankara and Konya.	outreach networks.	Salafi identification.
Bursa, Kayseri, and Other Cities	These cities are not reported individually in the TEPAV survey but are incorporated into broader regional categories.	The dataset includes open-source affiliations associated with Bursa, Kayseri, and other cities.	These affiliations suggest that local associations, madrasas, and religious networks participate in the broader circulation of digital outreach across multiple urban centers.	City-level open-source affiliations do not constitute representative survey evidence.
Germany and Other International Affiliations	International Affiliations The TEPAV survey is based exclusively on a sample from Türkiye.	The dataset includes affiliations linked to Germany and other transnational connections, indicating cross-border digital visibility.	Salafi digital outreach networks exhibit forms of transnational engagement and visibility that extend beyond regional patterns within Türkiye.	International affiliations cannot be directly compared with regional self-identification data collected within Türkiye.

Source: Demir, İnan, Yücel, and Can, *Türkiye’de Çoğulculuk Radikalleşmeyle Yüzleşiyor*, 96, fig. 93; authors' compilation based on the YouTube open-source dataset, 2024–2026.

10.1. From the Local Gathering to Digital Circulation: The Hasbihal Example

The hasbihal format provides a particularly illustrative example of how local religious gatherings are brought into wider circulation through digital platforms. Conversations and question-and-answer sessions held in a specific physical setting are recorded and published on YouTube, extending their reach beyond those present at the gathering to audiences in other cities and countries. As a result, a locally situated community practice becomes accessible to a much broader audience through digital media. “

In the “*Halis Hoca ile Hasbihal*” series, the inclusion of questions from followers living in different cities across Türkiye and abroad demonstrates that this format extends well beyond the boundaries of a local discussion circle. Participants from diverse geographic

locations become visible through their engagement with the same religious authority figure, while their questions, experiences, and everyday concerns are shared with a much broader audience via YouTube. In this way, the format establishes a reciprocal relationship of representation between the physical gathering and the digital audience, allowing each to reinforce the visibility and significance of the other.¹⁰¹

In this format, the importance of physical space remains. On the contrary, the physical gathering provides the foundation for establishing religious authority and belonging in the digital sphere. Viewers are not simply watching a video; they are engaging with a digital representation of a particular gathering, a shared community experience, and the relationship between a religious authority figure and their followers. Hasbihal videos therefore illustrate how local spaces are incorporated into digital circulation within Salafi digital outreach networks.

The hasbihal format also has a distinct geographic dimension in terms of engagement with younger audiences. Questions submitted by young people, university students, and families from different cities become visible within the same digital environment, allowing the everyday forms of religious guidance offered in a particular local gathering to reach audiences across diverse geographic locations. The discussion of topics such as harmful habits, university life, the pursuit of religious knowledge, family relationships, and social environments demonstrates that digital circulation creates not only a geographically expansive space of engagement, but also one that connects different generations through the concerns of everyday life.¹⁰²

10.2. Institutional Spaces, Associations, and Digital Reach

Geographic reach can be examined not only through the hasbihal format, but also through institutional structures such as associations, foundations, madrasas, and study circles. Examples such as Biriz Foundation, Guraba Der, the Association for the Promotion of Tawhīd and Sunnah Sciences, and İLİM-DER demonstrate that identifiable institutional and spatial infrastructures support YouTube visibility. Such organizations often organize programs and madrasa activities and provide opportunities for face-to-face engagement.

¹⁰¹ Halis Bayancuk Hoca, “*Halis Hoca ile Hasbihal*” video series, YouTube, selected episodes, accessed June 14, 2026.

¹⁰² Halis Bayancuk Hoca, “*How Can Bad Habits Be Overcome? | Halis Hoca ile Hasbihal*,” YouTube video, 2025, accessed June 14, 2026..

At Biriz Foundation, themes related to family, children, schooling, youth, and social crises are regularly addressed. These materials may therefore be interpreted not merely as talks disseminated through YouTube, but as part of a broader language of social and institutional guidance associated with the foundation's identity. In the case of Guraba Der, Abdullah Yolcu's role as a religious authority operates alongside the association's institutional identity. Topics such as public schooling, sin, family life, and religious education circulate both as forms of individual guidance and within an association-centered network of religious authority.¹⁰³

The Association for the Promotion of Tawhīd and Sunnah Sciences provides a particularly clear example of the relationship between institutional space and the digital lesson archive. The channel's regularly organized lesson series illustrate YouTube's function as both a virtual madrasa and a repository of religious instruction. This digital archive, however, is more than a collection of online materials. Through its connections to the association's website, social media accounts, Telegram channels, and WhatsApp communication lines, it forms part of a broader institutional communication network. Similarly, in the case of İLİM-DER, YouTube serves as a platform for topics such as study circles, religious instruction, marriage, prayer, and everyday religious obligations to circulate within an institutional framework.¹⁰⁴

These examples demonstrate that physical institutions, instructional settings, publishing networks, and communication channels often support digital visibility. Such support, however, does not necessarily indicate a high level of organizational density or systematic local activity. Open-source data reveal only the institutions, cities, and platforms with which the actors are publicly associated. The relationship between institutional spaces and digital reach should therefore be assessed cautiously within the limits of open-source analysis.

10.3. Transnational Reach and Indicators of International Engagement

Digital platforms enable Salafi outreach networks to gain visibility not only at the local and national levels, but also across national borders. YouTube videos can reach users living in different countries, allowing geographically dispersed audiences to access the same content. This is particularly significant for users living in diaspora communities, following content from outside Türkiye, or engaging with religious issues associated with different national contexts.

References in hasbihal videos to followers visiting from abroad, participants living in different countries, or outreach activities in the Turkic Republics may be regarded as open-

¹⁰³ Guraba Der, YouTube channel and associated digital platforms, accessed June 14, 2026; Abdullah Yolcu, selected YouTube videos, accessed June 14, 2026.

¹⁰⁴ İLİM-DER, YouTube channel, selected lesson series and discussion videos, accessed June 14, 2026.

source indicators of this transnational capacity for engagement. Such examples demonstrate that digital platforms not only facilitate access to content but also make followers' experiences in different geographic settings visible within the same digital space.

Actors associated with Syria also warrant particular attention in the analysis of geographic reach. These connections suggest that Salafi digital outreach networks may operate across fields of engagement extending beyond Türkiye's borders.¹⁰⁵ Such indications must nevertheless be interpreted cautiously. An actor's association with Syria or apparent transnational connections cannot, on their own, be treated as evidence of systematic international organization or direct influence. Rather, they should be understood as limited indicators of cross-border connections and visibility observable in open-source materials.

The cross-platform structure is also important in facilitating transnational reach. While YouTube provides an open platform with visibility across different countries, Telegram, WhatsApp, and affiliated websites can offer more sustained channels of communication and engagement. Users in other countries may therefore continue to access the same religious content, lesson archives, communication channels, and publishing networks. This demonstrates how digital outreach networks can cultivate an imagined community and a language of belonging that extend across geographic borders.

10.4. Interim Assessment

The analysis presented in this section demonstrates that the Salafi digital outreach networks examined should be understood not only in terms of their online visibility, but also through their spatial and institutional connections. By bringing local lessons, hasbihal gatherings, association activities, madrasa networks, and institutional publishing initiatives into digital circulation, YouTube enables content produced within a particular city or institution to become accessible to users across different cities and countries. At the same time, the limitations of open-source data must be acknowledged. Because such data do not reveal the precise location of audiences or the density of organizational relationships, geographic reach should not be interpreted as direct evidence of influence or organizational penetration. Rather, it should be understood as a limited indicator of digital visibility and spatial engagement capacity. Accordingly, the monitoring and analysis of digital outreach networks should extend

¹⁰⁵ Halis Bayancuk Hoca, "*Halis Hoca ile Hasbihal*" video series, YouTube, selected episodes addressing outreach activities and follower experiences abroad and in the Turkic Republics, accessed June 14, 2026.

beyond subscriber numbers and content themes to include the spatial settings, institutional affiliations, and cross-platform referral structures associated with these actors.

11. Scope and Methodological Notes

This study is based on open-source YouTube data, including channel descriptions, video titles, comment sections, cross-platform links, and other publicly accessible digital traces. Within this framework, the analysis examines the digital visibility of the selected actors, the continuity of their content production, the principal themes of their discourse, their cross-platform referral practices, and their potential for engagement. The findings should therefore be understood not as direct measures of individual influence or audience behavior, but as a quantitative and qualitative assessment of digital visibility derived from open-source data.

Accordingly, indicators such as subscriber numbers, view counts, video output, comment activity, cross-platform links, and content themes provide meaningful insights into the actors' digital outreach capacity and the structure of their cross-platform networks. These indicators, however, do not permit direct or definitive conclusions regarding audience demographics, individual levels of influence, offline behavior, or organizational affiliation. Throughout the study, digital metrics are therefore interpreted not as evidence of influence or radicalization, but as open-source indicators of visibility, continuity, engagement capacity, and referral potential.

Similarly, references to content targeting children, young people, or families are based on observable features such as video titles, content formats, audience questions, comment sections, modes of address, and recurring thematic patterns. These indicators help identify potential forms of engagement with particular user groups but do not establish the actual age, gender, educational background, socioeconomic characteristics, or geographic distribution of the audience. Likewise, comment sections provide insight into certain forms of audience interaction and response but are not treated as representative of the audience as a whole.

The open-source nature of this study also means that non-public spaces, including closed Telegram groups, WhatsApp communities, private messaging, face-to-face lessons, closed meetings, and individual interactions, are not examined directly. Nevertheless, publicly available video descriptions, external links, institutional websites, social media referrals, and other visible patterns of engagement provide limited yet meaningful indicators of the relationship between the online and offline dimensions of these networks.

It should also be recognized that digital platform data are inherently dynamic. Subscriber numbers, view counts, comments, external links, channel descriptions, and publication frequencies may change over time, while some content may be removed or become inaccessible. The findings presented here should therefore be understood as a cross-sectional assessment based on open-source data available during data collection.

Finally, the purpose of this study is not to equate Salafi digital outreach content with violence, criminal activity, or terrorism. A substantial proportion of the material examined focuses on religious education, morality, family life, child-rearing, privacy, the pursuit of religious knowledge, marriage, schooling, and everyday religious guidance. At the same time, these materials provide open-source indicators that merit analytical attention because they illustrate patterns of engagement with younger audiences, the construction of alternative religious authority, cross-platform referrals, the cultivation of belonging, and the continuity between online and offline forms of engagement. Accordingly, the study adopts a differentiated, cautious, and analytical approach grounded in open-source evidence, rather than one that generalizes about or criminalizes religious expression.

12. Assessment from a Monitoring and Policy Perspective

The TEPAV study's findings on radical religious attitudes provide an important counterweight to the policy recommendations developed in this study. According to the research's ideological radicalism index, the proportion of respondents categorized as holding radical religious attitudes declined from 4 percent in 2016 to 2 percent in 2020.¹⁰⁶ This finding indicates that radical religious attitudes remain relatively uncommon across Türkiye and have declined over time. Accordingly, policy responses to Salafi digital outreach networks should not be based on a generalized framework that treats religious expression as inherently risky, nor should they adopt a criminalizing or prohibitive approach.

At the same time, the TEPAV study identifies social exclusion as an important factor associated with the emergence of radical religious attitudes. In 2016, 19 percent of respondents who reported experiencing social exclusion were categorized as holding radical religious attitudes, compared with only 3 percent among those who did not report social exclusion. Although this figure declined to 12 percent among socially excluded respondents in 2020, it remained substantially higher than the 2 percent among those who did not experience social

¹⁰⁶ Demir vd., *Türkiye'de Çoğulculuk Radikalleşmeyle Yüzleşiyor*, 80.

exclusion.¹⁰⁷ This finding suggests that monitoring efforts on digital platforms should extend beyond ideological content alone. Particular attention should also be paid to indicators such as the absence of belonging, experiences of social exclusion, narratives of social rupture, discourses of victimhood, and the construction of closed group identities, as these may provide important open-source signals for understanding pathways of engagement and vulnerability.

Accordingly, the policy approach proposed in this study is not based on treating religious outreach activities as a generalized security threat, but rather on a differentiated, indicator-based monitoring framework. Open-source monitoring should extend beyond quantitative metrics such as subscriber numbers or video view counts to incorporate qualitative indicators, including engagement with younger audiences, referrals to closed platforms, the construction of exclusionary group identities, narratives of social rupture, the absolute rejection of official and societal authorities, the justification of violence or criminal behavior, and the increasing convergence of online and offline forms of engagement. Such an approach enables safeguarding freedom of religious expression while allowing more careful monitoring of digital networks that may exploit the vulnerabilities of young people.

In this context, the policy framework developed for Türkiye should be guided by three fundamental principles of balance.¹⁰⁸ First, a careful balance must be maintained between freedom of expression and religion, on the one hand, and legitimate security concerns, on the other. Second, the religious, ideological, and identity-related content encountered by young people in digital environments should not be approached solely as a security issue, but also as a matter of education, family support, psychology, youth policy, and digital media literacy. Third, cross-platform transitions and referrals to closed networks should be understood as multidimensional processes that require not only technical monitoring capabilities but also sociological and pedagogical analysis.

To operationalize this differentiated approach more systematically, a prioritization matrix was developed for use in open-source monitoring and analytical processes. Presented in Table 24, this matrix is not intended to classify religious content automatically into risk categories. Rather, it provides an analytical framework for identifying the contexts in which different types of open-source indicators warrant closer examination and more careful assessment.

¹⁰⁷ Demir et al., *Türkiye’de Çoğulculuk Radikalleşmeyle Yüzleşiyor*, 77, fig. 73.

¹⁰⁸ The monitoring and policy assessment framework developed in this section was informed by the integrated approach to prevention, youth policy, family and school support, efforts to address digital threats, and evidence-based intervention outlined in Prof. Dr. Hilmi Demir and Attorney Oğuz Demir’s study, *Yeni Nesil Çeteler ve Radikalleşme: Çeteler Çocuklarımızı Nasıl Çalıyor?*

Table 24. Prioritization Matrix for Open-Source Monitoring and Analysis

Monitoring / Analysis Priority	Open-Source Indicator	Illustrative Content or Behavioral Pattern	Policy Relevance	Assessment Note
Low Priority	General religious education and instructional content.	Regular lessons on 'aqidah, fiqh, ḥadīth, tafsīr, prayer, morality, and family life.	Should be understood within the scope of religious expression and religious education.	Not, in itself, a risk indicator; may be monitored only for the analysis of digital religious authority and visibility.
Low Priority	General moral guidance.	Content on sin, repentance, overcoming harmful habits, family relationships, marriage, and personal discipline.	Reflects the everyday search for religious guidance among young people and families.	Should not be conflated with harmful content or criminalized.
Low-to-Medium Priority	Regular content targeting young people and children.	<i>Çocukça Sorular</i> , animated content, and videos focusing on youth, school, family, and social media.	Indicates the capacity to engage younger audiences.	Not a direct risk indicator, but relevant for understanding engagement patterns among younger users.
Medium Priority	Strong in-group/out-group distinctions.	Frequent use of binary oppositions such as truth/falsehood, ummah/enemy, authentic/deviant, or pure/impure.	Indicates the strengthening of narratives of belonging and boundary construction.	May be understandable within religious identity formation, but warrants closer attention when combined with hostile or exclusionary discourse.
Medium Priority	Narratives reinforcing social disengagement.	Content portraying schools, non-family social environments, public life, or mainstream society as requiring complete separation.	May indicate discourse patterns that weaken young people's social ties.	The assessment should focus on recurring patterns and broader context rather than on isolated statements.
Medium Priority	Referrals to closed or semi-closed platforms.	Regular referrals from YouTube to Telegram, WhatsApp, private study groups, or contact forms.	Indicates the capacity to move users from open to more controlled communication environments.	Not all referrals are problematic; however, systematic referrals, particularly those

				targeting young audiences, warrant closer mapping and analysis.
Medium-to-High Priority	Construction of exclusionary group identities.	Persistent portrayal of particular religious, social, political, or sectarian groups as threats, deviants, or enemies.	May reinforce polarization, exclusion, and inward-oriented group cohesion.	Assessment should consider the intensity, frequency, and targeting of the discourse.
Medium-to-High Priority	Linking young people's search for belonging to an exclusive community.	Use of concepts such as "salvation," "the true path," "not being alone," "the cause," "patience," and "steadfastness" in conjunction with exclusive group belonging.	May indicate the potential for directing young people's search for meaning and belonging toward a single authority network.	Not inherently problematic, but becomes more significant when combined with social isolation, demands for absolute loyalty, or referrals to closed networks.
High Priority	Legitimation of violence or criminal activity on religious or ideological grounds.	Content presenting criminal acts, violence, armed struggle, or unlawful conduct as religious obligations.	Requires a security-priority assessment.	Such content should be clearly distinguished from protected religious expression and addressed within the appropriate legal framework.
High Priority	Combination of referrals to closed networks with hostile or exclusionary discourse.	Exclusionary rhetoric on YouTube accompanied by invitations to Telegram, WhatsApp, or other closed groups.	May represent a critical threshold in processes of radicalization and in-group mobilization.	The concern lies not in individual platform links alone, but in the combination of discourse, referrals, and movement toward closed networks.
High Priority	Explicit calls encouraging young people to disengage from family, school, or society.	Appeals to sever family ties, leave school, withdraw from society, or recognize only in-group authority.	May contribute to patterns of social isolation and exclusive group belonging.	Such discourse should be evaluated alongside youth policy, family support mechanisms, school guidance services, and psychosocial interventions.
High Priority	Crisis narratives evolving into calls for action.	Narratives of oppression, victimhood, anger, or revenge that develop into explicit calls for violence,	Indicates the transformation of emotional mobilization into a security-relevant action frame.	Narratives of victimhood or solidarity with the ummah are not, by themselves, risk indicators; concern arises when they

attacks, or criminal
conduct.

are combined with
advocacy of
violence or criminal
behavior.

Note. This matrix is intended neither to classify religious content nor Salafi outreach activities as inherently risky. Rather, it provides a framework for prioritizing different categories of open-source indicators during monitoring and analysis. No single indicator is sufficient to support definitive conclusions. Each should be interpreted in light of the broader content context, the intensity and consistency of the discourse, cross-platform referral practices, the intended audience, patterns of interaction in comment sections, and observable indicators of online-to-offline engagement.

Table 24 provides a differentiated framework for open-source monitoring and analysis that avoids generalized or criminalizing approaches. While religious instruction, moral guidance, and family-oriented content are classified as low-priority indicators, greater analytical attention should be devoted to patterns such as the construction of exclusionary group identities, narratives of social disengagement, systematic referrals to closed networks, and the legitimization of violence or criminal activity. This approach enables safeguarding space for religious expression while improving early identification of potential risk patterns in digital networks that engage younger audiences.

In line with this analytical framework, the following policy recommendations outline measures that may support the monitoring of Salafi digital outreach networks, strengthen resilience among younger audiences, improve understanding of cross-platform referral dynamics, and safeguard the space for freedom of religion and religious expression.

12.1. Policy Recommendations

First, open-source digital monitoring capabilities should be strengthened. YouTube, Telegram referrals, WhatsApp communication channels, websites, X, Instagram, book and journal networks, and video description fields should be monitored as interconnected components of a broader digital ecosystem. Monitoring should not be confined to individual platforms but should instead map cross-platform transitions, patterns of content circulation, recurring themes, and modes of engagement with younger audiences.

Second, clear analytical indicators should be developed to distinguish between protected religious expression and content that warrants closer scrutiny. Content concerning *tawhīd*, *‘aqīdah*, *fiqh*, family life, morality, or religious education should not, in itself, be

regarded as a risk indicator. Greater analytical attention should instead be directed toward content that legitimizes violence, encourages the rejection of democratic institutions and broader social life, promotes disengagement from family or school, constructs exclusionary group identities, or explicitly or implicitly legitimizes criminal conduct.

Third, credible and accessible digital guidance channels for young people should be supported. The cases examined in this study indicate that young people seek guidance not only on religious matters but also on issues such as school, family life, privacy, social media, harmful habits, marriage, sin, and identity formation. Leaving these needs unmet may increase the likelihood that young people turn to closed or one-dimensional religious interpretation networks. Developing trustworthy, inclusive, pedagogically informed digital guidance that addresses young people's everyday concerns should therefore be a policy priority.

Fourth, preventive capacity within families and educational institutions should be strengthened. Young people's engagement with digital religious content cannot be explained solely by personal curiosity or ideological orientation. Factors such as family communication difficulties, weak school attachment, social exclusion, peer pressure, loneliness, anger, and the search for meaning may also shape their patterns of digital engagement. Parents, teachers, school counselors, and youth workers should therefore be equipped to understand digital religious content, engage constructively with young people without stigmatization, and recognize patterns that may warrant additional support.

Fifth, cross-platform referral pathways should be monitored more systematically. Telegram channels, WhatsApp communication lines, websites, books, journals, PDF resources, and social media links embedded in YouTube video descriptions provide valuable open-source indicators of how users may move from open platforms into more controlled communication environments. Such referrals should not automatically be interpreted as problematic; however, systematic mapping of these pathways can help identify the mechanisms through which younger users may become increasingly engaged with more closed digital networks.

Sixth, monitoring and assessment processes should adopt a multidisciplinary approach. Evaluations should not rely exclusively on security expertise but should incorporate perspectives from the sociology of religion, theology, education, psychology, youth studies, media studies, data analysis, and law. Digital religious networks operate at the intersection of religious expression, youth culture, platform dynamics, and potential security concerns, requiring expertise across multiple disciplines.

Seventh, counter-narrative and alternative narrative initiatives should be designed around an understanding of young people's needs rather than a logic of prohibition. Responses that fail to address young people's search for certainty, belonging, meaning, discipline, identity, and purpose are unlikely to be effective. Accordingly, alternative narratives should extend beyond simply rejecting particular viewpoints by promoting opportunities for secure forms of belonging, critical thinking, religious pluralism, non-violent forms of expression, civic participation, and healthy digital media engagement.

Eighth, monitoring and assessment activities should operate within a clear legal and ethical framework. The monitoring of digital religious networks should remain consistent with the principles of freedom of expression, freedom of religion, the protection of personal data, and proportionality. Open-source monitoring should therefore be transparent, accountable, context-sensitive, and designed to avoid generalized or indiscriminate interventions. The objective is not to restrict religious expression, but to identify potential patterns of concern within digital networks engaging younger audiences at an early stage, and to respond with supportive rather than punitive measures.

Finally, monitoring policies should extend beyond risk identification to emphasize preventive and supportive interventions. Young people's engagement with digital religious content is often associated with loneliness, the search for belonging, family conflict, educational experiences, identity formation, or the search for meaning. Monitoring capacity should therefore not evolve into an approach that criminalizes young people, but should instead be integrated with early warning mechanisms, guidance services, family support, school-based interventions, and safe pathways for digital engagement. Table 25 summarizes the principal areas for preventive policy intervention and the corresponding policy instruments relevant to Salafi digital outreach networks.

Table 25. Preventive Policy Areas and Intervention Instruments for Salafi Digital Outreach Networks

Policy Area	Issue / Indicator Monitored	Recommended Intervention	Key Stakeholders	Expected Policy Contribution
Open-source digital monitoring	The interconnected use of YouTube, Telegram, WhatsApp, websites, and social media platforms	Cross-platform mapping of open-source digital networks	Public institutions, academia, data analysts, media researchers	Enables analysis of network structures, referral pathways, and patterns of digital visibility rather than focusing on individual videos or channels.
Trusted digital guidance for young people	Young people's search for religious guidance on family, school, privacy, social media, sin, marriage, and identity	Development of youth-friendly, inclusive, and pedagogically informed digital content	Ministry of National Education, Presidency of Religious Affairs, universities, youth centers, specialist NGOs	Provides credible alternative sources of guidance that may reduce reliance on closed or one-dimensional interpretive networks.
Family and school support	Challenges related to belonging, social exclusion, family communication, and school experience	Digital religious content literacy programs for parents and teachers	Ministry of National Education, school counselors, family counseling centers	Strengthens families' and schools' capacity to understand young people's engagement with digital religious content and to provide early, non-stigmatizing support.
Digital media literacy	Content circulation through short videos, excerpts, recommendation algorithms, emotional mobilization, and platform aesthetics	Digital media literacy modules in schools and youth programs	Ministry of National Education, universities, youth workers, media specialists	Enhances young people's ability to evaluate online religious, ideological, and political content critically.
Distinguishing religious expression from concerning discourse	The risk of either treating all religious content as problematic or failing to recognize genuinely concerning narratives	Development of clear, measurable, and context-sensitive analytical indicators	Sociologists of religion, theologians, legal scholars, security specialists	Supports the distinction between protected religious expression and content that legitimizes violence or criminal activity without criminalizing religion.

Monitoring referrals to closed platforms	Referrals from YouTube to Telegram, WhatsApp, or private groups.	Mapping transitions from open platforms to closed or semi-closed communication environments.	Public institutions, digital platforms, specialist research teams.	Strengthens early-warning capacity where movement toward more closed environments becomes systematic.
Counter- and alternative narratives	Young people's search for meaning, belonging, certainty, and identity being addressed primarily through closed networks.	Development of content promoting secure forms of belonging and non-violent forms of expression in language accessible to young audiences.	Youth centers, educators, psychologists, religious guidance specialists.	Moves beyond top-down messaging by providing meaningful alternatives that respond to young people's social and psychological needs.
Multidisciplinary expert teams	The religious, sociological, psychological, and technical dimensions of digital religious networks.	Multidisciplinary teams comprising specialists in the sociology of religion, theology, education, psychology, law, data analysis, and media studies.	Universities, think tanks, public institutions.	Promotes balanced, evidence-based assessments that go beyond a purely security-oriented perspective.
Periodic data collection and updating	Changes over time in subscriber numbers, platform connections, publication frequency, and thematic content.	Regular updating of open-source datasets and comparative reporting.	Research centers, academic teams, think tanks.	Supports the continuous monitoring of digital networks as dynamic rather than static phenomena.
Legal and ethical framework	The potential tension between monitoring activities and the protection of freedom of expression, freedom of religion, and personal data.	Transparent, lawful, proportionate, and accountable monitoring principles.	Legal experts, public institutions, human rights specialists, platform representatives.	Helps ensure that monitoring practices remain proportionate and do not develop into arbitrary or generalized interventions.

Local preventive capacity	The relationship between digital content and local communities, associations, schools, and families.	Strengthening local guidance services, youth work, and family support mechanisms.	Municipalities, school guidance services, family support centers, local NGOs.	Encourages addressing digital risks within their broader local social context rather than solely as online phenomena.
Platform responsibility and cooperation	The circulation of harmful content across platforms, recommendation systems, and referrals to closed networks.	Cooperation with platforms based on transparency, reporting mechanisms, researcher access, and systemic risk assessment.	Digital platforms, public institutions, researchers.	Promotes a more comprehensive approach focused on understanding systemic risks rather than relying solely on content removal.

Note. Table 25 draws inspiration from the holistic prevention framework developed by Prof. Dr. Hilmi Demir and Av. Oğuz Demir in *Yeni Nesil Çeteler ve Radikalleşme: Çeteler Çocuklarımızı Nasıl Çalıyor?* Adapting that approach to the open-source analysis of digital religious networks, the table presents a multidimensional policy framework that situates monitoring alongside youth policy, education, family support, digital media literacy, freedom of religion and religious expression, and open-source analytical capacity, rather than treating it solely as a security function. The proposed intervention instruments are not intended to criminalize religious expression, but to facilitate the earlier, more careful, and more supportive identification of potential patterns of concern within digital networks that engage younger audiences.

Table 25 suggests that an appropriate policy approach for Türkiye should move away from prohibitive, generalized models toward one that is evidence-based, grounded in open-source data, and oriented toward differentiated, preventive, and supportive interventions. Young people's engagement with digital religious content should therefore not be understood solely through a security lens, but also in relation to family dynamics, educational experiences, belonging, digital media literacy, religious guidance, and psychosocial support. Accordingly, monitoring capacity, alternative narrative initiatives, family and school support, and legal safeguards should not be designed as separate policy instruments, but as complementary and mutually reinforcing components of an integrated policy framework.

12.2. Comparative Policy Experiences and Implications for Türkiye

The experiences of the European Union, the United Kingdom, and Germany provide valuable comparative perspectives for Türkiye on monitoring digital platforms, removing illegal content, protecting children, platform accountability, and mitigating online risks. These experiences should not be regarded as models to be adopted wholesale. Rather, they offer useful policy examples from which lessons can be drawn on monitoring digital platforms, differentiating online risks, and developing balanced regulatory and preventive approaches.

The European Union's Digital Services Act (DSA) establishes a regulatory framework that imposes a range of obligations on online platforms to address illegal content, improve transparency, assess systemic risks, and protect users' fundamental rights. Particular emphasis is placed on Very Large Online Platforms (VLOPs) and Very Large Online Search Engines (VLOSEs), which are required to identify and mitigate systemic risks, increase the transparency of content moderation processes, and establish reliable notice-and-action mechanisms. Although the DSA was not specifically designed to address digital religious networks or online radicalization, its risk-based, systemic approach offers valuable lessons for Türkiye. In particular, it highlights the importance of developing open-source digital monitoring capacity through cooperation among public institutions, academic researchers, civil society organizations, and digital platforms, rather than relying exclusively on state-led monitoring mechanisms.¹⁰⁹ This approach suggests that, in Türkiye, open-source digital monitoring capacity should not be confined solely to state institutions. Instead, it should be developed through sustained cooperation among specialized public agencies, academic institutions, civil society organizations, and digital platforms. Such a collaborative approach would strengthen analytical capacity, improve the identification of emerging digital risks, and enhance the evidence base for policy development.

The United Kingdom's Online Safety Act framework places particular emphasis on illegal content, child protection, risk assessment, user safety, and platform accountability. This approach demonstrates the need for systematic assessment of the risks that children and young

¹⁰⁹ European Commission, "The Digital Services Act," *Shaping Europe's Digital Future*, accessed June 14, 2026, <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/digital-services-act>; European Commission, "DSA: Very Large Online Platforms and Search Engines," *Shaping Europe's Digital Future*, accessed June 14, 2026, <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/dsa-vlops>; European Commission, "Trusted Flaggers under the Digital Services Act (DSA)," *Shaping Europe's Digital Future*, accessed June 14, 2026, <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/trusted-flaggers-under-dsa>.

people may encounter in online environments.¹¹⁰ For Türkiye, this experience suggests that digital religious content targeting younger audiences should not be addressed solely through a security-oriented framework, but should also be considered alongside child protection, media literacy, family support, and education policy.

Germany's experience with the Network Enforcement Act (NetzDG), by contrast, introduced a model that places responsibility on social media platforms for reporting, assessing, and removing unlawful content within specified timeframes. At the same time, this model has generated debate concerning freedom of expression, the risk of over-removal, and the extent of private regulatory power exercised by platforms. The principal lesson for Türkiye is therefore that an approach focused exclusively on removal and prohibition is unlikely to be sufficient. Content moderation should instead be considered alongside transparency requirements, legal safeguards, appeal mechanisms, and an appropriate balance between freedom and security.

These comparative experiences point to three principal implications for Türkiye. First, digital platform monitoring should be based on clear, measurable indicators embedded within a well-defined legal framework. Second, although children and young people should be recognized as a group requiring particular protection, this assessment should be protective and supportive rather than criminalizing. Third, debates on platform accountability and content moderation should be conducted in a balanced manner that takes full account of freedom of expression and the protection of religious expression.

Approaches that conceptualize radicalization as a multidimensional process emphasize that it is not a linear outcome produced simply by exposure to particular content. Rather, it develops through the interaction of multiple factors, including identity, belonging, anger, social networks, ideological legitimization, and the capacity for action. Recent debates on youth radicalization have accordingly drawn attention to hybrid forms of radicalization, including “salad bar extremism,” in which different grievances, symbols, subcultures, and narratives of violence are combined rather than organized around a single, stable ideological commitment. This suggests that young users on digital platforms may be exposed not only to a single ideological trajectory, but also to more flexible and fragmented patterns of radicalization in

¹¹⁰ UK Government, “Online Safety Act: Explainer,” *GOV.UK*, accessed June 14, 2026, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/online-safety-act-explainer/online-safety-act-explainer>; Ofcom, “Illegal Content Duties under the Online Safety Act,” accessed June 14, 2026, <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/online-safety/illegal-and-harmful-content/illegal-content-duties-under-the-online-safety-act>.

which different elements of content and belonging are brought together.¹¹¹ Monitoring digital religious networks in Türkiye should therefore adopt a multilayered approach that examines narratives, networks, belonging, cross-platform transitions, and the broader social context of young people together, rather than treating isolated videos or individual concepts as risk indicators.

Within this framework, the most appropriate model for Türkiye is not a prohibitive or generalized approach to digital monitoring. Still, one grounded in open-source data, that differentiates among risk indicators, that protects young people, that avoids criminalizing religious expression, and that is capable of understanding cross-platform networks. Such an approach would enable the early identification of potential security risks while safeguarding freedom of religious expression and strengthening youth support and digital literacy.

12.3. Proposed Indicator Set for Monitoring

Assessing Salafi digital outreach networks solely based on individual pieces of content or subscriber numbers provides only a limited understanding of their structure and dynamics. More effective monitoring requires a multidimensional approach that considers indicators across content, network structures, platform use, user profiles, interaction patterns, and online-to-offline engagement. Such an approach enables a more comprehensive assessment of how these networks operate, expand their reach, and engage diverse audiences, while avoiding conclusions based on isolated indicators. The proposed core indicator set is presented in Table 26.

¹¹¹ Hilmi Demir, “Radikalleşme: Teröre Giden Yol,” TEPAV, April 25, 2017, <https://tepav.org.tr/tr/blog/s/5868>; Hilmi Demir, “Radikal Selefi Hareketler ve Terör Örgütleri: Kavram ve Teorik Çerçeve,” TEPAV Değerlendirme Notu, no. N201605, February 2016; Hilmi Demir and Oğuz Demir, *Yeni Nesil Çeteler ve Radikalleşme: Çeteler Çocuklarımızı Nasıl Çalıyor?* (Ankara: Anadolu Ay Yayınları, 2026).

Table 26. Proposed Indicator Set for Monitoring Salafi Digital Outreach Networks

Indicator Area	Element to Be Monitored	Policy Relevance
Content and discourse themes.	Violence, criminal activity, exclusionary group identities, narratives of social disengagement, hostile rhetoric, religious guidance, family, school, privacy, and youth-related themes.	Supports distinguishing protected religious expression from potentially concerning patterns of discourse.
Targeted or engaged user profiles.	Content directed toward children, young people, families, students, seekers of religious knowledge, or individuals exploring new religious orientations.	Helps identify the user groups these networks seek to contact.
Cross-platform referrals.	Movement from YouTube to Telegram, WhatsApp, websites, books, journals, PDF materials, or social media accounts.	Indicates the capacity to direct users from open platforms toward more controlled or closed communication environments.
Indicators of movement into closed networks.	WhatsApp groups, Telegram channels, private study groups, and contact forms.	Enables analysis of more direct and less easily observable channels of engagement with followers.
Comment and interaction patterns.	Questions, expressions of belonging, personal transformation narratives, and statements indicating exclusion or social disengagement.	Provides limited but valuable insights into how audiences engage with and respond to the content.
Type of authority.	Person-centered religious authority, association- or madrasa-based structures, virtual madrasa models, and hybrid networks.	Helps explain the organizational forms through which religious authority is constructed and maintained.
Geographic and spatial indicators.	City affiliations, association addresses, in-person gatherings, and references to international contacts.	Illustrates how digital visibility may be connected to physical locations and transnational engagement.
Continuity of content production.	Frequency of video uploads, regular lesson series, and content production during periods of crisis.	Provides information on the level of network activity and its capacity to sustain ongoing audience engagement.
Open-source indicators of algorithmic visibility.	Short-form video formats, popular titles, content linked to current events, and material designed to align with recommendation systems.	Supports the assessment of adaptation to platform logic and potential digital visibility.
Need for preventive intervention.	The need for safe alternative content for young people, family and school support, and digital media literacy initiatives.	Emphasizes that monitoring should inform supportive policy interventions rather than focusing exclusively on risk identification.

Note. This table was developed as part of the present study based on the open-source analysis conducted here, the literature on digital platform monitoring, and comparative policy experiences. The proposed indicators should not be interpreted in isolation as evidence of risk.

Rather, they are intended as open-source analytical indicators that facilitate the integrated assessment of content, network structures, platforms, user profiles, interaction patterns, and online-to-offline engagement.

Monitoring capacity for digital religious content engaging younger audiences must be developed in conjunction with supportive policy measures. Prohibitive interventions alone are unlikely to effectively address young people's search for meaning, belonging, discipline, and guidance. Instead, schools, families, youth centers, digital media literacy programs, credible religious guidance mechanisms, and psychosocial support services should be strengthened in a coordinated manner.

In conclusion, Türkiye's monitoring policy should rest on three principles. First, an analytical distinction should be drawn between protected religious expression and content that legitimizes violence or criminal activity. Second, digital religious content directed toward young people should be addressed not only as a security issue, but also as a matter of identity, belonging, education, and guidance. Third, open-source monitoring capacity should be developed to assess cross-platform networks, transitions to closed communication environments, and online-to-offline engagement together. Such an approach would enable both earlier identification of potential risks and the development of preventive and supportive policies that do not criminalize young people.

13. Conclusion and Overall Assessment

This study evaluates Salafi digital outreach actors on YouTube across content production, engagement with younger audiences, forms of religious authority, cross-platform communication networks, geographic reach, and policy implications. The analysis demonstrates that these actors should not be understood merely as isolated channels broadcasting sermons or lessons. Rather, they operate as multilayered digital outreach networks that bring together multiple platforms, institutions, religious authority figures, lesson archives, communication channels, and forms of in-person engagement.

The first major finding of the study is that YouTube functions within these networks not simply as a video-sharing platform, but as a central space of visibility through which relationships of religious authority, guidance, belonging, and referral are established. The channels examined feature a wide range of content formats, including lessons, sermons, question-and-answer sessions, hasbihal, child-oriented animation, guidance for young people and families, and content addressing school, privacy, sin, the pursuit of religious knowledge,

marriage, and everyday morality. This diversity indicates that digital outreach activities cannot be reduced to conventional forms of religious education or preaching alone.

The second major finding is that engagement with younger audiences is not limited to content explicitly labeled as “youth” content. Claims to provide “clean and halal content” for children, question-and-answer formats such as Çocukça Sorular, animated content, discourse on privacy and morality directed toward young adults, and discussions of harmful habits, university life, the pursuit of religious knowledge, and family-related problems in hasbihal gatherings all demonstrate that youth engagement is continually reproduced across different content formats. This suggests that young users’ search for religious knowledge, identity, belonging, everyday guidance, and moral discipline can be addressed through YouTube.

The third finding is that the actors examined operate through different models of authority. Some channels gain visibility around charismatic, person-centered religious figures, while others are connected to more institutional structures, such as associations, foundations, madrasas, or circles of religious learning. There are also cases in which YouTube functions as a virtual madrasa through the archiving of regular lesson series. The most striking feature, however, is that these forms of authority do not operate in complete isolation from one another. Rather, person-centered charisma, institutional structures, lesson archives, and cross-platform referrals are often combined within the same network.

The fourth finding is that cross-platform communication constitutes a fundamental component of these digital outreach networks. The presence of links in YouTube video descriptions directing users to websites, Telegram channels, WhatsApp communication lines, books, journals, Qur'an translations, lesson archives, and social media accounts demonstrates that viewers are guided beyond individual videos toward broader digital and institutional networks. Within this communication architecture, YouTube functions as the primary platform for visibility and content archiving; Telegram facilitates announcements and content circulation; WhatsApp enables direct communication; websites provide institutional information and publications; and books and journals ensure continuity through text-based resources. Digital outreach therefore operates not as a single-platform activity, but as a multilayered communication architecture in which different platforms perform complementary functions.

The fifth finding is that geographic reach cannot be understood solely by reference to the country in which a channel is registered or to viewership statistics. Hasbihal gatherings, questions submitted by followers from different cities and abroad, links to associations and madrasas, and references to contacts in the Turkic Republics and other countries all suggest

that digital outreach networks extend the spatial boundaries of religious engagement. A lesson or gathering organized in a particular locality can become accessible to audiences across different regions and countries through YouTube, allowing digital platforms to expand and archive existing offline religious communities. At the same time, these indicators should not be interpreted as direct evidence of organizational expansion or precise audience distribution. Rather, they should be understood as open-source indicators of geographic and transnational engagement.

The sixth finding is that, rather than demonstrating a direct and necessary relationship between Salafi digital outreach networks and cyber-jihadist discourse, cross-platform connectivity may create communication environments that some radical actors can exploit. The Salafi digital outreach networks examined in this study primarily use YouTube for visibility and archiving, Telegram for announcements and content circulation, WhatsApp for direct communication, and websites to provide institutional information and maintain continuity through publications. This multilayered communication architecture is not, in itself, an indicator of radicalization. However, when referrals to closed or semi-closed platforms are combined with exclusionary group identities, narratives of social disengagement, or content legitimizing violence or criminal activity, they constitute a domain that warrants closer attention within open-source monitoring.

From the perspective of cyber jihadist discourse, the principal concern is that digital actions requiring relatively limited technical expertise may appear more influential than they actually are when amplified through extensive media circulation. Website defacements, propaganda messages, or other symbolic digital actions can have a significant psychological impact when rapidly disseminated via Telegram and similar platforms. It would therefore be inappropriate to associate Salafi digital outreach networks as a whole with cyber jihadism. Nevertheless, when cross-platform referral capacity, indicators of movement toward closed networks, and discourse legitimizing violence are observed together, they represent an area that merits careful assessment through open-source monitoring.

The seventh finding is that digitalization has significantly expanded the reach of local Salafi outreach activities. These activities are no longer confined to particular cities but are increasingly able to reach audiences across Türkiye and beyond its borders. Accordingly, a key preventive priority is to strengthen the official religious guidance network in the digital environment. At the same time, an important challenge should not be overlooked. Public confidence in the Presidency of Religious Affairs has weakened compared with previous decades, particularly among younger generations. Salafi digital networks appear to operate, in

part, within the space created by this decline in institutional trust by constructing alternative forms of religious authority and seeking legitimacy through criticism of official religious institutions. In doing so, they often present religious messages that are perceived as more direct, accessible, and assertive by younger audiences.

For this reason, the Presidency of Religious Affairs and other relevant institutions should not rely exclusively on mosque-based or sermon-centered forms of communication. They should establish a stronger and more effective presence on YouTube, Telegram, and other social media platforms. Such a digital presence, however, should avoid adopting a top-down, prescriptive, or defensive style of communication. Instead, it should respond to young people's concerns regarding identity, belonging, privacy, and everyday life through credible, pedagogically informed, and inclusive digital content presented in accessible language. A renewed digital guidance network should function not only as a provider of religious rulings but also as a platform that listens to young people, engages with their concerns, and offers meaningful responses. Such an approach could reduce the appeal of closed, exclusionary, or radical networks. Becoming a more visible, interactive, and relatable actor in the digital environment may therefore represent one of the most important ways for the Presidency of Religious Affairs to rebuild trust and limit the influence of more radical digital networks.

A substantial proportion of the content examined in this study focuses on religious education, family life, child-rearing, morality, privacy, the pursuit of religious knowledge, marriage, schooling, and everyday guidance. At the same time, these materials provide valuable open-source indicators regarding the construction of alternative religious authority, engagement with younger audiences, cross-platform referrals, movement toward closed or semi-closed communication environments, the formation of belonging, and the continuity of online and offline engagement.

Accordingly, this study advocates neither a generalized nor a criminalizing approach toward religious expression. Instead, it proposes a differentiated and preventive monitoring framework grounded in open-source indicators. From a policy perspective, the priority should not be to treat all religious content as inherently risky, but rather to identify, at an early stage, patterns that legitimize violence or criminal activity, encourage young people to disengage from broader society, systematically direct users toward closed networks, construct exclusionary group identities, or channel the search for belonging into exclusionary narratives. Achieving this objective requires cooperation not only among security institutions, but also across education, youth policy, family support, digital media literacy, the sociology of religion, psychology, and platform analysis.

The findings of this report acquire broader significance when considered alongside TEPAV's survey research on religion, pluralism, and radical religious attitudes in Türkiye. The survey indicates that radical religious attitudes remain relatively uncommon and have generally declined, while individuals identifying themselves as Salafi constitute a limited but increasingly visible category of religious affiliation. These findings suggest that YouTube-based Salafi digital outreach networks should not be labeled as direct manifestations of radicalization or security threats. Rather, they represent a digital environment that warrants careful monitoring with respect to engagement with younger audiences, the construction of alternative religious authority, cross-platform referrals, narratives of social disengagement, exclusionary group identities, and indicators of online-to-offline engagement.

The principal contribution of this study lies in evaluating Salafi digital outreach networks not merely in terms of subscriber numbers or video visibility, but through the combined analysis of social belonging, discourse themes, youth engagement, authority structures, platform ecology, and geographic reach. The TEPAV survey data and the YouTube dataset examined in this study do not measure the same phenomenon. The former consists of representative survey data concerning religious identity and social attitudes, whereas the latter captures the open-source digital visibility of particular actors. Consequently, no direct causal relationship can be inferred between the two datasets. Considered together, however, they provide a valuable analytical framework for understanding potential parallels, divergences, and areas requiring continued observation between the limited but increasingly visible Salafi identity observed in Türkiye and the diversification of Salafi digital outreach networks.

In conclusion, the Salafi digital outreach actors operating on YouTube provide an important case through which to understand how contemporary forms of digital religious authority are constructed, maintained, and circulated across multiple platforms. These networks do more than produce content. They also respond to the religious guidance needs of young people and families, expand the authority of religious figures and institutions into digital environments, sustain engagement through cross-platform referrals, and extend local religious activities into broader geographic and transnational spaces. Monitoring these networks should therefore move beyond simple measures such as subscriber numbers or viewing figures and instead incorporate content themes, authority structures, platform connections, engagement with younger audiences, geographic reach, and open-source risk indicators within an integrated analytical framework.

Finally, this study demonstrates the need for more systematic analysis of digital religious networks in Türkiye. Future research should examine YouTube recommendation

systems and algorithms, short-form video formats, transitions to semi-closed platforms such as Telegram and WhatsApp, patterns of audience reception among younger users, and the network relationships among different actors in greater depth. The central challenge is not to treat the digital religious sphere as inherently risky, but to develop a balanced analytical and monitoring capacity capable of distinguishing, based on open-source evidence, among religious expression, youth guidance, platform referral practices, social belonging, and indicators of potential security concern.

References

Abdullah İmamoğlu. “Suçlu Kim? Gençler mi? Laik Sistem mi?” YouTube video. Accessed June 14, 2026.

Abdullah Yolcu. “Günahın Giriş Yolları: Kalbin Korunması.” YouTube video. Accessed June 14, 2026.

Abdullah Yolcu. YouTube channel, selected video titles, and open-source links to digital platforms. Accessed June 14, 2026.

Biriz Vakfı. “İlahi Terbiye: Çocukluk Yılları ve Nübüvvete Hazırlık.” YouTube video. Accessed June 14, 2026.

Biriz Vakfı. “Müslüman’ın Kalesi: Aile.” YouTube video series. Accessed June 14, 2026.

Biriz Vakfı. “Okul Katliamı: Boş Verilmiş Gençliğin Ağır Faturası.” YouTube video. Accessed June 14, 2026.

Biriz Vakfı. YouTube channel, selected video titles, channel descriptions, and linked digital platforms. Accessed June 14, 2026.

Bizim Dünyamız. “Bizim Çocuklar 2. Bölüm, Kutunun Sırrı.” YouTube video. Accessed June 14, 2026.

Bizim Dünyamız. “Çocukça Sorular.” YouTube video series. Accessed June 14, 2026.

Bizim Dünyamız. “Halis Bayancuk’a Bizim Dünyamız Kanalını Sorduk!” YouTube video. Accessed June 14, 2026.

Bizim Dünyamız. YouTube channel, selected video titles, channel descriptions, and platform links. Accessed June 14, 2026.

Bundesministerium der Justiz. “Gesetz zur Verbesserung der Rechtsdurchsetzung in sozialen Netzwerken (Netzwerkdurchsetzungsgesetz, NetzDG).” *Gesetze im Internet*. Accessed June 14, 2026. <https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/netzdg/BJNR335210017.html>.

Bunt, Gary R. *Islam in the Digital Age: E-Jihad, Online Fatwas and Cyber Islamic Environments*. London: Pluto Press, 2003.

Bunt, Gary R. *Islamic Algorithms: Online Influence in the Muslim Metaverse*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2024.

Campbell, Heidi A., and Ruth Tsuria, eds. *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in Digital Media*. 2nd ed. New York and London: Routledge, 2022.

Çeliksoy, Emre, and Steve Ouma. "Terrorist Use of the Internet." *Bilişim Hukuku Dergisi* 1, no. 2 (2019): 243–67.

Conway, Maura. "Determining the Role of the Internet in Violent Extremism and Terrorism: Six Suggestions for Progressing Research." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 40, no. 1 (2017): 77–98. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2016.1157408>.

Demir, Gülden. "Ekranın Ötesindeki Gençlik: Dijital Medya ve Gençlik Söylemlerine Eleştirel Bir Yaklaşım." *Journal of Communication Science Researches* 5, no. 3 (2025): 253–66. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.16786142>.

Demir, Hilmi. "Nedir bu Selefilik?" *TEPAV*. Accessed June 23, 2026. <https://tepav.org.tr/tr/blog/s/6281>.

Demir, Hilmi. "Radikal Selefi Hareketler ve Terör Örgütleri: Kavram ve Teorik Çerçeve." *TEPAV Değerlendirme Notu*, no. N201605, February 2016.

Demir, Hilmi. "Radikalleşme: Teröre Giden Yol." *TEPAV*, April 25, 2017. <https://tepav.org.tr/tr/blog/s/5868>.

Demir, Hilmi. "Selefi Radikalleşmesinde İdeolojinin Etkisi." Unpublished report manuscript, 2026.

Demir, Hilmi. *Türkiye’de DEAŞ Radikalleşmesi, Kadın ve Gençlik Yapılanmaları ve Stratejik Dönüşü*. Edited by Hatice Varol-Dağdelen and Zeynep Yıldız. Ankara: TEPAV, URAD, and the Embassy of Canada, 2026.

Demir, Hilmi, Feride İnan, Berat Yücel, and Ömer Faruk Can. *Türkiye’de Çoğulculuk Radikalleşmeyle Yüzleşiyor: TEPAV Müslüman Çoğunluklu Bir Ülkede Din ve Radikal Tutumlar Araştırması*. Ankara: Türkiye Ekonomi Politikaları Araştırma Vakfı, 2024.

Demir, Hilmi, and Oğuz Demir. *Yeni Nesil Çeteler ve Radikalleşme: Çeteler Çocuklarımızı Nasıl Çalıyor?* Ankara: Anadolu Ay Yayınları, 2026. European Commission. "DSA: Very Large Online Platforms and Search Engines." *Shaping Europe’s Digital Future*. Accessed June 14, 2026. <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/dsa-vlops>.

European Commission. "The Digital Services Act." *Shaping Europe’s Digital Future*. Accessed June 14, 2026. <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/digital-services-act>.

European Commission. "Trusted Flaggers under the Digital Services Act (DSA)." *Shaping Europe’s Digital Future*. Accessed June 14, 2026. <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/policies/trusted-flaggers-under-dsa>.

Gill, Paul, Emily Corner, Amy Thornton, and Maura Conway. "What Are the Roles of the Internet in Terrorism? Measuring Online Behaviours of Convicted UK Terrorists." VOX-Pol Network of Excellence, 2015.

Guhl, Jakob, and Milo Comerford. *Understanding the Salafi Online Ecosystem: A Digital Snapshot*. London: Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2021.

Guraba Der. YouTube channel, selected video titles, channel descriptions, and linked digital platforms. Accessed June 14, 2026.

Guraba Der / Abdullah Yolcu. "Çocuklarımızı Devlet Okullarına Göndermemizde Bir Sakınca Var Mıdır?" YouTube video. Accessed June 14, 2026.

Halis Bayancuk. "Ey Kadın." YouTube video. Accessed June 14, 2026.

Halis Bayancuk. "Halis Hoca ile Hasbihal." YouTube video series. Accessed June 14, 2026.

Halis Bayancuk. "İlim Talebesini Bozan Unsurlar." YouTube video. Accessed June 14, 2026.

Halis Bayancuk. "Kadın ve Erkek Fitnessi." YouTube video. Accessed June 14, 2026.

Halis Bayancuk. "Kötü Alışkanlıklar Nasıl Bırakılabilir? | Halis Hoca ile Hasbihal." YouTube video, 2025. Accessed June 14, 2026.

Halis Bayancuk. "Türkiye'deki Okul Katliamları." YouTube video. Accessed June 14, 2026.

Halis Bayancuk. Selected YouTube video descriptions and cross-platform referral links. Accessed June 14, 2026.

Halis Bayancuk. YouTube channel, selected lectures, sermons, question-and-answer sessions, *hasbihal* videos, and current-affairs commentary. Accessed June 14, 2026.

İLİM-DER. "Evlilik İşleriyle Meşgul Olduğu İçin Dört Gün Namazı Terk Eden Adam!" YouTube video. Accessed June 14, 2026.

İLİM-DER. YouTube channel, selected lectures and sohbet videos. Accessed June 14, 2026.

İSAM. "İlahiyat Makaleleri Veri Tabanı, 'Selefilik' arama sonucu." Accessed June 23, 2026.

<https://makale.isam.org.tr/search?f.isPartOf=%C4%B0lahiyat%20Makaleleri%20Veri%20Tabanı%C4%B1,equal&spc.page=1&query=selefilik&f.dateIssued.min=2014>.

Joosse, Paul. "Max Weber's Disciples: Theorizing the Charismatic Aristocracy." *Sociological Theory* 35, no. 4 (2017): 334–58. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0735275117740402>.

Karo, Gilad, Tom Divon, and Blake Hallinan. "The TikTok Caliphate: How Jihadist Supporters Exploit Algorithmic Recommendations and Evade Content Moderation." *Social Media + Society* 12, no. 1 (2026).

Lombardi, Marco, Miron Lakomy, Alessandro Bolpagni, and Silvano Lucini. "Under the Radar: Exploring the Salafi-Jihadi Terrorist Information Ecosystem on TikTok." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* (2026).

Mehmet Balcıoğlu. "Tüm Rasullerin Ortak Sünneti Evlilik." YouTube video. Accessed June 14, 2026.

Moghaddam, Fathali M. "The Staircase to Terrorism: A Psychological Exploration." *American Psychologist* 60, no. 2 (2005): 161–69. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.60.2.161>.

Muary, Rholand, Neila Susanti, and Puteri Atikah. "Salafis and Social Media: The Emergence of Islamic Populism in Indonesia." *Jurnal Sosiologi Agama: Jurnal Ilmiah Sosiologi Agama dan Perubahan Sosial* 18, no. 2 (2024): 151–70. <https://doi.org/10.14421/jsa.2024.182-02>.

Murat Gezenler. "İlim Talebesi Haddini Bilmelidir!" YouTube video. Accessed June 14, 2026.

Muthuswamy, Moorthy S. "A Conceptual Framework of Salafi Radicalization: An Underlying Theme and Its Enablers." *Science, Religion and Culture* 5, no. 1 (2018): 50–72.

Ofcom. "Illegal Content Duties under the Online Safety Act." Accessed June 14, 2026. <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/online-safety/illegal-and-harmful-content/illegal-content-duties-under-the-online-safety-act>.

Özyurt, Ece. *How Terrorist Organizations Use the Internet*. Master's thesis, İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University, 2021.

Silber, Mitchell D., and Arvin Bhatt. *Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat*. New York: NYPD Intelligence Division, 2007.

Stadlbauer, Susanne. "'Rewriting the Script': Hybridic Third Spaces of Salafism on YouTube." Unpublished book chapter submitted to *Third Spaces of Digital Religion*, Center for Media, Religion, and Culture, April 13, 2015.

Tapan, Yusuf Emre. *Turkish Salafism on Twitter: Social Network Analysis*. Master's thesis, Middle East Technical University, 2019.

TEPAV. “Türkiye’de radikal dini tutumlar azalma eğiliminde.” February 12, 2024.

Accessed June 23, 2026. <https://tepav.org.tr/tr/haberler/s/10714>.

Tevhid Dergisi. Official digital platform and publication archive. Accessed June 14, 2026.

Tevhid Dersleri. Official digital platform and lecture archive. Accessed June 14, 2026.

Tevhid Gündemi. Official digital platform. Accessed June 14, 2026.

Tevhid Kitap. Official digital platform. Accessed June 14, 2026.

Tevhid Meali. Official digital platform. Accessed June 14, 2026.

Tevhid ve Sünnet İlimlerini Yayma Derneği. “Namazın Manaları.” YouTube video series. Accessed June 14, 2026.

Tevhid ve Sünnet İlimlerini Yayma Derneği. Official website and linked social media accounts. Accessed June 14, 2026.

Tevhid ve Sünnet İlimlerini Yayma Derneği. YouTube channel, selected lessons on tafsīr, ḥadīth, fīqh, ‘aqīdah, prayer, the afterlife, and īmān. Accessed June 14, 2026.

UK Government. “Online Safety Act: Explainer.” *GOV.UK*. Accessed June 14, 2026. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/online-safety-act-explainer/online-safety-act-explainer>.

VOX-Pol Network of Excellence. *Violent Extremism Online: Research and Policy Perspectives*. 2023.

Weber, Max. *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. Edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978.

Wiktorowicz, Quintan. *Radical Islam Rising: Muslim Extremism in the West*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005.

Zalta, Anja. “Online Salafism: The Tension to (Co)Exist in Religious and Ideological Plurality.” *Poligrafi* 30, nos. 119–20 (2025): 219–39.