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## Digital Activism in Contemporary Islamic Politics: A Critical Analysis of Social Media's Impact on Islamic Movements

**Abstract:** This study explores the phenomenon of digital activism within the context of contemporary Islamic politics in Indonesia, focusing on the influence of social media on the dynamics of Islamic movements. Social media has emerged as a new space for political mobilization and religious discourse, enabling Islamic groups to expand their reach, enhance participation, and consolidate support. The study employs a qualitative approach with a critical analysis of the content, strategies, and impacts of social media use by various Islamic movements, ranging from moderate to conservative. The findings reveal that social media serves as a communication tool and a discursive space for shaping identities, conveying political narratives, and mobilizing collective action. On the other hand, the use of social media by Islamic movements also presents challenges, including polarization, misinformation, and the potential for radicalization. The research highlights that digital activism has reshaped the landscape of Islamic politics in Indonesia, with social media as a key catalyst for this transformation. However, its impact must be critically understood within broader social, political, and cultural contexts. These findings significantly contribute to studying Islamic politics and digital transformation in the modern era. The research expands academic literature on contemporary Islamic politics by analyzing the role of social media as a tool for political transformation within Islamic movements in Indonesia. This study offers a fresh perspective on the intersection of religion and digital technology, emphasizing how social media shapes political identity, mobilizes support, and influences public discourse and policy. Academically, this research contributes by providing a nuanced understanding of the digitalization of religious, political movements in a non-Western democratic context, enriching comparative studies on digital activism and political Islam.

**Keywords:** Digital Activism, Islamic Movements, Politics, Social Media.

## INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, advances in digital technology have changed various aspects of human life, from communication and economics to politics and religion.<sup>1</sup> This technology, especially social media, has become the primary means of conveying ideas, shaping opinions, and mobilizing the masses on an unprecedented scale. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram now function as a means of communication and as discursive spaces that influence public discourse, shape identities, and spark collective action. This transformation has created a new, more dynamic, complex socio-political landscape.<sup>2</sup>

In Indonesia, the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, social media has a very significant role in the dynamics of contemporary Islamic politics.<sup>3</sup> Various Islamic movements, moderate ones such as Nahdlatul Ulama and conservative ones such as groups that support specific political agendas, use social media to expand the reach of their message. Social media allows these groups to build a collective identity, voice political aspirations, and rally support from different walks of life.<sup>4</sup> This can be seen, for example, in mass mobilization through online campaigns related to religious and political issues, such as the Aksi Bela Islam movement in 2016. This phenomenon shows that social media has become a strategic tool in the struggle for religious politics.

However, the great benefits offered by social media also bring challenges that cannot be ignored.<sup>5</sup> In the context of Islamic politics, the use of social media often triggers polarization in society, spreads disinformation, and increases the potential for

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<sup>1</sup> Paulius Bergaudas, "Digitalization of Knowledge in the Islamic Civilization: A History Studies," *Journal of Comparative Study of Religions* 3, no. 1 (14 Oktober 2022): 1-20, <https://doi.org/10.21111/jcsr.v3i1.7967>.

<sup>2</sup> N. Serik dkk., "The specifics of digitalization of traditional religions in modern Kazakhstan," *Pharos Journal of Theology* 104, no. 5 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.46222/pharosjot.104.516>.

<sup>3</sup> Cucu Nur Hayati, A. Bakir Ihsan, dan Muhammad Farras Shaka, "The Influence of Social Media on Religious Identity Politics among Indonesian Millennial Generation," *Simulacra* 5, no. 2 (24 November 2022): 57-70, <https://doi.org/10.21107/sml.v5i2.16621>.

<sup>4</sup> Helena Octavianne dkk., "Identity Politics and Polarization in Contemporary Muslim Countries: The Impact of Elections, Social Media, and Global Dynamics," *MILRev: Metro Islamic Law Review* 3, no. 2 (16 Desember 2024): 263-286, <https://doi.org/10.32332/milrev.v3i2.9909>.

<sup>5</sup> Ö.F. Gürlesin, "Social Media, Environmental Activism and Implicit Religion: A Case Study of Extinction Rebellion," *Religions* 15, no. 12 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15121458>.

radicalization.<sup>6</sup> Polarization occurs when conflicting political and religious narratives are sharpened in the digital space, creating emotional and ideological distance between groups.<sup>7</sup> In addition, social media is often a medium for spreading unverified information, which can trigger conflicts or exacerbate social tensions.<sup>8</sup> These challenges show that while social media opens up new opportunities for Islamic movements to flourish, their use also requires careful management, not negatively impacting social harmony and political stability.

Previous research has discussed the relationship between religion and digital technology, including the role of social media in mobilizing social movements. For example, Budiyo's research highlights how social media has become an effective tool in consolidating political power among the Muslim community in Indonesia, especially during major political events such as the 2017 Jakarta Regional Elections.<sup>9</sup> Another study by Mustaqim et al. explains how political Islam undergoes structural change through digitalization, emphasizing the globalization aspect of religious narratives.<sup>10</sup> However, these studies tend to focus on specific phenomena or cases without comprehensively analyzing the dynamics of *digital activism* as a broader phenomenon in contemporary Islamic politics in Indonesia.

On the other hand, the study of *digital activism* in Indonesia is generally still dominated by secular political issues, such as pro-democracy or human rights

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<sup>6</sup> Dri Santoso dkk., "Preventing Religious Extremism in Islamic Religious Universities through Fiqh Wasatiyah," *Manchester Journal of Transnational Islamic Law and Practice* 19, no. 2 (2023): 176–192.

<sup>7</sup> Kadek Yoga Artha Yudha -, Nikita Maharani, dan Muhammadong Muhammadong, "Analyzing Religious Conflicts On Social Media Based On The First Principle Of Pancasila," *Journal of Digital Law and Policy* 3, no. 2 (31 Januari 2024): 88–98, <https://doi.org/10.58982/jdlp.v3i2.545>.

<sup>8</sup> M.S. Muhoja, "Religion, healthcare, and social media use in urban Tanzania: an ethnographic study of faith-based organizations," *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 18, no. 2 (2024): 219–239, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2024.2360234>.

<sup>9</sup> Mr Budiyo, "Media Sosial Dan Komunikasi Politik: Media Sosial Sebagai Komunikasi Politik Menjelang Pilkada DKI Jakarta 2017," *Jurnal Komunikasi* 11, no. 1 (2016): 47–62, <https://doi.org/10.20885/komunikasi.vol11.iss1.art4>.

<sup>10</sup> Mustaqim Pabbajah dkk., "Beragama Di Ruang Digital: Pergeseran Orientasi Dari Pemahaman Agama Ke Spirit Beragama," *Dialektika* 15, no. 2 (20 Desember 2022): 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.33477/da.v15i2.4028>.

movements.<sup>11</sup> Research on how Islamic movements use social media to build political narratives, influence public opinion, and interact with cross-border audiences is still relatively limited. In addition, previous research has tended to address less critical aspects of the impact of social media on social fragmentation and the challenges Islamic movements face in managing a dynamic and often uncontrolled digital space. This research offers a new approach by critically analyzing how *digital activism* affects the dynamics of Islamic politics in Indonesia. This approach sees social media as a tool and a discursive space that shapes the Islamic movement's narrative, identity, and strategy. The study also seeks to uncover the challenges that arise from using social media, such as societal polarization and the spread of disinformation, which can potentially disrupt socio-political stability. Thus, this research aims to provide a more profound and contextual understanding of Islamic political transformation in the digital era.

The novelty of this research lies in a multidisciplinary approach that integrates the study of politics, religion, and digital technology to understand the complexity of the relationship between social media and Islamic movements. The study not only focuses on practical dimensions, such as communication strategies or mass mobilization, but also examines broader social and political implications, including the challenge of maintaining social harmony amid rampant polarization. With a focus on the Indonesian context, this research contributes to the global study of political Islam and digitalization.

Based on this background, this study is designed to answer several key questions. First, how do Islamic movements in Indonesia use social media to build political identities and spread religious narratives? Second, to what extent does social media influence the dynamics of Islamic politics, including mass mobilization, the formation of public opinion, and interaction with other political actors? Third, what are the challenges Islamic movements face in using social media, and how does it impact socio-political stability in Indonesia?

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<sup>11</sup> Khairil Anwar, Surawan Surawan, dan Sarimah Awang, "Social Media and Religiosity: Shifting the Lifestyle Paradigm of Urban Muslim Students," *Akademika: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 29, no. 2 (26 September 2024): 195–204, <https://doi.org/10.32332/akademika.v29i2.9181>.

This research is expected to provide new insights into the role of social media in contemporary Islamic politics, both in terms of potential and challenges posed. By combining critical analysis and contextual approaches, this study is expected to offer new perspectives relevant to researchers, policymakers, and the wider public to help them understand the transformation of Islamic politics in the digital era. In a broader context, the research also contributes to the global debate about the relationship between religion, politics, and technology. By looking at how *the phenomenon of digital activism* is developing in Indonesia, the country with the largest Muslim population, the findings of this study can provide a more comprehensive picture of the implications of digitalization for religion and politics in the Muslim world.

## METHOD

This research was conducted with a qualitative approach through a critical analysis of the content, strategies, and impacts of the use of social media by various Islamic movements in Indonesia. Data was collected through the content analysis method on uploads on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube that are operated or associated with Islamic groups, both moderate ones such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, as well as conservative ones such as the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) and similar groups. Content analysis focuses on religious messages, political narratives, symbols, language, and visuals intended to build a collective identity or mobilize action. In addition, this study observed interactions in the comment column, content distribution patterns through the sharing or retweet feature, and the use of hashtags to identify themes that are the center of attention of the movement.

The strategy aspect was analyzed by examining these Islamic movements' communication and social media management patterns, including how they used the platform's algorithms to expand their audience reach. The study also examines their involvement with other actors, such as religious figures, influencers, or politicians affiliated with their agenda. Furthermore, the impact of these social media activities is evaluated through in-depth interviews with academics, activists, and community leaders to understand their perceptions of the role of social media in influencing public opinion,

creating solidarity, or triggering social polarization. This analysis is complemented by studying documents such as media reports, statistical data on social media usage, and policies related to digital platform regulation. With the triangulation of this method,<sup>12</sup> The study seeks to provide a comprehensive overview of the relationship between social media and the dynamics of Islamic politics in Indonesia.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The Role of Social Media in Islamic Politics in Indonesia

In recent years, social media has become the leading platform in shaping and strengthening the political dynamics of Islam in Indonesia. The country with the world's largest Muslim population is witnessing how social media is transforming into a vital space for Islamic movements to build their political and social identities.<sup>13</sup> Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube allow moderate and conservative Islamist groups to convey political, religious, and social messages to a wide audience without relying on mainstream media, often controlled by specific political forces. Social media opens up wider access for Islamic movements to engage in public discussion and mobilize support.<sup>14</sup>

One of the most significant roles of social media in Islamic politics in Indonesia is its ability to expand the reach of messages and speed up the mobilization process. Before social media, Islamic movements could only rely on mosques, schools, or religious organizations to spread their message. However, now, through digital platforms, the Islamic movement can reach millions of people with just a few clicks. Religious or social-

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<sup>12</sup> Helaluddin dan Hengki Wijaya, *Analisis Data Kualitatif: Sebuah Tinjauan Teori & Praktik* (Sekolah Tinggi Theologia Jaffray, 2019).

<sup>13</sup> Abd Hannan dan Ach Fatayillah Mursyidi, "Social Media and the Fragmentation of Religious Authority among Muslims in Contemporary Indonesia," *Digital Muslim Review* 1, no. 2 (21 November 2023): 84–104, <https://doi.org/10.32678/dmr.v1i2.10>.

<sup>14</sup> Ari Ganjar Herdiansah, Luthfi Hamzah Husin, dan Hendra Hendra, "Religious Identity Politics on Social Media in Indonesia: A Discursive Analysis on Islamic Civil Societies," *Jurnal Studi Pemerintahan*, 2018, 187–222, <https://doi.org/10.18196/jgp.2018.0186.187-222>.

political campaigns can quickly spread among social media users, raise political and religious awareness, and mobilize people to participate in social or political action.<sup>15</sup>

Social media also allows Islamic movements to build collective identity and solidarity among Muslims. Using hashtags (#), videos, and engaging images, these movements can bring together like-minded individuals in an online community. A clear example is movements such as #Aksi212 or #BelaIslam that have dominated social media in recent years. Through hashtags, they can mobilize thousands of people to take to the streets in political or social actions to fight for Islamic values. These online communities reinforce a sense of solidarity between individuals and groups and help accelerate mobilization at the national level.<sup>16</sup>

In addition, social media has become an effective means of shaping public opinion, where religious and political narratives are built and spread rapidly. Islamic movements use these platforms to spread da'wah, religious information, and invitations to engage in certain political activities. In Indonesia, Islamic leaders often use social media to share their political views on religious issues or state politics. The dissemination of opinions through social media allows their messages to be directly accepted by the public without going through media intermediaries who may have certain biases.<sup>17</sup> This gives more power to the leaders of Islamic movements to influence the general view of an issue.

However, social media also brings significant challenges to Islamic politics in Indonesia. While social media offers a space for free expression and communication, it also raises issues related to social polarization. The ideological tensions in Indonesian society are often sharper in cyberspace. Islamic movements with different ideologies, such as more moderate groups and conservative groups, often engage in open debates on social

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<sup>15</sup> Dita Kirana dan Endi Aulia Garadian, "Religious Trend in Contemporary Indonesia: Conservatism Domination on Social Media," *Studia Islamika* 27, no. 3 (23 Desember 2020): 615-622, <https://doi.org/10.36712/sdi.v27i3.18823>.

<sup>16</sup> Doli Witro dkk., "Society's Religiosity in Social Media and Its Implications for Conflict Resolution in Indonesia," *Studi Multidisipliner: Jurnal Kajian Keislaman* 10, no. 1 (17 Juni 2023): 55-68, <https://doi.org/10.24952/multidisipliner.v10i1.5968>.

<sup>17</sup> Khusna Haibati Latif dkk., "The Effects of Social Media Use Intensity on Student's Religious Knowledge in Yogyakarta," *Al-Tadzkiyyah: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 14, no. 2 (7 Desember 2023): 213-229, <https://doi.org/10.24042/002023141420200>.



media that deepen their differences.<sup>18</sup> Discussions or arguments that might be more controlled face-to-face can quickly develop into divisive debates in the digital space.<sup>19</sup>

The spread of misinformation or misinformation on social media often exacerbates this polarity.<sup>20</sup> When Islamic movements use social media to spread messages, they cannot always control how the audience receives and translates the message.<sup>21</sup> Hoaxes and provocative narratives often spread faster than valid information, and this causes chaos in society. Widespread disinformation can exacerbate tensions between groups, deepen differences of view, and create misunderstandings that have the potential to undermine social stability.<sup>22</sup>

On the positive side, social media also opens up space for dialogue and discussion between various religious, political, and social groups in Indonesia.<sup>23</sup> In the past, this kind of dialogue may have been limited to formal forums or small gatherings.<sup>24</sup> However, social media allows everyone to participate in a broader social, religious, and political discussion. Through social media, individuals and groups can share views, discuss, and listen to each other, enriching their understanding of each other.<sup>25</sup> While the challenges

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<sup>18</sup> Wahyu Abdul Jafar, "Persepsi masyarakat kota Bengkulu terhadap paham islam moderat," *Samarah* 3, no. 1 (2019): 177-204, <https://doi.org/10.22373/sjkh.v3i1.3213>.

<sup>19</sup> Abu Muslim, Moh Miftachul Choiri Moh Miftachul Choiri, dan Abu Mohd Sham Kamis Abu Mohd Sham Kamis, "The Impact of Social Media on the Formation of Religious Patterns Among Millennial Students in Ponorogo Regency," *Cendekia: Jurnal Kependidikan Dan Kemasyarakatan* 22, no. 2 (27 Desember 2024), <https://doi.org/10.21154/cendekia.v22i2.9870>.

<sup>20</sup> Bagong Suyanto dkk., "Global vs. Local: Lifestyle and Consumption Behaviour among the Urban Middle Class in East Java, Indonesia," *South East Asia Research* 27, no. 4 (2 Oktober 2019): 398-417, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0967828X.2019.1703557>.

<sup>21</sup> Hilarius Bambang Winarko dan Daniel Susilo, "Media Consumption Behaviours and Health Impacts of Video-on-Demand Services in Indonesia," *Jurnal Studi Komunikasi* 8, no. 3 (22 November 2024): 521-532, <https://doi.org/10.25139/jsk.v8i3.8663>.

<sup>22</sup> Firmanda Taufiq dan Ayu Maulida Alkholid, "Religious Tolerance, Social Media and Social-Politics in Indonesia: Exploring of NU Garis Lucu and Catholic Garis Lucu Community," *International Conference on Cultures & Languages (ICCL)* 1, no. 1 (18 November 2022): 159-173.

<sup>23</sup> Fatmawati Anwar dan Islamul Haq, "Religious Moderation Campaign Through Social Media at Multicultural Communities," *Kuriositas: Media Komunikasi Sosial dan Keagamaan* 12, no. 2 (5 Desember 2019): 177-187, <https://doi.org/10.35905/kur.v12i2.1392>.

<sup>24</sup> Daniel Susilo dkk., "Impact of Over-the-Top Video Providers on Viewing Satisfaction and Its Effect on Watching a Movie in Cinema: Bridging Preferences and Challenges," *Edelweiss Applied Science and Technology* 8, no. 5 (20 September 2024): 1434-1444, <https://doi.org/10.55214/25768484.v8i5.1846>.

<sup>25</sup> Daniel Susilo, Rahma Sugihartati, dan Diah Ariani Arimbi, "Indonesian women in politics: Critical analysis of portrayal in online news sites," *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi* 16, no. 2 (2019): 225-242.



of polarization and disinformation remain, social media still provides an opportunity to create a more open and inclusive discursive space.

Here is a detailed table describing the role of social media in Islamic politics in Indonesia, covering its positive aspects and challenges:

Table 1. The role of social media in Islamic politics in Indonesia

Aspects	Description	Example	Challenge
Spreading Religious and Political Messages	Social media allows Islamic movements to spread political and religious messages quickly and widely.	#BelaIslam or #Aksi212 campaigns that voice political and religious aspirations.	Uncontrolled dissemination of information can lead to confusion.
Mass Mobilization	Social media plays a role in mobilizing support for Islamic movements and inviting people to get involved.	Mass actions are mobilized through social media, such as demonstrations by Islamic groups.	The potential for mass manipulation and misinformation could exacerbate social tensions.
Building Collective Identity	Digital platforms strengthen solidarity and build Muslim communities through hashtags or joint movements.	Online communities such as #Aksi212 invite Muslims to unite and act together.	The potential for a sharper polarization between moderate and conservative Islamist groups.
Direct Interaction between Leaders and Followers	Leaders of Islamic movements can interact directly with their followers through live streams or Q&A.	Islamic leaders such as Habib Rizieq use social media to convey direct messages.	The risk of unverified information and the potential for the spread of radical or extreme ideologies.
Influence on Public Opinion	Social media is rapidly shaping public opinion on political and religious issues.	Islamic leaders spread their views on politics through social media such as Twitter.	The emergence of ideological polarization worsens relations between religious and political groups.
Spread of Disinformation	Unverified messages can quickly spread, creating confusion	The spread of hoaxes that associate Islamic groups with	The spread of false information can spark tensions between

	and social damage.	terrorism or radicalization.	groups and undermine social stability.
Increasing Dialogue and Discussion Spaces	Social media provides a space for discussion and sharing views between different groups.	Open discussions on political and social issues between various religious groups.	Open dialogue is often hindered by hatred and the spread of divisive narratives, reducing the space for tolerance.

Source: Author's Interpretation

This table provides a detailed picture of how social media plays a role in Islamic politics in Indonesia, describing both positive aspects, such as the rapid dissemination of messages and mass mobilization, and emerging challenges, such as polarization and the spread of disinformation.

Overall, the role of social media in Islamic politics in Indonesia shows both sides of the currency, namely opportunities and challenges. Social media offers great potential to strengthen solidarity, expand political influence, and facilitate Islamic movement mobilization.<sup>26</sup> However, it also carries risks related to social polarization, the spread of misinformation, and the potential for radicalization.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, it is important for Islamic movements, governments, and communities to jointly manage the use of social media wisely to maximize its benefits and minimize the negative impact that can be caused on social and political life in Indonesia.

### Communication Strategies of Islamic Movements on Social Media

In Indonesia, social media has become a very effective tool in political and social communication, including in Islamic movements. The communication strategies implemented by Islamic groups are greatly influenced by the development of digital technology, which allows them to spread messages widely and quickly. One of the important elements of this communication strategy is using various social media

<sup>26</sup> Benny Ridwan dkk., "Islam Nusantara, Ulemas, and Social Media: Understanding the Pros and Cons of Islam Nusantara among Ulemas of West Sumatera," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 9, no. 2 (25 Desember 2019): 163-188, <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v9i2.163-188>.

<sup>27</sup> Bagong Suyanto, Mun'im Sirry, dan Rahma Sugihartati, "Pseudo-Radicalism and the De-Radicalization of Educated Youth in Indonesia," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 45, no. 2 (1 Februari 2022): 153-172, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2019.1654726>.

platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, to reach a wider audience. Islamic movements use this platform to spread their religious and political messages and build solidarity and collective identity among Muslims.<sup>28</sup>

One of the main communication strategies Islamic movements use on social media is disseminating religion-based content that can touch the audience's emotions.<sup>29</sup> These contents often include da'wah messages, calls to action following religious teachings, or comments on relevant socio-political issues. Through emotional language and strong visuals, these messages aim to evoke hearts and strengthen the people's sense of solidarity. For example, images with text invitations or quotes from prominent religious leaders can be quickly disseminated and accepted by a wider audience.<sup>30</sup>

In addition, the Islamic movement's communication strategy also involves using social media to build direct relationships with their followers.<sup>31</sup> Through live streaming, Islamic movements can share their views and discussions directly with their audience. Islamic leaders often use platforms like Instagram Live, Facebook Live, or YouTube to hold talks, Q&A, or provide live explanations on current issues. This kind of interaction allows followers to feel closer to their leaders and get directly involved in the activities carried out by the movement.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Zaenuddin Hudi Prasjo dkk., "Religious Identity in the Use of Social Media Within Pontianak Muslim Community," *Karsa Journal of Social and Islamic Culture* 28, no. 1 (12 Juni 2020): 32–56, <https://doi.org/10.19105/karsa.v28i1.3284>.

<sup>29</sup> Daniel Susilo, Rahma Sugihartati, dan Roberto Rudolf T. Santos, "Muslim Minority in Manila: Ethnographical Studies of Minority Expression on the Archipelago," *AlJami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 61, no. 2 (22 Desember 2023): 419–440, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2023.612.419-440>.

<sup>30</sup> Ellyda Retpitasari dan Nila Audini Oktavia, "Preference of Social Media Usage in Teenagers Religion," *Tribakti: Jurnal Pemikiran Keislaman* 31, no. 1 (13 Januari 2020): 17–34, <https://doi.org/10.33367/tribakti.v31i1.985>.

<sup>31</sup> Daniel Susilo dan Teguh Dwi Putranto, "Indonesian Youth on Social Media: Study on Content Analysis" (2017 International Seminar on Social Science and Humanities Research (SSHR 2017), Atlantis Press, 2017), 94–97, <https://doi.org/10.2991/sshr-17.2018.15>.

<sup>32</sup> D.T. Buckley, J. Gainous, dan K.M. Wagner, "Is religion the opiate of the digital masses? Religious authority, social media, and protest," *Information Communication and Society* 26, no. 4 (2023): 682–698, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2021.1971279>.

Social media also allows Islamic movements to take advantage of the virality of content to expand the reach of their message.<sup>33</sup> Using features such as hashtags (#), this movement can create digital campaigns that mobilize audiences to participate in social or political actions. For example, campaigns such as #BelalIslam or #Aksi212 invite people to take to the streets to fight for an issue. The consistent use of hashtags makes these messages easy to find, strengthens solidarity, and raises awareness among the wider community.

However, although these strategies are very effective in strengthening the political and social position of the Islamic movement, significant challenges must be faced, primarily related to the quality of information disseminated. Social media is often a terrain for disseminating unverified information, posing challenges regarding message accuracy and credibility. Therefore, Islamic movements must be careful in selecting and disseminating information so that the messages they convey are not misinterpreted or misused by other parties with purposes that do not follow their original intentions.<sup>34</sup>

Selain itu, media sosial juga memiliki potensi untuk memperburuk polarisasi sosial.<sup>35</sup> When the messages disseminated contain provocative or highly ideological elements, this can deepen the differences between groups. Islamic movements that rely on social media to mobilize the masses and strengthen their identities often face challenges in maintaining unity and not exacerbating tensions between groups of different ideologies. In some cases, this communication strategy can exacerbate polarization between moderate and conservative Islamist groups.

Finally, the Islamic movement's communication strategy must also consider the development of social media algorithms that often affect the reach and visibility of

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<sup>33</sup> Adhitya Ridwan Budhi Prasetyo Nugroho dan Nawawi, "Construction of Religious Tolerance: Revitalizing The Prayer of Da'wah on Social Media," *Komunika: Jurnal Dakwah Dan Komunikasi* 17, no. 2 (1 Oktober 2023): 265-280, <https://doi.org/10.24090/komunika.v17i2.9220>.

<sup>34</sup> I. Siles dkk., "Populism, Religion, and Social Media in Central America," *International Journal of Press/Politics* 28, no. 1 (2023): 138-159, <https://doi.org/10.1177/19401612211032884>.

<sup>35</sup> A. Baraybar-Fernández, S. Arrufat-Martín, dan R. Rubira-García, "Religion and social media: Communication strategies by the spanish episcopal conference," *Religions* 11, no. 5 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11050239>.

messages.<sup>36</sup> For example, platforms like Facebook and Instagram use algorithms that select content based on user preferences, which can limit the reach of messages if they do not follow trending trends. Therefore, Islamic movements need to understand how these algorithms work so that their messages can reach a wider audience and are not hampered by the information filtering systems that apply to these platforms.

Table 2. Communication Strategies of Islamic Movements on Social Media

Strategy	Description	Example	Challenge
Dissemination of Emotional Content	Using emotional, religious-based messages to evoke audience feelings and reinforce collective identity.	The content of the invitation or da'wah quotes that inspire and touch the hearts of the audience.	Potential misunderstandings or interpretations that do not fit the context of the message.
Direct Interaction with Followers	Utilize the live streaming feature to interact directly with followers to give lectures or Q&A.	Live streaming by Islamic leaders to discuss religious or social issues.	Limited control over conversations that could be controversial or spark heated debates.
Use of Hashtags	Use hashtags (#) to expand your reach and create digital campaigns that are easily recognizable to your audience.	#Aksi212 or #BelaIslam campaigns that encourage people to participate in social action.	Potential use of hashtags by parties with different agendas or not following the original intention.
Content Virality	Utilize features such as share, like, and retweet to spread messages virally and strengthen solidarity.	The use of videos or images that have gone viral and received significant attention from the public.	It is possible that viral content can be misinterpreted or received in an unintended way.
Information Dissemination	Social media is used to disseminate up-to-date information on political or religious issues.	Islamic leaders share their views on state politics or social issues through social media.	Spreading unverified information can lead to misinformation or hoaxes.
Managing Social Polarization	Manage the potential for polarization between groups by avoiding divisive messages.	Maintaining a balance of messages does not exacerbate the differences between moderate and conservative Islamists.	The potential for deepening polarization between different ideological groups.

<sup>36</sup> T. Rashid, "Social media, religion and religiosity in Pakistan in the era of disruption," *Hamdard Islamicus* 42, no. 1-2 (2019): 33-56.

Understanding Social Media Algorithms	Understand how social media algorithms work so that a wider audience can more easily reach messages.	Optimize posting time and selection of relevant content so that it appears more often in your audience feed.	Algorithms can limit the visibility of messages that are not popular or considered less relevant by the platform.
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Source: Author's Interpretation

This table details the communication strategies used by Islamic movements on social media, ranging from disseminating emotional, religious-based content, direct interaction with followers to using hashtags to expand reach. While social media allows Islamic movements to amplify their influence, challenges regarding accurate information dissemination, social polarization, and understanding social media algorithms must be faced wisely for communication goals to be optimally achieved.

### **The Impact of Social Media on Social Polarity and Radicalization**

Social media has a significant impact on social polarization, especially in the context of politics and religion in Indonesia.<sup>37</sup> In cyberspace, individuals or groups with similar views tend to gather in limited digital spaces, amplifying their opinions and exacerbating differences between groups with different views. This creates an "echo chamber," where the information received confirms an existing view while others are ignored or attacked. In the context of Islamic politics, this can deepen the gap between moderate and conservative Islamists, as well as between more secular and more religious groups, exacerbating the social tensions that exist in society.

In addition, social media allows for the very rapid dissemination of information, which sometimes cannot be adequately verified. The spread of misinformation or hoaxes on social media can exacerbate existing polarization. For example, claims about threats to religion or the state often spread very quickly on platforms like WhatsApp, Facebook, or Twitter. This can further escalate existing tensions and worsen relations between various social groups. When misinformation is spread for a specific purpose, such as dividing

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<sup>37</sup> Eko Saputra, Dony Arung Triantoro, dan Ardiansyah Ardiansyah, "Urban Muslim Youth, Pengajian Communities and Social Media: Fragmentation of Religious Authorities in Indonesia," *Al-Qalam* 27, no. 2 (2 Desember 2021): 335-346, <https://doi.org/10.31969/alq.v27i2.1004>.

society or supporting extreme ideologies, social media becomes a potent tool to create division.<sup>38</sup>

In some cases, social media also serves as a platform to spread radical ideologies that can influence vulnerable individuals. Radical groups often use social media to recruit new members in a more subtle and organized way.<sup>39</sup> They use evocative narratives, such as claiming that they are fighting for religious truth or defending the honor of Muslims, to appeal to young people who feel alienated. The process of radicalization through social media can be speedy and undetected by many parties because most of these interactions occur in cyberspace, far from stricter social supervision.<sup>40</sup>

One example of radicalization is the phenomenon of "grooming" through social media, where specific individuals or groups approach and influence young people to join groups that adhere to extremist ideologies.<sup>41</sup> They often use narratives that touch feelings, such as a sense of injustice or marginalization, to appeal to people dissatisfied with their social or political conditions. This can cause individuals who were not previously exposed to radical ideas to become affected and then engage in acts of violence or extremism that undermine social peace.

A further impact of polarization and radicalization triggered by social media is the increase in social tensions.<sup>42</sup> Social conflicts can occur when groups with extreme views

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<sup>38</sup> Ioana A. Coman dan M. Coman, "Religion, popular culture and social media: The construction of a religious leader image on facebook," *Essachess - Journal for Communication Studies* 10, no. 2 (2017): 129-143.

<sup>39</sup> Mukhlis Mukhlis dkk., "The Legal Culture to Prevent Radical Islamism by a Pesantren in Madura," *De Jure: Jurnal Hukum Dan Syar'iah* 16, no. 1 (24 Juni 2024): 58-87, <https://doi.org/10.18860/j-fsh.v16i1.26216>.

<sup>40</sup> P. Van Esch dkk., "Where the dimensions of religion and mass media social marketing campaigns intersect," *Asian Social Science* 11, no. 12 (2015): 103-111, <https://doi.org/10.5539/ass.v11n12p103>.

<sup>41</sup> Erwin Jusuf Thaib, "Hoax in Social Media and It's Threats to Islamic Moderation in Indonesia," *Proceedings of International Conference on Da'wa and Communication* 2, no. 1 (26 November 2020): 259-269, <https://doi.org/10.15642/icondac.v2i1.386>.

<sup>42</sup> Iswandi Syahputra, "Social Media Activities and the 212 Movement: The Indonesian Ulama Council's Perspective," *AlJami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 58, no. 2 (20 Desember 2020): 323-354, <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2020.582.323-354>.



begin to confront each other, both physically and digitally.<sup>43</sup> Societies become divided, and social damage can be more challenging to repair.<sup>44</sup> Social media plays a role in creating and exacerbating these tensions, as social media accelerates the spread of hatred and mistrust between different groups. It also creates tensions between the ruling party and groups that are dissatisfied with government policies, which worsens socio-political conditions.

However, while social media has a considerable impact in exacerbating social polarization and radicalization, it can also be used to reduce social tensions if used more thoughtfully. Governments, religious groups, and civil society can work together to create a more inclusive and educational digital space, allowing for more positive and constructive dialogue between groups. Using social media for campaigns for peace, tolerance, and interfaith understanding can help ease social tensions and reduce the potential for radicalization. Therefore, it is important to understand both sides of the impact of social media on society and work to minimize its negative impact.

### **Disinformation and Challenges of Social Media Management in the Development of Islamic Movements**

In the context of the development of the Islamic movement in Indonesia, disinformation on social media is one of the biggest challenges that must be faced. Social media, with the ability to disseminate information quickly, is often used to spread fake news or harmful hoaxes. This disinformation can affect public perception of Islamic movements, both moderate and conservative. When misinformation or distorted information about an Islamic movement is widely circulated, it can damage its reputation and cause tensions between various society groups. For example, unfounded claims about

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<sup>43</sup> Abdul Basid, "From Conflict to Peace: Fuqaha Political Exegesis on Israel's War Crimes in Palestine," *Al-Istinbath: Jurnal Hukum Islam* 9, no. 2 (20 September 2024): 597-624, <https://doi.org/10.29240/jhi.v9i2.10597>.

<sup>44</sup> Arbanur Rasyid dkk., "Local Wisdom Recognition in Inter-Ethnic Religious Conflict Resolution in Indonesia from Islah Perspective," *JURIS (Jurnal Ilmiah Syariah)* 22, no. 1 (13 Juni 2023): 13-26, <https://doi.org/10.31958/juris.v22i1.8432>.

specific movements can worsen relations between Islamic groups and other parties in society.<sup>45</sup>

One example of disinformation that is often found is the spread of fake news about the activities or agendas of specific Islamic movements, which then cause fear or hatred among the public. This could be in the form of slander against leaders of Islamic movements, accusations of involvement in radical acts, or information that misleadingly portrays Islamic movements. When this fake news is spread through social media platforms, the impact can be huge, as many people tend to trust information shared by their friends or family on social media without checking the truth first. Another challenge the Islamic movement faces in managing social media is verifying the information disseminated and ensuring that only accurate and accountable information reaches the public. In many cases, Islamic movements have had to work hard to correct misinformation and clarify issues that society misunderstands. This process requires much time and resources, considering the content spread on various social media platforms. Therefore, Islamic movements need to build internal capacity in social media management to respond quickly and appropriately when disinformation spreads.<sup>46</sup>

One approach that can be used to reduce the impact of disinformation is to create a more open and transparent communication channel between the Islamic movement and its followers. Islamic movements need social media to convey accurate and accountable information from legitimate sources directly. This can be done by strengthening the image of the movement through educational content, which discusses religious, political, and social issues clearly and based on facts. In this way, Islamic movements can be more proactive in fighting disinformation that can damage their reputation.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Hasan Sazali dkk., "Islamic Political Communication System Mapping Millennial Muslim Geopolitics on Social Media in Facing the 2024 Presidential Election," *JURNAL GEOGRAFI* 15, no. 1 (12 Maret 2023): 122–134, <https://doi.org/10.24114/jg.v15i1.42477>.

<sup>46</sup> Munawiah Abdullah dkk., "Moderation of Thought in the Age of Radicalism: The Role of Social Media and Political Education in Countering Hate Content," *Tafkir: Interdisciplinary Journal of Islamic Education* 6, no. 1 (17 Januari 2025): 94–110, <https://doi.org/10.31538/tijie.v6i1.1373>.

<sup>47</sup> Rholand Muary, Neila Susanti, dan Puteri Atikah, "Salafis and Social Media: The Emergence of Islamic Populism in Indonesia," *Jurnal Sosiologi Agama* 18, no. 2 (2024): 151–170, <https://doi.org/10.14421/jsa.2024.182-02>.

In addition, effective social media management also involves strategies to ward off negative narratives that can spread virally. Islamic movements need a dedicated team trained to monitor social media and detect potential disinformation early. The team can work with social media platforms to report misleading or harmful content so that misinformation can be removed or clarified immediately. Through a more structured and systematic approach, Islamic movements can minimize the damage caused by disinformation and maintain the integrity of the messages they spread.<sup>48</sup>

Finally, although the challenges of managing social media in developing the Islamic movement are considerable, social media still has great potential to support positive goals.<sup>49</sup> By managing social media wisely and responsively to disinformation, Islamic movements can strengthen messages of peace, tolerance, and understanding between groups. In addition, Islamic movements can use social media to build a wider network of solidarity, educate the public about moderate religious teachings, and create a more inclusive dialogue between different groups in society.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that social media plays a strategic role in shaping contemporary Islamic politics in Indonesia. Digital platforms are utilized by various Islamic movements, both moderate and conservative, to voice political aspirations, build collective identities, and mobilize widespread support. However, the use of social media also presents serious challenges, including societal polarization, the spread of disinformation, and the potential for radicalization, which could threaten socio-political stability. Thus, social media serves as a communication tool and a discursive space that influences the direction and structure of Islamic movements in Indonesia. This research underscores the importance of collective efforts to enhance digital literacy and develop regulations that promote the responsible use of social media. These findings provide

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<sup>48</sup> Ahmad Ash Shiddieqy, Padlan Padil Simamora, dan Dinda Difia Madina, "Contemporary Islamic Politics in Tunisia: The Journey of Islamic Democracy Post-Arab Spring," *MILRev: Metro Islamic Law Review* 3, no. 1 (11 April 2024): 119-140, <https://doi.org/10.32332/milrev.v3i1.8976>.

<sup>49</sup> Ismandianto Ismandianto dkk., "Voices Unveiled: Social Media's Role in Empowering Indonesian Muslim Women Politicians," *Religious: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama Dan Lintas Budaya* 7, no. 3 (24 Juni 2024): 273-288, <https://doi.org/10.15575/rjsalb.v7i3.23342>.

significant insights into how digital technology shapes the landscape of Islamic politics in the modern era and its implications for social harmony and democracy.

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## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

This study was made possible through strong teamwork and effective collaboration among all authors. Nibrosu Rohid contributed to the conceptualization and methodology of the study, provided critical analysis, and drafted significant portions of the manuscript. Rahma Sugihartati led the literature review and theoretical framework, contributed to data collection, and ensured alignment with academic standards. Daniel Susilo focused on data analysis and interpretation, prepared visualizations, and reviewed the manuscript for technical accuracy. Afriul Zikri handled data curation, contributed to the study's design, and facilitated communication among team members to ensure efficient collaboration. All authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript for publication.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

This article has been written independently and objectively, free from any conflict of interest. The author has no financial, professional, or personal affiliations that could

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