Research Article

The Phenomenon of Brain Rot in the Digital Era: The Challenge of Shallow Entertainment and the Crisis of Religiosity from Ibn Rushd's Perspective

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Abstract: This study examines the phenomenon of *brain rot* in the digital era as a form of intellectual and spiritual degradation caused by excessive exposure to shallow entertainment. The research explores how digital media and algorithm-driven content reshape human cognition, attention, and moral awareness, leading to a decline in critical thinking and reflective religiosity. Using a literature-based qualitative approach, the study analyzes the ideas of Ibn Rushd regarding the harmony between intellect (*'aql*) and soul (*nafs*) as a philosophical framework to interpret this crisis. The findings reveal that uncontrolled digital entertainment fosters dependence on instant pleasure, weakens rational capacity, and contributes to a superficial understanding of religion. Therefore, restoring balance between reason and spirituality, as emphasized by Ibn Rushd, becomes essential to counter the negative effects of digital culture and to reorient entertainment as a medium for intellectual and moral development in contemporary society.

Keywords: Brain Rot; Digital Culture; Digital Era; Religiosity Crisis; Shallow Entertainment

1. Introduction

The digital revolution has fundamentally transformed the way humans interact, think, and seek meaning in life. With the proliferation of social media, short-form video platforms, and algorithm-driven entertainment, human attention has become a scarce and highly contested commodity. What was once a space for creativity and intellectual growth has now shifted into a culture of distraction. This condition, often referred to as brain rot, represents the decline of cognitive and moral capacities caused by excessive exposure to shallow and overstimulating digital content. In essence, it reflects a deeper crisis of modern consciousness: the inability to sustain meaningful attention, reflection, and spiritual awareness amid a flood of trivial amusements. As Postman warned in Amusing Ourselves to Death, the problem of modern society is not oppression through fear, but paralysis through pleasure a civilization entertaining itself into passivity and indifference [1].

The phenomenon of shallow entertainment in this context is not a trivial cultural trend but a manifestation of how digital capitalism commodifies human emotions and desires. Adorno and Horkheimer describe this as the "culture industry," where entertainment is manufactured not to enlighten but to manipulate. The logic of profit transforms pleasure into a mass-produced product that dulls critical thought and pacifies the mind. Consequently,

people no longer consume entertainment as an occasional form of relaxation but as a constant psychological need that shapes their perception of reality. In this industrialized entertainment landscape, truth and meaning are replaced by spectacle, and reflection gives way to sensation. This marks a dangerous shift in human civilization: the dominance of emotion over reason, and consumption over contemplation [2].

The attention economy intensifies this problem by exploiting human cognitive limitations. Platforms such as TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts utilize algorithms that reward short attention spans and fast-paced visual stimulation. This digital architecture trains the brain to crave instant gratification and discourages deep engagement with complex ideas. Citton explains this as an ecology of attention crisis, where the digital environment reprograms human focus to suit algorithmic interests. The more time users spend scrolling, the more fragmented their thinking becomes. This erosion of attentional depth not only weakens individual cognition but also undermines collective intellectual growth, creating a society that values speed over substance, and virality over truth [3].

From a neurological standpoint, the brain rot phenomenon is closely linked to the overstimulation of the brain's reward system. The repetitive consumption of short and emotionally charged content triggers the release of dopamine, producing temporary pleasure and dependency. Over time, this pattern alters the brain's capacity for self-regulation and long-term focus. Adam Alter demonstrates how digital platforms are intentionally designed to exploit this neurological loop, creating behavioral addiction similar to gambling. This addiction to shallow entertainment leads to emotional desensitization, social detachment, and intellectual stagnation. The modern individual becomes trapped in an endless cycle of consumption without reflection a passive observer of life's images rather than an active seeker of truth [4].

The implications of this phenomenon extend beyond the intellectual domain into the moral and spiritual dimensions of human existence. The constant pursuit of entertainment fosters a culture of immediacy that weakens ethical sensitivity and spiritual awareness. The digital individual, habituated to instant gratification, struggles to engage in practices that require patience, contemplation, and self-discipline all of which are essential components of religious and moral development. Carr emphasizes that the brain's neuroplasticity allows it to adapt to fast information processing but at the cost of deep, reflective thought. As a result, modern society faces not only a cognitive decline but also a spiritual vacuum, where religiosity becomes superficial and ritualistic rather than reflective and transformative [5].

From the perspective of Ibn Rushd (Averroes), this condition signifies the imbalance between the intellect ('aql) and the soul (nafs). Ibn Rushd emphasized that human perfection lies in the harmony between rational contemplation and moral virtue. When entertainment culture prioritizes sensory pleasure over intellectual and spiritual pursuits, the nafs al-ammārah (the commanding soul) dominates, enslaving reason and obscuring the path toward truth. In such a state, religiosity becomes fragile not because faith has disappeared, but because the capacity for deep understanding and moral reasoning has atrophied. Thus, the phenomenon of brain rot in the digital era can be interpreted, through Ibn Rushd's lens, as the decline of the intellective soul caused by the domination of sensory stimuli over rational reflection.

Therefore, the issue is not merely about technology or entertainment per se, but about how modern humans choose to engage with them. When digital entertainment is no longer guided by ethical and intellectual purposes, it transforms into an instrument of moral decay and spiritual negligence. This research seeks to explore the phenomenon of brain rot as both a cognitive and moral crisis, examining how shallow entertainment reshapes the human mind and spirit in the context of Ibn Rushd's philosophical framework. By integrating classical Islamic rationalism with contemporary media critique, this study aims to reveal how restoring

balance between intellect and desire could serve as a pathway to addressing the spiritual and intellectual degradation of the digital age.

2. Proposed Method

This research is a literature study, with data collection carried out through the examination of books, articles, and other sources relevant to the topic under discussion. Once the data were collected, the researcher conducted a selection process to identify materials that were most relevant to the study. The selected data were then analyzed using content analysis techniques, followed by the final step of drawing conclusions.

3. Results and Discussion
The Phenomenon Of Brain Rot in The Digital Era

The phenomenon of brain rot in the digital era describes a decline in cognitive abilities and mental health caused by excessive consumption of meaningless or low-quality content. Carr introduced the concept of brain rot as a negative consequence of excessive internet use, which alters the way the human brain processes information [5]. According to Carr, the ease of accessing information encourages the brain to operate on a superficial level. This leads to a habit of quickly switching from one piece of information to another without achieving deep understanding [5]. Carr highlights the phenomenon of information overload, where individuals receive an overwhelming amount of information without adequate time to process or evaluate it, thereby reducing their ability to think critically and analytically [5]. This habit fosters an instant and shallow mindset [6], making it challenging for the brain to tackle problems that require deep thought and problem-solving [4], [5], [6].

Several symptoms are commonly observed in digital users experiencing brain rot [7] . The first is a decline in cognitive abilities [9], where users struggle with concentration [10], experience memory deterioration [11], and find it difficult to process new information [11] . The second symptom is decreased productivity [12] , marked by challenges in completing tasks and an increase in procrastination [14]. The third symptom is a sense of lethargy and lack of motivation [15], as users feel trapped by boredom and a lack of energy [16]. Fourth, users may experience sleep disturbances, leading to poor sleep quality [17]. Carr outlines several indicators of brain rot. The first is a decline in deep reading ability. Brain rot conditions the brain to favor fast and superficial reading over deep reading, impairing the ability to understand complex information. The second indicator is the fragmentation of attention due to the habit of multitasking, which makes it difficult for the brain to focus on a single task for an extended period [5].

The third is memory impairment, where the brain becomes less effective at transferring information from short-term to long-term memory due to overreliance on search engines and digital devices [17] . The fourth is a loss of capacity for deep thinking, as the brain becomes accustomed to shallow information consumption, diminishing the ability to reflect deeply and think creatively [19]. The fifth indicator is the addiction to digital stimulation [20]. The internet is designed to provide constant stimulation, making digital users struggle to feel satisfied without distractions from their devices [20] . The impacts of brain rot on digital users can be significant. First, it increases the risk of depression and anxiety, as exposure to negative online content heightens emotional distress [22]. Second, it leads to a decline in quality of life, including reduced satisfaction in work or studies [22] . Third, it disrupts social relationships by diminishing face-to-face communication skills [24]. Addressing these challenges is essential for fostering healthier cognitive and emotional habits in the digital era [25].

The Meaning of Shallow Entertainment

In the digital era, entertainment has become a dominant element in modern human life. Unlimited access to social media, short videos, and visual content has transformed

entertainment from merely a means of relaxation into a part of lifestyle and even social identity. However, the emergence of superficial forms of entertainment has raised concerns about the quality of human life. Shallow entertainment can be defined as a form of pleasure that focuses on sensational, visual, and instant stimuli, lacking depth of value, moral meaning, or intellectual contribution. It is temporary, repetitive, and often distances individuals from self-reflection. According to Neil Postman, modern entertainment culture tends to reduce the quality of public thought by replacing reflective spaces with spectacles that gratify emotion rather than intellect. Thus, shallow entertainment is not merely a form of pleasure but a representation of a shift in values from the pursuit of meaning to the pursuit of sensation [1].

The characteristics of shallow entertainment can be observed in terms of its substance, form, and psychological effects on users. Substantively, this kind of entertainment usually contains little educational, moral, or reflective value. It is designed merely to trigger laughter, surprise, or momentary admiration without encouraging the audience to think critically. In this context, content such as "pranks," celebrity gossip, extreme challenges, or viral dramas exemplifies shallow entertainment that prioritizes emotion over meaning. Adorno and Horkheimer describe this phenomenon as the "culture industry," in which entertainment production is driven by market logic seeking profit and public amusement rather than the cultivation of cultural values or critical awareness. Consequently, entertainment loses its social function as a medium for moral education and transforms into a commodified product sold on a mass scale. Hence, one of the main features of shallow entertainment is the commercialization of pleasure detached from the noble values of culture [2].

In terms of form, shallow entertainment is characterized by short duration, speed, and strong visual appeal. In the era of the attention economy, human attention has become a commodity contested by social media algorithms. Viral content is not the one that offers depth, but the one that captures attention in just a few seconds. Platforms such as TikTok or YouTube Shorts encourage users to engage in endless scrolling, creating a consumption cycle that diminishes the brain's ability to focus and contemplate. Yves Citton refers to this phenomenon as the "ecology of attention," in which human attention has been reduced to a resource exploited by algorithmic systems. As a result, users experience cognitive fatigue and lose the ability to enjoy long-term thinking processes. This pattern produces a fast-paced yet shallow society one that knows much but understands little. Entertainment, which should serve as a space for mental refreshment, has instead become an instrument of distraction that dulls both emotional sensitivity and intellectual awareness [3].

From a psychological perspective, shallow entertainment operates through the brain's biochemical mechanisms, particularly the dopamine system that regulates feelings of pleasure. Fast, surprising, and humorous content stimulates dopamine release, creating a sense of instant gratification. However, as the body becomes accustomed to such stimuli, users constantly seek new entertainment to achieve the same level of pleasure a condition known as hedonic adaptation. Adam Alter explains that digital technology and social media are deliberately designed to make users addicted by providing continuously updated short-term pleasures. This creates psychological dependence on instant entertainment, reduces one's ability to enjoy simple experiences, and weakens mental resilience against stress. In the long run, this phenomenon not only affects emotional balance but also damages human cognitive structures as the brain becomes conditioned to rapid and shallow thinking. Consequently, modern humans live in a paradox: the more entertainment they consume, the less genuine happiness they experience [4].

The effects of shallow entertainment on social life are significant. It creates a society that values appearance and public recognition more than authenticity. The culture of the performative society thrives in cyberspace, where individuals display happiness, beauty, and false success to gain social validation. Interpersonal relationships thus shift from emotional

closeness to image-based interactions. As a result, honesty, empathy, and depth of communication decline. Digital society becomes more easily provoked by superficial issues, while social solidarity transforms into pseudo-solidarity such as in the phenomenon of cancel culture, where public shaming becomes a form of mass entertainment. This indicates a serious crisis of human values: entertainment that once served to unite people now generates social alienation. Therefore, shallow entertainment not only shapes cultural taste but also directs social behavior toward conformity and collective narcissism [1].

Meanwhile, the intellectual impact of shallow entertainment is equally alarming. In the long term, it leads to a decline in deep thinking and critical reflection. Nicholas Carr asserts that the human brain is plastic and easily adapts to patterns of information consumption. When individuals become accustomed to short and rapid content, their brains lose the ability to process long texts and complex arguments. Consequently, analytical capacity, reasoning, and intellectual creativity decline drastically. In education, this phenomenon is evident when students prefer digital summaries or short videos over reading academic literature. Knowledge thus becomes fragmented, decontextualized, and stripped of its transformative power. If this trend continues, society will face what Carr calls cognitive shallowing a shift from deep thinking to a deceptive surface-level understanding. In this context, shallow entertainment is not merely a matter of cultural aesthetics but a real threat to the quality of intellectual civilization [5].

Furthermore, shallow entertainment also triggers spiritual and moral crises in modern human life. In the classical Islamic philosophical tradition, as explained by Ibn Rushd, the intellect ('aql) and the soul (nafs) must exist in harmony for humans to attain true happiness. When excessive entertainment dominates life, the desires of the soul overpower the intellect, causing individuals to lose the ability to think clearly and act ethically. Entertainment that merely caters to sensory desires distances humans from their intellectual and spiritual purposes. From this perspective, shallow entertainment is not only a contemporary cultural problem but also an existential crisis that signifies the loss of harmony between rationality and spirituality. Therefore, it is essential to reconstruct the meaning of entertainment so that it once again becomes a medium for the development of the soul rather than a mere escape from boredom and life's pressures [2].

Religious Crisis from Ibn Rushd's Perspective

The current religious crisis is often linked to a weakening of rational thinking habits and a decline in in-depth religious understanding. Changes in the way people access information today, particularly the rise of fast-paced and shallow entertainment content, are accelerating the emergence of a phenomenon known as "brain rot," a decline in thinking power and the ability to reflect due to excessive consumption of meaningless information. Studying this crisis is crucial from the perspective of classical Islamic thought, particularly the thinking of Ibn Rushd, who considered reason central to understanding revelation and implementing religious rules[26].

In his study of Ibn Rushd's Philosophy: The Relationship between Reason and Revelation, Kaipal Wahyudi explains that Ibn Rushd considers reason as the basis for evaluating religious truth and revelation. According to Rushd, revelation that is not based on reason will lose its meaning and ability to answer the increasingly complex challenges of the times. In addition, the article Harmony between Sharia and Philosophy (A Study of Ibn Rushd's Thought in the Book of Fasl al-Maqal) shows that for Rushd, sharia and philosophy are not two separate fields, but rather complement each other [26]. Where reason plays a role as a bridge so that religious interpretation remains alive and in accordance with the ever-changing socio-cultural context.

On the other hand, the development of digital media actually exacerbates this problem by making people accustomed to consuming quick and shallow content, thereby reducing the

opportunity for deeper thought. In a recent study on the short- and long-term impacts of digital media use on attention, it was stated that continuous media use and having multiple media outlets open simultaneously can impair a person's ability to focus on reading religious texts or reflecting spiritually. This is also in line with popular media reports that state that the term "brain rot" will be the most popular word in 2024, due to the increasing awareness that accessing unimportant and instant content can weaken a person's mental and intellectual abilities [27].

According to Ibn Rushd, the crisis in the religious sphere occurred due to the loss of the role of reason, so that religion became only a formal form without real meaning. The article "Restoration of Philosophy, Mutual Dialogue, and Sharia: Ibn Rushd and Islamic Reformation" in Fasl al-maqal explains that Rushd attempted to renew the understanding of religion through his work Fasl al-Maqal. This work combines the principles of reason and revelation, so that religion is not merely a ritual, but also able to respond to the moral demands and intellectual needs of society.

Furthermore, findings from the study of Ibn Rushd's Philosophy: The Relationship of Reason to Revelation state that Rushd viewed reason not only as a tool for analysis, but also as a means of drawing closer to God. Understanding His creation (al-mawjudat) as a sign of God's power and wisdom has a significant impact on how we understand religion more deeply [26].

As a result of this crisis of thought, there is an urgent need to revive the classical Islamic tradition of critical thinking in religious education and popular culture. From an academic perspective, the article A Brief Review of Ibn Rushd's Book of Fasl al-Maqāl demonstrates that Rushd's work was capable of sparking intellectual transformation in the West and could serve as a good example for modern religious reform that emphasizes depth of understanding and a balance between ritual and rational thought. In the field of psychology and media studies, research on the long-term impact of digital media on attention and thinking skills opens up opportunities for interventions, such as media literacy education, reflective reading habits, and the development of religious education methods that are not only memorization but also involve critical thinking.

The state of religious literacy in Indonesia presents an interesting and contradictory picture. According to a national survey by the Ministry of Religious Affairs in 2023, the Indonesian people's Quranic Literacy Index was recorded at 66,038 (high category), meaning that most respondents can recognize the letters of the Quran, read some words, and write the letters of the Quran (Kemenag, 2023). However, on the other hand, there are still 38.49% of Muslims who are not fluent in reading the Quran according to the rules (do not have good Quranic literacy) according to the Ministry of Religious Affairs analysis. (Republika online, 2023) This shows that although statistically Quranic literacy is not in the poor category, the quality of in-depth understanding (tajweed, understanding of interpretation, context) may still be limited.

Previously, the Ministry of Religious Affairs had planned a study on the religious literacy index among Islamic Religious Education (PAI) students. This study will involve approximately 400 students as respondents from the western part of Indonesia, with the aim of measuring how deeply students have internalized religious literacy. (Kemenag, 2019) This kind of research is important because PAI students are expected to become religious cadres who not only master rituals and texts, but also are able to think critically about the challenges of the times.

Further empirical data demonstrates a relationship between social media use and critical thinking skills in Indonesia. Research in Surabaya showed that social media use was negatively correlated with the participants' intensive reading and critical thinking skills; the more intense social media use, the lower the in-depth reading and critical analysis skills. Similarly, the study

"The Influence of Social Media on Students' Critical Thinking Skills" reported that social media exposure has a complex impact on students' critical thinking skills depending on how they use it, content selection, and user literacy [28]. (Indah, 2021) These findings reinforce the premise that brain rot is not just a term, but a reality in the Indonesian context among the younger generation who are very familiar with social media.

Other relevant research shows that smartphone use in the context of religious education also plays a significant role in students' religious literacy. The study, "Analysis of Students' Religious Literacy Levels through Smartphone Utilization" (2024), found that wise smartphone use can be a means of improving religious literacy, but unfocused or superficial use can actually weaken the quality of religious understanding. This study uses a descriptive-analytical method with questionnaires, observations, and interviews, highlighting that although digital technology has great potential, without good education and guidance, gadgets can be a source of distraction and degradation of thinking.

A more specific study at the high school level also supports this concern. The study, "The Impact of Gadget Use on Students' Critical Thinking Skills at SMA Negeri 1 Padarincang" (Muawaliah & Kuntari, 2025), found that although gadgets provide extensive access to learning resources, excessive use leads to decreased concentration, increased distraction, and a reliance on instant answers. The implication of this finding is that a generation of teenagers heavily exposed to uncontrolled gadgets may experience an "erosion" of critical thinking skills a form of micro-brain rot that could spread to religious dimensions if left unaddressed.

Ibn Rushd, also known as Averroes, argued that reason does not contradict revelation. Rather, reason is a tool that must be used to understand the true meaning of religious texts. In his paper, "Ibn Rushd's Philosophy: The Relationship of Reason to Revelation," Wahyudi (2023) asserts that in Fasl al-Maqāl, Ibn Rushd emphasized that logic must be the basis for evaluating religious truth, not relying solely on literal reading. Without reason, revelation would struggle to reach changing realities, leading to a static understanding of religion that is less responsive to the context of the times [26].

In Terkan's (2006) study, "Ibn Rushd, Fasl al-Maqāl and the Theory of Double Truth," it is explained that Ibn Rushd views the philosophical and divine methods as two different methods of understanding but leading to the same truth. In his works, such as Fasl al-Maqāl, he supports the study of philosophy and logic because he believes it is in line with the goals of sharia, namely achieving truth and practical wisdom in religion. This opinion leads to the idea that understanding sharia only literally without examining it with reason can lead to misunderstandings in theology [29].

For Ibn Rushd, the relationship between reason, religion, and philosophy is mutually reinforcing: religion provides moral purpose and meaning to life, philosophy provides a rational way of thinking to understand the world, and reason serves as a bridge between the two so that the meaning of religion remains in accordance with logical evidence. Recent authors who study this balance show that a sharp separation of religion and reason can hamper the development of thought and change the meaning of religion itself. Therefore, restoring the relevant tradition of Averroes thought can help overcome religious problems today [30].

Although Ibn Rushd does not directly address "digital entertainment," the principles he proposes regarding the objectives of sharia and the use of reason can be used to draw the following conclusion: entertainment is considered permissible as long as it does not interfere with the pursuit of true knowledge and the practice of morality. However, if entertainment hinders reflective and intellectual thinking, it can undermine the function of reason as a means of understanding religion. This philosophical analysis is supported by studies of Islamic

education, which emphasize the balance between psychological needs (relaxation) and the cognitive and ethical duties of the community.

Ibn Rushd emphasized that the primary goal of humankind is to achieve true happiness (sa'ādah), not merely sensual pleasure. In his view, worldly entertainment is not wrong if used in moderation. However, excessive pleasure can lead human reason into negligence, thus deviating from the primary goal of sharia. Research by Shihadeh (2005) in The Teleological Ethics of Fakhr al-Din al-Razi also alludes to the comparison that classical Islamic ethics, including Ibn Rushd's, views sensual pleasure as merely a means, not an end in itself. In other words, philosophy and sharia both teach balance so that entertainment does not overpower the role of reason [31].

This view is relevant to the phenomenon of modern entertainment, which often emphasizes instant gratification. Hjarvard's (2008) research in The Mediatization of Religion shows that modern media shapes shallow religious mindsets through instant and fast entertainment. If Ibn Rushd's concept is applied, then entertainment media should be directed to support the function of reason, not weaken it. This aligns with the mission of sharia to safeguard reason (hifz al-'aql), one of the maqā (objectives of God).shid al-sharī'ah [32].

Furthermore, Berger's (2023) study in "Online Religious Learning: Digital Epistemic Authority and the Transformation of Islamic Knowledge" asserts that religious practice in the digital age is heavily influenced by forms of entertainment and fast-paced content consumption. If users only enjoy the entertainment aspect without considering the epistemic quality, religious teachings will be reduced to empty symbols or rituals. Ibn Rushd's thoughts on the role of reason can provide a corrective to this phenomenon, emphasizing the need for critical evaluation of religious information packaged as entertainment [33].

Several recent studies have shown a link between rapid and shallow consumption of digital content and a decline in attention, critical thinking skills, and the ability to reflect deeply on issues crucial to a mature understanding of religion. For example, research on the impact of digital media use on brain development and mental health has identified negative risks such as impaired attention and the loss of deep thinking habits. These findings support the argument that shallow entertainment can diminish the function of reason, as advocated by Ibn Rushd [34].

When reason is no longer used in understanding and studying religion, several issues arise: (1) performing rituals formally without understanding their meaning; (2) using a literal reading method and rejecting contextual understanding; and (3) religion is manipulated by certain parties who use it without a logical basis. Ibn Rushd warned of the dangers of understanding religion without testing it with reason, because it could lead to understandings that contradict basic logical principles. Modern Islamic philosophical literature explains this mechanism as the initial cause of the religious crisis.

Religious crises often arise when reason is no longer used critically in understanding religious texts. In Ibn Rushd's view, abandoning reason means closing the door to attaining the true meaning of revelation. According to Habti (2011), one of the problems of religion, from classical to modern, is the tendency toward formalism: religion is understood merely as ritual without philosophical reflection. This causes religion to lose its appeal as a moral and intellectual source, making it easily replaced by narrow traditions or even superstition [30].

This phenomenon seems relevant to contemporary conditions. Berger's (2023) research shows that in the digital age, religious authority often shifts from clerics and academics to popular figures on social media. This shift often reinforces forms of instant religiosity, where religious texts are consumed without critical analysis, but rather simply as slogans or entertainment. If reason is not revived in religious practice, the crisis of reducing religion to "fast food" will continue [33].

The marginalization of reason is also related to the phenomenon now known as brain rot. Liebherr (2025), using the Digital Media-use Effects (d-MUsE) model, shows that rapid and repeated exposure to digital content reduces the capacity for critical reflection and long-term concentration. If this phenomenon continues to permeate the religious sphere, religious people will tend to be satisfied with short answers and avoid in-depth discourse. Ibn Rushd clearly reminded us that revelation requires rational effort to understand, not just passive acceptance [35].

Local research in Indonesia further reinforces this picture of crisis. Gultom (2020) found that social media use was negatively associated with students' intensive reading skills, which are the foundation of critical thinking skills. This explains why religious formalism easily develops among young people: when analytical skills decline, religious teachings are absorbed without depth of meaning. Within Ibn Rushd's framework, this condition can be described as a concrete manifestation of the religious crisis resulting from the loss of the role of reason [28].

The term "brain rot" has gained increasing recognition and attention from academics and the media (as described as the OUP's Word of the Year 2024) as a metaphor for the decline in intelligence due to excessive consumption of meaningless content. Conceptual research and preliminary surveys (both reviews and quantitative studies on the relationship between social media and critical thinking) indicate a decline in critical thinking skills among schoolchildren and university students who frequently use instant entertainment platforms. Furthermore, they tend to accept various narratives without examination or verification, leading to religion being further simplified into a narrative of identity without any in-depth reflection. This situation is similar to Ibn Rushd's warning about the decline of reason.

Ibn Rushd's thoughts remain relevant in addressing the widespread phenomenon of brain rot in the digital age. According to him, sharia never contradicts reason; in fact, reason is the primary instrument for interpreting revelation and maintaining the rationality of religion. This view aligns with research by Hutton et al. (2024), which shows that excessive digital media consumption in young people reduces the capacity for deep reflection, while activities that stimulate critical thinking actually enhance brain development. In other words, the strengthening of reason as proposed by Ibn Rushd can counterbalance the negative impacts of digital media [34].

Furthermore, Ibn Rushd's concept of the harmony of reason, revelation, and philosophy teaches that even entertainment should be directed toward strengthening intellectual and spiritual values. Liebherr (2025), through his Digital Media-use Effects (d-MUsE) model, asserts that habitually consuming quality content can reduce the risk of brain rot. In light of Ibn Rushd's thinking, entertainment should be directed toward supporting rational thought processes, rather than simply serving as an emotional escape [35].

In the context of religious education, religious digital literacy can be a solution, aligning with Averrois's ideas. Maulidya (2025) emphasized that digital-based religious literacy should be directed at strengthening critical understanding, not simply disseminating instant information. This supports Ibn Rushd's proposal to integrate philosophical and religious knowledge so that religious practice does not become trapped in empty formalism [36].

Furthermore, the integration of entertainment, education, and spirituality is becoming a crucial agenda. Berger's (2023) study shows that online religious learning is often packaged as entertainment to attract audiences. However, if not balanced with reflective methods, this has the potential to degrade epistemic quality. Within Ibn Rushd's framework, this phenomenon can be addressed by reconstructing the meaning of entertainment: transforming it into a means of critical preaching that fosters reason, rather than merely passive viewing [33].

Ibn Rushd's thought suggests integrating logic-based education into the religious curriculum, such as teaching logic, how to understand texts, and the principles of knowledge

as part of religious learning. Contemporary educational literature emphasizes the importance of enhancing the ability to understand digital sources of knowledge and critical thinking skills, so that reason can once again play a vital role in digital information systems. This approach makes Ibn Rushd's legacy of thought part of the teaching methods used today [29].

Real solutions aligned with Ibn Rushd's ideas include creating digital content that combines entertainment with educational and spiritual elements (religious edutainment), digital literacy programs based in Islamic boarding schools (pesantren) or universities, and learning methods that combine religious studies, philosophy, and media literacy. Several early studies on religious digital literacy and critical thinking programs in higher education settings have shown positive results in improving participants' analytical skills and knowledge retention [36].

Based on a combination of Ibn Rushd's theories and contemporary evidence, several recommendations are given: (1) include modules on logic and hermeneutics in the religious education curriculum; (2) organize digital literacy training related to religion in educational institutions and religious communities; (3) facilitate the creation of quality edutainment content that prioritizes deep understanding; and (4) conduct research to evaluate the effectiveness of these steps on important indicators such as attention, critical thinking skills, and levels of reflective religiosity. These steps are a concrete application of the science of reason left by Ibn Rushd in facing religious challenges today [30].

4. Conclusions

The phenomenon of brain rot in the digital era reflects a profound decline in human intellect, morality, and spirituality as a result of excessive dependence on shallow entertainment. The dominance of instant digital pleasures has weakened the capacity for deep thinking, reduced sensitivity to ethical and spiritual values, and fostered a culture of distraction that prioritizes sensation over reflection. This condition indicates an imbalance between the intellect and the soul, where desire and emotional gratification overshadow rational and moral consciousness. To overcome this crisis, it is essential to restore harmony between reason and spirituality so that entertainment once again serves as a medium for intellectual growth, ethical awareness, and inner balance, rather than a source of cognitive fatigue and moral decline.

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