

From New Media to New Piety

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The Construction of Muhammadiyah Digital Piety Ideas

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Abstract

Muktamar is the highest consultative forum in Muhammadiyah, held every five years to discuss and formulate various decisions about the ummah and nationality issues. At the 48th *Muktamar* in 2022 in Surakarta, Muhammadiyah discussed six strategic issues, one of which was digital piety. This is very interesting because apart from Muhammadiyah, no Islamic organization in Indonesia has officially made the issue of digital piety a strategic issue to be discussed at its *Muktamar*. Therefore, this study aims to analyse the construction of the idea of digital piety by Muhammadiyah. This study is qualitative research with a literature study approach. The data was obtained by collecting print and digital literature related to the idea of digital piety by Muhammadiyah. The data obtained were then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman interactive qualitative analysis model. This analysis model has three stages: data reduction, presentation, and conclusion. Analysis of the data obtained leads to two findings. First, digital piety is interpreted by Muhammadiyah as behaving and doing activities in the digital space accompanied by morality and ethics based on Islamic values. Second, three dimensions build the construction of Muhammadiyah's digital piety ideas, namely the ideological dimension, the normative dimension, and the internalization dimension.

Keywords:

Digital piety, Muhammadiyah, civilised netizen, digital space

Introduction

The presence of new media such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter has a significant impact on human life. Since its presence, there have been shifts in various aspects of life, such as the economy, tourism, government, health, identity, and religiosity (Aditya and Al-Fatih 2021; Kay 2018; Krisna, Handayani, and Azzahro 2019; Midden and Ponzanesi 2013; Ohno 2016; Nurfitriya 2023). At this level, new media also significantly impacts human communication and interaction activities, especially after the start of the era of social media use in the early 2000s. Several European Union and American countries, for example, use social media as a medium for the government and the public to interact and dialogue on various issues related to public policy (Sáez Martín, Haro de Rosario, and Caba Pérez 2015; Stone, Flanders, and Can 2022). In other words, nowadays, almost everyone uses social media for interaction in everyday life. Some studies have even found that addiction to social media increases in line with the more intensive use of social media to meet various needs such as education, work, and entertainment (Haque et al. 2016; Kumar and Mullai 2022; Reer, Festl, and Quandt 2021; Wood, Center, and Parenteau 2016).

In Indonesia, internet penetration in 2022 reached more than 75% of the population. According to data from the Association of Indonesian Internet Service Providers (2022), internet users in Indonesia reached more than 210 million. This number is 77.02% of the total population of Indonesia. Meanwhile, 89.15% of internet users are active users of social media.

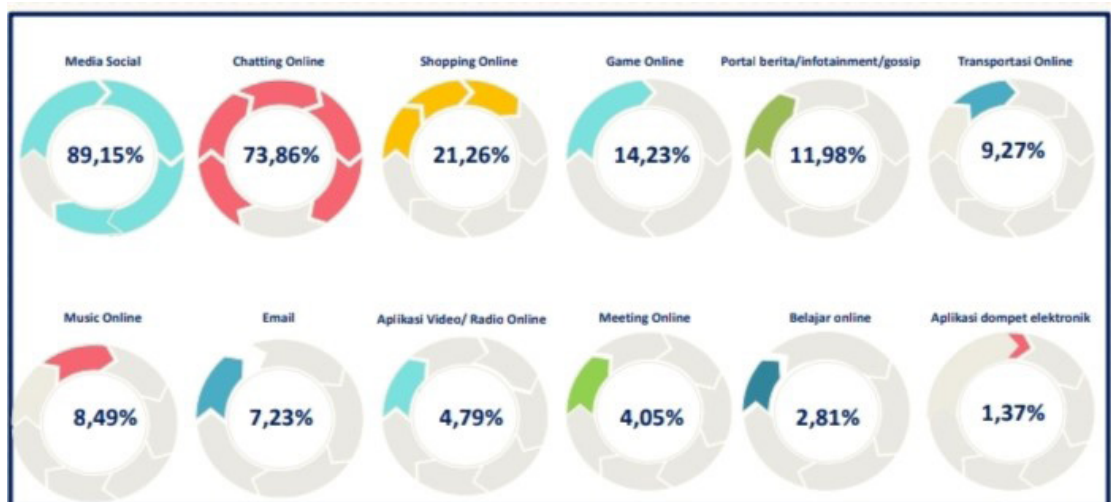


Figure 1. Internet usage preference in Indonesia

On the one hand, new media makes an essential contribution to meeting the needs of human life. Lengauer (2018) and Mustafa (2023), for example, found the use of new media in fulfilling the need for religious knowledge. Likewise, Yudarwati et al. (2022) found the importance of using social media in managing disasters in Indonesia. However, at the same time, the presence of new media also raises new problems, especially in human relations and media behaviour. Several studies have shown increased bullying behaviour on social media (Pfetsch 2017; Sheanoda and Bussey 2021). In the Indonesian context, Masduki’s study (2022) shows that digital attacks against institutions and individuals have increased yearly. This problem becomes even more complex when an even distribution of digital literacy competencies in Indonesia does not accompany the presence of new media. Under these conditions, there is also an increase in hate speech and racism on social media. Coupled with the “tsunami” of information, the spread of hoaxes is also increasingly massive (Amin, Alfarauqi, and Khatimah 2018; Karmila and Budimansyah 2022; Salam 2018). Unsurprisingly, a survey conducted by Microsoft (2021) found that the politeness of Indonesian netizens was ranked 29 out of 32 countries surveyed. Microsoft uses several indicators of low digital politeness, including digital content and interactions containing more bullying, hate speech, scams, and hoaxes. In response to the survey, Ekklesia (2022), in a study, states that even compared to other countries in ASEAN, the courtesy of Indonesian netizens ranks at the bottom.



Figure 2. Muhammadiyah’s Official Posts on Instagram about Six Strategic Issues That Will be Discussed at the 48th *Muktamar*

This reality raises concerns from various groups in Indonesia. Muhammadiyah is one of Indonesia's most prominent Islamic mass organizations, making the digital culture problem issue a strategic issue to be discussed at the 2022 *Muktamar* in Solo, Central Java (Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2022d; 2023). The discussion results then encourage the realization of digital piety, especially in the media culture of Indonesian society. This is even more interesting, bearing in mind that until now, there has yet to be a single Islamic mass organization in Indonesia that has made the issue of digital piety a theme or official agenda for discussion in its *Muktamar*.

Departing from this background, this study aims to analyze the construction of the idea of digital piety by Muhammadiyah. The results of this study can be used to understand the background and construction of the idea of digital piety. In addition, the results of this study can also be used as input for various interested parties, whether policymakers, media practitioners, or public figures, to promote polite and moderate media behaviour.

Several previous studies that are relevant to the theme of digital piety can be mapped into two major themes. First, studies that focus on the reality of digital piety. At this level, existing studies interpret digital piety as a show of religiosity and an expression of piety in the digital space. Slama (2017) found that practices and expressions in Islam can be found in almost every new media platform. This reality also causes a reconfiguration and transformation in expressing piety as a Muslim in the digital space. At this level, Kuncoro (2021) finds that certain groups of Islamic organizations use new media to express their pious transformation and share experiences of doing pious deeds. In the Indonesian context, Husein and Slama (2018) say that Indonesian Muslims use social media to express their piety. In line with that, the results of Wahib's study (2012) even found Islamic activists using the internet to disseminate and express religion. Wahib, in his writings, uses the term "city of God" to describe a cyberspace or website that becomes a place for disseminating ideas and doctrines of the pious and a forum for interacting with these activists. Like Indonesia, in Bangladesh, Muslims using social media tend to use it as a medium for "religious shows" of the power of faith and total devotion to Islam (Al-Zaman 2020).

Second, studies related to digital piety from the perspective of Muhammadiyah. In this context, there has not been any study directly related to digital piety, but several studies focus on media ethics and morality. It begins with a study conducted by Fauzi and Ayub (2019), which examines the products of Muhammadiyah fiqh in the use of social media, namely fiqh of information. In this study, Fauzi and Ayub found that fiqh of information contains not only what is permissible and what may not be done in social media but also guides values, morals, ethics, and philosophical principles in social media. From a different perspective, Surwandono and Kaukab (2021) examine the relevance of fiqh of information in tackling the spread of hoaxes. This study found that fiqh of information has positive implications for healthy media activities and suppresses the spread of hoaxes.

Muhammadiyah's efforts in guiding social media are through fiqh of information and by creating and publishing a code of ethics for Muhammadiyah netizens (Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2017; Suara Muhammadiyah 2017). In his study, Islamy (2021) found

that the ethical code of Muhammadiyah netizens aligns with the values and philosophy of Pancasila as the Indonesian ideology. In another study, Sutarno and Mardicko (2021) found that the code of ethics of Muhammadiyah netizens could be implemented quickly and received a positive response among Muhammadiyah tertiary students.

These studies focus on digital piety in general and interpret digital piety as an expression of religious devotion displayed in the digital space. The studies do not explicitly discuss the construction of the idea of digital piety by Muhammadiyah. In other words, there is a void in studies related to analyzing the construction of digital piety thinking initiated by Muhammadiyah. Therefore, this study aims to fill the void in this study.

This study is a qualitative research with a literature study approach. This research was conducted from March to May 2023. The data was obtained by collecting literature, both printed and digital, which had a connection with the idea of digital piety by Muhammadiyah. Therefore, the data in this study are sourced from books, official manuscripts from Muhammadiyah, journal articles, websites, and official social media of Muhammadiyah's. Specifically, the primary data sources in this study are as follows:

Data Source Type	
Printed	Digital
Tanfidz Keputusan 48th <i>Muktamar</i> Muhammadiyah in 2022	https://muhammadiyah.or.id/ (Official Website PP Muhammadiyah)
Fikih Informasi (Tarjih and Tajdid Council PP Muhammadiyah)	https://instagram.com/lensam-u?igshid=NTc4MTIwNjQ2YQ==
(Official Instagram PP Muhammadiyah) Kode Etik NetizMu (Tarjih and Tajdid Council PP Muhammadiyah)	

Table 1. Main Data Source

The data obtained were then analyzed using the interactive qualitative analysis model of Miles and Huberman. This analysis model has three stages in qualitative research: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion (Miles and Huberman 1994).

Digital Piety in the Point of View of Muhammadiyah

Previous studies have tended to define digital piety as an expression of piety and devotion to religion that is displayed in digital space to share spiritual experiences, preaching movements, and even just “religious shows”. At this level, Miski and Hamdan (2021) state

that digital piety is a phenomenon of virtualizing religiosity through new media. Likewise, Husein and Slama (2018) argue that online religiosity is online piety. In line with that, Najamudin (2021), in his study, expressly concluded that “ngaji online” is a form of virtual piety. In his study, Amir (2019) found that social media is often used to show piety identity and gain legitimacy for that piety. Departing from these various studies, digital piety is interpreted as digitizing piety or the performance of religiosity and rituality in the digital space.

Referring to the data obtained, this study found differences between previous studies and Muhammadiyah regarding the meaning of digital piety. Muhammadiyah’s 48th *Tanfidz Muktamar* explicitly states that digital piety is moral and ethical awareness by “involving God” in utilizing digital systems and living in the digital era. The purpose of having morality, values, and ethics in these digital activities is to create civilised digital interaction and life (Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2022a). In other data sources, it is specifically mentioned that one aspect of Muhammadiyah’s digital piety idea is morals in social media (Arif et al. 2019; Tabroni 2020). In this context, Muhammadiyah’s attention to the issue of digital piety at the 48th *Muktamar* is based on the advancement of digital technology that is not followed by the quality of media literacy and low morality in the media that makes people easy to produce and believe hoaxes, hatred, and hostility (Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2022a).

This finding shows differences in meaning between previous studies and Muhammadiyah regarding the relationship between netizens and digital space. The meaning of the previous study was to interpret digital space as a means of “showing” piety. At this level, the previous study placed the function of digital space as an object in interpreting digital piety. In contrast, Muhammadiyah interprets digital piety as tending to behaviour and morality in activities in the digital space. So even though it is a post or activity in the digital space unrelated to religion, as long as it is based on Islamic morality and values, it can still be called digital piety. At this level, Muhammadiyah places morals and religious values in behaving in the digital space as objects of meaning for digital piety.

There is a keyword consistently used by Muhammadiyah when explaining digital piety, namely *beradab* (civilised). Muhammadiyah (2022a) defines this term as behaviour that emphasises morality, politeness, and wisdom in the use of social media. This can be interpreted as Muhammadiyah’s desire through the implementation of digital piety, activities and interactions in the digital space to be more polite and maintain social cohesiveness. The term “civilised” can be found in all Muhammadiyah texts, literature, or posts about digital piety. The term “civilised” was used not only after the 48th *Muktamar* in 2022 but also before the *Muktamar* the term “civilised” was always used to describe digital piety (Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2022b; 2022c; 2022d; 2022e). The use of the term “civilised” to describe digital piety can be found on the official website and social media of Muhammadiyah’s.

Title	Access Link	Date
Mewujudkan Kesalehan Digital di Media Sosial	https://muhammadiyah.or.id/mewujudkan-kesalehan-digital-di-media-sosial/	18-04-2022
Pusat Studi Muhammadiyah Dorong Remaja Masjid Miliki Kesalehan Digital	https://muhammadiyah.or.id/pusat-studi-muhammadiyah-dorong-remaja-masjid-miliki-kesalehan-digital/	17-07-2022
Prihatin Pada Rendahnya Keadaban Netizen, Muhammadiyah Garap Isu Kesalehan Digital	https://muhammadiyah.or.id/prihatin-pada-rendahnya-keadaban-netizen-muhammadiyah-garap-isu-kesalehan-digital/	19-12-2022
Pemerintah Anggap Isu Strategis Kesalehan Digital Muhammadiyah Konstruktif dengan Konstitusi	https://muhammadiyah.or.id/pemerintah-anggap-isu-strategis-kesalehan-digital-muhammadiyah-konstruktif-dengan-konstitusi/	20-12-2022
Kesopanan Warganet Rendah, Muhammadiyah Ingin Menciptakan Kesalehan Digital	https://muhammadiyah.or.id/kesopanan-warganet-rendah-muhammadiyah-ingin-menciptakan-kesalehan-digital/	08-02-2023

Table 2. Digital Piety on the Official Website of the PP Muhammadiyah



Figure 3. Muhammadiyah's Official Posts on Instagram and Website

The emphasis on the term “civilised” by Muhammadiyah in defining digital piety is not unreasonable. Given that in recent years, problems related to politeness and ethics in the digital space in Indonesia, especially social media, are increasing. Several studies show increased “uncivilised” trends, such as hoaxes and hate speech, in Indonesia’s digital space (Pramujiono et al. 2022; Sirajuddin, Kamil, and Fachruddin 2017). These findings include increased hate narratives in conversations of Indonesian netizens on social media (Syahputra 2021). Another finding is that in 2020, around 800,000 sites were indicated to be spreading fake news and hate speech (Fernando et al. 2022). In the context of social cohesiveness, hate speech in the digital space has implications for intolerance between religious communities in Indonesia (Muhid et al., 2019). Reflecting on this reality, it is only natural that Muhammadiyah emphasises the term “civilised” in interpreting digital piety.

The Construction of Muhammadiyah Digital Piety Ideas

The idea of digital piety will be implemented if the construction of the idea can be understood holistically. At this level, the construction of the idea of digital piety is not only in the form of a definition but also in the design of the idea, starting from the background of the idea and ideological basis to the realization of the idea.

This study found that there are three dimensions in the construction of digital piety ideas by Muhammadiyah, which are interrelated with one another. First, the ideological dimension. The ideological construction of the idea of Muhammadiyah’s digital piety is motivated by the internal and external factors of Muhammadiyah. Internally, the idea of digital piety is Muhammadiyah’s response to humanitarian problems. This response is a basic form of the Islam Berkemajuan movement (Anshori 2020; Qodir et al. 2020). In the 48th *Tanfidz Mukhtamar* (2022a), it is stated that to realise an advanced Islam, Muhammadiyah carries out programs and movements related to improving the quality of the ummah, which are not only related to aspects of Islamic teachings but also concerning the realities of life including digital piety. This aligns with Muhammadiyah’s second-century agenda to present Islam that can answer various humanitarian problems to create a religious-humanistic social order (Febriansyah et al. 2013, 213–14). Thus, Islam Berkemajuan (progressive Islam) indirectly becomes the foundation of the idea of digital piety by Muhammadiyah.

Externally, the idea of digital piety is motivated by the many social problems in the digital space, especially the crisis of decency and morality of Indonesian netizens in using the internet and social media (Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2022a). Various studies have shown an increase in the spread of hoaxes and hate speech from year to year by Indonesian netizens. This problem tends to increase as Indonesia is approaching the 2023 elections (Hartono, Seregig, and Wibowo 2021; Ichwani, Damayanti, and Rianto 2019). Among the leading causes of this phenomenon is the massive digital connectivity in Indonesia that is not accompanied by an increase in digital literacy. This causes many digital problems and crimes (Paterson 2019). Witnessing this phenomenon, there is a concern from Muhammadiyah that if the problem is left unchecked, it will damage the order of

life and social cohesiveness (Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2022d; 2023). So, the idea of digital piety was offered by Muhammadiyah to reduce this problem.

The second dimension is the normative. Muhammadiyah provides norms, values, and guidelines for behaviour in the digital space. These norms are fiqh of information and the code of ethics of Muhammadiyah netizens (Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2022a; Suara Muhammadiyah 2017). The code of ethics for Muhammadiyah netizens contains rules and ethical standards for their social media use. This code of ethics consists of six articles specifically binding for Muhammadiyah members. Specifically, the first article is about the foundation used by Muhammadiyah members in using social media.

The second article is about the obligations that are the goals of using social media. The third article is about the prohibitions of using social media. The fourth article is about behavioural guidelines for using social media. The fifth article concerns the quality of material, information shared, and responsibility in using social media. The sixth article is about the sanctions and supervision of Muhammadiyah for its members' use of social media (Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah 2017; Suara Muhammadiyah 2017; Sutarno and Mardicko 2021).

Meanwhile, fiqh of information guides Muslims in using social media in more civilised and morally responsible ways (Nashir et al. 2022). This study found that the substance of fiqh for information purposes does not resemble classical fiqh, which is dominated by legal provisions, but instead tends to focus on values and morality that must be applied in using social media (Fauzi and Ayub 2019; Soehada et al. 2019). This is because the reasoning of Muhammadiyah fiqh is related to juridical-practical aspects and moral-ethical and theological aspects (Fauzi 2019).

The third dimension concerns internalization, or efforts to ground and create public awareness about digital piety. In the 48th *Tanfidz Mukhtamar* of Muhammadiyah (2022a), it is stated that efforts to internalise digital piety are conducted by educating the public and through movements to build moral awareness and digital literacy. In addition, the involvement of public figures and institutions such as scholars, public figures, government, and educational institutions is significant in campaigning for and exemplifying digital piety. At this point, to realise digital piety, the government's contribution can be implemented by presenting rules related to piety in the media (Afandi 2022). Meanwhile, religious leaders and scholars contribute by campaigning for the importance of digital piety to the public through religious activities and the academic pulpit.

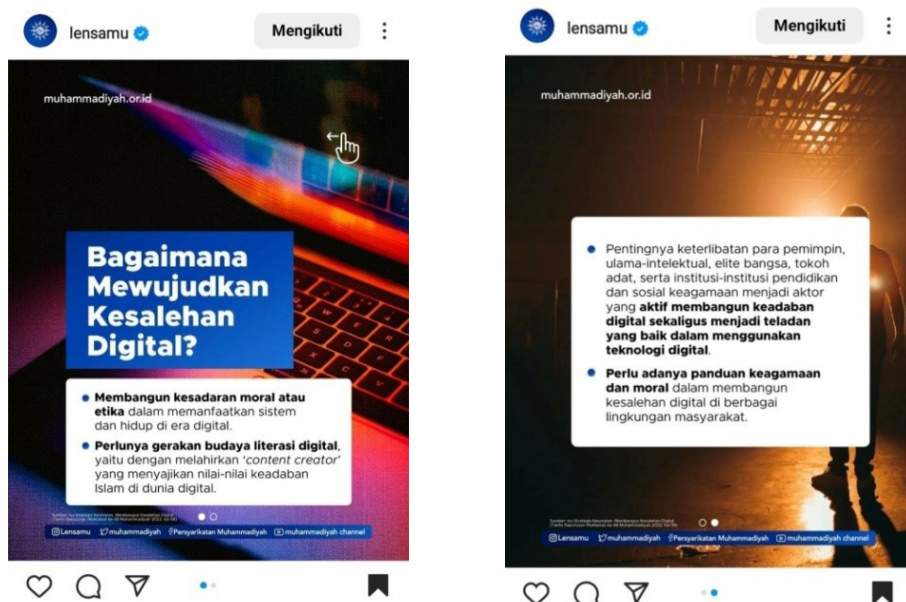


Figure 4. Muhammadiyah's Official Posts on Instagram

Muhammadiyah views public figures and religious leaders as authoritative and credible sources in interpreting religious texts and as a legitimizing tool for digital piety education to the public. Religious figures and institutions are references in interpreting religious texts and dogmas for religious communities. At this level, religious figures and institutions indirectly have legitimacy and credibility in various religious interpretations, similar to traditional leaders and public figures who often influence public perceptions and behaviour towards other issues. Therefore it is only natural that Muhammadiyah sees the involvement of these figures and institutions as necessary in internalizing digital piety in society. This finding aligns with the view of Aagaard (2019) that receiving messages in communication has a relationship with public legitimacy for these sources of information. Similarly, Tallberg and Zürn (2019) argue that the credibility of information sources dramatically determines the level of public trust in this information. Dellmuth and Tallbergh (2021) also found that the higher the credibility of the elite, the higher the public acceptance and trust in the messages conveyed.

Conclusion

The analysis of the data leads to two significant findings in this study. First, digital piety is interpreted by Muhammadiyah as behaving and acting in the digital space in line with morality and ethics based on Islamic values. The existence of digital piety will lead to more civilised interactions and activities in the digital space. The analysis of Muhammadiyah's

notion of digital piety differs from previous studies on digital piety. Previous studies interpret digital piety as digitizing and virtualizing religiosity and rituality. In other words, the findings of those studies tend to emphasise the function of digital piety in “showing religiosity” in digital space. Muhammadiyah, on the other hand, places more emphasis on media behaviour in its interpretation of digital piety. Second, three dimensions build the construction of Muhammadiyah’s digital piety ideas. The Islam Berkemajuan (progressive Islamic) movement inspires the ideological dimension and responds to various moral problems in the digital space. The normative dimension contains a set of values and norms that guide activities in the digital world. The internalization dimension is an effort to ground digital piety and create a civilised digital culture.

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