REPOSITIONING RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION ACTIVISM IN THE DIGITAL ERA

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ABSTRACT

The rise of the digital world poses a challenge to the position of religious organizations. This is evident in the emergence of new authorities, both individuals and groups, outside traditional religious structures. Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), a mainstream traditional organization, has also been impacted by this shift. However, several studies indicate that NU has effectively adapted to various challenges and situations over time. This analysis focuses on how NU, as a representative of traditional mainstream Islamic organizations, has repositioned itself in response to the digital era, using the example of its activities in Mojokerto. This work addresses two key issues: first, how NU adapts to the presence of social media; second, what strategies NU employs to reposition itself in the face of these new challenges on social media. To explore these questions, this work employs a qualitative methodology, collecting data through interviews, observations, and documentation. The data is then analyzed and presented using a digital religion approach. The findings suggest that NU has repositioned itself in two main ways. First, through adaptation, by adopting and actively using social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube via the organization's official accounts. Second, through a form of resistance, by having NU activists engage on social media without prominently displaying their organizational affiliation.

Keywords: *Repositioning; Religious Organization; Digital World; Nahdlatul Ulama*

INTRODUCTION

In the past decade, social media and religion have emerged as a prominent focus in academic research, reflecting the dynamic relationship between the two (Campbell and Bellar, 2023). Social media platforms have transformed the social landscape, rendering it highly fluid. Concurrently, the digital domain, across its diverse platforms, is seen both as an extension of traditional authority and a potential catalyst for the emergence of new religious authority

(Campbell, 2007). This phenomenon presents a fresh challenge for religious institutions in Indonesia, including NU and Muhammadiyah (Abdullah, 2020).

In the realm of Islam and social media research, the presence of social media has given rise to what is termed an Islamic digital space, where a plethora of religious discussions unfold across various digital platforms. Scholars refer to this space as CIE (Cyber Islamic Environment) (Bunt, 2018). While some scholars, like Campbell (2007), Helland (2016), and Bunt (2018), regard this development positively, viewing social media as an effective medium for disseminating religious teachings (Islam 2019), others, such as Amin Abdullah (2020), Ahmad Muttaqin (2020) and Husen (2019), hold a negative perspective. They argue that social media fosters superficial understanding and poses a significant threat to traditional authority, which derives legitimacy from tradition (Weber, 1978).

When it comes to the potential positive and negative impacts of social media, NU does not lean exclusively towards one viewpoint. Throughout its history in Indonesia, NU has demonstrated unique patterns of adaptation. Scholars, including Bush (2009), have noted NU's remarkable ability not only to adapt but also to effectively address and overcome various challenges. For instance, following the aftermath of 9/11, when the international focus cast a stigma on Islam as being associated with terrorism, NU successfully countered this perception by presenting a friendly, moderate, and respectful image of Indonesian Islam. These efforts have subtly reshaped the international perspective, making NU an intriguing subject of study for scholars worldwide. (Bush, 2009).

Throughout its history, NU has displayed a remarkable pattern of adaptation, notably during the early years of Indonesian independence. During this period, NU exhibited a comprehensive response to the political landscape and national ideologies. It underwent a significant transformation, transitioning from a civil organization to a political party—an essential move to counter the pressures from anti-democratic and non-pluralistic Islamic factions. However, NU reverted to its non-party civil organization status once the situation stabilized (Bush, 2009). This adaptation remained evident as NU navigated through the Islamic discourse and the peak of Islamism in Indonesia. In the midst of these challenges, NU, under the banner of Indonesian Islamic ideals articulated by Gus Dur, promoted a grand narrative known as 'Islam Nusantara' [Indonesian Islam] (Mietzner and Muhtadi, 2018). Implicitly, NU emerged as a representation of a religious organization capable of partnering with the government to uphold the nation's integrity and statehood. Its various

adaptations have significantly contributed to the nation's stability. (Hakim, et al., 2023).

As NU steps into the digital era within the national context, it's observed to have undertaken various adaptations. These begin with aesthetic adjustments, reflected in the presentation of excerpts highlighting deradicalization, moderation, and narratives stemming from Islam Nusantara, packaged in visually appealing images and videos on social media platforms (Schmidt, 2021). However, the efficacy of these adaptations is not absolute, given the nuanced nature of the digital realm and the Cyber Islamic Environment (CIE), as discussed by Bunt (2018). For Muslim minorities, the CIE serves as a space for consolidation, while for the majority, it serves as a platform for affirmation and dominance. Simply put, the CIE and the digital landscape at large foster the growth of various Islamic groups (Iqbal, 2017). Consequently, the digital presence poses both challenges (Akmaliah, 2020)—characterized by internal and external turmoil within NU (Hoesterey, 2021). On the other hand, it is also interpreted as an opportunity (Akmaliah, 2022), represented by NU's continued resilience as a representation of moderate Islamic values in Indonesia.

In fact, NU's engagement with the digital world can be characterized as navigating between opportunities and challenges. Therefore, this research aims to delve into how NU navigates the digital landscape amid these dual forces by focusing on the local context—NU activities in Mojokerto City—across various social media channels.

DISCOURSE ON RELIGION IN THE DIGITAL WORLD

Historically, the discourse on religion and the digital world emerged in the 1980s (Campbell and Emerson, 2011). However, its true impact began to manifest in the 1990s, as the internet network facilitated the migration of numerous offline religious activities into the digital realm (Bunt, 2022). Academically, this relationship between religion and the digital world is gradually being recognized as a new scientific discipline. Nevertheless, this phenomenon has yet to receive the serious attention it deserves from scholars (Vitullo, 2016).

As discussions surrounding religion and the digital world progress, they are gradually gaining traction within academic circles. Initially, two major responses emerged among scholars. The first response came from utopian circles, who held the belief that the digital world would not significantly alter religious practices. In contrast, the second response emerged from dystopian

circles, suggesting that the digitalization of religion is not only possible but could potentially lead to significant transformations in religious life (Vitullo, 2016).

Helland (2005), is credited as the first scholar to propose a theory of the relationship between religion and the digital world. According to him, this relationship is an unavoidable phenomenon, as evidenced by the increasing technological maturity that brings religion closer to the digital realm. In his initial theory, Helland introduced two forms of closeness between religion and the digital world. The first, termed *online religion*, denotes the presence of religious information in digital spaces. The second, termed *religion online*, goes beyond merely containing religious information, describing digital spaces where concrete activities and interactions resembling offline religious practices occur. This concept suggests that the digital realm becomes a new arena for the institutional presence of religion, not just a repository for religious information. Over time, the distinction between offline and online aspects of religious life has blurred, leading scholars like Helland (2016) and Campbell (2013) to propose a new concept to describe this increasingly intertwined relationship: digital religion or, as Siuda (2021) terms it, cyber religion. These terms describe the penetration and manifestation of religious activities within online spaces.

In the context of Islamic studies and the digital world, the concept of *digital religion* is acknowledged as a necessity, recognizing that the digital sphere constitutes an integral part of contemporary religious life. The acceptance of the digital world across various channels featuring Islamic content led to the conceptualization of the Cyber Islamic Environment (CIE). This term not only signifies the acknowledgment of the digital world as a component of the Islamic domain but also reflects a fervent embrace of it within Islam, thereby engendering new challenges for the Islamic community. Among these challenges is the contestation of Islamic authority, which brings forth competitors both at the individual and group levels (Bunt, 2018). While the presence of the digital world is enthusiastically embraced within Islam, it also poses a threat to traditional authority, presenting an opportunity for Islamic minorities with political agendas and resistance stemming from disillusionment with the international political order, often expressed through jihadist narratives (Bunt, 2003). This jihadist narrative, frequently disseminated in online spaces, contributes to stigmatizing Islam as a religion associated with terrorist activities. Returning to the discourse on religion in the digital world, it is evident that the presence of the digital realm impacts all Muslim groups, including both the majority and minority factions, presenting

both opportunities and challenges. While minorities may find opportunities in the digital space, the digital world poses a threat to the majority, particularly traditional authorities.

The coupling of the digital world with the narrative of globalization presents another significant challenge that increasingly threatens traditional authorities. The characteristic of openness inherent in the digital world has facilitated the entry of various authorities into digital spaces. Consequently, two crucial changes have ensued: macro changes and micro changes. Macro changes are characterized by the emergence of new religious ideas and the formation of new groups. Meanwhile, micro changes manifest as shifts in the mindset of religious communities, fostering independence and a disregard for official religious institutions that are traditionally controlled by authorities. This proliferation of options in the digital world grants religious adherents greater freedom and independence in shaping their religious orientation, often disregarding established religious authority or institutions (Dawson, 2014).

Amid the looming threat of the digital world's impact on religious institutions, particularly traditional ones, it is evident that the digital world will continue to exert significant influence on human life. Religion itself can no longer evade the pervasive presence of the digital world. According to Brenda (2001), the digital world has evolved into a new frontier for the next generation, similar to Moses seeking God in the desert labyrinth. This implies that, whether embraced or not, the digital world and religion are inevitably intertwined in the future (Jones, 2002). In fact, social media, as an integral part of the digital world, has become a crucial source of religious information for Muslim communities worldwide, including those in Indonesia (Slama, 2018). Consequently, the issue of authority and the proliferation of religious authority within the digital space must be acknowledged as a reality that all religious authorities and institutions must confront (Ahyar and Alfitri, 2019).

The acceptance of the digital world in Indonesia began with the digitalization of Islam, marked by the emergence of important applications related to Islam, such as the widespread adoption of the Al-Quran application by the majority of the Indonesian Muslim community. This initial phase was followed by digital Islamization, characterized by the proliferation of Islamic content in digital spaces (Said et al., 2020). The impact of the digital world became more tangible during the Covid-19 pandemic in Indonesia. As traditional religious activities faced limitations due to social distancing measures, the digital world served as a bridge, enabling the continuation of religious practices that could not be carried out collectively offline. Consequently, the obstacles posed by offline meetings were mitigated through online alternatives, presenting the

digital world as a solution that was consciously embraced by the majority of the Indonesian Muslim community as a new religious space (Burhani, 2021). Overall, the digital world has transformed religious practices within the Indonesian Muslim community, affecting various aspects from rituals to the authorization process (Syarif & Hannan, 2022). Particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic, online activities such as Friday prayers gained popularity, highlighting the increasing significance of digital platforms in facilitating religious rituals. (Tari, et al., 2021).

Behind the widespread acceptance of the digital world among the Indonesian Muslim community, there exists a certain degree of wariness. A primary concern is that the digital world, particularly on social media platforms, often showcases figures or preachers who lack sufficient qualifications and may even succumb to the commodification of religion (Muttaqin, 2020). Specifically, this phenomenon is perceived to undermine traditional mainstream authority, as social media content tends to offer instant but superficial insights, providing recipients with an incomplete understanding (Husen, 2019). From another perspective, the phenomenon is regarded as a religious ailment or symptom if religious matters are discussed by individuals lacking adequate religious knowledge. Nevertheless, this reality cannot be overlooked, and thus, social media has become a space for negotiation and contestation for both traditional authorities and emerging figures (Murken, 2004). Below is an example illustrating the use of social media for preaching by a celebrity with shallow religious understanding, resulting in what can be termed as "religious symptoms.".

Instagram as a space for da'wah
Source: https://www.instagram.com/ariekuntung/
Accessed on 3 June 2024

Indeed, the discourse on religion and the digital world has long been an academic concern. The acceptance of religion and Islam in the digital world presents both opportunities and challenges. A significant challenge, especially for Islam in the context of the digital world marked by the rise of social media, is the issue of authority. The gradual marginalization of traditional authority in religious discourse within the digital domain has become a pressing concern for all religious authorities and institutions, including those within the Islamic world. In this regard, NU, as a representative of the Indonesian Muslim community, is not immune to this threat.

MOJOKERTO CITY AND RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES IN THE DIGITAL WORLD

Discussions about religion and the digital world have now permeated the broader community. The intersection of religion and the digital world is not confined to major cities or elite circles; it is also becoming a topic of interest among local communities. In the Indonesian context, awareness of the digital world is growing across various regions and cities. For instance, in the past three years, Mojokerto has been recognized as one of the cities with the most advanced digital preparedness in Indonesia (Riani, 2021). This digital readiness inevitably impacts all aspects of its citizens' lives, including their religious practices.

The city of Mojokerto has experienced numerous administrative changes throughout its history, beginning with its status as a residency city called Staadsgemeente during the Dutch East Indies government. This long-standing importance is particularly evident in the East Java region. During the Japanese occupation from 1942-1945, it was known as Si Ku Cho. Post-independence, Mojokerto retained its significance through various administrative statuses. In 1950, it became a Municipality, in 1965 it was designated the Municipality of Mojokerto, and in 1974 it became a Level II Municipality. Finally, in 1999, it was established as the Mojokerto City Government, a status it holds to this day (Mojokerto City Government, 2024). Despite its relatively small area of 16.47 km^2, Mojokerto remains an important city both economically and culturally. (Financial Audit Board of East Java, 2024).

The small city of Mojokerto is home to approximately 140,730 residents who exhibit a rich ethnic and religious diversity. From a religious perspective, Islam is the predominant religion, with around 130,327 adherents. Protestantism follows with 735 adherents, Catholicism with 1,843, Buddhism with 1,062, Hinduism with 106, and Confucianism with 41 adherents (Office of Population and Civil Registry of Mojokerto City, 2023). As the majority religion, Islam

prominently influences the religious symbols seen in public spaces. The most significant manifestation of this is the number of places of worship, 252 in total, which includes 179 prayer rooms and 73 mosques (Kementerian Agama Jawa Timur, 2013).

The presence of numerous Islamic houses of worship indicates that Islamic activities in Mojokerto are vibrant and frequent. Observations from November 2023 to January 2024 reveal that several key mosques in the city maintain a regular schedule of recitations and congregational prayers. For instance, the Al-Fatah Mosque, the main mosque in Mojokerto, holds routine recitations every evening after Sunset prayers. Additionally, it hosts weekly events such as the *Rebuan* session on Wednesday evenings after Evening Prayer and a Saturday morning recitation followed by a communal breakfast in the mosque courtyard. Other nearby mosques, like the Al-Hidayah Mosque in the Prajurit Kulon sub-district, also maintain daily and weekly recitation schedules. Similarly, the Salahuddin Mosque offers a comparable weekly schedule, including a Sunday morning recitation followed by breakfast (Offline Observation Results, January 2024-March 2024).

Meanwhile, religious activities in the digital world of Mojokerto City are just as vibrant as the conventional ones. A search using the keyword "religious studies" on three social media platforms—YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram—revealed 30 active accounts broadcasting religious activities. Specifically, there are 14 accounts on Instagram, 8 accounts on Facebook, and 8 channels on YouTube (Offline Observation Results, January 2024-March 2024).

Hence, Mojokerto city, with its well-prepared digital infrastructure and abundance of mosques, boasts a bustling schedule of religious activities. Offline, congregational prayers and recitations in numerous mosques occur daily and weekly. Viewed through the lens of Weber's three types of authority processes (1978), these offline religious activities in Mojokerto align with the traditional category. This classification applies both in terms of methodology and the authority figures leading the recitations, such as the *kiyai, gus,* and *ustadz*. These figures hold traditional legitimacy and are closely associated with NU traditions.

Religious activities in the digital world are equally vibrant, with 30 accounts actively broadcasting on three major social media platforms. Instagram emerges as the busiest platform for religious content dissemination, followed by Facebook and YouTube, each hosting 8 active accounts. This robust digital presence mirrors the thriving offline religious landscape in Mojokerto City, particularly evident in the recitation of the Quran. Implicitly, this data reinforces the scholarly arguments put forth by academics such as Campbell

(2023), Helland (2016) and Bunt (2018), highlighting the digital world as a growing arena for religious engagement among communities, including Mojokerto City's Muslim population.

NAHDLATUL ULAMA ACTIVITIES ON SOCIAL MEDIA IN MOJOKERTO CITY

In the preceding section, we explored how the digital world has become an integral part of a new religious activity space for the Muslim community of Mojokerto City. In this section, we delve into NU's response to the emergence of social media and the potential presence of new authorities within Mojokerto City's Muslim community. Employing a fresh perspective in examining the relationship between religion and the digital world—termed the digital religion perspective (Tsuria and A.Campbell 2022)—we will analyze data on both offline and online activities. This includes direct interviews, offline field observations, observations on social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube), and relevant documentation.

Based on our observations in the social media space, NU in Mojokerto City appears to be very receptive to the presence of social media. This is evident from the distribution of accounts actively broadcasting religious activities. The data for this research was collected between December 2023 and February 2024. The detailed information can be seen in the following table.

Distribution of Accounts on Three Social Media Platforms								
Platform	Mass Organization					Non-Mass Organization		Total
	LDII	MUI	Salafi	Muhammadiyah	NU	Other Organizations	Public/ Private	
Instagram	1	1	0	1	8	1	1	14
YouTube	0	0	0	0	2	4	2	8
Facebook	0	0	1	0	3	0	4	8
Sub Total	1	1	1	1	13	6	7	30
	18					12		

Table: Summary of observation data from three social media platforms—Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube—using the search terms "religious organizations and religious studies" between November 2023 and January 2024.

The table above shows that NU emerges as the most dominant group across the three platforms, with a total of 13 accounts. Comparatively, other groups or organizations show less activity; Muhammadiyah, MUI, LDII, and Salafi each has only 1 account. However, NU faces strong competition from accounts affiliated with other institutions and personal accounts, totaling 12 accounts, trailing NU by just 1 point. In terms of social media dominance, NU maintains control by consistently maintaining a presence on every platform, with 8 accounts on Instagram, 2 on YouTube, and 3 on Facebook.

The number of NU accounts on social media does not necessarily translate into a significant influence on social media users. Strong competition from non-mass organizations and new authorities, both individual and group, poses a challenge for NU. Despite NU's dominance in terms of social media accounts, this does not correspond to a larger number of followers or subscribers. In fact, non-mass organizations and personal accounts, even though they have one fewer account than NU, have a greater number of followers. This data is illustrated in the following table.:

Distribution of Subscribers/Followers of Religious Activities on Social Media in Mojokerto

Platform	Mass Organization					Non-Mass Organization		Total
	LDII	**MUI**	**Salafi**	**Muhammadiyah**	**NU**	**Other Organizations**	**Public/ Private**	
Instagram	108	74	0	156	7971	845	2901	12055
YouTube	0	0	0	0	18408	1110	28500	48018
Facebook	0	0	4500	0	3600	0	86821	94921
Sub Total	108	74	4500	156	29979	1955	118222	154994
Sub Total	34817					120177		

Table: Observation Results of Profile Descriptions of Several Accounts on Three Religious Social Media Platforms (Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube), Data Collected between November 2023 and January 2024.

Using the table above, we can compare the number of NU followers on social media, totaling 29,979 across 13 accounts spread across three platforms. However, this figure pales in comparison to the followers of non-mass organizations, which reach 120,177 followers, constituting 77.56% of the total followers or accounts inclined towards religious activities on social media in Mojokerto City. In percentage terms, NU is followed by only 19.34% of all social media followers. This significant disparity in followers between NU and

non-organizational groups and personal accounts highlights the emergence of new authorities that pose a considerable threat to NU's position within the Muslim community of Mojokerto City in the digital world.

The disparity between the significant number of NU accounts and the total count of followers on social media presents a new challenge. Essentially, dominance in the social media sphere is determined by the number of followers or subscribers, rather than the sheer quantity of accounts. This indicates that, in this instance, NU has only managed to adapt to social media without exerting substantial influence. In fact, NU still lags behind its competitors, namely non-mainstream institutional groups and personal accounts. Upon closer examination, it was revealed that NU's approach to adopting and adapting to social media remains modest and not yet fully professionalized, as confirmed by Gus Badri, one of the NU representatives interviewed. The following excerpt is from the interview.

> Researcher: What are your thoughts on the process of digitizing da'wah in Mojokerto City?
> Informant: In my opinion, within the circles of Islamic boarding schools, it can be said that the efforts are still lacking and not very intensive.
> Researcher: What about NU itself?
> Informant: The situation is similar with NU; it's still lacking and far behind other groups. (Interview, February 19, 2024)

Gus Badri also confirmed this sentiment during his interview, highlighting that the use or acceptance of social media is quite informal and lacks professional management:

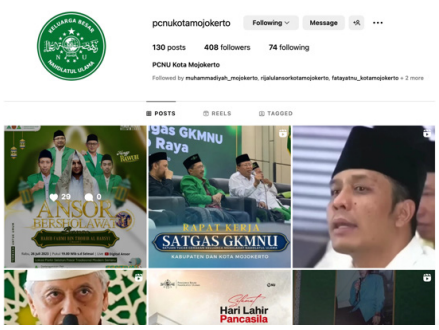
> "Yes, at least when it comes to Qur'an recitations, it's usually done live. Going live is convenient, without the need for editing. Editing takes up a lot of time. The recitations I lead occur every Monday." (Interview, February 19, 2024)

Similarly, Gus Ismail expressed similar sentiments regarding NU's use of social media in Mojokerto City. The following is an excerpt from his interview:

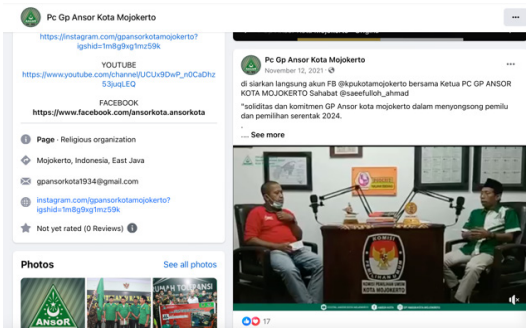
> Researcher: For instance, when compared to other groups, how would you describe NU in Mojokerto City?
> Informant: Actually, NU's efforts are not as vigorous when compared to other groups, particularly, former Wahhabi adherents who excel in their recitations in Mojokerto City. (Interview, February 20, 2024)

When examining the social media pages of Mojokerto City Ansor on Facebook,

it's apparent that the content in the last 10 posts primarily focuses on internal organizational activities aimed at enhancing internal structures only (A. K. Mojokerto, 2024). Similarly, on the Instagram platform of Mojokerto City NU PC, there are minimal general recitation posts, with a greater emphasis on structural reinforcement by showcasing information on NU activities. This includes both the initiatives undertaken by Mojokerto City NU PC and those by the Nahdlatul Ulama Executive Board. Although some posts are designed to appeal to the wider audience by featuring quotes from NU *kiyai*s and founders, such as Hadratus Sheikh KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, the overall content targeting the general public is considered very limited (Pcnukotamojokerto, 2024). Below are screenshots of the two Mojokerto City NU social media pages, namely the Facebook page owned by PC Ansor Mojokerto City and the Instagram page owned by PC NU Mojokerto City, both of which predominantly showcase organizational activities rather than outreach efforts directly engaging the broader community.



Source: Instagram
https://www.instagram.com/pcnukotamojokerto/
Accessed on 24 March 2024



Souce: Facebook
https://www.facebook.com/gpansorkotamojokerto
Accessed on 24 March 2024

Religious Organizations' Social Media on Instagram and Facebook Platforms

The phenomenon described above contrasts with the activities of non-mainstream institutions and personal accounts. Non-mainstream institutions refer to Islamic educational establishments that are not affiliated with specific mass organizations. For instance, the Petaqu Al-Multazam Tiga YouTube account, one of the channels associated with non-mainstream institutions, predominantly features direct da'wah content aimed at the broader community rather than information about institutional activities (P. P. T. Q. in Mojokerto, 2023). This discrepancy in engagement with the wider community leads to a higher level of interest from the public in non-mainstream social media content.

This is evident in the difference in the number of followers or subscribers of Islamic social media accounts in Mojokerto City, where accounts of non-mainstream institutions and private individuals outnumber NU accounts. However, upon closer inspection of non-mainstream institution accounts, it becomes apparent that many of these accounts represent Islamic boarding schools in the city of Mojokerto. For example, in the Petaqu Al-Multazam Tiga account, numerous NU *kiyai*s are actively involved, with informants like Gus Ismail and Gus Badri regularly leading recitations on this platform (P. P. T. Q. in Mojokerto, 2023). The screenshot below clearly illustrates the presence of Gus Badri and Gus Ismail as NU activists who frequently contribute to recitations on this account.

Source:
YouTube Petaqu Al-Mutazam Tiga
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2xt6iG3MpbY
Accessed on 24 March 2024

Source:
YouTube Petaqu Al-Mutazam Tiga
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CQa-Z079PB0&t=1555s
Accessed on 24 March 2024

Figures 1 and 2:
Online recitations on YouTube platform led by *kiyais* affiliated with NU

The presence of Gus Badri and Gus Ismail on non-mainstream social media accounts illustrates that Mojokerto City NU's response to the emergence of social media and the growing religious activity on these platforms extends beyond official structural directives reflected in official accounts. Instead, NU's presence permeates social media channels that may not explicitly mention their affiliation with NU. Therefore, evaluating Mojokerto City NU's presence on social media cannot solely rely on its official accounts but must also consider the involvement of NU activists such as NU *kiyais* [Cleric] and *ustadz* [Islamic teacher/preacher] across various social media platforms. Consequently, even if the official Mojokerto City NU accounts appear to have fewer followers

or subscribers, it does not necessarily indicate a loss of influence within the Mojokerto City Muslim community. This is because the presence of NU *kiyai*s in non-mainstream institution accounts indirectly reflects NU's influence across social media platforms.

In concrete terms, the enduring significance of NU in Mojokerto City is evident through the testimonials of several NU residents who continue to rely on NU for crucial religious matters. Dina, representing the younger generation of NU followers, acknowledged that while she frequently follows recitations on social media, she still turns to local NU *ustadz* for religious guidance on matters she finds difficult to grasp. Here's an excerpt from the interview:

> S: When it comes to religious matters, do you prefer searching online or asking local *ustadz* directly?
> R: It varies, really. If I don't fully understand something from online sources, I prefer consulting the local NU *ustadz* or *kiyai* in my community. Since I identify with NU, I usually turn to NU figures for guidance (Interview, January 23, 2024).

In addition to its efforts on social media, NU in Mojokerto City remains steadfast in providing offline religious activities, as highlighted in the previous section. During the period from November 2023 to January 2024, mosques affiliated with NU, such as Al-Fatah Mosque, Sholahudin Mosque, and At-Taqwa Mosque, consistently held daily recitations after sunset and weekly gatherings on Saturdays and Sundays. Moreover, religious practices like tahlil are conducted every evening after sunset on Thursdays or Fridays. These findings bring us back to the focal point of this research: the adaptation patterns of Mojokerto City NU to the emergence of social media, viewed through the lens of digital religion theory (Campbell and Bellar, 2023; Campbell and Emerson, 2011). This adaptation can be seen as a form of contestation, resisting the challenges posed by social media. Furthermore, when analyzed through Weber's theory of the authorization process (1978), which emphasizes the role of traditional actors such as *kiyai*, gus (young *kiyai* or *kiyai's* son), and *ustadz*, NU's response falls into the traditional category. In summary, NU in Mojokerto City exhibits two adaptation patterns to maintain its position as a religious institution and authority amidst the presence of social media. First, NU fills each social media platform with representative accounts in a structured manner. Second, to counter the potential influence of new authorities that could challenge NU's position, NU strategically places its activists on social media accounts without explicitly highlighting their affiliation with NU. Meanwhile, offline religious activities like *tahlilan*

[*recitations of the confession of faith*] and mosque recitations remain crucial pillars of NU's influence in Mojokerto City, even in the digital era.

CONCLUSION

The emergence of social media within religious communities has introduced a new religious sphere, presenting both opportunities and challenges, particularly for traditional authorities like NU. The ongoing efforts to sideline traditional authorities persist with the influx of new authorities on social media, comprising both groups and individuals. Leveraging its experience in adaptation throughout its history in Indonesia, NU has demonstrated an ability to navigate the digital era through various social media platforms. NU's approach to adaptation avoids extremes, neither outright rejecting the digital world (utopian) nor unconditionally embracing it without consideration (dystopian).

In the case of NU in Mojokerto City, it is evident that NU has effectively adapted to social media in a balanced manner. Mojokerto City NU demonstrates two key forms of adaptation. Firstly, there's a clear dominance of structural NU accounts across major social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. Secondly, there's a strategic resistance to potential new authorities and the erosion of NU's influence in the digital era, reflected in the presence of NU activists filling non-mainstream social media institutional accounts in Mojokerto City without explicitly highlighting their NU affiliation. Additionally, offline, NU remains active in mosques throughout the city. Thus, both online and offline, NU's presence remains robust among the people of Mojokerto City. These findings affirm NU's capability to reposition itself as a significant religious authority and organization in the digital era. Implicitly, this research reinforces the scholarly argument, previously reported by Akmaliah (2022), that NU retains its influence as a religious organization and authority for the Indonesian Muslim community in the digital age.

Indeed, this research significantly contributes to the advancement of studies concerning religion and digitalization in Indonesia. Specifically, it offers valuable academic insights into the role of religious authorities and institutions in the digital age. The reposition and adaptation strategies employed by NU in Mojokerto City serve as a noteworthy example of how religious organizations navigate the challenges and opportunities posed by social media in the digital era. However, it is essential to acknowledge that this pattern is just one of many, and further investigation is warranted to comprehensively understand the dynamics of religious organizations in diverse digital spaces. Future research should explore the experiences of other religious organizations beyond NU,

involving various digital platforms, to enrich and refine the findings of this study.

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