

e-Maktabah: A Digital Islamic Library System for Religious Counselors: Design, Development, and User Evaluation

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ABSTRACT

Background: Digital religious information services require accessible technology, reliable sources, and accountable governance.

Purpose: This study developed e-Maktabah, an institution-based digital Islamic library for religious counselors at the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Karawang Regency, and conducted functional testing alongside a preliminary descriptive user evaluation.

Methods: A design and development research (DDR) approach with a prototype-oriented workflow was employed. Nine black-box scenarios assessed user and administrator functions, while 40 purposively selected participants completed a 14-item questionnaire covering five descriptive dimensions conceptually informed by the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the DeLone and McLean Information Systems Success Model. The prototype integrated categorized Islamic collections, smart search, e-book viewing, bookmarks, offline reading, administrative reference management, and an institutional draft-review-publication workflow.

Findings: All functional scenarios produced expected outputs. The overall descriptive user score was 3.68 on a four-point scale (92.0%). Perceived usefulness received the highest dimension score (92.3%), while institutional content validation obtained the highest individual item score (93.8%).

Originality/Value: These preliminary findings indicate that embedding institutional content governance directly into digital library architecture enhances perceived reference reliability and practical utility for specialized religious counselors.

Keywords: Digital Islamic library; Design and Development Research (DDR); Technology Acceptance Model (TAM); e-Maktabah

1. INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has repositioned libraries from collection-centered organizations into networked information environments in which access, retrieval, service delivery, and knowledge mediation increasingly occur through digital platforms. In this setting, a digital library is not merely a repository of electronic documents but a socio-technical system combining collections, metadata, search functions, service procedures, and organizational governance. Recent studies show that digital-library implementation depends heavily on institutional readiness, technological infrastructure, staff competence, and ongoing content curation (Deja et al., 2021; Hermawan, 2025; Kardi & Sari, 2026; Zareef & Jabeen, 2025).

The effectiveness of digital-library services is multidimensional. System functionality must be accompanied by relevant and trustworthy information, understandable navigation, and clear benefits for users' information tasks (Faridah et al., 2024; Rahmawati et al., 2026). International studies likewise associate digital-library use with perceived value, satisfaction, trust, and task relevance (Malik et al., 2024; Pourjahanshahi et al., 2023; Rafique et al., 2021). However, functional adequacy does not automatically guarantee an optimal user experience or long-term adoption (Yoliadi et al., 2026). This highlights a key methodological distinction: while formal adoption studies require validated scales and structural modeling to test theoretical relationships, early-stage prototype evaluations rely on descriptive user feedback to identify system strengths, functional limitations, and immediate priorities for institutional refinement.

This distinction is especially critical for digital religious information. Religious guidance carries interpretive, educational, and normative weight; users require not only rapid access but also firm confidence in the authority, provenance, and accuracy of materials (Aini et al., 2025; Choirin et al., 2024). In digital environments characterized by information overload, uncertain provenance, and misinformation, individual media literacy alone is often insufficient (Guess et al., 2020; Haider & Sundin, 2022; Kozyreva et al., 2020; Pennycook & Rand, 2021). Specialized religious information services require structured institutional governance to select, review, and authorize content (Campbell & Tsuria, 2021; Tsuria et al., 2024).

This challenge is particularly salient for Islamic religious counselors (known as *penyuluh agama Islam*) within the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Karawang Regency. In practice, these counselors depend on fragmented print collections or unverified open-web sources, which gives rise to three interrelated problems: uncertainty regarding the authenticity of information, inefficient retrieval, and interrupted access due to unreliable internet connectivity in field settings. The central problem, therefore, is not merely a scarcity of digital texts, but the absence of an integrated service that combines structured retrieval, offline availability, and an institutional content-validation mechanism.

The existing literature has examined digital library usability, preservation, and public engagement at length. However, empirical evidence remains limited on how institutional content validation can be operationalized as an embedded governance feature within specialized digital Islamic libraries intended for religious counselors.

To address this gap, the present study developed e-Maktabah, an institution-based digital Islamic library for religious counselors in the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Karawang Regency. The system integrates categorized references, intelligent search, offline access, and a draft-review-publication validation workflow. It was developed by a research team from Universitas Singaperbangsa Karawang (UNSIKA) using Flutter and Firebase backend services, and is accessible through both web and mobile platforms. The platform organizes core

Islamic collections, namely the Qur'an, tafsir, hadith, fiqh, Islamic ethics, and history. Its defining feature is an administrative draft–review–publication pipeline, whereby uploaded resources remain inaccessible to users until they have been formally verified and approved by authorized administrators.

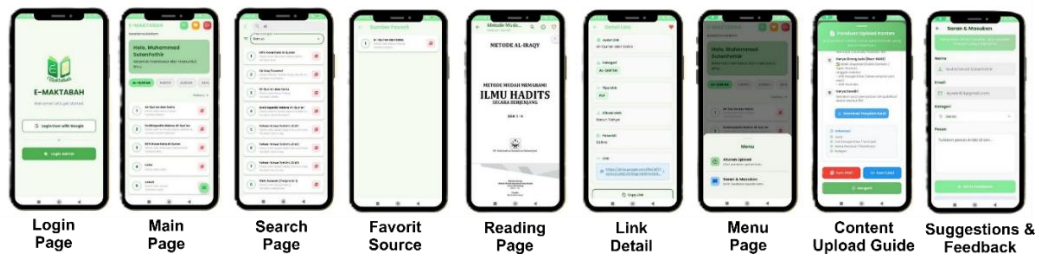


Figure 1. e-Maktabah Interface

In response to this gap, the present study is organized around two research questions. The first (RQ1) examines how the e-Maktabah prototype integrates user-oriented access features with an institutional content-validation mechanism suited to the professional needs of religious counselors in Karawang Regency. The second (RQ2) investigates how prospective users appraise the prototype with respect to system quality, information quality, service quality, perceived ease of use, and perceived usefulness. Taken together, these questions link the technical design of the system to the perspectives of its intended users. The study accordingly seeks to develop, functionally test, and descriptively evaluate the prototype. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the DeLone and McLean Information Systems Success Model are employed solely as conceptual references for structuring the dimensions of user feedback; they do not serve as the basis for formal structural hypotheses.

To answer these questions, the inquiry proceeds through three stages: conceptual framework design, functional black-box verification, and preliminary descriptive user evaluation. By tying technical functionality to content governance, e-Maktabah responds to the operational problem identified in the field, namely the counselors' need for reliable, verified, and readily accessible digital references. The study thereby contributes a replicable design for embedding institutional validation within specialized digital Islamic libraries, together with preliminary evidence of how its intended users perceive the resulting system.

2. METHODS

This study employed Design and Development Research (DDR) using a prototype-oriented model, followed by a preliminary cross-sectional descriptive evaluation (Creswell & Creswell, 2023; Richey & Klein, 2014). Conducted at the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Karawang Regency, the development and field trial were completed in October 2025.

Development comprised five stages: (1) analysis of users' and institutional information needs; (2) design of the system architecture, interface, collection structure, and institutional content-validation workflow; (3) prototype development; (4) functional testing and iterative refinement; and (5) preliminary user evaluation. The prototype used Flutter for the Android and web interfaces and Firebase Authentication, Cloud Firestore, and Firebase Storage for backend services. The resulting functions included categorized Islamic collections, smart search, e-book viewing, bookmarks, offline reading, administrator-mediated reference management, and a draft–review–publication workflow. Iterative development and

institutional support are important in mobile-library innovation because successful implementation depends on user engagement, technical readiness, and adaptation to the organizational context (Hermawan, 2025).

Table 1. Development and preliminary evaluation stages of e-Maktabah

Stage	Principal activities	Output
Needs analysis	Identification of counselors' information needs, institutional requirements, access constraints, and content-governance needs	User and institutional requirements
System design	Design of system architecture, interface, collection categories, retrieval features, and content-validation workflow	Prototype design and functional specifications
Prototype development	Development of Android and web interfaces using Flutter and Firebase services	Functional e-Maktabah prototype
Functional testing	Execution of nine black-box test scenarios and iterative correction of identified problems	Functional-conformity results
Preliminary user evaluation	Prototype trial involving 40 purposively selected participants and a 14-item feedback questionnaire	Aggregate descriptive user feedback

The functional performance of the system was assessed through nine black-box testing scenarios, which covered administrator authentication, public access, category browsing, e-book viewing, intelligent search, offline reading, bookmarking, content uploading, and authorized publication.

The preliminary user evaluation involved 40 participants selected through purposive sampling, comprising Islamic religious counselors, staff of the Islamic Community Guidance Section, and representatives of madrasahs and Islamic boarding schools. Participants' feedback was collected using a 14-item instrument organized into five descriptive dimensions: System Quality (three items), Information Quality (three items), Service Quality (two items), Perceived Ease of Use (three items), and Perceived Usefulness (three items). Responses were recorded on a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree).

Because the survey was intended as an early-stage diagnostic of the prototype rather than a psychometrically validated instrument suitable for structural equation modeling, the analysis was limited to aggregate mean scores and percentage values. The study adhered to established ethical principles: participation was voluntary, institutional consent was secured, and all data were anonymized prior to analysis.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Conceptual Architecture and Development of the e-Maktabah Prototype

The development produced a fully functional prototype of e-Maktabah built upon a modular architecture. The system integrates Flutter-based multi-platform front-end applications (web and Android) with Firebase backend services (Firebase Authentication, Cloud Firestore, and Firebase Storage) to establish a synchronized repository ecosystem. Figure 2 illustrates the high-level conceptual framework and operational architecture of the platform.

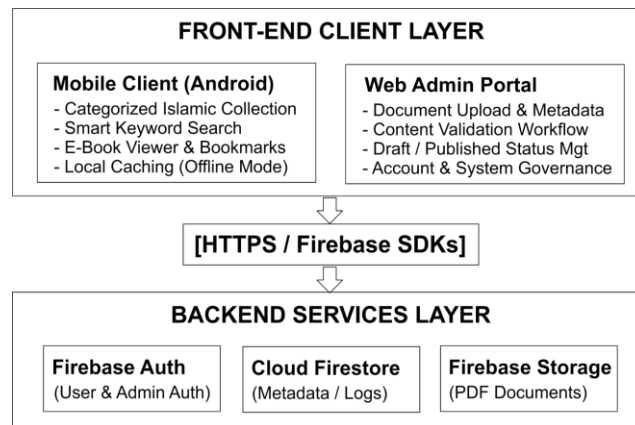


Figure 2. Conceptual System Architecture of e-Maktabah

Institutional Content-Validation Workflow

To answer RQ1, e-Maktabah embeds an institutional validation workflow directly into the content management pipeline. Materials uploaded by administrators do not immediately enter the public repository. Instead, uploaded records are automatically assigned a Draft status and remain invisible to end-users until reviewed and formally approved by an authorized administrator.



Figure 3. Institutional content-validation workflow in e-Maktabah

The review process assesses source authority, counselor task relevance, metadata accuracy, appropriate categorization, and alignment with Ministry policies. Only upon explicit administrative approval is the record converted to Published status, making it retrievable by public users and counselors.

Functional Testing Results

Black-box testing verified that all primary user and administrative modules performed in strict accordance with predefined specifications.

Table 2. Functional testing results of the e-Maktabah prototype

No	Functional area	Test scenario	Observed output	Status
1	Administrator	The administrator enters valid	The account is authenticated	Valid

No	Functional area	Test scenario	Observed output	Status
	authentication	credentials	and the administrator dashboard is displayed	
2	Public-user access	A user opens the application without an account	The home page and published collection are accessible without login	Valid
3	Category browsing	A user selects a subject category	Materials associated with the selected category are displayed	Valid
4	E-book viewing	A user selects a book title	The complete electronic document is displayed in the document viewer	Valid
5	Smart search	A user enters a title, author, or subject keyword	Records relevant to the entered keyword are displayed	Valid
6	Offline reading	A user downloads a document and disconnects the internet connection	The downloaded document remains accessible without internet connectivity	Valid
7	Bookmarking	A user bookmarks a selected document page	The page is stored and accessible through the bookmark menu	Valid
8	Content uploading	An administrator enters metadata and uploads a PDF document	The file is stored and the bibliographic record is assigned draft status	Valid
9	Content validation and publication	An authorized administrator reviews and approves a draft	The status changes to published and the record becomes available to users	Valid

All nine test scenarios executed as expected, confirming core operational stability and verifying that draft materials remain restricted prior to administrative authorization.

Preliminary Descriptive User Evaluation

The results of the preliminary user evaluation directly mirror the operational needs and content-governance concerns outlined in the Introduction. The data indicate that participants evaluated the platform not merely as a generic reading tool, but as an authoritative digital workspace. Table 3 summarizes the empirical scores across the five evaluation dimensions, illustrating how technical features and institutional validation combine to fulfill counselors' information requirements.

To answer RQ2, descriptive feedback from 40 trial participants was aggregated. Overall, participants evaluated the prototype very favorably, yielding a total average score of 3.68 out of 4.00 (92.0% of the maximum score).

Table 3. Descriptive summary of participants' preliminary evaluation of e-Maktabah (N = 40)

Evaluation dimension	Number of items	Mean score (1–4)	Maximum Score (%)
System quality	3	3.65	91.3%
Information quality	3	3.69	92.2%
Service quality	2	3.68	91.9%
Perceived ease of use	3	3.68	91.9%
Perceived usefulness	3	3.69	92.3%
Overall descriptive score	14	3.68	92.0%

Perceived Usefulness achieved the highest dimension score (92.3%), followed closely by Information Quality (92.2%). At the individual item level, the highest score overall was awarded to the statement regarding institutional content validation (mean 3.75; 93.8%), followed by reference accuracy and reliability (mean 3.73; 93.3%). Search efficiency, interface clarity, and overall utility received scores of 92.5%. The lowest individual item scores were associated with offline synchronization management and workplace workflow integration (90.0% each).

Functional Alignment and Operational Capabilities

The functional testing results confirm that e-Maktabah successfully bridges client-side access features with backend governance. By fulfilling all nine black-box scenarios, the prototype demonstrates operational readiness for field trial conditions. The strict separation of draft and published content directly fulfills the technical design requirements of RQ1.

However, functional test compliance must not be conflated with broad system maturity. As Hermawan (2025) emphasizes, technological deployment in public library environments requires continuous infrastructure adaptation, organizational alignment, and long-term user support beyond preliminary technical readiness. Future technical iterations must expand testing beyond black-box functional checks to evaluate cybersecurity resilience, concurrent database load handling, and compliance with digital accessibility standards.

System Quality, Ease of Use, and Offline Access

The positive evaluation of System Quality (91.3%) and Perceived Ease of Use (91.9%) indicates that the Flutter-based interface provided an intuitive, low-friction user experience. These results mirror findings by Faridah et al. (2024), who observed that intuitive design and structured access significantly enhance user reception of library platforms.

The inclusion of offline reading directly addresses field-level access constraints faced by religious counselors operating in rural areas. Although offline access scored lower relative to other features (90.0%), this score highlights practical refinement needs rather than dissatisfaction. Specifically, offline functionality requires enhanced user feedback regarding background synchronization status, storage management, and automated notifications when local files are updated by administrators. Furthermore, as noted by Yoliadi et al. (2026), pragmatic usability success should eventually be supplemented by user experience assessments measuring engagement and interface novelty.

Institutional Content Validation as Information Governance

The empirical findings validate the core premise established in the Introduction: in specialized religious information environments, user trust is fundamentally driven by institutional accountability rather than raw information volume. The institutional content validation item achieved the highest individual score (93.8%), directly confirming that embedding a mandatory draft-review-publication workflow solves the problem of unverified digital references. This strong alignment demonstrates that technological functionality and institutional curation must operate as an integrated system to ensure reference authority.

The prominent rating awarded to institutional validation (93.8%) provides critical empirical insight for RQ2. In specialized digital library contexts, user confidence is fundamentally rooted in institutional trust and clear content provenance. While general digital library evaluations often treat information quality as an intrinsic property of metadata (Alzahrani et al., 2019; DeLone & McLean, 2003), religious counselors view quality through the lens of institutional accountability and authoritative approval.

Digital religious communication often struggles with unverified assertions and fragmented authority across digital platforms (Choirin et al., 2024; Tsuria et al., 2024). By embedding a mandatory draft–review–publication workflow, e-Maktabah operationalizes content curation as an active governance safeguard (Pennycook & Rand, 2021; Zareef & Jabeen, 2025). This institutional review mechanism provides counselors with high confidence that retrieved references align with official guidance. Nevertheless, user perceptions of validity do not replace the need for ongoing, objective content audits by qualified subject specialists to verify historical, legal, and textual accuracy.

Perceived Usefulness and Organizational Integration

Corroborating the practical gap highlighted in the Introduction, the high score for Perceived Usefulness (92.3%) confirms that e-Maktabah successfully resolves the fragmentation of reference sources previously faced by counselors. By consolidating validated collections, smart search, and offline reading into a single architecture, the platform directly improves daily counseling preparation and field-level information retrieval efficiency.

Perceived usefulness obtained the highest aggregate evaluation, at 92.3%. Participants particularly valued the application’s capacity to accelerate reference searching and support religious-counseling activities. This result suggests that the perceived value of the prototype arose primarily from its relevance to immediate work tasks: consolidating distributed references, simplifying retrieval, and making approved materials available through one platform.

The high score for Perceived Usefulness (92.3%) underscores e-Maktabah’s practical utility in accelerating reference discovery for community counseling tasks (Abdul Rahman & Mohezar, 2020; Pourjahanshahi et al., 2023; Rafique et al., 2021). However, the lower score for institutional integration (90.0%) indicates that software availability alone does not guarantee organizational embedding. Sustainable adoption requires formal Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), clear administrative delegation for review boards, legal copyright management, and continuous professional training (Hermawan, 2025).

Table 4. Interpretive Synthesis of Key Findings

Principal Finding	Contextual Interpretation	Information Science Implication	Required Follow-Up Action
100% Functional Test Pass Rate	Core client/admin functions operated correctly in trial	Functional conformity is necessary but insufficient for adoption	Conduct load, security, and accessibility testing
High Content Validation Score (93.8%)	Users heavily value administrative verification of materials	Provenance and institutional authority drive perceived quality	Formulate explicit, rubrics-based review guidelines
High Perceived Usefulness (92.3%)	Application accelerates reference retrieval for daily tasks	Specialized tools must align directly with practical work workflows	Perform longitudinal usage and adoption tracking
Lower Ecosystem Integration (90.0%)	Technical tool exists prior to complete organizational policy	System adoption requires formal institutional policy and SOPs	Establish official Ministry SOPs and user training

To achieve long-term organizational integration, the implementation of e-Maktabah must move beyond technical deployment toward institutionalized operational frameworks. Table 5 details the key governance pillars required for Ministry adoption:

Table 5. Core Governance Pillars for Institutional e-Maktabah Integration

Pillar & Icon	Operational Focus	Actionable Institutional Strategy
Institutional SOPs	Standardized Workflows	Draft and formalize official Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) governing document ingestion, review cycles, and approval delegation.
Editorial Board	Peer Verification	Formalize an expert review board comprising senior Islamic scholars and certified librarians to conduct textual and historical validation.
Legal & Copyright	IP Compliance	Implement copyright protocols ensuring all digital uploads comply with public-domain, Open Access, or explicit publisher licenses.
Professional Training	Counselor Empowerment	Conduct structured digital literacy workshops for religious counselors to optimize usage of smart search and offline functionality.
Infrastructure Readiness	Connectivity & Backup	Establish redundant cloud backup strategies and optimize offline synchronization protocols for low-bandwidth rural field sites.
Security & Access Control	System Integrity	Enforce role-based access controls (RBAC), regular vulnerability scans, and encrypted user data management.
Longitudinal Audit	Continuous Improvement	Deploy automated analytics to log continuous usage metrics, monitoring search queries and popular references to refine content curation.

Limitations and Future Research

Although all nine black-box scenarios were passed, this result indicates only initial functional compliance with the design specifications and should not be interpreted as evidence of system maturity or readiness for large-scale deployment. Black-box testing verifies expected behavior from the user's perspective but does not assess performance under concurrent load, resilience to security threats, or sustained use in field conditions.

Several methodological limitations should also be acknowledged. First, the user evaluation relied on descriptive aggregate statistics drawn from a purposively selected sample of 40 participants in a single regency. This limits the generalizability of the findings and precluded the use of structural equation modeling to test the relationships proposed in the TAM and IS Success frameworks. Second, the analysis was restricted to aggregated scores, which prevented advanced psychometric assessment of instrument reliability. Moreover, some dimensions, such as Service Quality, were measured with only a few items. Third, the evaluation captured immediate, self-reported perceptions rather than long-term usage logs or objective indicators of counseling effectiveness, and it did not include a comparison with existing reference practices. Consequently, the findings should be regarded as preliminary indications of acceptability rather than conclusive evidence of impact.

4. CONCLUSION

This study successfully developed, functionally tested, and preliminary evaluated e-Maktabah, an institution-based digital Islamic library prototype tailored for religious counselors at the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Karawang Regency. Developed using Flutter and Firebase, the system successfully integrates core user features including categorized browsing, smart search, and offline reading with a mandatory administrative draft-review-publication workflow to guarantee content authority. Black-box functional testing confirmed 100% operational conformity across nine key test scenarios, establishing technical stability. Furthermore, preliminary descriptive evaluation among 40 targeted participants yielded an overall score of 3.68 out of 4.00 (92.0%), with Perceived Usefulness scoring highest (92.3%) and institutional content validation achieving the highest individual item rating (93.8%). These results demonstrate that embedding institutional content governance directly into digital library software significantly enhances perceived reference reliability and practical utility for specialized professional counseling tasks, providing a scalable model for authoritative digital religious information systems.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Iwan Hermawan: Writing original draft preparation. Ideas; formulation or evolution of overarching research goals and aims.
Oyoh Bariah: Supervision. **Nono Heryana:** Supervision. **Jajam Haerul Jaman:** Supervision. **Siswadi:** Supervision.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

We state that there are no known conflicts of interest linked with this publication, and that there has been no significant financial assistance for this work that could have influenced its outcome.

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