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The Use and Abuse of Internet Spaces: *Fitna*, Desacralization, and Conflict in Indonesia's Virtual Reality

Irwan Abdullah[1,*], Hasse Jubba[2], Saifuddin Zuhri Qudsy[3], Mustaqim Pabbajah[4], Zaenuddin Hudi Prasojo[5]

[1] Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogayakarta, Indonesia, irwan.fib@ugm.ac.id
[2] Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, Indonesia, hasse@umy.ac.id
[3] Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, saifuddinzuhri@gmail.com
[4] Universitas Teknologi Yogyakarta, Yogyakarta, Indonesia, mustaqim_pabbajah@uty.ac.id
[5] Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Pontianak, Indonesia, zaestain@yahoo.com

Corresponding author: Irwan Abdullah, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Jl. Nusantara 1, Bulaksumur, Yogyakarta 55281, Indonesia, irwan.fib@ugm.ac.id

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Abstract

This article critically examines the utilization and misuse of internet spaces during Indonesia's political contestations over the past five years, focusing on the emergence of *fitna* (sedition, strife) in virtual environments. It analyzes how internet users exploit religious symbols to solidify their positions and contest opposing views, leading to the desacralization of religion. The study elucidates the construction of religious values through communal online communication, the effects of digital interactions on religious practices, and the behavioral codes and value frameworks emerging within these virtual religious spaces. By mapping the multifaceted manifestations of *fitna*—hoaxes, fake news, insulting memes, videos, and hate speech—the article sheds light on the mechanisms of digital manipulation and their broader implications. This research significantly contributes to the discourse by illuminating the intersections of digital media, religion, and conflict, while proposing strategies to mitigate the adverse effects of internet misuse on religious and social harmony.

Keywords

Internet Spaces; Fitna; Desacralization; Conflict; Virtual Reality; Political Contestation; Indonesia

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Introduction

The role of religion as a source of human knowledge and values has been increasingly challenged, with its truths becoming subject to contestation. Diverse actors, through their production of knowledge and values, have created divergent social realities by reinterpreting religious concepts. Simultaneously, religious discourses have shifted from physical to virtual spaces, mediated by new media. This transition has raised novel questions about the sacrality of God, prophets, sacred texts, and their teachings, leading to a relativization of religious truth.

Scholarly research has explored the mediatization of religion, examining its transition from empirical reality to virtual practice (Helland 2005; Hjarvard 2011; Abdullah 2017; Pennington & Kahm 2018; Saputra 2016). Internet usage has been identified as creating new democratic spaces where the public actively participates in shaping religious reality and discourse (Hill & Sen 2000; Poster 2001; Dahlgren 2009; von Mücke 2010; Aguilar et al. 2017). In the new media era, the public has emerged as a critical subject, capable of evaluating religious truths. Through discursive processes, religion has been constructed and deconstructed, sometimes leading to conflict through the use and misuse of new media spaces for economic and political propaganda (Al-Rawi 2015; Evolvi 2018).

The internet has supplanted traditional media, creating novel public spaces for social, economic, religious, and political activities. This transformation has rendered the internet susceptible to misuse, including the propagation of *fitna*. *Fitna*, which can be understood as slander or defamation, is often employed in political and social contexts to undermine opponents and exacerbate social polarization (Setyadi et al., 2018). Desacralization becomes a concern when religious values are decontextualized and appropriated for secular or political purposes. During Indonesian elections, religious symbols are frequently deployed in virtual spaces to legitimize candidates and undermine opponents, leading to the desacralization of religious values. Religion, now produced by diverse agents on a massive scale, becomes less sacrosanct and more subject to personal interpretation, often without the guidance of established religious authorities. This reinterpretation is prominent on social media, where content often employs religious texts and symbols to justify particular interpretations of *jihad*. The internet has fostered a cyber-Islamic environment utilized by activists and *ulama* to disseminate specific exegeses and promote certain actions. Consequently, online media plays a crucial role in mobilizing the masses and shaping religious discourse in contemporary society.

The internet's role in desacralization is significant. It provides platforms for various actors to share, critique, and interpret religious texts according to their interests. This process undermines the authority of traditional religious leaders, as individuals increasingly seek readily accessible answers online rather than from conventional sources. This trend is evident in the proliferation of radical perspectives through online search results, which are often uncritically accepted and disseminated. While the internet accelerates information flow and reduces technology costs, facilitating the creation of global networks, it is also exploited by extremist groups for propaganda and recruitment purposes.

This article examines the implications of the creation and expansion of new public spaces for Islam and Muslims in Indonesia by addressing three key questions. Firstly, how are religious values constructed through communal communication on online media? Secondly, how has online communication influenced internet users' religious practices and understandings? Finally , how have religious spaces in virtual environments produced specific behavioral codes and value frameworks in society? These questions will be analyzed through the discussion of several cases within the context of Indonesia's changing environment and Islamic discourses.

The article posits that the shift of religious discourses from physical to virtual spaces has not only affected the coercive power of religion (due to ongoing value contestations) but has also generated new values that potentially misrepresent religion and its teachings. This misrepresentation, driven by actors with diverse interests, may detrimentally impact the credibility of religion and undermine its power as a source of knowledge and code of conduct. This hypothesis will be examined through cases of *fitna* on the internet, desacralization, and conflict in religious spaces.

Literature Review

HATE SPEECH AND INTERNET USE

Hate speech encompasses all forms of expression—spoken, visual, video, or digital—that have the potential to incite hatred towards individuals and groups based on their characteristics (Jääskeläinen 2019; Setyadi et al. 2018). Chetty and Alathur (2018) and Watanabe, Bouazizi, & Ohtsuki (2018) similarly define hate speech as offensive communication that employs stereotypes to express an ideology of hatred. Ruwandika and Weerasinghe (2019) and Saksesi, Nasrun, & Setianingsih (2018) note that hate speech commonly targets religious beliefs, race, skin color, disability, sexual orientation, citizenship, gender, and social status. While hate speech often manifests as personal, informal, and expressive communication, when directed at specific religious groups, it can lead to disruption, enmity, and even fatal consequences (Mathew et al. 2019).

The proliferation of hate speech creates significant opportunities for misinformation, ambiguity, unrest, violence, and disillusionment with democratic processes, potentially undermining public beliefs and knowledge (Kumbrian 2019). As such, hate speech is recognized as a form of discrimination (Marais & Pretorius 2019; Al-Makhadmeh & Tolba 2019). Studies of U.S. elections have demonstrated a positive correlation between perceived exposure to hate speech and its avoidance in political discourse (Barnidge et al. 2019). In Slovenia, research has revealed that some media editors lack sufficient knowledge of the relevant legal framework to distinguish between hate speech, defamation, and other controversial or prohibited forms of expression (Milosavljević 2012).

In extreme cases, hate speech has been used to rationalize acts of violence, as exemplified by events in Rwanda (Bertoni & Rivera 2012). The rapid dissemination of hate speech facilitated by the internet and other media has prompted many governments and international organizations to implement measures to curb its spread and impact. For instance, the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights regarding hate speech has been analyzed through relevant examples and cases (Alaburic 2018, p. 230). However, within Europe, there is no unified definition of hate speech, nor are there common criteria for permitting its regulation (Alkiviadou 2018). Notably, secular hate speech laws, while integral in addressing general cases of discrimination, often encounter limitations in tackling religiously charged blasphemy or defamatory content that may be experienced as offensive or discriminatory by religious communities, underscoring the secular framework's inability to fully encompass religious sensitivities.

FITNA IN INTERNET SPACE

Fitna, referring to discord and defamation, is prevalent in internet usage across various contexts, including personality, family, identity, state policy, politics, and power. Globally, Western apprehension towards Islam, Muslims, and Islamic traditions has led to hate speech designed to stigmatize these entities. For instance, Geert Wilders' film *Fitna* (2008) contained anti-Islamic and anti-immigration rhetoric, provoking international backlash. Similarly, the 2012 film *Innocence of Muslims* incited widespread outrage in the Muslim world. Such media contribute to the portrayal of Muslims as increasingly extremist, stimulating new Islamophobic content. On platforms like Twitter, now known as X, Islam is often framed as violent,

primitive, and incompatible with Western cultures, as evidenced during the discourse surrounding Turkey's potential admission to the European Union.

In Indonesia, *fitna* is particularly prevalent during local and presidential elections. The 2012 and 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial elections are notable examples of how *fitna* and desacralization manifest during electoral processes. In both instances, organizations identifying as 'defenders of Islam' actively opposed non-Muslim candidates. Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok), running mate of gubernatorial candidate Joko Widodo (Jokowi), faced significant resistance that escalated during his 2017 gubernatorial campaign, leading to widespread *fitna* in virtual spaces. Claims were disseminated suggesting that Ahok voters would be barred from entering heaven and would forfeit their Muslim identity.

A similar phenomenon was evident in the 2019 presidential election, where Jokowi faced his 2014 opponent, Prabowo Subianto. At that time, Prabowo gained the full support of the *ulama* (Muslim scholars), religious figures traditionally regarded as authorities on religious matters due to their deep knowledge of Islamic studies and jurisprudence. The *Ijtimak Ulama*, the Islamic Defenders' Front (FPI), and various *ulama* campaigned for Prabowo on social media, creating unsourced and non-factual content attacking Jokowi. Jokowi was branded anti-Islam, accused of having Chinese and communist heritage, and deemed incapable of reciting the Qur'an. Prabowo also faced smear campaigns, albeit to a lesser extent. This highlights how digital spaces, in an era of desacralization, facilitate the spread of defamatory content that blends hate speech with fitna, reflecting limitations in secular legal frameworks to address religiously nuanced discourses in the virtual world.

INTERSECTION OF SECULAR AND RELIGIOUS LAWS

Modern interpretations of secularism have accelerated the desacralization of religion (Dominguez 2016), fundamentally altering the ideological framework through which sacrality and its boundaries are defined (Kovbasiuk 2016). In the process of desacralization, religious elements are repurposed for utilitarian applications, while cultural functions supplant traditional religious roles. Consequently, worship is often reduced to a mere form of religious service or social function, practiced primarily during holidays and other relevant occasions (Bartha 2012).

Desacralization manifests through various digital media, including audio-visual content (Gardner, Mayes, & Hameed 2018), offensive imagery, and online expressions of blasphemy (Bunt 2018). Bunt (2018) posits that the internet, particularly through social media platforms, possesses the capacity to shape public discourse on all matters, including religious issues. Moreover, it can facilitate the dissemination of radical texts from preachers to global audiences (Gendron 2016). Desacralization is not confined to recent times; historically, as in the Netherlands and during the French Revolution, desacralization transformed religious and cultural symbols into politically charged, pluralistic symbols. In a similar vein, desacralization in the digital realm creates an environment in which religious symbols and beliefs are open to reinterpretation and contestation, aligning with the political utilization of religious themes in contemporary media.

POLITICAL CONTESTATION AND MEDIA INFLUENCE

In the realm of international relations, contestation encompasses discursive social practices that challenge predominant norms (Wiener 2017). Featherstone and Korf (2012) define contestation as discursive practices that question the legitimacy of prevailing political and social structures. Hayward (2011) posits that contestation is oriented towards controlling the principles, regulations, and norms that guide society, which in some instances are embedded within the nation's economic, political, and governmental ideology (Featherstone & Korf 2012).

The desacralization of religious symbols and beliefs contributes to a shift in the traditional understanding of religious and secular boundaries, allowing previously sacrosanct topics to enter the public domain as

subjects of political contestation. This context is further amplified by new media, which fosters contestation by enabling discourse on topics like identity and values beyond traditional community boundaries (de Zúñiga, Jung & Valenzuela, S. 2012). Social media platforms allow for greater agency in reshaping political narratives, as seen in the Indonesian elections, where desacralized religious symbols become instruments for political leverage. Thus, desacralization is not only a cultural phenomenon but also a political strategy, intensifying through media influence and shaping public perceptions, particularly during elections (Ceron 2015; Lim 2012).

Methodology

A qualitative research design was employed to examine the use and abuse of internet spaces. This approach is particularly suitable for understanding complex issues such as *fitna*, desacralization, and conflict, as it allows for in-depth exploration of social and cultural phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln 2011). The design incorporates methods such as content analysis and case studies, which are appropriate for examining narrative and visual data from social media. The qualitative approach provides the flexibility necessary to capture nuances and meanings associated with individual and group experiences in virtual spaces (Creswell 2014). The research process involved data collection from various social media platforms, thematic analysis to identify patterns and trends, and in-depth interpretation to understand the social implications of *fitna* and desacralization.

Social media served as the primary data source, reflecting its role as the principal platform for information dissemination and *fitna* in the digital age. The data was categorized into four forms: hoaxes and fake news, insulting and harassing memes, misleading edited videos, and hate speech. Utilizing internet sources provided access to vast and diverse data, enabling comprehensive mapping of various forms of *fitna* and desacralization (Boyd & Ellison 2007). The data collection method involved mapping the scope of available data related to *fitna*, desacralization, and conflict in virtual spaces. This process included data scraping from social media platforms and content analysis to identify and classify various forms of *fitna* (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken 2002). Data collection employed specific keywords such as "*ruang internet*" (internet spaces), "*fitnah*" (*fitna*), "*desakralisasi*" (desacralization), "*konflik*" (conflict), and "*realitas virtual*" (virtual reality). Visual and narrative text data from platforms including Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube were collected and analyzed to identify relevant patterns and trends. Online data was accessed using the aforementioned keywords, and findings were classified according to the four forms of internet abuse previously outlined. The stages involved searching and collecting data, filtering for relevance and quality, and organizing data for further analysis, ensuring a rigorous and systematic approach to the examination of *fitna* in Indonesian virtual spaces.

Data analysis employed an interpretation method for visual data and narrative texts, following three main stages: restatement, description, and interpretation. The restatement stage involved restructuring data to understand the basic context of the information obtained (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña 2014). The description stage aimed to identify patterns and themes, while the interpretation stage ascribed meaning to the data by exploring the ideologies underlying the various forms of internet abuse. This method facilitated a deeper understanding of the use and abuse of internet spaces and their impact on religious sanctity. The analysis process began with data organization, proceeded through thematic analysis to identify patterns, and concluded with in-depth interpretation to produce a comprehensive understanding (Coffey & Atkinson 1996).

This research focuses on the use and misuse of internet spaces in the context of *fitna*, desacralization, and conflict in Indonesia. The internet, as a modern communication medium, has become the primary platform for rapid and borderless information dissemination (Castells 2009). The misuse of internet spaces, particularly through *fitna* and desacralization, is especially pertinent in Indonesia, given its status as the

world's largest Muslim-majority country and its complex political dynamics.y This study examines how *fitna* and desacralization contribute to conflict in Indonesia's virtual reality by identifying forms of misuse, analyzing their impact, and tracing underlying ideologies.

Results and Discussion

FORMS OF *FITNA* IN VIRTUAL SPACE

This study identified four primary forms of *fitna* in virtual spaces that significantly influence the formation of self-image and religious perception. First are hoaxes and fake news, which represent pervasive forms of *fitna* in cyberspace, involving the deliberate spread of inaccurate and false information through social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter. A notable example occurred during the 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election, where numerous false stories were disseminated to discredit certain candidates. For instance, claims that Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (Ahok) had insulted the Qur'an were later proven untrue but significantly influenced public perception (Setyadi et al. 2018). These hoaxes, often created for political purposes, exacerbate social polarization by spreading fear and hatred among different societal groups. The rapid proliferation of hoaxes is facilitated by the internet's lack of strict boundaries and controls, allowing anyone to produce and disseminate unverified information (Kumbrian 2019).

Insulting and harassing memes constitute a second form of *fitna*. Memes, as modified images or videos with text or other elements conveying specific messages, are frequently employed to insult and harass individuals or groups. An illustrative example is a meme depicting President Joko Widodo as an infant carried by Megawati Soekarnoputri, chair of the Indonesian Democratic Party of Struggle (PDI-P) (Bunt 2018). Such memes not only insult the individuals concerned but also attempt to dehumanize them in the public eye. The widespread sharing of these memes on social media platforms can rapidly influence public opinion and provoke emotional responses (Gardner, Mayes, & Hameed 2018).

Misleading edited videos represent a third form of *fitna*. This involves videos taken out of context and edited to create false impressions of events or individuals' statements. During the 2019 Indonesian presidential election, numerous videos were manipulated to portray presidential candidates as engaging in controversial or inappropriate behavior (Bunt 2018). These edited videos, shared through platforms like YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter, aim to mislead audiences and manipulate public opinion. The visual nature of these videos can have a strong emotional impact, increasing the likelihood of viewers accepting misinformation without verification (Mathew et al. 2019).

Hate speech constitutes the fourth identified form of *fitna* in virtual spaces, characterized by provocative expressions of animosity towards individuals or groups based on attributes such as religion, race, or ethnicity. This phenomenon is particularly prevalent on social media platforms and has the potential to instigate violence and exacerbate social conflicts. A salient example of hate speech can be observed in the social media campaign against Joko Widodo (Jokowi) during the Indonesian presidential election. In this instance, Jokowi was accused of being anti-Islam, having Chinese and communist heritage, and lacking the ability to read the Qur'an (Sponholz & Christofoletti 2018). Such hate speech not only tarnishes the reputation of the targeted individual but also intensifies social polarization and societal tensions. The propagation of hate speech is frequently driven by political or ideological objectives, with perpetrators leveraging social media platforms to amplify the reach of their messages. Consequently, societies experience increased division, and conflicts between various groups become progressively more challenging to mitigate (Chetty & Alathur 2018).

The manifestation of *fitna* in internet spaces exemplifies the complexity and profound impact of digital technologies on social and religious dynamics. Each form of *fitna* capitalizes on unique characteristics of social media to disseminate misinformation and foment division. Hoaxes and fake news capitalize on rapid

information dissemination to exacerbate tensions, while abusive memes employ humor and visual elements to demean and provoke. Misleadingly edited videos manipulate context to deceive audiences, and hate speech utilizes open platforms to propagate intolerance and animosity. These manifestations of *fitna* are fueled by identity crises, unrestricted freedom, and low media literacy among internet users. The resultant digital environment is increasingly polarized, with religious truths and authority frequently questioned and reduced to conflicting micro-narratives. Addressing this phenomenon necessitates a holistic approach, encompassing enhanced media literacy, appropriate regulatory measures, and the promotion of constructive interfaith dialogue in digital spaces. By implementing such comprehensive strategies, the internet can be optimized as a platform for healthy information exchange, fostering a more peaceful and inclusive social milieu.

REFLECTION ON THE RISE AND SPREAD OF *FITNA*

The emergence and proliferation of *fitna* in social media reflect broader macro-conditions prevalent in contemporary society. Three fundamental factors contribute significantly to the various forms of *fitna* in virtual spaces. The first is the crisis of self-identity. The increasingly global and interconnected virtual world often induces a sense of identity dislocation among individuals. Immersed in vast and diverse social landscapes, users may experience a loss of self and belonging. This identity crisis renders individuals more susceptible to misinformation and prone to disseminating false information about perceived adversaries (Gardner, Mayes, & Hameed 2018). The anonymity afforded by the internet exacerbates this issue, diminishing accountability and emboldening users to engage in defamation and slander. Consequently, virtual spaces become arenas for personal grievances and social disputes, facilitating the rapid spread of misinformation with minimal resistance. This crisis of self-identity is a critical factor in the propagation of *fitna*, fostering an environment where individuals are more likely to engage in harmful behaviors that they might avoid in face-to-face interactions (Kumbrian 2019).

The second factor is unregulated and uncontrolled freedom. This contributes significantly to the spread of *fitna* because the perception of the internet as a free and open space, where users can express opinions and share information without significant oversight, has contributed to the unchecked dissemination of false and defamatory content (Chetty & Alathur 2018). Social media platforms, designed to maximize user engagement, often lack robust mechanisms for effective content moderation. This environment allows *fitna* to flourish, as malicious actors exploit these platforms to spread misinformation and incite discord. The absence of clear guidelines governing online behavior further exacerbates this issue, creating an environment where individuals feel empowered to engage in defamatory actions without fear of repercussions. The viral nature of social media facilitates the rapid spread of false information, enabling content to reach a global audience within seconds. This unregulated freedom presents a double-edged sword, providing a platform for free expression while simultaneously enabling the spread of harmful and false information (Setyadi et al. 2018).

The third factor encompasses propaganda and media illiteracy, which further exacerbate the issue of *fitna* on social media. Individuals who lack critical media literacy skills are more susceptible to believing and spreading propaganda. Propaganda, defined as biased or misleading information used to promote specific political causes or viewpoints, can proliferate rapidly on social media, particularly when users cannot critically assess the content they encounter (Chetty & Alathur 2018). The emergence of sophisticated propaganda techniques, such as deepfakes and targeted misinformation campaigns, adds complexity to the issue by creating highly convincing false narratives that are challenging to distinguish from the truth. Media literacy programs are vital in addressing this issue, as they equip users with the skills necessary to navigate the intricate information landscape of the digital age. By fostering critical thinking and providing tools for verifying information, these programs can mitigate the impact of propaganda and reduce the spread of *fitna* on social media (Sponholz & Christofoletti 2018).

The three fundamental factors fueling the emergence and spread of *fitna* on social media reflect the broader macro conditions of contemporary life. In an increasingly globalized and connected virtual world, individuals often experience identity dislocation, alienation, and a loss of self and attachment. These vast and diverse virtual environments can leave individuals feeling ungrounded, making them more susceptible to misinformation and prone to spreading false information about those they dislike (Gardner, Mayes, & Hameed 2018). The anonymity of the internet exacerbates this problem, reducing individuals' sense of accountability and emboldening them to commit slander and defamation. Additionally, the unregulated and uncontrolled freedom to use the internet as an open space allows users to express their opinions without significant oversight, facilitating the rapid spread of false and defamatory content (Chetty & Alathur 2018). Furthermore, individuals lacking critical media literacy skills are more vulnerable to propaganda, which can spread rapidly on social media. Sophisticated propaganda techniques, such as deepfakes and targeted misinformation campaigns, create false narratives that are difficult to distinguish from the truth (Sponholz & Christofoletti 2018). Media literacy programs are essential in addressing this issue, promoting critical thinking and providing tools to verify information. These programs can reduce the impact of propaganda and the spread of *fitna* on social media.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The phenomenon of *fitna* in the internet space threatens the sacredness of religion and undermines social order. To counteract this trend, the first step is to improve media literacy among internet users. Enhanced media literacy enables individuals to critically evaluate the information they encounter, thereby reducing their vulnerability to misinformation and propaganda. Media literacy education programs should be integrated into both formal and informal educational curricula, focusing on understanding media operations, fact-checking techniques, and awareness of manipulative content's dangers. Governments and non-governmental organizations can collaborate to develop public campaigns that raise awareness about the importance of media literacy. This approach can help the public become wiser in consuming and disseminating information and more resilient to harmful slander attempts (Chetty & Alathur 2018).

In addition to improving media literacy, proper regulation and monitoring of content on social media are necessary to prevent the spread of *fitna*. Social media platforms should enhance their content moderation mechanisms to detect and remove misinformation and defamation. This includes utilizing artificial intelligence technology to automatically monitor and flag harmful content, as well as collaborating with experts and religious organizations to ensure that disseminated information does not undermine the sanctity of religion. Moreover, clear and transparent policies on the consequences of spreading *fitna* should be enforced to provide a deterrent effect. The government could also introduce stricter laws regarding the spread of online slander, including penalties for those found guilty of disseminating damaging information (Setyadiet al. 2018). Through a combination of media literacy and effective regulation, the internet can be optimized as a safer and more supportive space for constructive and tolerant discussions.

Conclusion

This study makes several key contributions to both academic knowledge and policy aimed at fostering peaceful social coexistence. Firstly, it illuminates the profound impact of digital spaces on religious discourse and authority, underscoring the necessity for nuanced media literacy programs that can equip individuals to navigate and critically assess online religious content. By elucidating the processes of desacralization and the contestation of religious knowledge, policymakers and educators can more effectively address the challenges posed by the digital age. Secondly, the study demonstrates social media's paradoxical role in both uniting and fragmenting religious communities. This duality suggests that policy measures should focus on promoting digital platforms as spaces for constructive interfaith dialogue and understanding, rather

than conflict and division. Encouraging the development of online communities that prioritize tolerance and respect for diverse religious perspectives is paramount. Lastly, the study emphasizes the importance of safeguarding against the proliferation of misinformation and hate speech in virtual spaces, particularly in the context of Indonesia where the spread of *fitna* has become a significant concern. Policies aimed at regulating online content should strive to balance the need for free expression with the imperative to prevent the dissemination of harmful and divisive rhetoric. By fostering an environment where diverse religious voices can be heard and respected, society can work towards a more peaceful and inclusive digital landscape.

This research not only provides insights into the complex dynamics of religion in digital spaces but also offers practical recommendations for enhancing media literacy, promoting interfaith dialogue, and regulating online content to support peaceful social coexistence. These findings contribute to the broader academic discourse on religion in the digital age and offer valuable guidance for policymakers seeking to address the challenges and opportunities presented by the intersection of faith and technology.

The advent of social media has fundamentally transformed the construction and deconstruction of religious reality across knowledge, values, and social interaction domains. This transformation has catalyzed the emergence of novel discourses that objectify religion. Unlike traditional religious discourse dissemination through authoritative sources such as sacred texts and religious scholars, contemporary dissemination and signification often occur anonymously via members of the general public. This shift has precipitated a desacralization of religion, wherein truths are no longer passively accepted but actively questioned and challenged, contributing to an increase in nihilism and relativism.

As religious knowledge has become more widely disseminated, it has grown increasingly fluid and open to reinterpretation. The authority and truth of the Holy Qur'an and the Hadiths are no longer exclusively rooted in their content, semantics, or recognized authorities. Instead, these discourses now involve a diverse array of actors, many of whom are anonymous and impersonal. Consequently, knowledge transmission has shifted from intergenerational transfer within grand traditions to production through contesting discourses and micro-narratives. This complexity necessitates significant media literacy for comprehensive understanding, and the resultant relativism disrupts humanity's quest for a coherent value framework and code of conduct.

The ongoing transition from physical to virtual spaces has led to the misrepresentation of religion, often producing claims defended as absolute truths. This presents significant challenges for religion in the virtual world, where creating shared spaces for practicing tolerance remains a major obstacle. While some individuals may find guidance in their spiritual quest through these new mediums, others are "left behind" in an offline reality. This dichotomy underscores the importance of fostering media literacy and critical thinking skills to navigate the complex religious landscapes of the digital age.

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