

Discursive Constructions of Islamic Religiosity and Indonesian Muslim Identity in the Globalization Era

Muhammad Amin Saputra

UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, Indonesia
muhammadaminsaputra05@gmail.com

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Abstract

Amid globalization and the rapid expansion of communication technologies, Indonesian Muslim identity is increasingly negotiated within digital environments that reshape religious discourse, authority, and practice. This study aims to examine the dynamic negotiation of Indonesian Muslim identity in the digital era by drawing on Manuel Castells's concept of the network society, Heidi Campbell's digital religion framework, and Zygmunt Bauman's notion of liquid modern life. Using a qualitative analytical-explanatory library research design, the study analyzes primary sources, including books and journal articles on digital media and Indonesian Islam, as well as secondary data from online religious communities, through interpretive discourse analysis. The findings show that digital platforms broaden the public sphere and enable Muslim actors, such as preachers like Felix Siauw and movements such as One Day One Juz (ODOJ), to combine traditional Islamic values with popular culture, visual aesthetics, and algorithmic logic. This process fosters forms of "Popular Islamism," produces fragmented yet adaptive religious identities, and generates new practices of piety that challenge fixed religious authorities while intensifying contestation and adaptation in the post-Reformasi context. Although social media accelerates the

circulation of religious discourse, it also requires new criteria of trust and legitimacy. The study concludes that Indonesian Muslim identity in the digital era is hybrid, adaptive, and resilient, shaped by ongoing technological mediation. These findings contribute to interdisciplinary discussions on digital religious subjectivities and offer practical insight into the dual role of digital media in shaping contemporary faith and society.

Keywords: Digital Religion; Indonesian Muslim Identity; Popular Islamism; Religious Authority; Social Media

INTRODUCTION

Issues surrounding communication technology represent the most significant concerns in social and cultural implications. It stems from technology's role as a fundamental dimension of social structure and social change. With its inherent characteristic of continuous evolution, technology drives the emergence of new paradigms in communication. In network society, communication technology is frequently employed to introduce new actors and content into social organization processes (Santamaría, 2007), including the dissemination of individual and collective religious identities through the transmission of religious narratives.

The role of technology in shaping religious expression on social media cannot be overlooked. The ongoing, massive process of Islamization in digital spaces profoundly influences diverse religious expressions and practices, ultimately transforming the social conditions in which political and religious authorities are produced (Turner & Nasir, 2013). Significant advancements in communication technologies have also reshaped how individuals practice religion. To illustrate these shifts, Heidi Campbell employs the framework of "digital religion" to articulate how media and digital spaces both shape and are shaped by religious practices in novel ways (Campbell & Tsuria, 2013). In this context, technology enables innovative methods for worship, learning, and community interaction within religious groups.

The emergence of new religious expressive spaces integrated through digital platforms offers insights into how the internet and other digital technologies shape religious communities and practices (Ichsan, 2019). This article maps these dynamics within discussions of social media's influence on Muslim identity expression amid globalization. In an increasingly complex era of globalization, Indonesian Muslims face profound intellectual

challenges that demand critical and innovative thinking. Rapid and expansive information flows enable ever more intricate exchanges of ideas and cultures. Numerous studies illustrate how globalization reshapes economic, political, and cultural competitions into a new world order. History further records the long, dynamic process of Islamic transformation in Indonesia, tracing the social, cultural, political, and intellectual evolution of Muslim communities across eras.

Various previous studies have demonstrated the dual influence of social media on religious practices, particularly among Indonesian students and adolescents. Isnaniyah (2025) found that social media facilitates access to religious content such as lectures and study videos at UIN Malang, thus strengthening religious understanding and practice despite the risk of distraction and unreliable content. Meanwhile, Muslim et al. (2024) revealed shifts in the religious patterns of millennial students in Ponorogo through YouTube, where this platform enables flexible learning based on the Technology Acceptance Model and shapes practices through social construction. Research by Choiri et al. (2024) showed a significant influence of X (Twitter) on the religious behavior of mosque youth with a coefficient, while another study found a moderate positive correlation between social media use and student religious behavior. Furthermore, the transformation of digital da'wah encourages new religious interactions. Still, it poses challenges to the authority of messages, and social media has the potential to reduce religious devotion due to reduced prayer time. This literature overall emphasizes the need for wise guidance to maximize the benefits of social media (Chusjairi & Sudarmanti, 2024). In accordance with the background of this article, the study of the discourse of Indonesian Muslim identity in the digital era has provided space for the emergence of new identity productions that they continuously negotiate.

Regarding the debate over the emergence of digital religion, Campbell and Tsuria (2013) provide the background for this article. In her earlier work (2003), Campbell explains that the emergence of digital religion in the early 2000s was marked by efforts by religious communities to establish an online presence, ranging from discussion forums and online fatwa sites to spaces for dialogue across religious authorities. The internet became not only a tool for distributing information but also a new space for establishing authority, community, and religious practice. Here, religion began to adapt to the logic of media: fast, open, participatory, and transboundary (Lundby & Evolvi, 2021).

However, in subsequent developments, particularly in Campbell's analysis of digital religion, he emphasized that religion in the digital space cannot be understood as simply

"online religion" or "religion transferred to the internet." In this context, the development of information technology has transformed religion into "liquid modern life," a concept popularized by Zygmunt Bauman about social life characterized by fluidity, uncertainty, and continuous identity negotiation (Polhuijs, 2022). Authority structures become fluid, the boundaries between private and public spaces fade, and individuals have more room to shape their own identities.

It is at this point that Campbell's argument becomes crucial for the study of Indonesian Muslim identity in the digital age. Social media is not merely a medium for preaching or distributing fatwas, but a fluid arena for negotiating religious identity (Muthohirin, 2025). Muslim identity is no longer solely shaped by formal institutions (ulama, Islamic boarding schools, large organizations), but also by religious influencers, online communities, platform algorithms, and user interactions.

Within the framework of liquid modern life, religious practice has become both more personal and more public. Individuals can choose religious authorities that suit their preferences, participate in interfaith studies, or construct an image of piety through digital performativity (posts, verse quotations, short sermons, etc.). Indonesian Muslim identity in the digital space is thus both flexible and fragmented, shaped through various sources of authority (Hannan & Mursyidi, 2023). Drawing on studies of the history of Islamic civilization, this paper will highlight how to understand the journey of Indonesian Muslims in responding to external and internal challenges through a process of cultural adaptation and assimilation that has transcended geographical boundaries to create a global network of Islamic civilization.

In this paper, the researcher highlights Indonesian Muslim actors in responding to globalization, particularly in relation to the production of contemporary Islamic discourse. Globalization, in all its complexity, has brought a cross-border flow of information, values, and culture, influencing how Muslims, including those in Indonesia, understand and express their religious identity. In this context, Muslim actors not only serve as conveyors of Islamic messages but also as cultural actors actively negotiating these various global influences. Furthermore, using a multidisciplinary approach, this paper seeks to examine how intellectuals have made significant contributions to shaping the face of civilization, emerging as a flexible and dynamic identity, continually negotiated and shaped in interaction with the modern world.

METHODS

The researcher employed a qualitative approach with analytical-explanatory library research. This approach was chosen to deeply understand the transformation of Islamic discourse and the negotiation of Indonesian Muslim identity in the era of globalization through conceptual analysis and a review of previous research. Theoretically, this research relies on Manuel Castells's concept of network society to explain changes in social structure due to developments in communication technology; Heidi Campbell's digital religion framework to analyze the reciprocal relationship between digital media and religious practices; and Zygmunt Bauman's concept of liquid modern life to understand the fluidity and negotiation of religious identity in the context of late modernity.

The data sources in this study consist of primary data in the form of books, journal articles, and scholarly works discussing digital media, globalization, and Indonesian Muslim identity, as well as secondary data in the form of supporting literature and documentation of digital phenomena such as social media and online religious communities. Data collection was conducted through documentation studies and searches of relevant academic literature (Nasution, 2023; Suwendra, 2018). The data analysis technique used interpretive discourse analysis, emphasizing how Islamic narratives are produced, distributed, and negotiated in digital spaces, as well as how religious authority and identity are constructed within the context of globalization. Through this method, the research seeks to explain that digital media is not merely a means of disseminating Islamic preaching but rather an arena for contestation and negotiation of Indonesian Muslim identity, which is dynamic, flexible, and constantly transforming.

RESULTS

Negotiating Indonesian Muslim Identity

The transmission of Islamic discourse in Indonesia has undergone a dynamic process that stimulates the continuous writing and production of religious literature. It is inseparable from the dynamic circulation of religious thought and movements in Indonesia, as well as the role of young Muslims who have challenged and influenced religious contestation in the public sphere. As Gole and Ammann (2006) wrote, the new face of Islam in the public sphere demonstrates a significant transformation of Muslim identity amidst the currents of modernity and globalization. In this case, the public sphere, which was once limited

territorially, has now transformed into a virtual expansion that has impacted the Muslim community. Muslim actors within this wave not only maintain traditional Islamic values but also actively shape Islamic discourse relevant to the increasingly complex context of the times. They engage in modern urban spaces, accustom themselves to productive and adaptive lifestyles, utilize global communication networks, and participate in various public debates covering social, political, and cultural issues (Hasan, 2018a).

Modernization and globalization, marked by the emergence of new media, not only threaten traditional forms of authority based on oral transmission and print-based textual learning (Turner & Nasir, 2013). They also provide opportunities for traditional religious authorities, or ulama, to adapt and contest to shape the Islamic discourse of Indonesian Muslim society within new media (Hasan et al., 2018). Furthermore, the development of new media has also driven a shift in the interests of young Muslims in seeking out religious literature. The shift from printed literature to online literature has enabled the emergence of new media, such as smartphone applications, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Line, and WhatsApp, as alternatives for narrating religious discourses (Hasan et al., 2018).

An important issue that also arises in discussing the discourse of Islam and Muslim identity in the era of globalization is closely related to the drastic development of widespread internet use in spreading religious opinions and influencing individuals about sharing religious ideas packaged in digital packages (Bunt, 2010). Muslim actors involved in the digital space make changes to the choices in reshaping the understanding and practice of Muslim diversity. Through social media, YouTube, podcasts, they present various Islamic narratives that do not always originate from Islamist ideologues like their predecessors; Hasan Al-Bana (1906-1949) who founded the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt in 1923, Abdul A'la Al-Maududi (1903-1978) and Sayyid Qutb (1906-1966) who have influenced the development of the ideology of the caliphate system and Islamic politics throughout the world (Hasan et al., 2018). However, the existence of new media actually enriches religious choices by creating a dialectical field, borrowing Campbell's term for it as "liquid modern life," where religious ideas become increasingly fluid, dynamic, changing, and no longer singular. Consequently, the expansion of public space impacts the Muslim community by offering all participants an endless dialectic of choices (Campbell & Evolvi, 2019).

In modern society, mass media plays a crucial role in shaping religious identity, including increasing mediation of self-representation and social interaction. Concurrently,

the role of media in religious identity has expanded. Religion has transformed in late modernity to reflect current social issues. This allows actors to continually change, negotiate, and renegotiate their identities throughout life (Berger & Ezzy, 2009).

The involvement of Muslim scholars in studying Indonesian Muslim identity is currently recognized through critical thinking, in-depth research, and significant contributions to the development of science and culture adapted to the modern, contemporary, and Indonesian context. Research conducted, such as that demonstrated by Noorhaidi Hasan, for example, in his various writings, emphasizes how Islamism has transformed into a cultural expression through religious symbols in lifestyle, fashion, and popular media. He calls this phenomenon a form of "Popular Islamism," indicating that Islamism is no longer limited to narratives of political struggle, but is also embedded in everyday practices packaged popularly and attractively (Hasan, 2018b). Furthermore, Najib Kailani (2018), in his research, as another example, has shown a picture of how the transmission of Islamic literature becomes the consumption of Islamic discourse, one of which is most sought after by young Indonesian Muslims. Based on his research in several large cities on the consumption of literature by young Muslims, it shows that young Muslims in Indonesia prefer Islamic literacy readings that are articulated with more modern Islamic ideas, contemporary in pop culture, packaged in writings in comics and novels (Ehrenkonig, 2021).

In the context of an increasingly digital society, I want to show how research (Hew Wai Weng, 2018) has illustrated how the negotiation of religious identity is no longer a closed or confined process within private and institutional spaces, but rather takes place openly and dynamically in the digital public sphere. His in-depth research into the ways in which the most popular Chinese Muslim negotiates ethnicity and religiosity in Indonesia is directed, among others, at Felix Siauw.

Felix Siauw is an activist in Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI). In 2015, a study of him revealed that Felix Siauw was the third most active Indonesian preacher on social media. Felix Siauw is active on Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube, where his content includes lectures, inspirational stories, and his thoughts on Islam and life. He is also listed as one of the most popular and influential preachers on Twitter (X) and Instagram in Indonesia. By 2016, he had become one of the most popular and controversial preachers in Indonesia. He attributes his rise to popularity to his extensive use of social media and visual aesthetics. The

main characteristics of Felix Siau's online visual sermon strategy are expressed through attractive images. Felix Siau has successfully adapted digital platforms as an effective preaching space, adapting his delivery style to social media trends and youth visual culture. In this context, he is not only a disseminator of Islamic discourse but also a producer of popular culture that bridges Islamic values with a global lifestyle, even though it often reaps debate within a certain ideological framework. Felix Siau is sometimes very fluid in narrating religious values. He is also very careful on social media with relaxed language in conveying messages inspired by HTI ideology (Weng, 2017).

As written (Hew, 2018) can be clearly seen in the figure of Felix Siau as a Muslim of Chinese descent. He then emerged as a popular preacher who was very successful in online and offline preaching in Indonesia. Felix Siau is a concrete example of how social media has become the main arena in forming, representing, and negotiating religious identity continuously. The transformation of his religious identity not only occurs in offline spaces but is also actively mediated and constructed through digital platforms (Schulz, 2015). Based on the reflection of charismatic, traditional authority written by Weber. Felix Siau negotiates his identity by taking traditional and charismatic authority as a form of attraction mediated through visual aesthetics and re-presenting it by being managed through certain strategies and media formats effectively and efficiently (Kailani & Sunarwoto, 2019; Schulz, 2015).

DISCUSSION

Muslim Identity and Religious Transformation in the Digital Space

In today's era, the internet has become crucial for disseminating religious values, strengthening internal solidarity, and rapidly mobilizing support across regions (Bunt, 2010). Indeed, it cannot be denied that the future of Islam and Muslims is now closely linked to the information technology revolution (Howard, 2010). The internet, which has gone through a long process and series of modern communications, has transformed the way Muslims interact online. Manuel Castells calls it a "Network Society," where new forms of social structure are formed and mediated by technological networks (Castells, 2004).

One characteristic of modern society is increasing urbanization and public exposure to mass media. The information revolution is indeed shaking the very fabric of society worldwide. Its reverberations are increasingly felt in all developing countries, including

Indonesia. It can be seen in the increasing spread of communication technology. Long before the internet developed in Indonesia, the process of transforming religious identity in the public sphere was articulated through religious content distributed through television. Thomas and Lee (2012) explain that the hallmark of modernity is marked by the struggle for religious identity and intra-religious contestation, which is related to two major trends: first, the globalization of conventional identity, and second, the important role played by television as a worldwide entertainment activity.

The transformation of religious identity in Indonesia experienced significant momentum in the late 1990s, particularly after the collapse of the New Order regime in 1998. This change was not only political but also touched the social, cultural, and spiritual realms of Indonesian society. One factor that played a significant role in this transformation process was the presence of private television. In this context, television became a very strategic medium in disseminating religious values, shaping public opinion, and building a new religious identity (Kailani & Sunarwoto, 2019). The emergence of private television in the early 1990s, such as RCTI, SCTV, and Indosiar, laid the initial foundation for the formation of a religious identity market. Consider the religious programs on television that began to occupy significant space on the screen. Programs such as *Manajemen Qalbu* (Qalbu Management), popularized by Aa Gym on RCTI, *Curhat Keluarga Sakinah* (*Sakinah* Family Confessions) on SCTV, *Indonesia on TV One*, *Mama & Aa* on Indosiar, and *Islam Itu Indah* (Islam Itu Indah) on Trans TV symbolized the wave of Islamization of the television screen, where their presence was able to address the spiritual needs of urban communities experiencing an identity crisis. These programs present Islam in a lighter, more popular, and easily digestible format, thus being able to reach a wide audience from various social class backgrounds (Muzakki, 2012).

In today's era, social media, like television, also serves a similar purpose. Muslim actors have used it to represent their identities and religious transformations in the digital space. There are several studies dedicated to exploring how religious identities are transformed in the digital space. For example, Eva F. Nisa's research in her article "Social media and the birth of an Islamic social movement: ODOJ (One Day One Juz) in contemporary Indonesia" shows how the ODOJ community uses WhatsApp to encourage Muslims to read the Quran daily. With over 140,000 members in Indonesia and abroad, ODOJ has successfully galvanized religious enthusiasm through technology, creating a semi-virtual Quranic movement rooted in the Tarbiyah movement. Nisa emphasized that ODOJ

demonstrates how technology can generate and shape new socio-religious movements in Indonesia (Nisa, 2018).

In addition, similar research on the ODOJ community and how Islamic discourse is transformed into the digital space was conducted by Acep Muslim. In his article, "Digital Religion and Religious Life in Southeast Asia: The One Day One Juz (ODOJ) Community in Indonesia," Acep examines ODOJ as an example of "digital religion." He highlights how ODOJ has encouraged its members to read one juz of the Quran daily, transforming their religious practices and enabling new ways of practicing religion. Acep Muslim understands ODOJ as an online community with a unique disciplinary structure and social mechanisms that have created a new technology-based religious institution (Muslim, 2017).

The study of Muslim identity discourse in Indonesia in transforming religion in the digital space, as demonstrated by the ODOJ community, is one representation of how social media has provided ways for Indonesians to become pious digitally. For example, Martin Slama, in his article "Social Media and Islamic Practice: Indonesian Ways of Being Digitally Pious," has highlighted how social media has transformed the relationship between preachers and their followers. He shows the emotional and symbolic exchanges through social media that have reshaped the economy of Islamic preaching in Indonesia. With an emphasis on the emotional needs of middle-class Muslims, Salma also highlights how ustadz and ustadzah must be sensitive to the emotional needs of their followers, especially women who increasingly seek spiritual guidance through social media (Jurriens & Tapsell, 2017).

Thus, the study of Islamic discourse and Muslim identity in the era of globalization, marked by the presence of social media, has offered a multitude of networking options, from chat groups to websites. Muslim actors have expanded all of these options for information exchange in the digital space and have presented unique challenges regarding the extent to which the internet provides speed of access and the need for new criteria for trust.

CONCLUSION

The transmission of Islamic discourse in Indonesia has undergone a profound transformation amid globalization and the rise of new media, expanding territorial public spheres into dynamic digital arenas that foster novel expressions, productions, and contestations of Muslim identity. Far from eroding traditional religious authority, media modernization has spurred adaptation and reconfiguration, as ulama, preachers, and Muslim

actors compete in digital spaces by leveraging visual logics, algorithms, and popular culture. This shift is evident in the move from print to digital literature, which reshapes young Muslims' religious consumption toward more aesthetic, pop-infused formats like Popular Islamism; the fluid negotiation of identity on social media, exemplified by figures such as Felix Siauwho who strategically mediate religiosity through visual aesthetics, personal charisma, and digital adaptation; and digital movements like One Day One Juz (ODOJ) that harness technology to forge religious solidarity and digital piety. Overall, Indonesian Muslim identity in the digital era emerges from the intricate interplay of globalization, communication technologies, popular culture, and post-Reformasi socio-political dynamics, with the internet not only accelerating religious discourse circulation but also necessitating new criteria for authority, trust, and legitimacy in religious life—insights that invite further interdisciplinary inquiry into hybrid religious subjectivities.

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