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Abstract

The emergence of new media has reshaped the landscape of Islamic da'wah in Indonesia, shifting religious authority from traditional institutions to digital platforms. This article seeks to discuss how Habib Husein Ja'far Al Hadar—one of Indonesia's most influential millennial preachers (dai)—promotes a form of "Smiling Islam," characterized by tolerance, inclusivity, and religious moderation, through his YouTube channel "Jeda Nulis." This article uses Social Network Analysis (SNA) and content analysis of twenty-one videos uploaded between 2019 and 2023 to find four main signs of religious moderation: tolerance, anti-violence, national commitment, and acceptance of tradition. Findings show that Husein Ja'far's da'wah is dominated by messages of tolerance (82.4%) and non-violence (58.5%), supported by a millennial-friendly communication style, interfaith dialogues, and collaborations with influencers. The study also explores contestation surrounding his online presence, particularly accusations of Shia affiliation propagated by right-wing Islamic actors and conservative groups within Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). SNA of audience responses indicates that the majority of netizens reject these accusations, highlighting the role of media framing and communication distortion in shaping sectarian narratives. Overall, the research demonstrates that Habib Husein Ja'far's digital da'wah not only challenges the dominance of conservative voices in Indonesia's virtual religious sphere but also contributes significantly to mainstreaming religious moderation among young Muslims.

Keywords: Virtual Da'wah; Husein Ja'far Al Hadar; Islamic Religious Authority

Introduction

In the post-secular era, instead of disappearing from the public sphere, religion has increasingly come to the forefront. José Casanova refers to this as the phenomenon of the deprivatization of religion. According to him, religion in the public sphere involves religion assuming or taking on the character, functions, and roles of the public domain. In this context, the dichotomy between the "private" and the "public" seems to blur or, at the very least, is no

longer a significant issue (Casanova, 1994).

Alongside the emergence of this phenomenon, the public sphere of Islamic religiosi-ty has become increasingly prominent. Islamic identity and its symbols frequently appear in the public sphere of mass media and have become a global phenomenon in the Muslim world since the 1990s. These manifestations break through traditional boundaries and begin to reframe religious authority and expression through "new media," or online media channels, following the proliferation of the internet. They often emerge from grassroots movements composed of the Muslim middle class. This phenomenon represents a systematic explora-tion of how religious (Islamic) groups respond to and embrace various developments in new media and information technology. (Campbell, 2010)

In the past decade, virtual *da'wah* in Indonesia has experienced significant develop-ment. *Da'wah* content, which was previously accessible only through conventional means such as religious gatherings or mosque pulpits, has transformed into public content that pop-ulates social media platforms, particularly *YouTube*.

However, the dissemination of virtual *da'wah* also brings about a proliferation of provocative content that accuses other Islamic groups of being infidels. Such content is easi-ly accessible on *YouTube* and often garners a substantial number of views and followers. For instance, if we search for the keyword "*bid'ah*" on *YouTube*, a preaching by *Ustaz* Khalid Basalamah typically appears at the top of the results. Following that, an account named *Yufid.TV* appears in second place, boasting an impressive 3.59 million subscribers. Both accounts are affiliated with the Salafi-Wahhabi. Furthermore, to expand the reach of their *da'wah*, *Yufid.TV* offers an application platform that can be downloaded from *iTunes* or the *Google Play Store* (Chaplin, 2016).

This development has triggered backlash, particularly from circles within Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), in the name of safeguarding nationalism, preventing hate speech, and coun-tering the caliphate movement. As a result, NU—both structurally and culturally—has ex-pressed opposition to these popular preachers and has rejected Khalid Basalamah's sermons in several locations, including Lamongan, Sidoarjo, and Jakarta. Similarly, Felix Siauw's lectures have been refused in several places due to his affiliation with Hizbut Tahrir Indone-sia (HTI), which is viewed as contributing to social polarization (Akmaliah, 2020).

Such reactive responses from NU are indeed problematic. Considering NU's repu-tation as a friendly and moderate Islamic organization, these actions appear contradictory and risk undermining the principles of religious pluralism. (Saat, 2021) Therefore, in this context, a more constructive and conciliatory counter-strategy is needed to ensure that NU's moderate identity is upheld rather than reduced to a mere rhetorical claim (Hilmy, 2013).

This phenomenon aligns with the theory of Islam and new media in a contemporary context. Several studies on Islam and new media, shifts in religious authority, and virtual preaching have been conducted. However, few have specifically identified which Islamic groups in Indonesia dominate the religious public sphere or highlighted representatives of moderate Islamic figures in the contestation of religious authority on social media. Most of the prominent figures mentioned tend to come from conservative or fundamentalist Islam-ic groups, such as Felix Siauw. In light of this phenomenon, there is a pressing need for a friendly and non-reactive counter-strategy in preaching to ensure that the "moderate" label is no longer just a myth but becomes a tangible reality in the religious public discourse (Hilmy, 2013). This article seeks to discuss the role and strategies employed by millennial preachers in the contestation of virtual *da'wah* in contemporary Indonesia. It highlights Husein Ja'far Al Hadar as a role model for millennial *dai* (preachers) from the moderate Islamic group.

Method

This research falls under the category of library research. It focuses on media analysis, with *YouTube* as the primary object of study. The primary data source for this research is a *YouTube* channel named "Jeda Nulis," while secondary data sources include books, journals, magazines, and newspapers (both print and online) that are relevant to the research topic. Using the Social Network Analysis (SNA) approach, (Wellman, 2011) the study examines twenty-one *YouTube* videos from Husein Ja'far Al Hadar's "Jeda Nulis" channel, published between 2019 and 2023.

In the context of this article, the "node" (social actor) is Husein Ja'far Al Hadar, the individual behind the *YouTube* channel "Jeda Nulis." Meanwhile, the "bonds" (relations between them) refer to those who subscribe, comment, or interact with the "Jeda Nulis" account (O'Donohoe, 2010; Wellman, 2011). The foundation of this article lies within the discipline of the sociology of religion in a digital context. Fundamentally, the study of religion in a media context should analyze religious expressions across various media platforms using an interpretive (hermeneutic) and critical-historical approach, which are prevalent in text-oriented disciplines. Similarly, the social scientific tradition of religion examines how individuals use media either as a substitute for or a complement to their religious practices (Campbell (ed.), 2013).

For data collection, this article utilizes the *MaxQDA* 2020 software, analyzing all content uploaded by the "Jeda Nulis" *YouTube* channel. Technically, the authors incorporate four indicators of religious moderation into *MaxQDA*: national commitment, tolerance, anti-violence, and acceptance of tradition. The software then analyzes both the content and user comments on the "Jeda Nulis" channel. As a result, the research will generate a Social Network Analysis (SNA) map, which will disclose potential affiliations with religious groups based on the tendencies observed in the comment content.

A Brief Overview of Husein Ja'far

Over the past decade, numerous young preachers have emerged, one of whom is Husein Ja'far Al Hadar. Known to netizens as Habib Husein Ja'far, he is a young preacher born in Bondowoso, East Java, on June 21, 1988. Husein Ja'far began his religious studies as a student at an Islamic boarding school in Bangil, Pasuruan, East Java. He then pursued his undergraduate education at the State Islamic University (UIN) Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, majoring in Islamic Philosophy. Subsequently, he continued his academics by enrolling in a master's program specializing in Qur'anic Exegesis and Hadith (Masfufah, 2019).

Habib Husein Ja'far is a young preacher who has gained increasing popularity, particularly among the millennial generation. Habib Husein Ja'far employs unique and relatable methods of da'wah, with social media serving as his primary platform. Before establishing himself as a preacher, Habib Husein Ja'far built a career in literacy. He has authored numerous books, including *Anakku Dibunuh Israel* (2008), *Islam "Mazhab" Fadlullah* (2011), *Menyegarkan Islam Kita* (2015), and his most renowned work, *Tuhan Ada di Hatimu* (2020). Habib Husein Ja'far also launched a *YouTube* channel called "Jeda Nulis," which he uses as a medium for his *da'wah* activities.

Figure 1: Official Account of Habib Husein Ja'far

In several interviews, Habib Husein Ja'far explained the reason for his transition from *da'wah* through writing to using audio-visual *YouTube*. He chose social media as a platform for his *da'wah* to offer a positive alternative amidst the prevalence of negative content. Since his primary goal is to reach young people who are deeply engaged in the digital world, social media platforms like *YouTube* prove to be more effective than writing essays (Masfufah, 2019).

This trend aligns with data presented by *We Are Social and Hootsuite*, which show that *YouTube* ranks as the second most-used social media platform globally, with 2.51 billion active users as of October 2022, trailing *Facebook* with 2.93 billion active users. WhatsApp, with 2 billion users, and Instagram, with 1.38 billion active users, trail these figures (Annur, 2022).

Meanwhile, in Indonesia, as of February 2022, *YouTube* remained the second most-visited platform by Indonesians, following *Google*. For a detailed breakdown, please refer to the picture below: (Riyanto, 2022)

Figure 2: Websites that are visited by many Indonesian in 2022

The *YouTube* account "Jeda Nulis" was created on May 4, 2018. As of the writing of this article (December 30, 2024), the account has reached 1.57 million subscribers, with 398 videos published. In its first two years, the "Jeda Nulis" account achieved significant progress, producing over 130 videos and gaining 314 thousand subscribers in just two years. During this period, it collaborated with "Majelis Lucu Indonesia," a partner for content creation. As a result, millennial and Gen Z audiences enjoyed religious content presented in a relaxed, humorous, and satirical style. The audience, known as the "Pemuda Tersesat," was coined by him to refer to his digital followers (Pikri, 2022).

Islam and New Media: A Global and Indonesian Perspective

The discourse on Islam and new media has been ongoing for quite some time. On a global level, this discussion became prominent in the 1990s with the emergence of studies on religion in the public sphere, a movement partly initiated by José Casanova. Shortly thereafter, similar studies emerged that focused more specifically on the context of the Muslim world. Dale F. Eickelman, Jon W. Anderson, and others wrote one such study. In their book chapter, they successfully identify the role of new media in expanding not only the Islamic public sphere but also the transnational networks of Muslims (Eickelman & Anderson, 2003).

This, of course, does not diminish similar studies, such as those by Heidi A. Campbell. Her perspective is particularly intriguing, as her research begins with a redefinition of the terms "religion" and "new media" in the context of contemporary society. She traces the definition of religion as understood by Clifford Geertz and contextualizes it with the phenomenon of "new media," or the internet era, considering it as an inseparable part of human life (Campbell, 2010).

The term "new media" is used to encompass the emergence of digital, computer, or network-based information and communication technologies at the end of the 20th century. Most technologies described as "new media" are digital and often exhibit characteristics that are manipulable, networked, dense, interactive, and non-hierarchical. (Jinan, 2012)

All new media share similar characteristics related to distribution, production, and consumption. These characteristics include interactivity, hypertextuality, virtuality, and simulation. However, they are unaware that behind this apparent freedom, digital technologies in the form of new media are tracking their habits and characteristics. Ultimately, through the power of algorithms, these new media platforms manipulate users and undermine human autonomy, akin to what René Descartes referred to as the "*Genius Malignus*." This term can be understood as a "very intelligent demon" that is all-knowing and omnipotent. In the contemporary context, the presence of new media can be likened to Descartes' "*Genius Malignus*" (Hardiman, 2021).

Likewise, in the Islamic world, when "Islam" and "New Media" are combined, it refers to how the Islamic religion interacts with and utilizes modern information and communication technologies. Many Muslim communities have used new media to spread religious teachings, share religious knowledge, conduct *da'wah* campaigns, and communicate with fellow Muslims around the world. This aligns with what Gary R. Bunt describes. He argued that online activism in the name of Islam, which can be referred to as "virtually Islamic," is an area where tensions can increase with the growing availability and ease of access to internet technology (Bunt, 2003).

In contemporary Indonesia, a new generation of young clerics (*ulama muda*) has emerged, successfully leveraging this phenomenon, both from right-wing Islamic movements and moderate groups, by using social media as a platform for *da'wah*. Ulil Abshar Abdalla and Felix Siauw serve as representative examples of both of them. Initially affiliated with the Jaringan Islam Liberal (JIL), Ulil Abshar underwent a paradigm shift by 2016. He initiated a digital *da'wah* platform on *Facebook* called "*Ngaji Ihya*." Ulil seemed determined to reshape his image and reaffirm his authority as a *santri* rooted in the Nahdliyin tradition (Akmaliah & Saat, 2022).

The second figure is Felix Siauw, a young Chinese-Indonesian *ustaz* who has gained significant influence on social media. He has become one of the prominent millennial preachers, largely due to his affiliation with the transnational right-wing Islamic movement, Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI). Hew Wai Weng provides valuable insights into how *da'wah* strategies and social media have played an extraordinary role in contemporary virtual *da'wah* in Indonesia. Although Felix Siauw openly promoted the ideology of Hizbut Tahrir Indo-

nesia (HTI) before it was disbanded, he successfully created a unique niche in his *da'wah* approach: his sermons are both entertaining and conservative, relaxed yet dogmatic, and simultaneously personal and political. His *da'wah* appears to reconcile contradictions within Islamic discourse, but in reality, Felix Siauw seeks to normalize and make Islamic fundamentalism acceptable to netizens (Weng, 2018).

Recently, a prominent millennial *ustaz* from the Habaib, Husein Jafar, has emerged, creating a significant impact in the realm of virtual *da'wah*. As a young *ustaz* who presents accessible and easily understandable Islamic content, he has successfully introduced a moderate approach to *da'wah* in Indonesia.

Mainstreaming Religious Moderation in Virtual

Religious moderation is a concept composed of two key terms: "moderation" and "religious." The term "moderation" refers to the middle path or a balanced approach. In various contexts, such as discussion forums, moderators embody the principle of moderation by facilitating discussions impartially. They do not favor any particular side or opinion, ensuring fairness to all participants. Moderation also implies striving for the optimal or best course of action, often characterized by balance and equilibrium. In ethical terms, moderation lies between two extremes, which are typically undesirable (Kementerian Agama RI, 2019).

When associated with religion, the concept of religious moderation refers to adopting a balanced approach in practicing religious beliefs, aligning with the principles of moderation outlined above. Religious moderation entails avoiding extremes or excessive behaviors in the practice of faith. Individuals who embody this principle are referred to as moderate. Such individuals occupy a middle ground, steering clear of the two extreme poles.(Kementerian Agama RI, 2019)

In Indonesia, the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, Kemenag RI) significantly promotes the concept of religious moderation. One tangible initiative has been the establishment of Houses of Religious Moderation at universities across the country. Several Islamic higher education institutions (*Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam Negeri/PTKIN*) have utilized the digital public sphere and social media platforms to enrich and disseminate the discourse on religious moderation. Various forms of content, such as videos, memes, published works, articles, and opinion pieces, enable this dissemination. These materials are produced and distributed to both academic communities and the broader public, fostering greater awareness and engagement with the principles of religious moderation (Hefni, 2020).

The Ministry of Religious Affairs regularly organizes events to strengthen its work programs, inviting leaders from religious moderation centers within PTKIN and PTKIS units across Indonesia. These events include training sessions that cover both the principles of religious moderation and the effective management of social media and websites. These initiatives have led to the establishment of numerous websites that promote moderate and inclusive interpretations of Islam. One notable example is *Arina.id* (https://arina.id/).

The dissemination of religious moderation through digital information technology enables broader outreach, particularly to the millennial generation. The ability to effectively engage in and shape the digital space is crucial for influencing religious narratives within social media platforms. Without a balanced presence of moderate religious narratives rooted in values of tolerance, the digital sphere risks becoming a breeding ground for unregulated expressions. Such unchecked freedom, in the current context, has the potential to foster conflicts and promote intolerant perspectives.

In the context of the modern world, it is nearly impossible to disregard the presence of religion in the public sphere. This is evident in its frequent visibility, both at the individual

and institutional levels, as highlighted by media coverage. Religion continues to hold significant and enduring relevance within the public sphere, particularly in relation to the political realm (Moyser, 1991).

This phenomenon is referred to as (post)Islamism, a contemporary socio-political movement that seeks to reformulate the concept of "Islamism," particularly regarding the theoretical and practical feasibility of establishing an Islamic state. (Post-)Islamism emerged as a response to the ideological and political impasse of traditional Islamism, presenting itself as a more adaptable alternative. It conveys an impression of compatibility with modern political frameworks, such as democracy (Mustofa, 2021).

Social Media and the Shifting Religious Authority in Indonesia
In Indonesia's digital public sphere, people often view the advent of social media as a mixed blessing. Generations Y and Z, who were born and raised during the rapid transformation of information technology, exhibit distinctive characteristics, including a preference for instant access to information—religious content being no exception. However, not all individuals in these generations come from families that are well-versed in religious literacy or belong to the educated Indonesian Muslim middle class. Consequently, the religious information they encounter is not always constructive.

The broader impact of this phenomenon is the creation of what is termed an "echo chamber." Social media echo chambers reinforce existing beliefs by filtering information, often leading individuals to accept falsehoods as truths. Once entrenched, these misconceptions can be challenging, if not impossible, to correct. The dominance of misinformation in such environments undermines factual discourse (Alimi, 2018).

Contemporary humans have undergone a conceptual evolution from "*Homo sapiens*" to "*Homo digitalis*," characterized by a shift in the locus of subjectivity. In this transformation, individuals increasingly derive their thoughts and perspectives not from internal reflection but from the continuous stream of messages in digital communication. Without the ability to critically filter the overwhelming flood of digital information, the boundary between reality and fiction becomes blurred, rendering interpretation and discernment increasingly challenging (Hardiman, 2021).

This phenomenon, which Thomas Kuhn referred to as an "anomaly," has gradually extended to various domains, including the shifting of religious authority, particularly in Indonesia. Ismail Fajrie Alatas explains that religious authority, in its traditional sense, can be understood as a hierarchical relationship that connects a community to its historical foundation. This relationship grants the community the power or capacity to transform the past into a guiding example for the present. Religious authority, in this context, does not rest on common sense or the power of the ruler but on the recognition of a hierarchy that is deemed authentic and legitimate by all parties involved (Alatas, 2021).

In recent times, with the onset of the digital revolution, there has been a noticeable shift in the nature of religious authority. However, a deeper examination reveals that the concept of "authority" itself is inherently complex within the context of Islam. In Islamic thought, ultimate religious authority is attributed solely to Allah, the Creator (Azra, 2010). Historically, religious authority was primarily associated with figures such as *kiai*, or scholars who possessed a recognized and verified lineage of knowledge (*sanad*). This authority was often conferred upon individuals who had established their credentials through rigorous scholarship, as well as those who managed religious educational institutions.

The fragmentation, pluralization, and contestation of religious authority have been enduring features throughout the history of Islam. In recent times, however, the intensity of contestation among religious elites has notably increased. In Indonesia, three key factors

have significantly contributed to the recent dynamics within the Islamic religious sphere: globalization, post-reform democratization, and the growing influence of private television stations and social media platforms. ((eds.), 2020)

In other words, religious authority is increasingly shifting to new media platforms, which are often impersonal and primarily driven by information networks such as the internet. This transformation has made it easier for individuals to access knowledge tailored to their personal preferences and needs. People no longer need to directly consult a cleric to seek answers to their questions. Religious fatwas and interpretations are no longer exclusively the domain of traditional clerics. (Jinan, 2012)

This aligns with Heidi A. Campbell's argument regarding the impact of the digital era on religious practices, where several key changes have become increasingly evident. These include the decline in affiliation with traditional religious institutions, the shifting of religious authority, the rise of individualism, and a transition from pluralism to a more tribalistic mindset. The emergence of millennial ustaz in Indonesia, who have garnered significant attention from netizens, further exemplifies this transformation. These figures, often associated with the "Right Islam" category, play a crucial role in the virtual preaching landscape, reflecting the broader shift in religious authority in contemporary Indonesia (Heidi A. Campbell, 2010).

Data from *Alexa* and *Similarweb* reveal a striking trend: the two largest mass organizations, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah, did not dominate the top rankings. NU's website (*nu.or.id*) ranked third, while Muhammadiyah (*suaramuhammadiyah. id*) ranked tenth. In contrast, websites associated with the "Right Islam" movement, such as *portal-islam.id, eramuslim.com, hidayatullah.com, voa-islam.com, dakwatuna.com, and arrahmah.com*, emerged as dominant players in the online religious discourse (Akmaliah, 2020).

On *YouTube*, the accounts that dominate are those affiliated with the Salafi-Wahabi movement. Prominent channels such as *Yufid TV, Rodja TV*, and *Ammar TV* lead the religious content landscape on this platform. In contrast, Muhammadiyah and NU are represented by channels like *tvMu, Aswaja Tube, NU Channel*, and *NU TV*, but these are ranked lower in terms of influence. Salafi and Wahabi channels have gained greater significance, with higher subscriber counts and engagement, surpassing the popularity of Muhammadiyah and NU channels. For a more detailed comparison, please refer to the table below.

Islamic Religious Authority on YouTube Channel (Akmaliah, 2020)

No	Channel	Number of Subscribers	First Upload	Number of Content	Average content per month
1.	Yufid TV	491.866	1 March 2011	7568	91
2.	Rodja TV	136.668	26 January 2012	1147	16
3.	Ammar TV	405.345	8 November 2014	1067	27
4.	tvMU	7.173	31 March 2014	2097	45
5.	Aswaja Tube	47.324	9 October 2013	992	19
6.	NU Channel	349	21 November 2017	23	8
7.	NUTV	2.761	15 September 2015	314	11

The followers of this new religious authority largely shape its influence on Instagram. *Instagram* has been strategically chosen as a medium for preaching, targeting a specific audience primarily composed of users between the ages of 15 and 30, a demographic that dominates this platform, which is now affiliated with *Facebook*. According to data collected in 2020, *Ustaz* Abdul Somad holds the highest position on *Instagram*, with 9.7 million followers, although his original account was lost and replaced with a new one (@ustadabdulsomadofficial). The second position is held by Hanan Attaki, with 7.4 million followers, followed by Felix Siauw and Adi Hidayat, who have 4 million and 2 million followers, respectively. Khalid Basalamah and Syafiq Riza Basalamah occupy the middle positions, with 999,000 and 933,000 followers, respectively. At the lower end of the ranking are Handy Bony and Evie Efendi, with 324,000 and 16,600 followers, respectively. For a more detailed comparison, please refer to the table below.

New Religious Authorities' Number of Followers on Instagram (Akmaliah, 2020)

No	Instagram Channel	Name	Followers
1.	@ustadzabdulsomad	Abdul Somad	9.7 million
2.	@hanan_attaki	Hanan Attaki	7.4 million
3.	@felixsiauw	Felix Siauw	4 million
4.	@ustadadihidayat	Adi Hidayat	2 million
5.	@khalidbasalamahofficial	Khalid Basalamah	999 thousand
6.	@syafiqrizabasalamah_official	Syafiq Riza Basalamah	933 thousand
7.	@oemar_mita	Oemar Mita	698 thousand
8.	@handy.bonny	Handy Bonny	324 thousand
9.	@evieefendie	Evie Efendie	16.6 thousand

Habib Husein Ja'far's *Da'wah* Model

Habib Husein Ja'far occupies a distinct position in the delivery of his religious messages. In today's increasingly digitally connected world, millennial preachers like Habib Husein Ja'far have the unique opportunity to engage with a broader audience through social media and digital platforms. This phenomenon is part of the broader trend of online religion, wherein the presence of Islamic knowledge across various media platforms reflects the growing popularity of Islam in the digital realm.

The distinctiveness of Habib Husein Ja'far as a millennial preacher is evident in his approach to delivering preaching messages, his language style, and his ability to captivate the younger generation. Key elements of his preaching model include his use of communicative language that resonates with millennials, the incorporation of narratives relevant to contemporary issues, and the presentation of religious perspectives that address the challenges faced by today's generation. Habib Husein Ja'far effectively utilizes various social media platforms to convey his messages. (Fakhruroji, 2021)

Habib Husein Ja'far's presence in the digital world represents a highly effective strategy for disseminating his *da'wah* messages, particularly to the younger generation, who are increasingly active on these platforms. Additionally, his strong religious qualifications further enhance his credibility and influence. By optimizing digital content and engaging directly with his followers, Habib Husein Ja'far is able to play a significant and impactful role in shaping the understanding, perspectives, and positive attitudes towards religion and

diversity among youth.

This approach aligns with Hew Wai Weng's assertion that a popular preacher must possess both communication skills and media strategies. In other words, alongside knowledge and substance, performance is a critical component in the evolution of Islamic *da'wah* in contemporary Indonesia. Consequently, social media has become an essential "partner" in *da'wah*, providing a platform that facilitates the rise of a preacher's popularity and expands their reach (Hew Wai Weng, 2018).
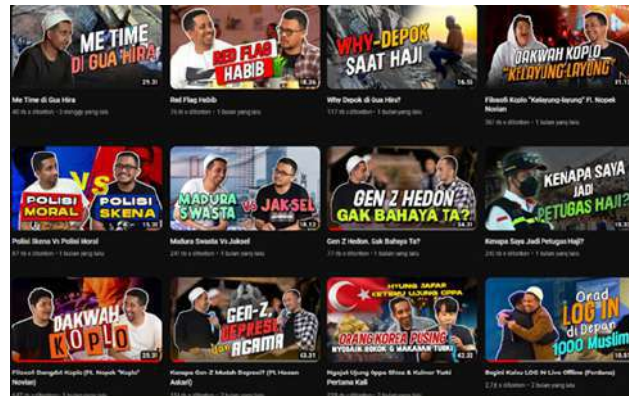

Figure 3: Editorial Contents of Habib Husein Ja'far Official Account

The editorial title and the visually engaging "glamour" thumbnail illustration, as seen in the image above, create a compelling impression that the content presented by Habib Husein Ja'far is dynamic and engaging, in contrast to the more rigid or monotonous style of conventional preaching. Furthermore, his strategic collaborations with social media influencers and celebrities, who boast substantial followings comparable to his own, enhance the appeal and reach of his messages, helping to attract a wider and more diverse audience.
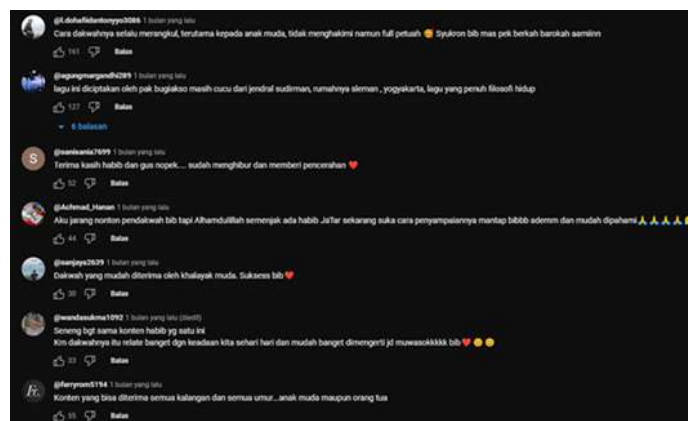

Figure 4: Online Reactions to Habib Ja'far's Preaching

The communication model employed by Habib Husein Ja'far can be described as digital communication. His audience strongly resonates with this, perceiving it as both effective and efficient. By utilizing digital platforms, this model effectively engages followers, making it a powerful tool for reaching and inspiring the audience in a contemporary context (Gallager, 2008).

Da'wah Approach in Promoting a Smiling Islam

An analysis of twenty-one content pieces from Habib Ja'far's *YouTube* channel "Jeda Nulis" reveals four key indicators of religious moderation: tolerance, anti-violence, national commitment, and acceptance of tradition. This analysis provides important details about the

nature of the communication strategies employed in these videos, highlighting the character-istics of a moderate and inclusive religious understanding that Habib Ja'far advocates. It also demonstrates the effective delivery of these messages to his audience via digital platforms. The following are the detailed findings from the analysis.
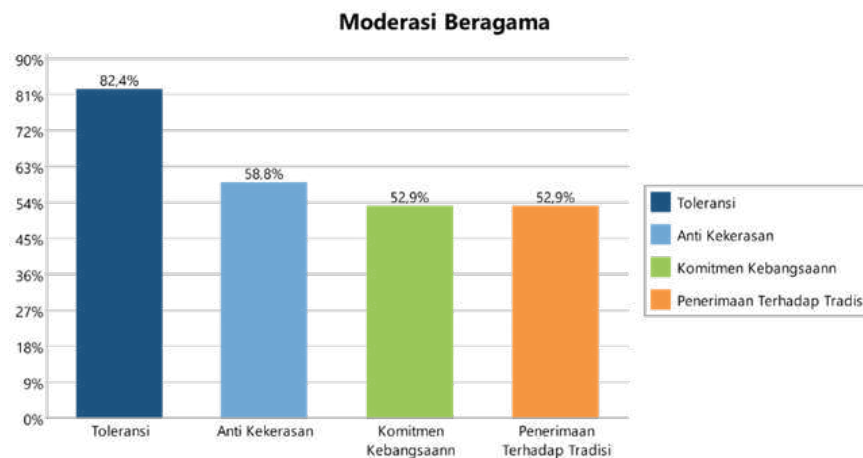

Figure 5: The Result of Content Analysis based on indicators of religious moderation

First, in the area of tolerance, Habib Husein Ja'far achieved a score of 82.4%. This indicates that his content predominantly conveys messages that promote and encourage in-terfaith tolerance. His messages likely emphasize the importance of coexisting peacefully while acknowledging and respecting differences in beliefs as essential for fostering social harmony.

Further, in the Anti-Violence indicator, Habib Ja'far scored 58.5%. This score sug-gests that, while he generally advocates against the use of violence in the transmission of his messages, there are instances where his content may be interpreted as implicitly supporting non-violent approaches. Nonetheless, the score reflects his ongoing effort to promote peace and oppose all forms of violence.

Habib Ja'far achieved a score of 52.9% in the category of National Commitment and Acceptance of Tradition. This score suggests that while some of his content emphasizes the importance of preserving traditions and fostering national commitment, there remains signif-icant room for improvement. Strengthening these messages in a broader context, particularly by placing greater emphasis on national values and traditions, could contribute to building a stronger and more cohesive identity.

To gain more profound insights into the themes frequently discussed in the content, the accompanying "word cloud" provides a visual representation. It highlights that Habib Ja'far, as a figure in Islam, emphasizes tolerance and acceptance of diversity among individ-uals, both within the Muslim community and between Muslims and non-Muslims.

Figure 6: "Word cloud" visual representation of Habib Husein Ja'far da'wah contents analysis

Furthermore, Habib Ja'far holds significant potential to deepen understanding of religious teachings, address misconceptions, and advocate for the values of tolerance and unity. By leveraging digital platforms and engaging with his followers, millennial preachers like Habib Ja'far can play a pivotal role in delivering positive and inclusive messages to both the younger generation and the broader community.

The message aligns with the teachings emphasized by Habib Ja'far in his book *Tuhan Ada di Hatimu*. In this work, Habib Ja'far highlights the Prophet Muhammad as an exemplary model of tolerance and religious moderation. He portrays the Prophet as a figure who conveyed the teachings of Islam comprehensively and fostered unity among diverse communities. According to Habib Ja'far, Islam serves as a solution to the complex challenges faced by society rather than contributing to new conflicts. In contemporary contexts, the concept of religious moderation offers a framework for Muslims to navigate horizontal relationships within diverse societies (Al Hadar, 2020).

Content Analysis

An analysis of twenty-one pieces of content created by Habib Ja'far reveals that one particular video stands out prominently. Titled "*Hukum & Sikap Kita atas Ucapan Selamat Natal*," this video contains the highest number of indicators related to religious moderation, with a total of 82 such elements identified. As of July 5, 2023, the video has garnered 1.5 million views and attracted 6,512 comments from viewers. In this content, Habib Ja'far brings together two prominent religious figures—Buya Yahya, representing the Muslim community, and Pastor Tommy—to discuss the topic, as illustrated in the accompanying image. This collaborative and dialogical approach exemplifies the principles of interfaith understanding and tolerance.

The Social Network Analysis (SNA) conducted on the public responses to Habib Husein Ja'far's content reveals significant dynamics and variations in audience reactions. The analysis highlights distinct clusters, each reflecting different themes and interpretations of the messages conveyed. Below is a summary of the findings for each cluster:

Figure 7: One of contents of Habib Husein Ja'far with both Buya Yahya and Pastor Tommy

Cluster 1 (Total Responses: 220) —Comment "Buya panutan aku buya yahya"
This cluster indicates that comments referencing Buya Yahya's exemplary behavior, particularly in the context of him being described as a "role model," generate substantial engagement. Responses from various netizens express appreciation for Buya Yahya as a figure of moral and spiritual guidance. This reflects not only his influential presence but also the positive impact of Habib Ja'far's messages in amplifying such influence. These comments underscore the critical role of role models in shaping public perspectives and behaviors, highlighting the importance of individuals who embody values that resonate deeply with the community.

Cluster 2 (Total Responses: 45)—Comment: "Mohammad Salah aja merayakan selamat hari natal..."
This cluster showcases reactions to contentious remarks made by other public figures about Christmas celebrations. The reactions in this cluster reflect a sense of confusion stemming from differences in views and practices within the religious context. Additionally, the use of specific emojis in these comments suggests a mixture of curiosity and apprehension, possibly indicating discomfort with the perceived fanaticism present in some responses. These dynamics point to the complexity of navigating diverse opinions within the framework of religious and cultural practices.

Cluster 3 (Total Response: 43)—Comment: "Belum mencapai titik spiritual dalam memaknai agama"
This cluster conveys the perspective that certain individuals may not have attained the level of spiritual depth necessary for comprehensively understanding and interpreting religious principles. The comments within this cluster reflect a recognition of the varying stages of spiritual awareness and the diverse interpretations among individuals responding to the content. This highlights the complexity of religious engagement and the importance of acknowledging differing levels of spiritual maturity within a community.

Cluster 4 (Total Response: 36) —Comment "Masya Allah buya yahya dan Habib jafar"
This cluster demonstrates a profound sense of admiration and respect for Habib Ja'far and Buya Yahya, both of whom are highly appreciated for their perspectives and messages. The comments in this cluster reflect a positive recognition of the significance of spiritual leadership and the role of influential figures in promoting harmony and peace. These responses underscore the community's acknowledgment of the importance of leaders who embody and advocate for values of unity and mutual understanding.

Cluster 5 (Total Response: 33) —Comment "Salut dan respect buat buya yahya..."
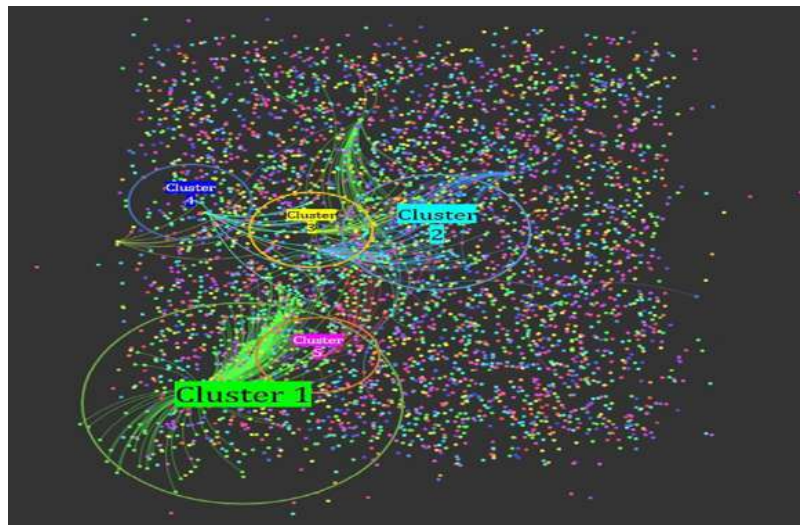

Figure 8: Map of the result Social Network Analysis (SNA)

This cluster reflects a strong sense of appreciation and respect for the acts of toler-ance demonstrated by Buya Yahya, Habib Ja'far, and Pastor Tommy. The comments high-light admiration for their positive approaches in navigating differences and their collective efforts to foster tolerance within society.

Overall, the social network analysis reveals a wide range of responses to the da'wah messages shared by Habib Ja'far. These responses range from praise and agreement to dis-agreements and deeper reflections on religious understanding. The clusters effectively illus-trate the complex dynamics within online communities as they engage in discussions sur-rounding religious messages and spirituality. If visualized, the results would be represented in the image below, which was generated using the *Gephi* application.

Additionally, Habib Husein Ja'far has faced accusations of being a Shia sympathizer since his early presence on *YouTube*. These criticisms have persisted over time, with some groups, particularly within the broader Indonesian Muslim community, voicing concerns about his alleged affiliation. The accusations have not been limited to more conservative factions, often referred to as the "Right Islam" group, but have also come from within the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) community, specifically from the "NU Garis Lurus" (NU GL) fac-tion. This ongoing criticism underscores the complexities and challenges faced by Habib Husein Ja'far in navigating religious identities and affiliations within the Indonesian reli-gious landscape.

Figure 9: Ustaz Idrus Ramli's YouTube Channel

Based on the content analysis and Social Network Analysis (SNA), four key actors have prominently engaged with the issue of Shia accusations on *YouTube*. The first of these is *Ustaz* Idrus Ramli, who represents the NU Garis Lurus. His content includes accusations that Habib Husein Ja'far is a Shia sympathizer. In his videos, *Ustaz* Idrus Ramli highlights various aspects of Habib Husein Ja'far's background and digital presence, including his social media posts that reflect respect for key figures in Shia Islam, such as Imam Ali and Imam Hussein. These elements serve as the basis for the accusations and are central to the discourse surrounding Habib Husein Ja'far's religious affiliations.

The second key actor in this issue is KH. Luthfi Bashori, a prominent figure who previously served as an advisor to the East Java Front Pembela Islam (FPI) and has held the position of Syuriah MWC NU Singosari Malang for two terms (2013–2023). KH. Luthfi Bashori's content contains accusations that the views expressed by Habib Husein Ja'far are closely aligned with Shia teachings. His criticism underscores concern within certain circles regarding the perceived doctrinal similarities between Habib Husein Ja'far's views and Shia beliefs.

Figure 10: KH. Lutfi Bashori's YouTube Channel

According to KH. Luthfi Bashori, in several of Habib Husein Ja'far' posts, he consistently defended Shia teachings and at times criticized opposing viewpoints. Notably, Habib Husein Ja'far was reported to have referred to those who reject the Shia school of thought as radical. One of the primary references cited by Habib Husein Ja'far in these discussions is the *Kitab Nahjul Balaghah*—a text frequently used by the Shia sect. KH. Luthfi Bashori argued that despite Habib Husein Ja'far's identification as a "millennial habib," his pro-Shia stance reveals significant doctrinal differences from the majority of Indonesian Muslims, who adhere to the Ahlussunnah wal Jamaah *mazhab*.

Figure 11: Ustaz Lutfi Sahal Al Mudhofary's YouTube Channel

The fourth key actor is *Ustaz* Sahal Al Mudhofary, who served as a resource person for a *ruqyah* program on national television from 2013 to 2017. He is also an administrator of the DPP ARSYI (Asosiasi Ruqyah Syar'iyyah Indonesia) and the founder of TLT. In his content, *Ustaz* Sahal Al Mudhofary discusses the growing popularity of Habib Husein Ja'far, particularly among millennials. While acknowledging Habib Husein Ja'far's appealing appearance and style, *Ustaz* Sahal expresses concerns over his digital presence on social media, which, according to him, indicates an affiliation with the Shia sect.

Among the four figures, *Ustaz* Sahal Al Mudhofary garnered the most attention from *YouTube* users. At the time of this research, his content had accumulated 128,000 views and 3,022 comments. Given the significant engagement, the author chose to conduct a more in-depth analysis of this content to explore the accusations of Shia affiliation directed at Habib Husein Ja'far. This raises a critical question: why does the issue of Shia Islam continue to evoke such strong reactions in Indonesia, often appearing as a source of fear and contention?

Excessive fanaticism rooted in a shallow understanding of religion is one of the key factors contributing to the continued sensitivity surrounding the issue of Shia Islam in Indonesia. This supports Gus Dur's claim that the growth of fundamentalist groups is due to young Muslims' shallow understanding of religion. Many seek to simplify their religious understanding by focusing on the primary texts of Islam, such as the Qur'an and *hadith*, without engaging with the centuries of interpretation and scholarly consensus that have shaped Islamic thought. In reality, Islam advocates for a life of peace and non-violence. Violence, according to Islamic teachings, is only permissible when Muslims are driven out of their homes (*idzâ ukhirijû min diyârihim*). Historically, Islam has spread without resorting to violence—particularly in Indonesia—a stark contrast to the actions of contemporary Muslim fundamentalists and terrorists who misinterpret and misuse religion to justify violence (Wahid, 2006).

Social Network Analysis (SNA) Review: Pros and Cons of Shia Accusations
In this section, the author conducts a deeper analysis of the pros and cons surrounding the Shia accusations directed at Habib Husein Ja'far. The analysis focuses specifically on the *YouTube* content of *Ustaz* Sahal Al Mudhofary, utilizing the Social Network Analysis (SNA) approach to examine the responses of netizens to these accusations.

Two primary perspectives are central to this research: first, the majority of netizens maintain that Habib Husein Ja'far is not a Shia; second, a minority group believes that he is indeed a follower of Shia Islam. These contrasting perceptions have emerged through content disseminated on *YouTube*, as well as writings authored by Habib Husein Ja'far himself. To provide a more comprehensive understanding of these dynamics, the SNA map is presented below for further examination.

In the map, the division between pro and contra groups is evident. The large circle, indicated by the arrow, represents the group that opposes the accusation that Habib Husein Ja'far is a Shiite sympathizer. In contrast, the slightly smaller yellow circle represents the group that supports this accusation, asserting that Habib Husein Ja'far is indeed affiliated with Shiism.

In this context, the Social Network Analysis (SNA) effectively demonstrates that the proportion of individuals rejecting the accusation that Habib Husein Ja'far is a Shiite sympathizer is significantly larger than the group supporting this claim. Therefore, the results of the analysis map serve as a valuable tool and concrete evidence that public perception does not entirely align with the accusation of Shiism directed at Habib Husein Ja'far.
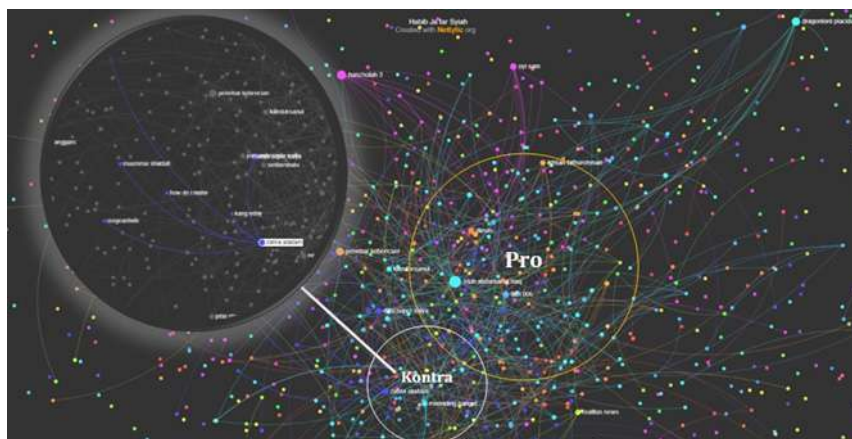
Figure 12: Map of pros and cons based on SNA

Furthermore, the allegation that Habib Husein Ja'far is a Shiite sympathizer lacks scientific validation. In addition to the absence of direct *tabayyun* (verification) with the individual in question, assessing someone's ideological stance or religious practice solely based on excerpts from their lectures or opinions constitutes a logical fallacy. From the perspective of Jürgen Habermas, this accusation exemplifies communication distortion. Such distortion arises from the failure to meet essential validity claims, including claims of truth, accuracy, authenticity or sincerity, and comprehensibility (Hardiman, 2013).

A deeper analysis suggests that the issue of Shiism has been strategically framed as a means to discredit Habib Husein Ja'far. For instance, media outlets may selectively present video clips or written materials that depict him in controversial contexts or evoke certain emotional responses.

Excessive or non-objective framing in representing a public figure can significantly influence audience perceptions, leading to a distorted understanding of the individual. For example, the selective use of video excerpts or written content portraying Habib Husein Ja'far in seemingly contentious situations may reinforce negative stereotypes and misconceptions about him. Framing, in this context, is closely linked to the ways in which various social actors operate and interact to construct organized narratives that shape public understanding of the world (Grant [eds.], 2008).

To provide further clarity, the following word cloud is presented as a result of comment analysis, highlighting *YouTube* as the primary platform driving the discourse.

Figure 13: The result of negative framing of Habib Husein Ja'far's Youtube Contents

The illustration above demonstrates that the issue of Shiism is the most dominant keyword in the accusations, alongside other related issues. Why does this occur? Based on our analysis, the topic of Shiism remains a subject of significant interest in Indonesia. Over the past decade, it has been one of the most widely debated religious issues. Through media framing, the Shiism discourse has become as complex and contentious as other religious debates.

Media framing, often based on binary oppositions, has played a significant role in shaping a biased perception of Shiism in Indonesia. Whether consciously or not, both mainstream and non-mainstream media contribute to this narrative by selectively quoting the opinions of certain religious figures who hold conservative and extreme views. As a result, information about Shiism is often presented in a fragmented manner, reinforcing suspicion and misunderstanding.

For instance, it is inappropriate to frame Shiism within a binary opposition such as "Islam versus non-Islam." Shiism is a branch of Islam, although some individuals argue that certain aspects of its teachings do not align with their understanding of Islamic doctrine. In many cases, binary oppositions fail to fully capture the complexity and diversity of religious realities (Eriyanto, 2015).

In reality, the understanding of Islam cannot always be confined to a simple binary opposition. According to Algirdas Greimas' quadrilateral opposition model, facts and realities can be categorized into four dimensions: (S_1, S_2, S_1 and S_2). Within this framework, the appropriate categorization is not merely "Islam versus non-Islam," but rather a more nuanced classification, such as "true Islam," "misguided Islam," "not misguided Islam," and "not true Islam." This approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities within Islamic discourse (Eriyanto, 2015).

Conclusion

The intersection of Islam and new media presents a compelling phenomenon for study, significantly shaping the landscape of virtual *da'wah* contestation in contemporary Indonesia. Over the past decade, the virtual *da'wah* sphere on Indonesian social media was initially dominated by figures affiliated with conservative or right-wing Islam. However, in recent years, moderate Islamic figures have emerged, one of the most notable being Habib Husein Ja'far. Since May 4, 2018, he has been actively promoting a friendly and inclusive form of *da'wah* through his *YouTube* channel "*Jeda Nulis*," employing various strategies—from crafting content that appeals to millennials and Generation Z to incorporating values of religious moderation.

By leveraging platforms such as *YouTube*, *Instagram, Twitter*, and *TikTok*, Habib Husein Ja'far has made significant contributions to spreading *da'wah* content that is both accessible and widely disseminated. His efforts have positioned him as a key figure in Indonesia's virtual *da'wah* contestation. Through collaborations with social media influencers, he has successfully captured the attention of young audiences, encouraging them to engage with interfaith relations and respond thoughtfully to various religious phenomena.

The analysis and findings presented in this article ultimately conclude that content focused on religious moderation remains highly appealing to young people. Despite facing accusations of promoting liberal or Shia ideologies, moderate preachers like Habib Husein Ja'far continue to resonate with a significant portion of the youth population.

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