



Digitalization of Islamic Politics in Indonesia: A Critical Study of Religion-Based Political Parties

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ABSTRACT

Purpose : This study examines how Islamic political parties in Indonesia (PKS, PKB, and PPP) transform their strategies and ideological articulation in response to digitalization by analyzing political communication on X (Twitter), Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, with particular attention to the implications of religious symbols in online politics.

Design/Methodology : Using a **critical qualitative** approach grounded in Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the study analyzes primary data consisting of official party posts and user comments to identify textual patterns, discursive practices, identity negotiations, and the articulation of Islamic values across platform-specific formats.

The findings show that these parties strategically integrate rich religious narratives and symbols tailored to each platform's affordances to build political image, strengthen ideological positioning, and mobilize support. Religion-based content consistently generates higher public engagement, indicating strong ideological resonance between party messages and segments of the audience. However, this digitalization also prompts criticism regarding the commodification of religious identity and the normalization of a singular political-religious identity, which may narrow deliberative space, intensify polarization, and weaken pluralism in the digital public sphere.

Practically, the study recommends a more ethical and reflective approach to digital da'wah and religious political communication—emphasizing inclusive framing, transparency of intent, and dialogic engagement—to maintain a democratic and pluralistic online environment.

Originality lies in its comparative cross-platform CDA of three Islamic parties that connects platform-specific communication strategies with audience engagement and democratic implications in contemporary Indonesia.

Keywords: Islamic Politics, Digitalization, Communication, Religion.

Paper type: Research paper.

ABSTRAK

Tujuan : Penelitian ini mengkaji bagaimana partai politik Islam di Indonesia (PKS, PKB, dan PPP) mentransformasikan strategi dan artikulasi ideologinya dalam menghadapi digitalisasi dengan menganalisis komunikasi politik di X (Twitter), Instagram, YouTube, dan TikTok, khususnya terkait implikasi penggunaan simbol-simbol keagamaan dalam ruang publik digital.

Metodologi penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif-kritis dengan kerangka Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) Norman Fairclough, dengan data primer berupa unggahan resmi media sosial partai dan komentar pengguna yang dianalisis untuk mengungkap pola tekstual, praktik diskursif, negosiasi identitas, serta artikulasi nilai-nilai Islam lintas karakteristik platform.

Temuan menunjukkan bahwa partai-partai Islam secara strategis mengintegrasikan narasi dan simbol religius yang kaya serta menyesuaikannya dengan affordances tiap platform untuk membangun citra politik, menegaskan posisi ideologis, dan memobilisasi dukungan. Konten berbasis narasi keagamaan terbukti menghasilkan tingkat keterlibatan publik yang lebih tinggi, menandakan adanya resonansi ideologis yang kuat antara pesan partai dan sebagian audiens. Namun, intensifikasi simbol religius dalam proses digitalisasi juga memunculkan kritik mengenai potensi komodifikasi identitas keagamaan dan normalisasi identitas politik-keagamaan tunggal, yang berisiko menyempitkan ruang dialog, meningkatkan polarisasi, dan melemahkan pluralisme dalam ruang publik digital.

Secara praktis, penelitian ini merekomendasikan pendekatan dakwah digital dan komunikasi politik religius yang lebih etis dan reflektif – melalui pembingkaihan yang inklusif, transparansi tujuan, serta strategi keterlibatan yang dialogis – guna menjaga ruang publik digital yang demokratis dan plural.

Orisinalitas penelitian terletak pada analisis wacana kritis komparatif lintas platform terhadap tiga partai Islam yang menghubungkan strategi komunikasi platform-spesifik dengan pola keterlibatan audiens serta implikasi demokratisnya di Indonesia kontemporer.

Kata kunci: Politik Islam, Digitalisasi, Komunikasi, Agama.

Jenis artikel: Artikel Penelitian

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital technology in Indonesian politics has significantly transformed the landscape of electoral contestation, particularly through the role of social media as a primary medium of political communication. This transformation is evident in how political actors utilize digital platforms to build networks, disseminate information, and mobilize support. The digitalization of democracy has introduced new intermediaries in the form of digital brokers, complementing the role of conventional brokers in reaching voters via social media (Madeley, 2013; Sarkissian & Özler, 2013; Warner, 2013). Technological adaptation has also driven the General Elections Commission (*KPU*) to design regulations and digital applications aimed at enhancing electoral transparency (Mantilla, 2018). Explorations of electronic voting systems and digital voter identification further illustrate a new trajectory in Indonesia's political administration, though such innovations must still adhere to democratic principles to ensure legitimacy (Kadhum, 2019; Kakar, 2022; Rebelo, 2022; Ryzhova, 2015).

Social media has become a vital arena in political contestation, serving as a digital public sphere where political narratives and debates emerge and disseminate rapidly. Platforms such as Twitter function as deliberative spaces that facilitate the mobilization of public opinion, as demonstrated by movements like *#GejayanMemanggil* ("*Social Network Analysis untuk Menilik Kualitas Demokrasi Digital Indonesia*", 2022; Fuadi, 2020). Meme culture and WhatsApp have also been strategically employed by political elites, particularly during the 2019 presidential campaign, to shape political narratives through astroturfing strategies (Band, 2012). Moreover, the practice of cyber-politics reflects how social media is used not only to deliver optimistic messages but also antagonistic narratives, ultimately contributing to societal polarization (Freedman, 2020).

Although digital technology offers significant opportunities for democratization and political transparency in Indonesia, it also presents serious challenges that require careful attention. Predictive analytical tools such as Google Trends, for instance, have been employed to forecast election outcomes; however, their accuracy remains limited due to the lack of granular data and the inability to precisely measure public sentiment (Musil, 2022). On the other hand, social media

allows politicians to construct charismatic images and blur the boundaries between public and private personas, as demonstrated by Ridwan Kamil, who leveraged his digital presence to strengthen his political influence (Aini, 2023; Millie & Baulch, 2024). In this context, Islamic parties such as the Prosperous Justice Party (*PKS*), the National Awakening Party (*PKB*), and the United Development Party (*PPP*) have also adopted digital media platforms including Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok as strategic tools to build political images, convey messages, and mobilize public support. Given the high rate of internet penetration in Indonesia, these digital platforms serve as primary media to reach broader audiences and shape political perceptions.

PKS, for example, has managed its political image through public communication strategies and communicative performance, although weaknesses in issue management and persuasive communication were identified during the 2019 campaign (Jahroni & Bakti, 2022). Additionally, adaptation to visual communication trends has become crucial for maintaining the party's relevance amid changing patterns of information consumption in digital society (Rohid dkk., 2025). Therefore, to prevent political digitalization from undermining democratic values, strong regulations and governance are required to ensure that digital media is used in an accountable and inclusive manner.

Social media also functions as a direct communication channel for Islamic political parties to deliver speeches and political messages directly to the public without relying on conventional media intermediaries. This offers a strategic advantage in reaching the Muslim millennial segment, which is highly active on platforms such as Twitter and Instagram (Fauzan dkk., 2024). The content strategies employed include the use of hashtags and participation in trending political discourses such as *#pemilu2024* allowing parties to engage in real-time interaction with prospective voters and to craft contextually relevant narratives (Azhar dkk., 2025). In this regard, digital communication serves as a crucial instrument for building emotional and ideological proximity between parties and voters, particularly within an increasingly competitive digital ecosystem.

Furthermore, digital media is also utilized as a tool for political mobilization. Experiences from other countries, such as Pakistan, demonstrate that social media can be effectively used to recruit volunteers, disseminate political

information, and encourage electoral participation (Azhar dkk., 2025). The concept of virtual democracy underscores the potential of social media in enhancing political participation, which is especially relevant in the Indonesian context, where a significant portion of the population actively accesses political content online (Octavianne dkk., 2024). Nevertheless, challenges persist, including the spread of misinformation and the digital divide, which can hinder the engagement of certain societal groups. Therefore, the effectiveness of Islamic parties' digital strategies is highly dependent on their ability to adapt to the dynamics of digital media while maintaining the authenticity of their political communication in the digital public sphere.

The role of digital media in the political communication strategies of Islamic parties in Indonesia is highly complex and multifaceted, influencing both Islamic discourse and broader democratic dynamics. Digital platforms have become arenas of ideological contestation, where various Islamic groups compete for authority, shape public opinion, and negotiate the meaning of Islam within the digital public sphere. Social media platforms such as YouTube, for instance, serve as battlegrounds for competing moderate Islamic narratives between traditional and contemporary religious authorities, driven by ideological, economic, political, and socio-cultural factors (Abusharif, 2023). Popular Islamic websites promote diverse political ideologies from religious democracy to the idea of a caliphate reflecting the plurality of views within Islamic discourse in Indonesia (Al-Zaman & Alimi, 2021). This phenomenon has also given rise to digital communities with differing religious orientations, contributing to social segmentation and tendencies toward exclusivism (Mahendra dkk., 2025).

These digital dynamics have significantly impacted the transformation of Islamic discourse and the social configuration of Muslim communities in Indonesia. The digital environment offers a space for young women in boarding schools to navigate moral challenges while asserting religious authority, potentially reshaping traditional gender norms (Muslim-Majority, t.t.). On the other hand, the rise of digital media has also facilitated the spread of both radical and moderate Islamic narratives, with actors such as *Nahdlatul Ulama* utilizing online platforms to promote deradicalization (Yilmaz & Shukri, 2024). However, these developments are not without consequences for Indonesia's digital

democracy, which is increasingly characterized by information control, self-censorship, and the manipulation of public opinion by online trolls and hyperpartisan media serving political interests (Mahendra dkk., 2025). During the 2019 presidential election, Islamic movements actively used digital media to support or oppose candidates through religious narratives, illustrating the central role of digital media in shaping electoral political outcomes (Arofah dkk., 2025).

Despite its significant potential, digital media also presents ethical challenges in political communication strategies. Communication practices in digital spaces frequently violate social norms and Islamic principles, often featuring political narratives that lack compassion and offering limited space for constructive dialogue (Masran, 2022). This situation demands careful navigation to prevent the spread of misinformation and to safeguard the integrity of political communication, particularly during critical periods such as elections (Sazali et al., 2023). Thus, digital media functions as a double-edged sword on one hand, it provides a platform for political engagement and discursive pluralism, while on the other, it harbors the potential to exacerbate polarization, exclusivism, and democratic erosion.

Accordingly, a strategic and ethical approach is required in managing the digital space to ensure that the positive potential of digital media is maximized while mitigating its negative impacts on social cohesion and democratic order. This research problem seeks to explore how digitalization has transformed the strategies and ideologies of Islamic political parties. Is there a tension between religious values and the logic of the digital marketplace?

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a critical qualitative approach with a discourse analysis framework to examine the transformation of political communication strategies among Islamic political parties in the digital era. The primary data sources consist of official social media posts from three Islamic-based political parties in Indonesia namely the Prosperous Justice Party (*PKS*), the National Awakening Party (*PKB*), and the United Development Party (*PPP*) on platforms such as X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and YouTube. In addition to these posts, user comments were also analyzed to understand patterns of interaction and public responses to the

content. Data collection was conducted between January and June 2025, focusing on online digital media that reflect the dynamics of political discourse, identity negotiation, and the articulation of Islamic values within the context of contemporary Indonesian society.

Data were collected using purposive sampling by selecting posts and comments that explicitly contained political messages or religious symbolism. The data were then analyzed using Norman Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), which consists of three dimensions: textual analysis (linguistic features), discursive practice (text production and consumption), and socio-cultural practice (ideological and political context). This analysis aims to explore how Islamic political actors construct meaning, exercise symbolic power, and respond to the logic of digital capitalism while maintaining their religious legitimacy. The findings are systematically presented through thematic categorization to highlight the interconnection between language, digital space, and Islamic political ideology. This methodological design is expected to provide analytical depth in revealing how digitalization has reconfigured the strategies and ideologies of Islamic political parties in Indonesia.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

TRANSFORMATION OF POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

Table 1. Number of political preaching uploads per platform

Platform	PKS	PKB	PPP
X (Twitter)	150	130	100
Instagram	100	90	80
YouTube	40	42	45
TikTok	25	22	15

Source: processed by the author

Table 1 illustrates the distribution of political da'wah posts across four major social media platforms X (Twitter), Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok by three Islamic-based political parties in Indonesia: *PKS*, *PKB*, and *PPP*. Among them, *PKS* is the most active actor, with 150 posts on X, significantly surpassing *PKB* (130 posts) and *PPP* (100 posts). This indicates a strategic emphasis by *PKS* on

utilizing text-based, fast-paced platforms to disseminate religious-political messaging. The prioritization of X reflects an effort to engage in real-time political discourse and leverage the platform's potential for virality and interactivity, which suits the ideological narrative they seek to promote.

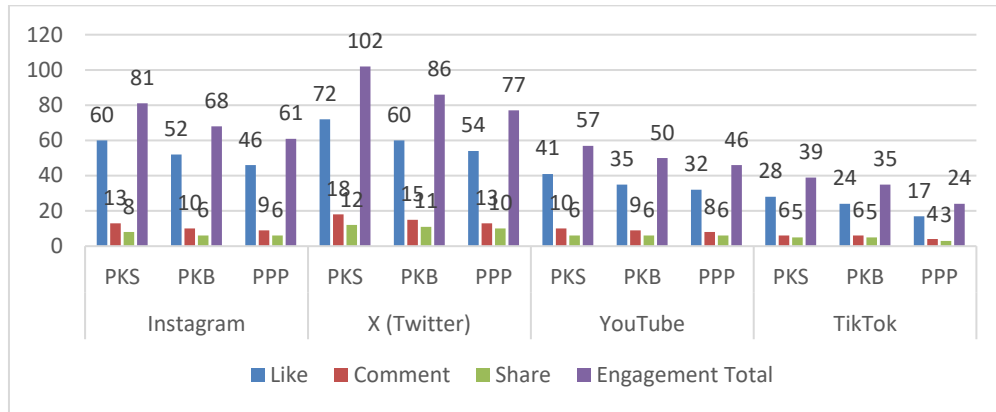
In contrast, on visually driven platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, all three parties show reduced posting frequencies. Nevertheless, *PKS* maintains its lead, with 100 posts on Instagram, followed by 40 on YouTube and 25 on TikTok. *PKB* and *PPP* demonstrate relatively balanced use across platforms, though still less intensive. These figures suggest a shifting trend toward visual storytelling, particularly among younger audiences, while text-dominant media remains crucial for real-time engagement. Overall, the data reflect a diversification in political communication strategies, with parties adapting their da'wah content based on platform characteristics and audience behavior.

From a textual analysis perspective, the content on X is characterized by dense, symbolic, and persuasive language. *PKS*, with the highest number of posts, frequently employs linguistic features such as Quranic quotations, moral imperatives, and emotive rhetoric to position themselves as the moral authority within the political landscape. The language used often constructs a binary between the "righteous ummah" and the "other," reinforcing ideological boundaries and identity politics. This reflects Fairclough's (1995) argument that texts are never neutral; instead, they are inherently embedded in power relations and serve ideological functions.

In terms of discursive practice, the production and circulation of da'wah content across platforms signify how these parties negotiate ideological dominance within digital public spheres. Posts are strategically crafted to resonate with specific audiences and are further disseminated through sharing, commenting, and algorithmic amplification. The consumption of these messages by digital followers reaffirms the legitimacy of religious narratives in political contexts. At the level of social practice, this dynamic reveals how political Islam adapts to the digital age blending religious discourse with visual culture to maintain relevance and legitimacy. As Fairclough (1992) posits, discourse is both shaped by and shapes sociopolitical structures, and in this context, political da'wah

becomes an instrument for ideological reproduction in a mediatized society (Arofah dkk., 2025; Deni, 2025; Yilmaz & Shukri, 2024).

Figure 1. Number of Engagement (Like, Comment, Share) of Political-Da'wah Content of PKS, PKB, and PPP



Source: processed by the author

Figure 1 illustrates the total engagement likes, comments, and shares received by political-da'wah content from *PKS*, *PKB*, and *PPP* across various social media platforms. *PKS* consistently receives the highest engagement, with a peak of 368 total interactions, primarily driven by religious narrative content (117) and emotive storytelling (71). Notably, Instagram and TikTok appear to be the most responsive platforms for *PKS*'s religiously themed content, indicating a strategic alignment between platform preference and message type. In contrast, *PKB* and *PPP*, though showing moderate engagement, have lower figures, with total engagement of 252 and 182 respectively, reflecting a more restrained or less resonant digital strategy.

The breakdown shows that religious narrative content consistently garners higher engagement across all three parties compared to emotive storytelling, especially for *PKS* and *PKB*. This trend implies that audiences are more responsive to content framed within religious language and themes, especially when delivered through visual and interactive platforms. For *PPP*, the engagement level remains comparatively low in both categories, possibly due to either a lack of optimized content strategy or limited audience reach. Overall, the data underscores the potency of religious discourse in capturing public attention on

social media, especially when packaged in a visually compelling and emotionally resonant manner.

From a textual analysis perspective, the data suggests that content rich in religious narratives typically marked by scriptural references, spiritual keywords, and moral exhortations elicits stronger engagement than emotionally driven stories. This aligns with Fairclough's (1995) assertion that linguistic features of a text are imbued with ideological functions. *PKS's* dominance in engagement suggests its mastery in crafting religious-political discourse using symbolically loaded language, fostering a sense of collective identity and spiritual urgency. The contrast in performance between narrative types further reinforces the role of intertextuality and framing in political messaging, where religious legitimacy enhances the persuasive force of the message (Arofah dkk., 2025; Deni, 2025; Ridho dkk., 2023; Syahrain dkk., 2024).

Through the lens of discursive and social practice, this pattern of engagement indicates that religious discourse is not merely consumed passively but actively reproduced through audience interaction likes, comments, and shares which constitute new cycles of discourse circulation. The higher engagement for religious narrative content reveals a deeper ideological resonance between message and audience, confirming Fairclough's (1992) view that discourse both reflects and constructs social reality. The findings also imply a broader social-political context wherein Islamic political identity is not only communicated through content but validated through audience interaction. In this digital ecology, political parties utilize religious language not only to inform but also to mobilize and maintain ideological hegemony in the public sphere (Arofah dkk., 2025; Deni, 2025; Syahrain dkk., 2024).

COMMODIFICATION OF RELIGION IN DIGITAL SPACE

Table 2. Percentage of Political Content with Religious Symbols

Platform	PKS (%)	PKB (%)	PPP (%)
Instagram	65%	58%	54%
X (Twitter)	72%	66%	61%

YouTube	78%	70%	68%
TikTok	60%	55%	50%

Source: Nvivo 12 Plus

Table 2 reveals the prevalence of religious symbols in political content shared by *PKS*, *PKB*, and *PPP* across four major social media platforms: Instagram, X (Twitter), YouTube, and TikTok. Among these, YouTube emerges as the platform with the highest percentage of religious-symbolic content 78% for *PKS*, 70% for *PKB*, and 68% for *PPP*. This trend highlights a strategic emphasis on long-form video platforms to embed religious imagery and language, allowing for more in-depth religious narratives to be integrated within political messaging. The use of such symbols reinforces religious legitimacy and moral authority, particularly in platforms that allow greater visual and verbal elaboration.

On platforms like X and Instagram, the use of religious symbols remains consistently high, ranging from 54% to 72% across the three parties. *PKS* again leads in all categories, indicating a deliberate effort to visually embed Islamic identity in its political outreach. TikTok, although relatively lower in percentage (60% for *PKS*, 55% for *PKB*, and 50% for *PPP*), still reflects a significant presence of religious symbols. This data suggests that religious semiotics remains central to political branding, with parties tailoring their symbolic strategies based on platform characteristics and target demographics.

From a textual analysis perspective, the consistent integration of religious symbols across all platforms signifies the intentional use of visual and linguistic signifiers to evoke Islamic identity and piety. Religious attire, Qur'anic calligraphy, mosque imagery, and Islamic greetings are embedded within textual and visual narratives to construct a moral frame around political actor. As Fairclough (1995) emphasizes, textual features including symbols are powerful tools for reproducing ideologies, and in this case, they function to naturalize the association between political authority and religious virtue. *PKS*, with the highest percentages, exemplifies a textually dense strategy where political discourse is almost inseparable from religious representation (Afwardzi & Miski, 2021; Rumata dkk., 2024; Widian dkk., 2023).

In terms of discursive and social practice, these symbolic patterns reflect a broader political communication strategy aimed at legitimizing power through religious identity. The high symbolic density on YouTube implies deeper narrative construction, while platforms like TikTok offer quick, emotionally resonant appeals through simplified yet potent symbols. This practice not only addresses the audience's spiritual sensibilities but also seeks to consolidate the hegemony of Islamic political identity in the digital public sphere. According to Fairclough (1992), discourse is shaped by and actively shapes social structures; thus, the persistent use of religious symbols by these parties reveals how Islamic semiotics is employed to negotiate legitimacy, mobilize support, and assert ideological dominance within Indonesia's contested digital political landscape (Kuswana dkk., 2024; Utami dkk., 2024; Wadipalapa & Budiatri, 2025).

CRITICISM OF THE DIGITALIZATION OF ISLAMIC POLITICS

The digitalisation of Islamic politics in Indonesia, particularly through platforms such as Twitter (X), Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, has not only opened a new arena of political communication but also introduced specific forms of political innovation in how Islamic parties organise, brand, and disseminate their messages. Textual analysis of the online communication of PKS, PKB, and PPP shows a high density of religious symbols and linguistic markers that construct a moral binary between "us" (pious, moral, righteous) and "them" (secular, corrupt, deviant). These rhetorical strategies rely on emotionally charged vocabulary, scriptural references, and visual cues such as Islamic clothing or places of worship to generate affective resonance with targeted audiences. In line with Fairclough's (1995) view that linguistic features are never neutral, these patterns function as an innovative yet conservative mode of political branding: they modernise the medium (through digital platforms and visual storytelling) while simultaneously reproducing a familiar moral-religious hierarchy in political discourse (Burhanuddin dkk., 2021; Jubaedah & Suryadi, 2023; Utami dkk., 2024).

At the level of discursive practice, the digitalisation of Islamic politics manifests as a series of organisational and communicative innovations. Political actors are no longer simply sending messages; they are engaging in continuous identity curation through strategic storytelling, micro-targeting, and visual

branding designed to maximise algorithmic visibility and engagement. Long-form narrative preaching and policy explanation are channelled through YouTube; highly curated religious imagery and identity-signalling are concentrated on Instagram; while TikTok is utilised for short, emotionally charged ideological appeals that can be rapidly circulated. These platform-specific strategies indicate that Islamic parties have adopted the logic of datafied campaigning and content optimisation, where metrics such as views, likes, and shares become key indicators of success. The audience, in turn, participates as co-producers of discourse by liking, sharing, stitching, and recontextualising content, thereby extending the reach and legitimisation of party narratives. This dynamic confirms Fairclough's (1992) argument that discourse is shaped by both institutional production and audience consumption within particular socio-technical environments (Burhanuddin dkk., 2021; Kuswana dkk., 2024; Leniawati & Haq, 2024).

Viewed from the perspective of social and ideological practice, these digital innovations are deeply ambivalent for Indonesian democracy. On the one hand, the ability of Islamic parties to use multi-platform strategies, influencer collaborations, and visually sophisticated content can be read as a modernisation of party outreach expanding access, lowering entry barriers, and enabling more continuous engagement with constituents. On the other hand, the saturation of Islamic symbolism across platforms contributes to the normalisation of a singular religious-political identity, narrowing discursive space and potentially marginalising alternative, more pluralistic or issue-based articulations of Islam in politics. In Fairclough's (1992) terms, digital religious-political discourse simultaneously constitutes and is constituted by power relations: the very innovations that appear to democratise access also embed hegemonic ideological positions in everyday communicative practices.

Critically, this trajectory risks reducing Islamic political thought to performative piety and symbolic populism, where the depth of ideological debate and policy discussion is displaced by viral slogans, curated authenticity, and affective spectacle. The digital realm, while offering unprecedented opportunities for religious and political expression, also fosters a commodification of Islamic identity in which visibility and engagement metrics often take precedence over substantive programmatic innovation. This raises significant ethical and political

questions about the role of platforms, parties, and digital strategists in shaping political-religious subjectivities: to what extent are these innovations strengthening democratic deliberation, and to what extent are they merely optimising the circulation of emotionally resonant, but intellectually thin, content?

Against this backdrop, a critical approach to the digitalisation of Islamic politics must, following Fairclough (1995), attend not only to what is explicitly articulated but also to what is silenced: which interpretations of Islam and democracy are amplified, which are marginalised, and how algorithmically mediated visibility redistributes symbolic power in the digital public sphere (Afwadzi & Miski, 2021; Rumata dkk., 2024; Widian dkk., 2023). By foregrounding these tensions, the analysis demonstrates that digital innovation in Islamic party politics in Indonesia is not normatively neutral; it is a contested process that can either deepen or hollow out democratic practices, depending on how religious symbols, narratives, and technological affordances are mobilised.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that Islamic-based political parties in Indonesia specifically PKS, PKB, and PPP have systematically adapted to the dynamics of the digital media ecosystem by embedding religious narratives, symbols, and emotive storytelling into their communication strategies across multiple platforms. The findings indicate that these parties do not merely disseminate content with strong religious symbolism, but also strategically calibrate their message formats, narrative styles, and visual repertoires to align with the technical and cultural affordances of each platform. The analysis further confirms that religiously framed content tends to generate significantly higher levels of public engagement, particularly when it combines narrative depth, emotional resonance, and an appeal to shared religious identities. Taken together, these results offer an empirically grounded account of how political-religious actors negotiate the intersection of ideology, media logic, and audience behaviour in the digital era.

The research contributes to a deeper theoretical understanding of the ongoing transformation of Islamic political discourse in online spaces. It illustrates how religious-political identity is increasingly constructed, performed, and

legitimised through digitally mediated practices, thereby shaping how citizens perceive, evaluate, and respond to political messages. In this regard, the study underscores the growing importance of religious semiotics not only as a repertoire of symbols and narratives, but as a communicative strategy that can reconfigure patterns of mobilisation, representation, and contestation within the public sphere.

Beyond its conceptual contribution, the study generates a set of operational and actionable implications for key stakeholders. For Islamic-based political parties, the findings suggest the need to develop and institutionalise clear internal guidelines for the use of religious symbols and narratives in digital campaigning, including explicit parameters regarding tone, frequency, and ethical boundaries to mitigate the over-commodification or instrumentalisation of religious identity. Parties are also encouraged to establish dedicated digital strategy units that design platform-specific content plans, conduct systematic testing of message performance (e.g., through A/B testing), and coordinate with internal ethics or sharia advisory bodies to screen materials that may exacerbate polarisation or misinform voters.

For electoral management bodies and regulatory institutions, the results point to the urgency of formulating more detailed operational guidelines on religiously framed digital campaign practices. This includes clarifying rules on disclosure of paid political endorsements, setting standards for labelling sponsored religious-political content, and designing monitoring protocols that can identify and respond to the manipulative use of religious semiotics during election periods. Meanwhile, civil society organisations and educational institutions can translate the insights of this study into targeted media-literacy programmes that equip citizens particularly younger voters with analytical tools to critically interpret religious-political content online, distinguish between symbolic mobilisation and substantive policy communication, and recognise emotionally charged framing.

Finally, the findings hold implications for social media platforms and fact-checking initiatives, which can collaborate to design context-specific information labels, strengthen partnerships with local fact-checkers on religious-political content, and review recommendation systems that may disproportionately amplify highly emotive religious messages. By articulating these concrete,

implementable recommendations, this study not only advances scholarly debates on digital Islamic politics but also provides a practical framework for fostering a more inclusive, transparent, and democratically oriented digital public sphere in Indonesia.

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