

Research Article

Online Ruqyah in The Digital Age: A Tawhid Based Critical Analysis from Al-Qur'an and Hadits

Nur Fathin Hakim

Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Ali Bin Abi Thalib Surabaya
E-mail: nurfathinhakim@gmail.com

Maritsa Zein

Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Ali Bin Abi Thalib Surabaya
E-mail: maritsazeiin@gmail.com

Agung Pranoto Kadiatmaja

Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Ali Bin Abi Thalib Surabaya
E-mail: agungpranotokadiatmaja@stai-ali.ac.id

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Abstract

This study critically examines the phenomenon of online Ruqyah in the digital era through a Tawhid based theological framework derived from the Qur'an, Hadith, and classical works such as Kitab At-Tauhid by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab. It explores whether this digital adaptation of spiritual healing aligns with the principles of Ruqyah Shar'iyah and safeguards the purity of Tawhid al-Uluhiyyah. Employing a qualitative library research approach, the study analyzes Qur'anic texts, Prophetic traditions, and scholarly literature on digital Islam. Findings indicate that while online Ruqyah enhances accessibility and serves as a medium for da'wah and spiritual education, it fails to fulfill the essential methodological (kayfiyyah) elements prescribed in the Sunnah particularly Masah (wiping) and Nafth (blowing) thereby challenging its theological validity as affirmed by scholars such as Shaykh Al-Fawzan. The digital mediation of supplication, absent during the Prophet's era, further risks bid'ah (religious innovation) and dilutes the sincerity (ikhlās) and tawakkul central to authentic worship. Nevertheless, the study underscores the need for empirical engagement with users' experiences to evaluate whether digital Ruqyah may function as a complementary form of guided self Ruqyah and an evolving expression of faith within contemporary digital religiosity.

Keywords: Ruqyah, Tawhid, Digital Religion.

INTRODUCTION

The digital era has profoundly transformed the landscape of Islamic religious life. Social media and online platforms have become new arenas for the dissemination of faith-based values and spiritual practices (Campbell, 2020a). Among the emerging developments in this context is *digital Ruqyah* a form of spiritual healing based on Qur'anic recitations and Prophetic supplications delivered through online media such as YouTube, Instagram, and mobile applications. This phenomenon reflects the adaptive nature of Islamic traditions to technological change, as observed in various Muslim societies around the world, from the Middle East to Western diasporic communities (Bunt, 2018a).

In principle, *Ruqyah* has a legitimate foundation in the Qur'an and Sunnah, as affirmed by the Prophet ﷺ: "There is no harm in *Ruqyah* so long as it does not involve *shirk (polytheism)*" (Rahman, 1980). However, its adaptation into digital spaces has generated diverse responses among scholars and researchers. Some view it as a positive innovation that broadens access to spiritual care, especially for those unable to meet practitioners in person (El-Gohary, 2021a). Others express concern that the digitalization of *Ruqyah* may introduce theological irregularities particularly when commercial motives, exaggerated visual effects, or self-promotion begin to dominate religious content (Al-Azami, 2019).

The emergence of *digital Ruqyah* also signifies a new pattern in contemporary Islamic religiosity, where spiritual interaction is no longer confined to physical proximity but mediated by technology and algorithms. This transformation presents both opportunities and challenges. On one hand, technology enables Qur'anic healing and *da'wah* to reach a global audience, reinforcing remembrance of Allah (*dhikrullah*) in the digital age (El-Gohary, 2021a). On the other hand, it raises theological questions concerning the preservation of *Tawhid al-Uluhiyyah* and *tawakkul* the absolute dependence on Allah alone. These questions are particularly relevant given that classical *Ruqyah Shar'iyah* prescribes specific methodological requirements (*kayfiyyah*) involving direct physical interaction between the *rāqī* (healer) and the *marqī* (patient), such as *masah* (wiping) and *nafth* (light blowing) (Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, t.t.).

In this regard, classical theological works such as *Kitab At-Tauhid* by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab provide an essential framework for assessing the alignment of digital *Ruqyah* with the purity of worship (Ibn Abd al-Wahhab, t.t.). Contemporary scholars remain divided: while some argue that digital mediation does not alter the essence of worship if the intention (*niyyah*) and method remain sound (El-Gohary, 2021a), others caution that it may blur the boundaries between devotion and performance, potentially weakening the believer's conviction (*yaqīn*) and sincerity (Al-Azami, 2019).

Although *digital Ruqyah* has gained widespread attention, academic research addressing its theological and methodological dimensions remains limited. Most previous studies have focused on its psychological or sociocultural impact, leaving the question of its alignment with *Tawhid* and *Ruqyah Shar'iyah* methodology largely unexplored (Campbell, 2020b). Therefore, this study aims to critically analyze the practice of *online Ruqyah* in the digital age through the theological framework of *Tawhid al-Uluhiyyah* and the methodological standards of *Ruqyah Shar'iyah* derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah. The main research focuses are:

- (1) to evaluate the theological validity of *digital Ruqyah* from the perspective of *Tawhid* and the sincerity of worship (*tawakkul* and *yaqīn*)
- (2) to examine the conformity of its methodology (*kayfiyyah*) with Prophetic

practice, particularly concerning *masah* (wiping) and *nafth* (light blowing)
(3) to assess the impact of technological mediation on the purity of worship and the potential emergence of religious innovation (*bid'ah*) in contemporary spiritual practice.

Furthermore, this study seeks to identify the possible constructive role of *digital Ruqyah* as a means of *da'wah* and guided *self-Ruqyah*, provided it remains anchored in the principles of *Tawhid*. In doing so, it contributes to the broader discourse on Islamic theology in the digital age and clarifies the distinction between beneficial innovation and practices that risk compromising the integrity of Islamic monotheism.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative library-based research design, relying entirely on the review, interpretation, and critical analysis of written sources. These include classical Islamic texts, scholarly books, peer reviewed academic journals, and credible digital publications. The primary objective is to analyze and understand the phenomenon of online Ruqyah through a theological-normative lens, with specific attention to its relationship with the concept of Tawhid in Islam and its implications for preserving doctrinal purity.

The primary data consist of the *Qur'an*, authentic *Hadith*, and foundational theological works such as *Kitab At-Tauhid* by Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, along with later commentaries by scholars including Al-Uthaymeen and Al-Albani. The secondary data draw from contemporary studies on digital Islam and online religiosity, notably those of (Bunt, 2018c) and related literature exploring the intersection of faith and technology.

Data collection followed a documentary research model involving the identification, classification, and analysis of relevant materials that discuss *Ruqyah*, monotheism, and digital religious practice. The data were examined using thematic content analysis, a qualitative technique for identifying recurring themes, meanings, and theological patterns within both classical and contemporary contexts.

Methodologically, this study adopts a theological-normative approach, evaluating *online Ruqyah* in accordance with the principles of Islamic monotheism (Tawhid) to ensure that all interpretations align with divine revelation (wahy) and Prophetic tradition (Sunnah) (Hasan, 2008). This approach allows for a critical synthesis of existing literature to generate meaningful insights into digital religiosity from a faith-based perspective.

However, as a library-based qualitative study, this research is limited by its lack of empirical field data and participant perspectives, which restricts its ability to assess the experiential or psychological dimensions of *digital Ruqyah* practice. Future studies could adopt mixed-methods research combining theological-normative analysis with ethnographic interviews, digital ethnography, or survey-based approaches to examine user engagement, spiritual efficacy, and the broader socio-religious impact of *online Ruqyah* within Muslim communities. Such empirical extensions would enrich the academic dialogue on digital Islam, providing a more comprehensive understanding of how faith and technology interact in shaping contemporary Islamic spirituality.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Conceptual Review of *Ruqyah Shar'iyah*

a. Definition, Types, and Objectives of *Ruqyah*

Etymologically, *Ruqyah* means a plea or supplication for protection

through recitation of Qur'anic verses or prescribed supplications. In Shar'i terminology, *Ruqyah Shar'iyah* refers to therapeutic recitations sanctioned by the Qur'an and Sunnah, performed with the conviction that healing comes solely from Allah. The Prophet ﷺ identified three principal forms of healing: *Ruqyah Shar'iyah*, *Thabi'iyah* (natural medicine such as honey or black seed), and the combination of both approaches (Arni, 2021, hlm. 6).

The Prophet ﷺ practiced three types of healing within the *Thibbun Nabawi* system: *Ruqyah Shar'iyah*, *Thabi'iyah* (consuming honey, dates, *habbatus sauda*), and *Al-Jam'u baina huma* (combining both)(Arni, 2021, hlm. 6). The objectives of Ruqyah extend beyond curing ailments caused by sorcery, envy, or Jinn. It also functions as a means of spiritual fortification and psychological relief. Empirical evidence and scholarly discourse have shown its relevance as complementary therapy for physical diseases such as diabetes, lung infections, and cancer (Muksi, Faqih, Kholil, & Fauriz, 2025, hlm. 34). Hence, Ruqyah operates at the intersection of spiritual, psychological, and physical healing.

b. Legal Basis and Conditions for Valid Ruqyah

In its early period, *Ruqyah* was initially prohibited by the Prophet ﷺ due to its association with practices containing elements of shirk (polytheism). However, this prohibition was later lifted with strict stipulations. The 'illat (legal cause) for prohibiting *Ruqyah* is the presence of shirk. This is confirmed in the following Hadith: It was narrated from 'Auf bin Malik who said:

"We used to perform *Ruqyah* during the Jahiliyyah, and we said, 'O Messenger of Allah, what do you think about that?' He said: 'Show me your *Ruqyahs*. There is nothing wrong with *Ruqyah* as long as it does not contain shirk.'"(an Naisaburi, 1987).

If the recitation consists of Qur'anic verses, *al ismu al mu'adham* (The Great Name of Allah), or recitations transmitted from the Prophet ﷺ, and the performer holds firm conviction that healing is solely by Allah's permission, then the practice is permissible (Mu'awanah, 2022, hlm. 56). The conditions for valid *Ruqyah Shar'iyah* are: (1) using Qur'anic verses/Allah's names/Prophetic prayers; (2) being performed in Arabic; (3) the meaning must be understandable; (4) it must contain no prohibited elements (e.g., seeking help from others besides Allah); and (5) firm conviction that the healing effect is solely due to Allah's permission (Arni, 2021, hlm. 9).

Digital Adaptation and Challenges of Online Ruqyah

a. The Online Ruqyah Phenomenon

The era of digital disruption has led to adaptations in spiritual services, notably the emergence of *Ruqyah Shar'iyah* conducted remotely via online channels. This phenomenon is spearheaded by *da'wah* figures who utilize social media, such as Ustadz Muhammad Faizar in Indonesia (Nabila, 2024, hlm. 3). The practice typically takes the form of recorded videos featuring the recitation of Qur'anic verses and *ma'tsur* prayers (Unik Hanifah Salsabila, Adinda Dika Insani, Ramadhani Tri Astuti, Nenchi Nenchi, & Vika Meila Sintia, 2024, hlm. 133). The primary goal of this online *Ruqyah* is education, the affirmation of *Tawhid*, and combating TBC (Tahayul, Bid'ah, Churofat), ensuring the content is generally free from shirk (Unik Hanifah Salsabila dkk., 2024, hlm. 134).

While the online *ruqyah* phenomenon has been studied in terms of *da'wah* and communication, studies analyzing its methodological validity (*kayfiyyah*) from a *Fiqh* and *Tawhid* perspective remain limited. This research, therefore, aims

to fill this gap by conducting a critical analysis of the Prophet's *ruqyah* methodology (*kayfiyyah*) as the criterion for assessing this contemporary digital practice.

b. Critical Analysis Based on Tawhid al-Uluhiyyah

The concept of *Tawhid al-Uluhiyyah* -the singularity of Allah in terms of worship- serves as the fundamental premise of *Ruqyah Shar'iyah* (Suci Jelita & Rahman, 2023, hlm. 2122). Valid *Ruqyah* must be free from shirk and established upon the perfect faith that healing is *minallah* (from Allah) (Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb, 2011, hlm. 51).

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah affirmed that complete healing through *ruqyah* is achieved only when supported by perfect faith and strong conviction (*yaqīn*) (Wahyudin, 2022, hlm. 67). In the context of online *ruqyah*, the *rāqī*'s failure to fulfill the physical *kayfiyyah*, such as *naftḥ* and *masah*, risks inducing doubt (*syak*) in the *marqī* regarding the process's validity. This, in turn, may weaken their *yaqīn*, shifting their reliance from Allah's permission to the automated effect of the recording or technology.

Discussion and Critical Analysis (Critique of Kayfiyyah Methodology)

a. Fiqh Criticism on Ruqyah Kayfiyyah (Physical Methodology)

The fundamental critique against online *ruqyah* centers on the failure to fulfill the physical and interactive requirements (*kayfiyyah*) stipulated in the Sunnah (Al-Aql, 2016: 52). *Ruqyah Shar'iyah* inherently involves direct physical interaction (Al-Aql, 2016: 54), as evidenced by the Prophet's practice:

Narrated to us 'Abdullāh al-Qa'nabī, from Mālik, from Yazīd ibn Ḥuṣayfah, that 'Amr ibn 'Abdullāh ibn Ka'b al-Sulamī informed him, that Nāfi' ibn Jubayr informed him, from 'Uthmān ibn Abī al-Āṣ, that he came to the Prophet (ﷺ) and said: "I have a pain that is nearly killing me." The Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: "Wipe your body with your right hand seven times, and say: A'ūdhu bi-izzatillāhi wa qudratihi min sharri mā ajid (I seek refuge in the might of Allah and His power from the evil that I feel)." 'Uthmān said: "I did that, and Allah removed the pain I had. I have never ceased commanding my family and others to do it." Narrated by Abū Dāwūd, No. 3891, and Muslim, No. 2202. Also recorded by Ahmad, No. 12647. (Muksi dkk., 2025, hlm. 43–44).

The analysis of the Prophet's *Sunnah* demonstrates that *kayfiyyah* (methodology) is not merely verbal but involves essential physical interaction. The two primary physical elements that digital media fails to replicate are *Masah* (Touch/Wiping) and *Naftḥ* (Light Blowing). These elements are consistently mentioned in the Hadiths regarding the procedures of *ruqyah*, including:

b. Ruqyah Methods Requiring Presence and Physical Action

1. Ruqyah with Recitation Alone (Al-Qirā'ah waḥdah)

Although solely recitation, it requires the *rāqī* direct presence at the side of the patient. This is supported by the Hadith narrated by Aisha:

"Take away the suffering, O Lord of mankind. Cure, for You are the Curer. There is no cure except Your cure, a cure that leaves no disease behind." Narrated by Al-Bukhārī (5657) and Muslim (2191). (Al-Aql, 2016, hlm. 52).

2. Ruqyah with Recitation and Naftḥ (Light Blowing)

This method explicitly requires the transmission of breath (*naftḥ laṭīf bi la*

rīq) from the *rāqī* to the *marqī*.

"Verily, the Prophet ﷺ used to blow (*yanfuth*) in *Ruqyah*." Narrated by Al-Bukhārī (5743) and Muslim (2191). (Al-Aql, 2016: 53).

3. *Ruqyah* with Recitation and *Masah* (Wiping/Touching)

This method explicitly necessitates direct physical touch (*masah bi yadihi al-yumnā*) on the patient.

"Verily, the Messenger of Allah ﷺ used to seek protection for some of his family, he would wipe with his right hand and say: 'O Allah, Lord of mankind, take away the suffering, cure, for You are the Curer...'" Narrated by Al-Nasā'ī in Al-Kubrā (7506) and Ibn Mājah (3528), authenticated by Al-Albānī. (Al-Aql, 2016, hlm. 54).

4. *Ruqyah* with Physical Mediums and *Nafth*

This method requires the physical processing of material (earth and water) that is blown upon and applied directly to the patient.

"Remove the suffering, O Lord of mankind, from Thabit bin Qais bin Shammās. Then he took earth from Bathhan, placed it in a vessel, blew water upon it, and then poured it onto the patient." Narrated by Al-Bukhārī in At-Tārīkh al-Kabīr (3387) and Abū Dāwūd (3885), authenticated by Ibn Bāz. (Al-Aql, 2016, hlm. 58).

c. Fiqh Criticism on the Absence of Kayfiyyah

The analysis of these Hadiths demonstrates that *Ruqyah* is a ritual requiring presence, touch, blowing, or the use of physical matter. Reliance on *masah* and *nafth* creates a legal barrier that digital media cannot overcome (Al-Aql, 2016, hlm. 53–54). Since media only transmits audio/visuals, it fails to replicate the definitive physical transfer (Al-Aql, 2016, hlm. 54).

This incomplete *kayfiyyah* is the basis for the fatwa of contemporary scholars. *Syaikh Saalih bin Fawzaan al-Fawzaan* explicitly states:

"This is a void (*bātil*) action. *Ruqyah* must be conducted directly upon the patient... As for *Ruqyah* from a distance through media or websites, this has no origin (*aṣl*)... This is not remote *Ruqyah*; it will not become a *Ruqyah*." (Al-Fawzān, 2007, hlm. 515).

Therefore, although online *Ruqyah* functions as an innovative medium for *da'wah* and the dissemination of *Tawhidic* education, its ritual legitimacy remains theologically questionable due to the absence of direct physical elements (*kayfiyyah*) as prescribed in the Prophetic tradition. The physical components of *Ruqyah* such as *masah* (wiping) and *nafth* (gentle blowing) are not merely symbolic gestures, but rather integral aspects of the authentic *Ruqyah Shar'īyyah* as practiced by the Prophet ﷺ. These actions embody both spiritual transmission and physical interaction between the *rāqī* (healer) and the *marqī* (patient), reflecting sincerity (*ikhhlās*), reliance upon Allah (*tawakkul*), and adherence to the Prophetic methodology.

Contemporary *Fiqh* authorities, including Shaykh Ṣāliḥ al-Fawzān and Shaykh Ibn Bāz, emphasize that *Ruqyah Shar'īyyah* must be performed directly upon the patient, involving physical presence and recitation accompanied by sincere intention and faith that healing comes solely from Allah. According to their view, performing *Ruqyah* remotely through digital media, recorded audio, or live online sessions has no valid basis (*aṣl*) in the Qur'an or Sunnah. The absence of physical engagement renders the ritual incomplete in its methodological form and diminishes its authenticity, thereby invalidating it (*bātil*) from a theological

standpoint.

Nevertheless, from an educational and spiritual perspective, online *Ruqyah* continues to play a valuable complementary role within contemporary Muslim life. Through digital platforms, Qur'anic recitations and *du'ā ma'thūr* can reach audiences across diverse regions, including individuals who lack access to qualified *rāqīs* or religious institutions. In this sense, online *Ruqyah* may be viewed as a complementary rather than a substitutive practice a supportive means that encourages faith, reinforces *tawakkul*, and promotes awareness of divine healing without claiming the ritual authority of traditional *Ruqyah Shar'iyah*.

Thus, while online *Ruqyah* does not fulfill the Prophetic *kayfiyyah* required for ritual validity, it still serves as an instrument for *da'wah* and theological education. Its primary function lies not in ritual performance but in spiritual reinforcement and the propagation of Tawhidic understanding. When conducted within proper scholarly boundaries and without replacing the authentic Prophetic model, digital *Ruqyah* can contribute meaningfully to the preservation of faith and the dissemination of Islamic monotheism in the digital age.

CONCLUSION

The critical theological examination of online ruqyah reveals a fundamental tension between its digital accessibility and the *Shar'ī* authenticity required for valid spiritual practice. While the recitations themselves often adhere to *Tawhid* principles by avoiding *shirk*, the absence of *kayfiyyah* (physical methodology) elements such as *Masah* (wiping) and *Naftḥ* (blowing) as prescribed in the *Sunnah* renders the practice *bāṭil* (invalid) according to leading contemporary *Fiqh* scholars.

The study concludes that although online ruqyah may serve as an effective instrument for *da'wah*, education, and psychological reassurance, it does not satisfy the normative requirements of *Ruqyah Shar'iyah* as a complete and sanctioned act of worship. Furthermore, technological mediation risks compromising *Tawhid al-Ulūhiyyah*, as reliance on recordings or digital intermediaries may diminish *tawakkul* (complete dependence upon Allah) and introduce subtle forms of *bid'ah* (innovation) into worship.

To address these challenges, policy-level recommendations are essential. Islamic authorities, religious educators, and digital developers should collaborate to establish ethical and theological guidelines for producing Islamic healing content and digital *Ruqyah* applications. Such policies should emphasize theological supervision (*murāja'ah 'aqīdiyyah*), transparent intent (*niyyah*), and adherence to *Shar'ī* boundaries to prevent commercialization and doctrinal distortion.

In a global context, further research should explore how Muslim communities in diverse regions including the Middle East, Southeast Asia, and Western diasporas negotiate the balance between faith and technology in their spiritual practices. Cross-cultural studies and mixed-methods research could evaluate user motivations, theological perceptions, and socio digital impacts of online *Ruqyah* to inform both academic discourse and policy formation.

Ultimately, the preservation of *Tawhid* in every mode of worship whether physical or virtual must remain the guiding principle. Any integration of technology into spiritual healing should be carefully managed to ensure that divine unity, sincerity (*ikhlas*), and *tawakkul* remain uncompromised, safeguarding Islamic spirituality in the digital age.

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