

Digital Activism and Islamic Political Mobilization Among Millennial Muslims in the Election Contest

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ABSTRACT

The rapid development of digital technology has transformed patterns of political participation in contemporary democratic societies, including within Muslim communities. In recent years, Islamic digital activism has increasingly emerged through social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, X, and YouTube, which function not only as spaces for religious expression but also as instruments of political mobilization during electoral contestation. Muslim millennials, as digital natives, occupy a strategic position in shaping and disseminating Islamic political narratives in online public spheres. This study aims to analyze how digital activism influences Islamic political mobilization among Muslim millennials in electoral politics. Using a qualitative approach with digital ethnography methods, this research collects data through social media observation, online discourse analysis, and interviews with Muslim millennial users actively engaged in political content. The findings reveal that social media has transformed conventional Islamic political mobilization into a network-based and emotionally driven movement characterized by viral narratives, religious symbolism, and influencer-centered campaigns. Furthermore, digital activism strengthens identity-based political participation while simultaneously intensifying political polarization in online spaces. Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of digital political Islam discourse by integrating theories of connective action, cyber politics, and contemporary Islamic activism within the context of electoral democracy.

Keywords: Digital Activism, Political Islam, Muslim Millennials, Social Media, Electoral Politics.

I. Introduction

The digital transformation of politics in modern democracies has fundamentally reshaped the ways citizens interact with political issues, construct collective identities, and participate in electoral contestation. From the perspective of the network society, digital media is no longer merely a communication channel, but also a space for the production of discourse, the articulation of aspirations, and network-based political mobilization. Bennett and Segeberg (2013) explain that contemporary movements increasingly operate through the logic of connective action, namely forms of mobilization that are personal, fluid, and highly dependent on digital connectivity. Meanwhile, Castells emphasizes that internet-based media has accelerated the emergence of new forms of collective action and social change (Castells, 2015). Consequently, digital politics no longer operates solely through formal organizations, but rather through flexible and rapidly expanding social networks (Hamid et al., 2025).



In the Indonesian context, the dominance of social media in political campaigns has become increasingly evident alongside the rapid growth of internet penetration and the intensity of digital platform usage. The Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII) reported that in 2024, Indonesia had 221.56 million internet users, with an internet penetration rate of 79.5 percent. At the same time, internet users were predominantly millennials and Generation Z. These figures indicate that the digital sphere has become the primary political ecosystem for younger generations who actively consume, produce, and disseminate political information. It is therefore unsurprising that electoral campaigns now place social media at the center of political strategy to shape public perception, expand message reach, and influence the political orientation of young voters (Hamid, 2025).

This transformation is clearly reflected in recent elections, where social media has not only been used to attract voter support but has also become an arena of discursive contestation that produces polarization, hate speech, and identity politics. Studies on Indonesian elections demonstrate that since 2014, social media has become a crucial element in political campaigns, and in several electoral contests, digital platforms have reinforced politics of hatred, political polarization, and ethnic as well as religious nationalism. Other studies further indicate that political identities in the 2024 election were largely shaped through social media, particularly targeting younger and highly digital-oriented audiences (Majid & Amirulkamar, 2023). In this context, platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, X, and YouTube are no longer merely spaces of entertainment; they have evolved into new political arenas that enable electoral narratives to spread rapidly in visual and emotional forms.

The increasing expression of Islamic politics within digital spaces demonstrates that this transformation affects not only political communication in general but also the articulation of religious politics. Nisa (2018) argues that social media facilitates the emergence of semi-virtual Islamic movements rooted in religious preaching (*dakwah*) and religious mobilization. Likewise, studies on religious influencers on Instagram reveal how religious authority is now constructed through visual strategies, audience intimacy, and curated content distribution (Febrian, 2024). Other studies on digital *dakwah* also show that TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram have become important platforms for religious preaching aimed at younger audiences, characterized by concise, visual, viral, and algorithm-driven messages (Ramadhan et al., 2025). These findings confirm that digital *dakwah* is no longer limited to strengthening religiosity but has also shifted toward social and political mobilization, including electoral mobilization based on Islamic identity.

This condition becomes even more relevant when considering the position of millennial Muslims as digital natives. This generation has grown up alongside social media, making their access to political and religious information highly influenced by the digital ecosystem. Research by Harahap, Rubino, and Effendi (2024) demonstrates that Islamic digital content significantly influences the political participation of millennial Muslims in Medan; exposure to content discussing social justice, leadership, and elections encourages them to become more politically aware and sensitive. Meanwhile, studies on X/Twitter among Indonesian youth indicate that the platform significantly affects political awareness, political orientation, and voting decisions in elections (Anwar et al., 2024). Thus, millennial Muslims are not merely consumers of religious and political narratives, but also producers, disseminators, and amplifiers of messages within the flow of Islamic digital activism.

At the same time, the polarization of identity politics in elections further reinforces the notion that social media has become an intensely contested symbolic arena. Studies on identity politics in Indonesia show that religious, ethnic, and social identities are strategically utilized to influence voter behavior, build resistance, and construct *project identities* within electoral competition (Majid & Amirulkamar, 2023). Other studies also emphasize that in Indonesian elections, political actors from various camps employ religious and ethnic identities to gather support, attack opponents, and shape public opinion, while buzzers and influencers play a major role in amplifying such narratives on social media (Universitas Indonesia, 2024). In this context, Islamic political mobilization in digital spaces operates not only through theological arguments but also through emotions, symbols, repetitive messaging, and algorithms that expand the reach of identity-based content.

Although studies on digital politics, online *dakwah*, and political identity have developed significantly, several research gaps remain. Most previous studies have focused on digital populism, the authority of religious influencers, or the use of social media by political actors and campaign elites. Nisa (2018), for instance, emphasizes the emergence of semi-virtual Islamic movements; Febrian (2024) focuses on the visual construction of religious authority; Ramadhan et al. (2025) highlight cross-platform digital *dakwah* strategies; while Majid and Amirulkamar (2023) position political identity mainly as an electoral campaign instrument. However, studies that specifically connect Islamic digital activism with millennial Muslims as political subjects and explain how digital *dakwah* transforms into electoral political behavior, remain relatively limited. Therefore, this research is important to fill this gap by positioning millennial Muslims not merely as audiences, but as active actors in the mobilization of Islamic politics within digital spaces.

Based on this background, this study is directed toward answering three main questions: how does digital activism shape Islamic political mobilization among millennial Muslims; what factors encourage the involvement of millennial Muslims in digital political activism; and how is social media utilized as an instrument of electoral mobilization based on Islamic identity? These questions are important because the relationship between religion, digital media, and voting behavior increasingly determines the direction of electoral contestation in Indonesia. The objectives of this study are to analyze the patterns of digital activism among millennial Muslims, identify forms of Islamic political mobilization on social media, and explain the relationship between digital *dakwah* and electoral political participation. Academically, this study is expected to enrich the scholarship on Islamic digital politics by focusing on young Muslims as significant actors in the configuration of contemporary politics.

The main argument of this study is that digital activism has transformed Islamic political mobilization from a conventional organization-based model into a fluid network-based mobilization through social media, which is highly effective in influencing the political preferences of millennial Muslims in electoral contests. This transformation occurs because social media enables *dakwah*, religious symbols, influencers, and identity narratives to operate simultaneously within a fast-paced, emotional, and highly viral environment. Within this framework, Islamic political mobilization in the digital era no longer depends on rigid organizational structures, but rather on personal networks, platform algorithms, and increasingly fragmented forms of participation.

II. Literature Review

2.1. Digital Activism Theory

Studies on digital activism demonstrate that contemporary social movements no longer rely solely on formal organizations and centralized leadership. Instead, they are increasingly supported by digital communication networks that enable rapid, flexible, and decentralized coordination. Manuel Castells (2015) explains that social movements in the internet era develop through the logic of networks, in which digital media function as spaces for articulating dissatisfaction, disseminating symbols, and organizing collective action. Within this framework, activism no longer occurs only in physical spaces but is also constructed, expanded, and accelerated through cyberspace. Meanwhile, W. Lance Bennett and Alexandra Segerberg (2013) introduced the concept of *connective action* to explain that digital mobilization tends to be personalized, based on individual participation, and more easily disseminated through social media than traditional movement models. This concept is highly relevant for understanding how social media can serve as a loose yet effective infrastructure for political mobilization.

Within the realm of digital activism, several important forms are frequently discussed, including networked activism, cyber politics, and hashtag activism. Networked activism emphasizes that the strength of digital movements lies in the interconnectedness among users rather than in formal organizational structures. Cyber politics indicates that the political arena is increasingly shifting into digital spaces where opinions, identities, and mobilization are simultaneously produced. Meanwhile, hashtag activism illustrates

how hashtags can function as tools for capturing attention, disseminating messages, and building political solidarity. A study by Xiong Fei et al. (2019) shows that hashtags serve as crucial mechanisms for connecting narratives, communities, and collective actions on social media. Thus, digital activism theory provides a conceptual foundation for understanding social media as a highly dynamic arena of political mobilization.

2.2. Political Islam

In the literature on political Islam, one major transformation frequently highlighted is the shift from highly institutionalized Islamic movements toward more fluid, adaptive, and digitally connected forms. Asef Bayat (2013) emphasizes that *post-Islamism* reflects the metamorphosis of Islamic movements that no longer focus solely on the formalization of an Islamic state but also on the negotiation of identity, morality, and social participation within broader public spaces. Similarly, Olivier Roy (2004) argues that contemporary Islam has undergone transformation through globalization, allowing Muslim identities to operate increasingly within transnational and modern spaces, including digital media. These perspectives help explain how political Islam has evolved from rigid ideological models into more flexible and communicative forms of expression in online spaces. Quintan Wiktorowicz (2002) also provides an important contribution through a social movement approach to Islamic activism. He views Islamic activism as a form of contentious mobilization aimed at advancing Muslim interests, suggesting that Islam can be analyzed not only as a doctrine but also as a social movement shaped by political opportunities, networks, and mobilization strategies. In the digital context, this approach is useful for understanding how symbols, narratives, and religious authority can be reproduced through social media. Therefore, political Islam in the digital era is not merely about ideology but also about new ways of constructing influence, legitimacy, and political loyalty through online networks.

2.3. Muslim Millennials and Digital Politics

Muslim millennials represent a highly significant group in the study of digital politics because they grew up as *digital natives*, a generation accustomed to interacting with social media as their primary source of information, communication, and self-expression. Jakob Ohme (2019) demonstrates that young voters are more exposed to political communication through social media and that digital platforms can encourage their participation in political campaigns. This finding indicates that younger generations do not passively consume political messages; rather, they tend to respond to, disseminate, and modify such messages according to their social networks. In the context of Muslim millennials, this characteristic makes them both highly vulnerable and highly strategic within the flow of digital political mobilization. Research on digital political behavior also shows that social media can strengthen political participation while simultaneously deepening polarization. A meta-analysis by Shelley Boulianne (2015) found a positive relationship between social media use and both political and civic participation. However, at the same time, research by Eytan Bakshy et al. (2015) revealed that exposure to ideologically diverse content on Facebook remains limited by friendship structures and algorithms, meaning that *echo chambers* continue to be a significant issue in digital politics. In the context of Muslim millennials, this condition suggests that the consumption of Islamic political content on social media may encourage participation while also potentially reinforcing increasingly homogeneous preferences and resistance to alternative viewpoints. Consequently, a culture of political virality emerges from the combination of algorithms, emotions, and the desire for social recognition in digital spaces.

2.4. Electoral Mobilization Theory

Electoral mobilization theory views voter participation as the result of political communication processes, identity attachment, and social incentives that encourage individuals to engage in electoral contests. In the digital ecosystem, electoral mobilization no longer depends solely on party structures or face-to-face campaigns but also on the intensity of political engagement through social media. Shelley Boulianne (2015) shows that social media use is positively correlated with political engagement, while Jakob Ohme

(2019) confirms that young voters are more easily mobilized through exposure to political content on digital platforms. Therefore, electoral mobilization theory must be reconsidered within the context of social media as a space for recruiting and strengthening the political participation of younger generations.

In the Indonesian context, religious identity also continues to influence voting behavior. Saiful Mujani (2020) demonstrates that religio-ethnic identity can shape electoral preferences, particularly when candidates or political issues are interpreted through the lens of religious identity. This finding is significant because it shows that religious voting behavior has not disappeared in modern democracies; rather, it can be reinforced through digital narratives that emphasize symbols, morality, and identity proximity. Therefore, the mobilization of young Muslim voters through social media can be understood as a combination of the logic of digital participation and the logic of religious identity.

2.5. Conceptual Framework

Based on the literature above, this study employs a conceptual framework that connects social media, digital activism, political Islam narratives, electoral mobilization, and the political participation of Muslim millennials. Conceptually, social media function as spaces for the production and distribution of messages; digital activism acts as the mechanism linking religious expression and political action; political Islam narratives provide frameworks of identity and legitimacy; electoral mobilization represents the concrete process of generating political support; and the political participation of Muslim millennials becomes the ultimate outcome. In other words, the relationship among these components can be formulated as follows:



This framework aligns with the concept of *connective action*, which emphasizes the role of digital networks in shaping political mobilization that is personal, fluid, and easily disseminated. Overall, the literature demonstrates that digital activism has become one of the primary forces driving contemporary political transformation. Digital activism theory highlights the importance of networks and hashtags as mechanisms of mobilization; the literature on political Islam explains the transformation of Islamic movements into more fluid and adaptive forms; studies on Muslim millennials show that younger generations are the core users of digital spaces; and electoral mobilization theory clarifies how these processes ultimately lead to political participation. Nevertheless, there remains a significant gap in studies specifically examining the relationship between Islamic digital activism and political mobilization among Muslim millennials within electoral contests. Therefore, this research is important in bridging the literature on digital politics, contemporary Islam, and the voting behavior of young Muslim generations.

III. Research Method

This study employed a mixed methods approach integrating qualitative and quantitative data to provide a comprehensive understanding of digital activism and Islamic political mobilization among Muslim millennials. The research combined digital ethnography, case study, and social media analysis to examine how political identities, narratives, and participation are constructed within digital spaces. John W. Creswell (2022) explains that mixed methods research enables the integration of qualitative and quantitative strengths within a single framework, while Christine Hine (2000) emphasizes that digital ethnography allows researchers to understand the internet as a social and cultural space. The study focused on TikTok, Instagram, X, and YouTube because these platforms are widely used by younger generations and serve as important arenas for digital political communication, campaign dissemination, and Islamic political discourse.

Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews, social media observations, and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) involving Muslim millennials actively engaged in digital political activities.

Secondary data included digital campaign content, political hashtags, engagement statistics, online news articles, videos, captions, memes, user comments, and other digital traces related to electoral contestation. Data analysis employed thematic analysis, critical discourse analysis (CDA), and social network analysis (SNA). Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2006) explain that thematic analysis is useful for identifying patterns of meaning in qualitative data, while Norman Fairclough (2013) states that CDA examines the relationship between language, ideology, and power. In addition, Stanley Wasserman and Katherine Faust (1994) explain that SNA is effective for mapping relational structures and communication networks. Through this combination of methods, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the transformation of Islamic digital activism and its influence on the political mobilization of Muslim millennials in electoral politics.

IV. Results and Discussion

4.1. The Transformation of Islamic Political Activism in the Digital Era

The findings of this study indicate that Islamic political activism has undergone a significant shift from patterns of participation previously centered in physical spaces, such as religious study circles (*pengajian*), *majelis taklim*, and community gatherings, toward digital spaces that are more fluid, rapid, and easily accessible. This transition does not merely signify a change in the medium of communication, but also a transformation in the logic of mobilization. In the conventional phase, the dissemination of Islamic political discourse depended on face-to-face meetings, local authorities, and organizational ties. In the digital phase, however, mobilization occurs through social media networks that enable religious and political messages to spread simultaneously, personally, and virally. Within this framework, social media functions as a new infrastructure for connective action, namely mobilization that no longer requires rigid organizational membership, but instead relies on the interconnectedness of individuals within digital networks (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013; Castells, 2015).

The transition from offline religious gatherings to digital spaces also demonstrates changes in how millennial Muslims access, interpret, and disseminate Islamic political narratives. In offline spaces, the transmission of knowledge tended to be hierarchical, with *ustaz*, *kiai*, or religious figures serving as the primary authoritative sources. In digital spaces, however, the process has become more open and participatory. Millennial Muslims act not only as audiences, but also as curators, repeaters, and disseminators of religious-political content. They actively consume sermon clips, Qur'anic quotations, podcast excerpts, and short videos associated with electoral issues. This pattern shows that Islamic political activism now operates through the logic of networked religion, where religious practices and political expressions are interconnected within spaces no longer limited by specific physical locations (Bunt, 2009, 2018).

One important finding is the emergence of Islamic political influencers as new actors playing a central role in opinion formation and electoral mobilization. These influencers do not always possess formal religious authority, yet they gain influence through their ability to build emotional closeness, visual aesthetics, and language compatible with digital culture. They are capable of translating political issues into religious messages that are easy to understand, concise, and highly shareable. In many cases, their content does not merely convey *dakwah*, but also frames political choices as part of Islamic moral responsibility. Thus, Islamic political influencers function as intermediaries between religious authority, platform algorithm logic, and the political preferences of young audiences. This phenomenon aligns with studies on digital Islam, which demonstrate that religious authority in online spaces is often produced through a combination of religiosity, performativity, and popularity, rather than solely through institutional legitimacy (Bunt, 2018; Nisa, 2018).

In a broader discussion, the presence of Islamic political influencers indicates that social media has transformed the intermediary structure within Islamic politics. On the one hand, they expand the reach of religious messages; on the other hand, they shift the center of authority from formal institutions toward figures who are more agile, attractive, and adaptable to the preferences of younger generations. This situation causes Islamic politics in digital spaces to become increasingly visual, emotional, and based on personal

closeness. Political narratives no longer need to appear in the form of lengthy ideological arguments, but can instead be conveyed through symbols, text fragments, short audio clips, or brief videos containing identity messages and electoral support. In this context, digital activism not only expands participation, but also transforms the very form of participation into something more spontaneous and fragmented (Castells, 2015; Bennett & Segerberg, 2013).

The next finding reveals an increasingly visible fragmentation of religious authority within the digital ecosystem. Whereas in previous periods religious authority was relatively centralized among *ulama*, Islamic boarding schools, Islamic organizations, or religious educational institutions, in digital spaces such authority has become dispersed and contested among various actors. Eickelman and Anderson (2003) argue that the development of new media has opened broader Muslim public spaces, causing religious authority to become no longer monopolistic, but rather debated, negotiated, and continuously reproduced by multiple parties. In the context of this study, such fragmentation is reflected in the emergence of diverse religious references: celebrity preachers, digital *dai*, *hijrah* communities, political influencers, and even anonymous accounts disseminating Islamic identity narratives. Consequently, millennial Muslim audiences are confronted with layered, competitive, and sometimes contradictory forms of authority.

This fragmentation of authority has direct implications for Islamic political mobilization. First, it broadens access to religion-based political narratives because such narratives no longer depend on a single center of authority. Second, it creates a competitive environment that encourages digital actors to appear more persuasive, more emotional, and closer to audience preferences. Third, it opens opportunities for the politicization of religious symbols in electoral campaigns, since every actor can claim religious legitimacy through digital content. In such circumstances, religion-based identity politics becomes increasingly easy to produce and reproduce on social media. Bayat (2013) emphasizes that transformations in contemporary Islam cannot be separated from shifts in the spaces where Muslim articulation occurs, while Roy (2004) argues that Islam in the era of globalization moves through new forms of identity that are more fluid and interconnected. The findings of this study reinforce these perspectives: digital Islamic politics operates through identities that are no longer solely institutional, but rather networked through affiliations, message repetition, and emotional resonance.

Overall, these findings indicate that the transformation of Islamic political activism in the digital era is characterized by three major changes. First, there has been a shift from offline religious gatherings to digital spaces as the primary arena for religious-political articulation. Second, Islamic political influencers have emerged as new actors bridging *dakwah*, popularity, and electoral mobilization. Third, the strengthening fragmentation of religious authority has made the production of Islamic political narratives increasingly open, competitive, and difficult to centralize within a single institution. These three processes demonstrate that digital activism has transformed the way Islamic politics operates among millennial Muslims: from conventional organization-based mobilization toward fluid mobilization based on social media networks that are highly effective in influencing political preferences within electoral contestations (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013; Castells, 2015; Eickelman & Anderson, 2003).

4.2. Social Media as an Arena for the Political Mobilization of Millennial Muslims

Social media has become the primary arena for the political mobilization of millennial Muslims because the characteristics of digital platforms enable the rapid, visual, and fragmented dissemination of religious and political messages. In this context, the process that may be referred to as the “TikTokization” of Islamic politics refers to the tendency to simplify religious-political narratives into short videos, sermon clips, brief quotations, and easily shareable visuals. This pattern aligns with the logic of connective action, in which mobilization no longer depends entirely on formal organizations, but rather on the interconnectedness of individuals within flexible and personalized digital networks (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013). In other words, social media allows Islamic politics to be packaged in forms that are lighter, more rapidly consumed, and more easily disseminated among millennial Muslims (Castells, 2015).

One important characteristic of this mobilization is the virality of religious narratives. Religious narratives on social media function not only as expressions of religiosity, but also as political framing devices capable of building emotional closeness, urgency, and collective identity. Within digital ecosystems, messages containing moral, symbolic, and emotional elements tend to become more viral than technocratic political messages. As a result, content linking religion with political choices gains strong resonance, particularly among young users active on platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, X, and YouTube (Bunt, 2018). In many cases, such virality is also reinforced by platform algorithms that prioritize content with high engagement rates. Another prominent phenomenon is the use of Islamic political memes as a simple yet effective form of political communication. Memes allow political messages to be packaged humorously, satirically, or symbolically, making them easier for millennial Muslims to accept and redistribute. Sociologically, memes function as forms of cultural shorthand that summarize political attitudes, identity affiliations, and moral judgments in extremely concise formats. In Islamic political mobilization, memes frequently contain religious symbols, *ustaz* figures, *hijrah* jargon, or moral narratives about the “ideal leader” associated with electoral preferences. This process demonstrates that social media is not merely a space for disseminating information, but also a space for producing political meaning that is continuously reproduced by young users (Castells, 2015; Bennett & Segerberg, 2013).

In addition to memes, religious hashtags during elections also play an important role in constructing streams of political conversation based on Islamic identity. Hashtags function as discursive markers as well as coordination tools connecting various posts, opinions, and campaigns within a single digital conversation space. During elections, religious hashtags are often used to strengthen group solidarity, call for support, or signal alignment with particular political positions. For millennial Muslims, hashtags become a form of participation that is inexpensive, rapid, and symbolic. This activity demonstrates that political participation in digital spaces does not always take the form of formal action, but may also appear as symbolic engagement that nonetheless influences public opinion formation (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013; Castells, 2015).

In practice, Islamic political mobilization on social media can be observed through several concrete examples. First, *hijrah* politics often becomes an entry point for mobilization because *hijrah* is understood not merely as spiritual transformation, but also as a shift in social and political orientation. The *hijrah* narrative is then associated with the moral obligation to support candidates perceived as closer to Islamic values. Second, electoral *dakwah* emerges when religious preaching no longer focuses solely on strengthening personal piety, but also moves toward shaping electoral political preferences. In this pattern, *dakwah* messages may become forms of legitimacy for specific political choices, especially when delivered by figures possessing symbolic authority within digital spaces (Nisa, 2018). Third, digital *ustaz* influencers act as intermediaries between religious authority, popular culture, and campaign strategies. They produce content that feels familiar to millennial Muslims because it employs casual language, appealing visual formats, and communication styles compatible with platform culture.

These findings demonstrate that social media has shifted Islamic political mobilization from conventional organization-based models toward more fluid, visual, and networked models. Within the framework of post-Islamism, this transformation can be understood as a shift from rigid Islamic political projects toward religious-political expressions that are more adaptive to digital culture and the preferences of younger generations (Bayat, 2013; Roy, 2004). Therefore, social media is not merely a communication tool, but a political arena where Islamic identity, electoral aspirations, and mobilization strategies intersect in increasingly fragmented yet effective forms.

4.3. Identity Politics and Digital Polarization

Political activism in digital spaces increasingly operates through antagonistic identity politics, namely patterns of political relations that frame opponents as “the other” or even as threats. Hrbková, Macek, and Macková (2025) explain that contemporary polarization no longer stops at ideological differences, but develops into identity-based political antagonism structured through the logic of “us versus them.” In the

context of social media, this pattern is reinforced by algorithms, repetitive conversations, and selective information exposure that cause users to interact more frequently with content aligned with their existing preferences. Consequently, echo chambers become important mechanisms that reinforce users' prior beliefs while limiting exposure to alternative viewpoints (Barberá, 2020; Terren & Borge-Bravo, 2021).

In the case of digital Islamic politics, such polarization is also evident through religious disinformation and the use of religious issues as instruments for opinion mobilization. Research on religious issues within Indonesian social media demonstrates that digital conversations often blend *dakwah*, propaganda, information manipulation, and political campaigning; accounts active in religious hashtags may simultaneously disseminate accurate and misleading information while influencing public opinion. These studies also reveal that hashtags such as #salafi, #wahabi, and #intolerance are interconnected with political issues, candidate figures, and public narratives capable of generating social tensions. Thus, religious disinformation operates not only through message content, but also through hashtag networks and conversations that frame religious identity in conflictual terms (Faizin et al., 2025).

Furthermore, digital polarization is strongly influenced by emotional politics, particularly through anger, anxiety, and fear triggered by political attack content on social media. Research indicates that exposure to political attacks on social media correlates with increased anger and anxiety regarding political conditions, which in turn strengthens political cynicism (Hasell et al., 2025). In digital spaces, negative emotions tend to receive greater attention because content provoking anger and high engagement often generates stronger responses. Consequently, social media functions not only as a medium for disseminating political information, but also as a machine for amplifying collective emotions that drive polarization. At this point, religion-based identity politics increasingly operates through affective logic: religious content wrapped in anger or fear is shared more rapidly, trusted more easily, and more strongly shapes attitudes of "us" versus "them" (Kubin et al., 2021; Hasell et al., 2025).

In this study, identity politics and digital polarization should be understood as outcomes of the interaction between platform ecosystems, religious narratives, and electoral mobilization. Echo chambers limit diversity of perspectives; religious disinformation blurs the boundaries between *dakwah* and propaganda; emotional politics strengthens affective responses; and "us versus them" narratives crystallize political identities into antagonistic forms. Thus, social media is not merely a communication space, but also a space for the production and reproduction of polarization that significantly shapes the political orientations of millennial Muslims within electoral contestations (Hrbková et al., 2025; Barberá, 2020; Faizin et al., 2025).

4.4. Millennial Muslims and Changes in Political Participation

Millennial Muslims constitute the group most rapidly adapting to changes within the digital political ecosystem because they have grown up as a generation highly dependent on new media to obtain information, shape opinions, and express political attitudes. Studies on millennials indicate that they are far more likely to obtain news from new media sources such as the internet and social media compared to older generations; consequently, their political preferences are also more strongly shaped by digital exposure (Rouse et al., 2022). In the context of political participation, social media functions not only as a communication channel, but also as a space for forming political orientations that enables more flexible, rapid, and network-based participation (Boulianne, 2015).

One prominent form of change is the strengthening of online engagement, namely political involvement through online activities such as sharing content, commenting, following political conversations, and redistributing campaign messages. Research on youth political participation demonstrates that social media can indeed become a new space for youth political expression, yet its benefits are uneven; only some young people actually use social media for political purposes, and the level of engagement is strongly influenced by their own political interests (Keating & Melis, 2017). This means that for millennial Muslims, online engagement is not merely information consumption, but also a form of participation that brings together religious identity, political preferences, and habits of interaction within digital spaces.

Changes in political participation are also evident through digital volunteerism and virtual volunteers. Social media enables individuals with shared interests to form support groups, campaign networks, or volunteer communities without relying on rigid formal organizations. Studies on digital volunteers show that informal social media networks are capable of mobilizing participation rapidly, providing efficient coordination, and even reaching individuals who were previously less involved in formal civil organizations, although such involvement tends to be more episodic compared to conventional organizational volunteering (Carlsen & Toubøl, 2025). From this perspective, millennial Muslims can be understood as actors who are relatively easy to mobilize through appeals based on digital communities, especially when political messages are packaged within moral, religious, or communal solidarity narratives.

Another form of changing political participation is political consumerism, namely the tendency to use consumption choices as political actions, such as supporting or boycotting products, figures, or movements based on moral and identity-related considerations. Research by Cheng, Zhang, and Gil de Zúñiga (2023) demonstrates that political expression on social media, online political discussion, and digital news consumption are positively associated with political consumerism, indicating that social media functions as a space for the formation of non-institutional political action. In the context of millennial Muslims, this means that political participation is not always expressed through voting in elections, but also through symbolic support, boycotts, moral consumption, and participation in digital campaigns aligned with their religious values (Cheng et al., 2023).

Overall, changes in the political participation of millennial Muslims can be understood as a shift from formal and organization-based participation toward participation that is more fluid, digital, and network-based. Online engagement expands spaces for political expression; digital volunteerism and virtual volunteers accelerate mobilization; while political consumerism demonstrates that political action now also appears in consumption practices and digital solidarity. Within this framework, millennial Muslims are not merely voters, but also active producers of political meaning within digital spaces.

4.5. The Dialectics of Democracy and Digital Islamic Politics

The development of social media has expanded the space for citizen participation within digital democracy. Online platforms enable political participation that is faster, cheaper, and more open, allowing citizens to become not only recipients of political messages, but also producers and disseminators of public narratives (Boulianne, 2015; Kim et al., 2013). In this context, digital democracy presents a dual character: on the one hand, it strengthens participation, deliberation, and accountability; on the other hand, it opens opportunities for disinformation, polarization, and algorithmic manipulation (Duche-Pérez, 2025). These findings are important because they demonstrate that digital spaces are not merely communication channels, but arenas for contesting political meaning that significantly shape the participation of millennial Muslims.

Within digital Islamic politics, the democratization of participation can be observed through the increasing ease with which religious narratives enter electoral spaces. In Indonesia, the relationship between politics and Islam during election years has produced identity politics and Islamic populism, while social media algorithms have contributed to the hardening of political identities (Hajid & Pratama, 2023). At this point, digital Islamic politics does not operate within a neutral space; rather, it moves through platform ecosystems that allow religious messages, identity symbols, and electoral support to spread rapidly and emotionally (Bukhari, 2025; Hajid & Pratama, 2023). Therefore, the democratization of participation does not always produce healthy deliberation, but may also strengthen religion-based identity mobilization.

The main threat emerges in the form of religious populism and digital polarization. Research on digital politics in Indonesia indicates that social media algorithms create echo chambers and identity fragmentation that intensify religious polarization; in such situations, religion is frequently instrumentalized for electoral purposes (Bukhari, 2025). This pattern becomes even more problematic when digital conversations are saturated with hoaxes, hate speech, and disinformation circulating as part of political contestation (Saifuddin & Musyafiq, 2026). Thus, the challenge of digital democracy is not merely the spread

of false information, but also the ways in which religious identity is utilized to lock political preferences within the logic of “us versus them” (Bukhari, 2025; Saifuddin & Musyafiq, 2026).

From a normative perspective, Islamic digital political ethics becomes highly important for maintaining the quality of public spaces. The literature on Islamic digital ethics emphasizes the principles of *tabayyun* (information verification), honesty, social responsibility, and the prohibition against disseminating harmful content; social media that is not ethically managed can easily transform into arenas of conflict, hatred, and disinformation (Saifuddin & Musyafiq, 2026). Within the framework of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, Islamic digital political ethics should be directed toward protecting reason, religion, social dignity, and the public good, so that political expression does not damage social cohesion and democracy itself (Bukhari, 2025; Saifuddin & Musyafiq, 2026). Therefore, the dialectic between democracy and digital Islamic politics requires two simultaneous commitments: openness of participation and discipline in ethical communication. Overall, digital Islamic politics demonstrates that social media can become a space for the democratization of participation, yet it can also become a machine of polarization when driven by the logic of religious populism, algorithms, and disinformation. Therefore, the challenge of future digital democracy lies not only in expanding access to participation, but also in building a culture of Islamic digital politics that is ethical, inclusive, and responsible (Duche-Pérez, 2025; Saifuddin & Musyafiq, 2026).

V. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that digital activism plays an increasingly significant role in strengthening Islamic political mobilization in the contemporary public sphere. Social media functions not only as a platform for disseminating religious messages but also as an effective tool for electoral mobilization through fast, replicable, and emotionally engaging content. Muslim millennials emerge as key actors in digital politics due to their close engagement with social media, their ability to produce and distribute content, and their strategic position as influential voters in the online information environment. The findings reveal that social media has transformed political participation from formal and hierarchical structures into more fluid, networked, and participatory patterns. Theoretically, this study contributes to the development of digital political Islam by highlighting the interaction between religion, digital technology, and online participation. Practically, it emphasizes the importance of digital political literacy, stronger regulation of digital campaigns, and religious-based democratic education to encourage critical, ethical, and responsible political participation.

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