

Research Article

Islamic Authority in the Digital Era: A Systematic Literature Review of the Hijrah Movement in Indonesia

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Abstract. This study examines the transformation of Islamic authority in Indonesia in the digital era through a systematic literature review, with particular focus on the hijrah movement. The research analyzes scholarly articles, books, and academic publications discussing digital Islam, religious authority, and youth religious movements in Indonesia. The review identifies key themes, including the growing influence of the hijrah movement among urban Muslim youth, the role of digital platforms in shaping religious identity, and the shift of authority from traditional institutions such as pesantren and established ulama to social media preachers and influencers. The findings indicate that digital media has restructured religious authority, expanded access to Islamic knowledge, and transformed patterns of religious communication. However, the literature also highlights emerging challenges,

including tensions between conventional and digital religious actors, the commercialization of da'wah, and the fragmentation of religious interpretations. Overall, the study concludes that Islamic authority in Indonesia has become increasingly decentralized, dynamic, and contested in the digital age.

Keywords: Islamic Authority, Digital Islam, Hijrah Movement, Social Media, Indonesia.

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is widely recognized as the country with the largest Muslim population in the world, and Islam has played a central role in shaping its social, cultural, and political life. Historically, Islamic authority in Indonesia has developed through complex interactions between religious scholars, educational institutions, local traditions, and socio-political movements. For centuries, religious authority was primarily concentrated in traditional institutions such as pesantren (Islamic boarding schools), where kyai and ulama functioned as the main transmitters of Islamic knowledge. Their authority was based on formal religious education, mastery of classical Islamic texts, spiritual lineage, and community recognition. In addition, large Islamic organizations such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama have significantly contributed to shaping Islamic discourse, educational reform, and social engagement in Indonesian society[1].

Traditionally, the structure of Islamic authority in Indonesia was hierarchical and institutionally grounded. Religious legitimacy was closely tied to scholarly credentials, organizational affiliation, and communal trust. The dissemination of Islamic knowledge occurred through face-to-face teaching, sermons in mosques, religious study circles (pengajian), and printed religious literature. In this context, access to religious interpretation was relatively structured, and authority remained largely in the hands of recognized scholars[2].

However, the rapid expansion of digital technology and social media over the past two decades has profoundly altered patterns of communication, knowledge production, and social interaction. The emergence of digital platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, and online Islamic forums has transformed the ways in which religious knowledge is accessed and shared. This transformation has given rise to what scholars describe as “digital Islam,” a phenomenon in which religious authority is increasingly negotiated and constructed within online spaces. In this digital environment, religious messages circulate rapidly, audiences expand beyond geographical boundaries, and individuals can directly engage with religious content without mediation from traditional institutions[3].

One of the most significant outcomes of this transformation is the shift in the structure of Islamic authority. In the digital era, authority is no longer solely determined by formal religious education or institutional recognition. Instead, visibility, communication skills, digital literacy, and the ability to attract followers have become influential factors in shaping religious influence. Social media preachers and religious influencers, many of whom do not come from traditional pesantren backgrounds, have gained substantial popularity, particularly among urban Muslim youth. Their sermons, short motivational videos, and lifestyle-oriented religious

content resonate with contemporary audiences and are easily accessible through smartphones[4].

Within this broader context, the hijrah movement has emerged as a prominent and influential religious phenomenon in Indonesia. The term “hijrah,” which originally refers to the Prophet Muhammad’s migration from Mecca to Medina, has been reinterpreted in contemporary discourse as a personal spiritual transformation toward greater religious commitment. Among Indonesian youth, hijrah often involves adopting more visible expressions of piety, such as changes in dress, daily practices, and social associations. The movement is strongly connected to online communities, digital campaigns, and charismatic social media preachers who frame religiosity in appealing and relatable ways[5].

The rise of the hijrah movement illustrates how digital media not only facilitates the dissemination of religious knowledge but also actively shapes religious identity and authority. Through hashtags, online lectures, podcasts, and short-form videos, digital platforms create new spaces for religious engagement. At the same time, this shift generates new challenges and tensions. Scholars have noted the potential fragmentation of religious interpretations, the commercialization of da'wah, and the emergence of competition between traditional ulama and digital religious actors. Questions concerning authenticity, credibility, and legitimacy become increasingly complex in a decentralized digital environment[6].

These developments highlight the need to critically examine how Islamic authority is being transformed in Indonesia’s digital age. While numerous studies have discussed digital Islam, youth religiosity, and online religious movements, there remains a need to systematically synthesize existing research to better understand overarching patterns and debates. A systematic literature review allows for the identification of key themes, methodological approaches, theoretical perspectives, and research gaps within the academic discourse[7].

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the transformation of Islamic authority in Indonesia in the digital era through a systematic review of scholarly literature, with particular focus on the hijrah movement. By examining how authority is constructed, negotiated, and contested in digital spaces, this research seeks to contribute to broader discussions on religion, modernity, and media in contemporary Muslim societies. Ultimately, understanding these transformations is crucial for comprehending the evolving nature of Islam in Indonesia and the ways in which digital technology reshapes religious life in the twenty-first century[8].

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of Islamic authority has long been a central theme in the study of Islam in Indonesia. Traditionally, authority has been closely associated with ulama, kyai, and religious scholars who possess formal training in Islamic sciences and are affiliated with established institutions such as pesantren and major Islamic organizations. Scholars argue that religious authority in Indonesia has historically been grounded in scholarly expertise, spiritual lineage (sanad), and communal recognition. Organizations such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama institutionalized religious authority by structuring religious education, issuing fatwas,

and guiding social and political engagement[9].

Previous studies emphasize that traditional authority was hierarchical and community-based. Religious knowledge was transmitted through direct teacher-student relationships, mosque sermons, and structured study circles. In this model, legitimacy depended on recognized scholarship and moral integrity. However, modernization, urbanization, and globalization began to challenge this centralized structure of authority, creating space for alternative interpretations and actors[10].

With the expansion of the internet and social media, scholars have increasingly focused on the concept of “Digital Islam.” Research in this field explores how digital platforms reshape religious expression, learning, and authority. Studies show that online spaces enable rapid dissemination of religious content, interactive engagement between preachers and audiences, and the formation of virtual religious communities[11].

The literature highlights that digital media democratizes access to religious knowledge. Individuals can now access lectures, fatwas, and Islamic discussions without physical proximity to traditional institutions. However, this democratization also produces a more fragmented religious landscape, where multiple interpretations coexist and compete. Authority in digital spaces often depends on visibility, follower count, emotional appeal, and communication style rather than exclusively on formal credentials[12].

Several scholars argue that digital platforms blur the boundaries between religious scholarship and religious performance. Social media encourages short, visually engaging, and emotionally persuasive content, which may prioritize popularity over scholarly depth. This shift has led to what some researchers describe as the “platformization” of religion, where algorithms influence which religious messages gain prominence[13].

The hijrah movement has attracted significant academic attention in recent years, particularly in studies of youth religiosity in urban Indonesia. Researchers describe hijrah as a contemporary form of religious revivalism characterized by personal transformation, lifestyle change, and visible expressions of piety. Among urban middle-class youth, hijrah is often associated with wearing syar'i clothing, attending Islamic study groups, and consuming Islamic-themed digital content[14].

Literature on the hijrah movement emphasizes its strong connection to social media. Influencers, celebrity preachers, and online communities play a central role in promoting the narrative of spiritual transformation. Studies suggest that the movement provides young Muslims with a sense of belonging, moral clarity, and identity in a rapidly changing society. Digital platforms function not only as tools of communication but also as spaces where religious identity is performed and reinforced[15].

However, scholars also identify tensions surrounding the movement. Some research points to the commercialization of hijrah through Islamic fashion industries, paid seminars, and branded religious merchandise. Other studies highlight ideological diversity within the movement, including influences from conservative, Salafi, and reformist thought. These dynamics contribute to debates about authenticity, authority, and the future direction of Islamic discourse in Indonesia[16].

While numerous studies have examined digital Islam, Islamic authority, and the hijrah movement separately, fewer studies systematically synthesize these themes within a unified analytical framework. Much of the existing literature focuses either on descriptive accounts of online religious trends or on case studies of specific influencers and communities. There remains a need for a comprehensive review that integrates discussions of authority transformation, digital mediation, and youth religious movements in Indonesia[17].

By conducting a systematic literature review, this study aims to bridge this gap by identifying overarching patterns, theoretical approaches, and emerging debates regarding the transformation of Islamic authority in the digital era. Through this synthesis, the research seeks to clarify how authority is reconstructed, contested, and negotiated within Indonesia's evolving digital religious landscape[18].

Table 1: Summary of Selected Studies on Islamic Authority, Digital Islam, and the Hijrah Movement

No .	Author(s) & Year (APA Style)	Research Focus	Method	Key Findings	Contribution to Current Study
1	Azra (2004)	Islamic authority and traditional ulama networks in Indonesia	Historical & qualitative analysis	Islamic authority historically rooted in scholarly lineage (sanad), pesantren networks, and institutional legitimacy	Provides foundation for understanding traditional authority structure
2	Eickelman & Anderson (2003)	Islam and the transformation of religious communication	Theoretical analysis	New media technologies reshape religious discourse and decentralize authority	Explains theoretical basis of digital religious transformation
3	Lim (2017)	Digital media and Islamic activism in Indonesia	Qualitative media analysis	Social media facilitates new forms of religious mobilization	Supports argument on digital platforms as new authority

				and identity formation	spaces
4	Nisa (2018)	Hijrah movement and youth religiosity	Ethnographic study	Hijrah movement shaped by online communities and celebrity preachers	Connects youth piety with digital authority
5	Hidayat (2019)	Commercialization of Islamic preaching	Case study	Rise of religious branding and monetization in digital da'wah	Highlights tensions and challenges in digital religious authority

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to examine the transformation of Islamic authority in Indonesia in the digital era, with particular emphasis on the hijrah movement. A systematic literature review is a structured and comprehensive method used to identify, evaluate, and synthesize existing scholarly research on a specific topic. This method was chosen because the objective of the study is not to collect primary data, but rather to analyze and integrate findings from previous academic works in order to understand broader patterns and theoretical developments related to digital Islam and religious authority[19].

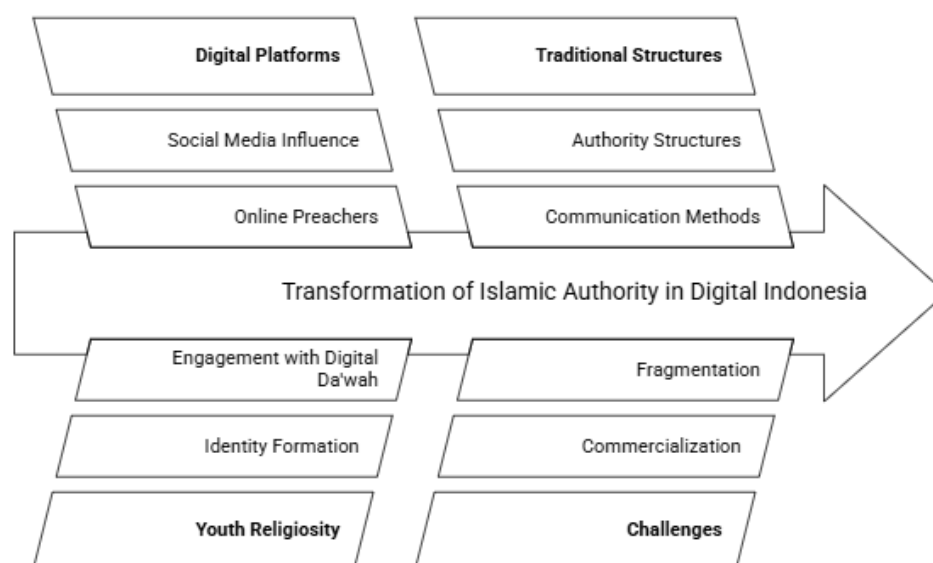
The data for this research were obtained from peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, and conference proceedings accessible through electronic academic databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus-indexed journals, and university digital libraries. The literature search was conducted using specific keywords, including "Islamic authority in Indonesia," "digital Islam," "hijrah movement Indonesia," "religious authority and social media," and "youth religiosity in Indonesia." To ensure relevance to contemporary developments, the review primarily focused on publications produced within the last fifteen to twenty years, particularly those addressing the impact of digital technology on religious practices and authority structures[20].

To maintain academic rigor and relevance, the study applied clear inclusion and exclusion criteria. The selected sources were limited to peer-reviewed academic publications written in English or Indonesian that specifically discuss Islamic authority, digital media, or the hijrah movement within the Indonesian context. Non-academic sources, opinion articles, blog posts, and studies unrelated to Indonesia were excluded from the analysis. This selection process ensured that the review was grounded in credible and methodologically sound research[21].

After identifying and selecting relevant literature, the data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Each article was carefully read to identify recurring concepts, theoretical frameworks, and empirical findings. The identified themes were then categorized into broader analytical groups, such as traditional Islamic authority structures, the role of digital platforms in shaping religious communication, the emergence of social media preachers, youth religious identity formation, and the challenges of commercialization and fragmentation in digital da'wah. By synthesizing these themes, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how Islamic authority in Indonesia has been reshaped in the digital era[22].

As a literature-based study, this research is limited by the scope and availability of existing publications. It does not include primary fieldwork such as interviews or ethnographic observation. Nevertheless, the systematic approach allows for a structured and critical synthesis of current academic discussions, contributing to a deeper understanding of the evolving nature of Islamic authority in contemporary Indonesia[23].

Figure 1 :Analyzing the Transformation of Islamic Authority in Digital Indonesia



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Decentralisation of Islamic Authority

The findings from the systematic literature review indicate that Islamic authority in Indonesia has become increasingly decentralised in the digital era. Traditionally, authority was concentrated within pesantren, kyais, and established Islamic organisations such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama. Religious legitimacy was based on scholarly credentials, intellectual lineage (sanad), and

institutional recognition. However, digital media platforms have opened new spaces for religious discourse, allowing individuals outside traditional institutions to participate in the production and dissemination of Islamic knowledge. As a result, authority is no longer monopolised by established religious elites but is now shared within a broader digital environment[24].



Figure 2:Muhammadiyah and Nahdatul Ulama Identity/logo

This decentralisation is closely connected to the accessibility of digital platforms, which enable religious messages to reach audiences instantly and without geographical limitations. Social media eliminates many traditional barriers to religious communication, such as institutional approval or formal scholarly training. Individuals with strong communication skills, appealing presentation styles, and consistent online engagement can quickly gain large followings. Consequently, authority becomes more audience-driven, where popularity and digital visibility contribute significantly to perceived legitimacy[25].

Moreover, the literature suggests that decentralization does not necessarily mean the disappearance of traditional authority, but rather its transformation. Established religious institutions have also adapted by creating official online channels, streaming sermons, and engaging with digital audiences. In this sense, decentralization creates a hybrid system in which traditional and digital authorities coexist and interact. However, the balance of influence is increasingly shaped by digital metrics such as views, shares, and followers[26].

Another important aspect of decentralization is the shift in how religious credibility is evaluated. In traditional settings, credibility was assessed through years of formal study, mastery of classical texts, and peer recognition among scholars. In digital spaces, credibility is often judged by relatability, clarity of message, and emotional resonance with audiences. This shift reflects broader changes in contemporary culture, where authority is influenced by media performance and public engagement rather than solely by institutional endorsement[27].

Finally, decentralisation also creates a more pluralistic religious environment. Multiple interpretations and perspectives circulate simultaneously, offering individuals greater choice in selecting religious guidance. While this plurality encourages active participation and personal agency, it can also generate competition and fragmentation within Islamic discourse. The absence of centralised control over religious narratives makes authority more fluid, negotiated, and contested,

highlighting the profound impact of digital transformation on the structure of Islamic authority in Indonesia[28].

The Role of Digital Media in Reshaping Religious Communication

The literature consistently shows that social media platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok have transformed patterns of religious communication. Digital media enables rapid dissemination of religious content and allows interactive engagement between preachers and audiences. Authority in digital spaces is often shaped by visibility, follower count, and communication style. Religious messages are frequently presented in short, visually appealing, and emotionally persuasive formats. This shift demonstrates that digital literacy and media skills play an increasingly important role in shaping contemporary Islamic authority[29].

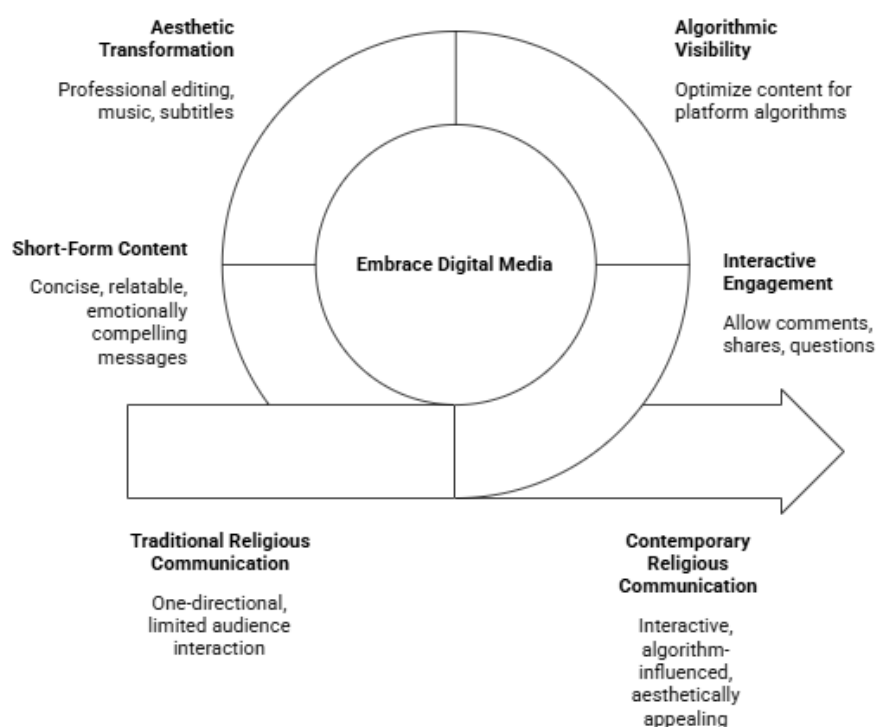
One significant transformation concerns the shift from one-directional to interactive communication. In traditional religious settings, sermons and lectures were typically delivered in a one-way format, with limited opportunities for immediate feedback. In contrast, digital platforms allow audiences to comment, share, question, and directly interact with religious figures. This interactivity creates a more participatory religious environment in which audiences are not merely passive recipients but active contributors to religious discourse. As a result, authority becomes more negotiated and responsive to audience expectations[30].

Furthermore, digital algorithms play a crucial role in shaping religious visibility. Platform algorithms determine which content appears on users' feeds, influencing which preachers gain prominence and which interpretations circulate widely. This technological mediation introduces a new dimension to religious authority, where popularity is partially structured by algorithmic systems rather than purely by scholarly merit. Consequently, religious communication becomes intertwined with digital platform dynamics that prioritize engagement and shareability[31].

Another important aspect highlighted in the literature is the aesthetic transformation of religious messaging. Digital da'wah often incorporates professional video editing, background music, subtitles, and visual branding to attract viewers. This aestheticization reflects broader trends in media culture, where attention is highly competitive and content must be engaging to survive. As a result, religious authority is increasingly linked to media performance and the ability to translate complex theological ideas into concise, relatable, and emotionally compelling messages[32].

Finally, the transformation of religious communication through digital media has significant implications for knowledge consumption patterns. Audiences increasingly prefer short-form content that is easily accessible and time-efficient. While this format enhances accessibility, it may also simplify complex theological discussions. The literature suggests that this shift encourages a more personalized and fragmented approach to religious learning, where individuals select content based on preference rather than following structured curricula. Overall, digital media has not only changed how religious messages are delivered but also how they are interpreted, internalized, and practiced within Indonesian Muslim society[33].

Fig 3 : Transforming Religious Communication with Digital Media



The Hijrah Movement and Youth Religious Identity

Another key finding highlights the central role of the hijrah movement in accelerating the transformation of Islamic authority. The hijrah movement promotes personal spiritual transformation and visible expressions of religiosity, particularly among urban Muslim youth. The reviewed literature indicates that social media influencers and online religious communities significantly influence this movement. For many young Muslims, religious engagement takes place primarily in digital spaces, where identity formation and community belonging are reinforced through shared online content. In this context, authority is often linked to relatability and lifestyle representation rather than exclusively to traditional scholarly expertise.

The literature suggests that the hijrah movement represents more than a religious trend; it reflects a broader search for identity and moral direction in a rapidly modernising society. Many young Muslims view hijrah as a form of self-improvement and spiritual renewal. Online narratives often frame hijrah as a journey toward becoming a better, more disciplined, and morally conscious individual. This framing resonates strongly with youth audiences who seek both religious meaning and social belonging[2].

Digital influencers play a central role in shaping this process. Charismatic preachers and public figures who openly share their personal “hijrah stories” create powerful emotional connections with followers. Their experiences are often presented in accessible and motivational language, making religious commitment appear relatable and achievable. As a result, authority is constructed through personal

storytelling and digital presence rather than solely through formal theological training[2].

However, the literature also points out that the hijrah movement is diverse and not ideologically uniform. Different interpretations of Islam coexist within the movement, ranging from moderate to more conservative orientations. This diversity reflects the plural and decentralised nature of digital religious spaces. Overall, the hijrah movement illustrates how youth religiosity, digital media, and evolving forms of authority intersect in contemporary Indonesia[4].

Table 2. The Hijrah Movement and Youth Religious Identity

1.	No	2.	Aspect	3.	Description	4.	Implication for Islamic Authority
5.	1	6.	Spiritual Transformation	7.	Hijrah promotes personal religious change and visible expressions of piety among urban Muslim youth.	8.	Authority becomes linked to personal religious commitment and lifestyle changes.
9.	2	10.	Digital Engagement	11.	Religious learning and interaction primarily occur through social media and online communities.	12.	Digital platforms become new spaces for religious authority formation.
13.	3	14.	Identity Formation	15.	Hijrah reflects youth search for identity, belonging, and moral direction in modern society.	16.	Authority shifts toward figures who provide relatable guidance and community support.
17.	4	18.	Role of Influencers	19.	Social media preachers and public figures share personal hijrah stories in accessible language.	20.	Authority is shaped by charisma, storytelling, and digital visibility rather than formal credentials alone.
21.	5	22.	Diversity of Interpretations	23.	The hijrah movement includes moderate and conservative perspectives.	24.	Islamic authority becomes plural, decentralized, and more contested in digital spaces.

Democratization and Fragmentation of Religious Knowledge

The literature reveals that digital media has significantly democratized access to Islamic knowledge by removing geographical, social, and institutional barriers. In the past, individuals seeking religious knowledge often relied on local religious leaders, pesantren institutions, or established Islamic organizations. Access to authoritative interpretations was limited by physical proximity and institutional

affiliation. However, in the digital era, Islamic teachings, sermons, and discussions are readily available through websites, online lectures, podcasts, and social media platforms. This accessibility allows individuals from diverse backgrounds to engage with religious content at any time and from any location[7].

This democratization has encouraged broader participation in religious discourse. Ordinary users are no longer passive recipients of knowledge but active participants who can share, comment on, and reinterpret religious messages. Social media platforms enable interactive engagement, where followers can directly question preachers, discuss interpretations, and even challenge traditional viewpoints. As a result, religious communication becomes more dialogical rather than strictly hierarchical. Authority is increasingly negotiated in public digital spaces instead of being solely defined by formal credentials or institutional endorsement [8].

However, the literature also highlights that democratization brings unintended consequences, particularly fragmentation. The availability of multiple interpretations without clear hierarchical guidance can create confusion among audiences, especially younger users who may lack strong foundational knowledge. Competing theological perspectives, ideological orientations, and methodological approaches coexist online, often without contextual explanation. This situation can lead to selective consumption of religious messages, where individuals choose interpretations that align with their personal preferences rather than established scholarly consensus [34].

Furthermore, the absence of centralized control over digital religious messaging makes authority more fluid and unstable. Popularity metrics such as views, shares, and followers often influence perceived credibility, sometimes more than scholarly expertise. This environment allows new voices to emerge rapidly but also creates volatility, as authority can shift quickly based on digital trends. Consequently, Islamic authority in Indonesia becomes more dynamic, decentralized, and contested, reflecting the broader transformation of religious life in the digital age [35].

Commercialization and Emerging Tensions

The review also identifies the commercialisation of da'wah as an increasingly significant issue within digital Islamic spaces. In the contemporary media environment, religious preaching is often intertwined with branding strategies, merchandise sales, paid seminars, online courses, and monetized content on platforms such as YouTube and Instagram. Many digital preachers develop personal brands that combine religious messaging with lifestyle products, modest fashion, books, or motivational programs. While this model enables wider dissemination of Islamic teachings and provides financial sustainability for content creators, it also introduces market logic into religious communication [36].

The commercialisation of da'wah raises important questions regarding authenticity, sincerity, and the ethical dimensions of religious authority. Some scholars argue that when religious influence becomes closely linked to economic interests, the boundaries between spiritual guidance and commercial promotion may blur. Audiences may struggle to distinguish between religious advice and marketing strategies, particularly when promotional content is integrated into sermons or motivational talks. This phenomenon reflects the broader integration of religion into

consumer culture, where religious identity can be expressed not only through belief and practice but also through consumption patterns[37].

In addition to commercialisation, the literature frequently highlights tensions between traditional ulama and emerging digital religious actors. Traditional scholars often emphasize the importance of formal religious education, mastery of classical texts, and intellectual lineage (sanad) as the foundation of legitimate authority. In contrast, digital preachers frequently stress accessibility, relatability, and the ability to communicate Islamic teachings in contemporary language. This difference in orientation can create debates about credibility, expertise, and the proper method of religious interpretation[10].

These tensions illustrate the increasingly contested nature of Islamic authority in contemporary Indonesia. Rather than a single dominant structure, authority now operates within overlapping spheres—traditional institutions, digital platforms, and commercial networks. The coexistence of these spheres generates negotiation, competition, and adaptation. Ultimately, the commercialization of da'wah and the tensions between conventional and digital actors demonstrate that Islamic authority in the digital era is not only decentralized but also shaped by economic, technological, and cultural dynamics[10].

CONCLUSION

Through a thorough assessment of the literature with an emphasis on the hijrah movement, this study has investigated how Islamic authority has changed in Indonesia in the digital age. The results show that the effect of digital media has led to a decentralization of Islamic authority, which was previously concentrated on pesantren, kyai, and well-established Islamic organizations. The emergence of digital religious influencers, whose authority is frequently founded on visibility, relatability, and communication skills rather than only on formal scholarly qualifications, is made possible by social media platforms, which also promote interactive involvement and wider access to religious knowledge. The commercialization of da'wah, fragmentation, and conflicts between conventional and digital religious actors have all resulted from the democratization of Islamic knowledge. According to the study's overall findings, Islamic authority in modern Indonesia has grown more dynamic, multiple, and challenged, reflecting the significant influence of digital technology on religious life and the development of young people's identities.

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