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THE TRANSFORMATION OF RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY IN DIGITAL DA'WAH HABIB HUSEIN JA'FAR



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The development of digital technology has changed the way Muslims in Indonesia express their religion, while giving rise to new forms of religious authority that are more fluid and flexible. This study examines how Habib Husein Ja'far built a new relig

ious authority through the Jeda Nulis YouTube channel. The main problem raised is how the form of religious authority is built in the digital world, and what is the role of Habib Ja'far in the process. This study employs content analysis methods and performative theoretical approaches, as well as digital communication concepts, to analyze the da'wah strategies used. The results of the study show that digital authority not only depends on formal social or scientific status, but also on technical and communicative adaptability. The Jeda Nulis channel combines education and entertainment, using a relaxed and popular language, to effectively reach young audiences and form relevant connections with religious authorities in the digital age.

1. INTRODUCTION

The increasing normalization of digital interaction has significantly reconfigured the structure of religious culture, primarily through shifts in how social engagement is enacted in online environments (Bergengruen, 2022; Lewis & Caldwell, 2016; Lord et al., 2005). This transformation is evident in three major developments: the formation of internet-based religious organizations, the digitization of religious rituals and ceremonies (Aboelnagah, 2022; Clover et al., 2016; Kilonzo et al., 2023), and the rise of online platforms as key sites for religious education. Enabled by evolving digital technologies, social media influencers and everyday users alike now possess the agency to create, access, and disseminate religious content across diverse virtual communities (Akgül, 2017; Dudin et al., 2023). This cultural shift has altered not only the performance of religious rituals but also the modes through which religious authority and knowledge are produced and circulated (Mochel, 2023a, 2023b; Radde-Antweiler, 2018). Whereas traditional religious authorities once held exclusive control over the articulation and transmission of Islamic doctrine through formalized practices, such authority is now being contested and redefined within digital spaces, indicating the emergence of new, decentralized forms of religious legitimacy.

The proliferation of digital platforms and the rise of social media influencers have opened new avenues for individuals and communities to critically re-engage with traditional notions of religion and authority (Fogarassy & Demongeot, 2022; Mundiri & Nawiro, 2019). Scholars have noted that religion today not only exerts influence but is also shaped by consumer culture, particularly within the accelerated dynamics of influencer-driven media. Campbell's concept of "digital religion" captures this duality: it emphasizes both the ways in which digital technologies and cultures transform religious beliefs and practices (Kandemir & Toprak, 2023; Kołodziejska & Neumaier, 2017), and the strategies through which religion adapts to new media environments while attempting to preserve long-standing metaphysical assumptions and institutional frameworks (Kołodziejska, 2018; Mustofa et al., 2023). In the Indonesian context, such religious consumption is increasingly visible across social media platforms like YouTube, where both individual and institutional accounts actively disseminate religious content. One notable example is the YouTube channel Jeda Nulis, founded by Habib Husein Ja'far, which has repeatedly appeared on trending lists despite its focus on religious themes—a trend that challenges prior assumptions about the limited appeal of faith-based content in the digital entertainment landscape.

According to data from HypeAuditor.com, as of July 2023, the Jeda Nulis YouTube channel was ranked 13th in the education category based on the number of subscribers. Several other channels within the top 10 in this category that also feature Islamic content include Islam Populer (Neumaier, 2016; Urban, 2022), Albahjah TV, YtCrash Islam, Adi Hidayat Official, Khalid Basalamah, Audio Dakwah, and Learning Islam. However, when ranked by total view count, Jeda Nulis occupies second place, while the aforementioned channels fall much lower, ranging from the tens to dozens in ranking. This suggests that *Jeda Nulis* enjoys high engagement and public visibility. Moreover, Habib Husein Ja'far, the channel's founder, also disseminates Islamic content across various other platforms and media, which likely contributes to his growing influence in conveying religious discourse.

Nonetheless, updated data from HypeAuditor.com in September 2023 reveals a general decline in both subscribers and viewership across all of the previously mentioned channels, with drops ranging from tens to hundreds. This fluctuation underscores the volatile nature of digital media trends and indicates that metrics such as subscriber counts and views are not necessarily reliable indicators of religious authority or long-term relevance.

Given this context, the present study does not rely on these fluctuating metrics in selecting Jeda Nulis as its object of analysis. Rather, the selection is based on a subjective but reasoned comparison with other similar accounts, as previously discussed. Therefore, this research is guided by several key questions: How is Islam constructed and represented on the Jeda Nulis YouTube channel? In what ways does Jeda Nulis reflect the emergence of new forms of religious authority within digital realities? And finally, how can digital religious authority serve as a foundational element in shaping Islamic discourse in the context of the digital age?

Masfufah notes that one key reason for the widespread appeal of Habib Husein Ja'far's videos lies in his ability to communicate complex messages in a clear and accessible manner. When engaging with individuals from diverse backgrounds, he adopts a perspective-sensitive approach, tailoring his communication style to align with the background of his interlocutors. He is also willing to visit unfamiliar environments and adjust his attire to foster a comfortable and non-intimidating atmosphere for dialogue.

Beyond this adaptive strategy, Habib Ja'far actively constructs his online persona, recognizing the performative power of digital identity in shaping public perception. In terms of da'wah communication, he is known for his gentle and conversational tone, polite language, and strong storytelling abilities—all of which contribute to the effectiveness and appeal of his message. Unlike many other habib figures, Habib Ja'far deliberately cultivates a distinct identity aimed at reaching younger audiences. His empathetic style and emotional resonance have earned him a reputation as a young habib who spreads Islamic teachings with compassion. His YouTube lectures consistently generate enthusiastic and positive responses, reinforcing his growing influence.

Prajanto and Kertamukti observe that the variety of nicknames attributed to Habib Husein Ja'far—such as "light in the dark," "protector," "Armor Level 3," and other terms drawn from the popular video game *PUBG*—reflect his strong connection with younger audiences. In other contexts, he is affectionately referred to as *Hyung*, a Korean term for older brother commonly used by fans of Korean dramas. These nicknames are not arbitrary; they constitute a symbolic construction of identity, as names inherently carry referential meaning. In this case, the nicknames serve to position Habib Ja'far as a religious figure who resonates with the cultural codes and preferences of today's youth, reinforcing his image as a relatable *da'i*.

His style of dress also contributes significantly to his public reception and his ability to collaborate with others. According to Prajanto and Kertamukti, clothing functions as a form of self-presentation aimed at constructing identity. Within the framework of nonverbal communication, attire serves as an *artifactual message* with communicative intent. Habib Ja'far's choice to dress in ways aligned with youth culture is a strategic act of identity expression that supports his da'wah objectives. This use of nonverbal communication serves a metacommunicative function, providing contextual cues that clarify the intent and meaning of his verbal messages. In communicative situations that require subtlety, nonverbal cues such as clothing often become the most effective means of conveying meaning, thereby reducing the risk of distortion, misinterpretation, or deception.

2. Method

The methodological approach for this research is firmly rooted in a qualitative, interpretative paradigm, utilizing content analysis combined with a performative communication framework to explore the construction of digital religious authority. This section details the systematic steps undertaken, from the design choices to the instruments and analysis techniques employed, ensuring the study's rigor and relevance to the digital sociology of religion (Suadi, 2020). The subsequent sections provide a detailed breakdown of the procedures, commencing with the overall research design illustrated in the figure below.

Here is the visual representation of the research design employed in this study:

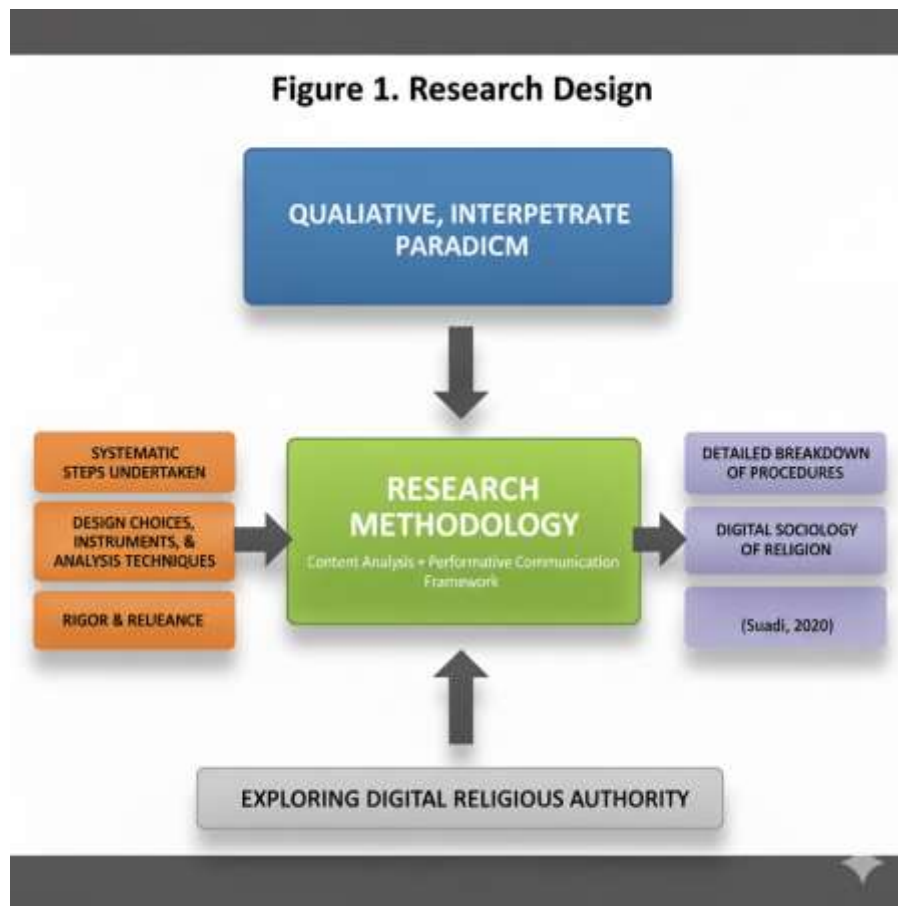


Figure 1. Research Design

2.1 Research Design

The current research is grounded in a qualitative paradigm, employing a descriptive-interpretive design that centers on content analysis. This methodological choice is imperative for a thorough investigation of the construction of digital religious authority, extending beyond mere quantifiable metrics to explore the intricate processes of meaning-making and influence in the digital sphere (M. K. Lutfi, 2022). The design strategically combines general qualitative content analysis for mapping thematic patterns and a specific performative

communication theory framework to dissect the rhetorical and non-verbal strategies employed by the subject (Pranoto, 2023). Treating YouTube content as a deliberate performance enables a granular assessment of how digital affordances, specific communication styles, and audience negotiation mechanisms are leveraged to establish a new form of authority. This approach aligns with contemporary digital sociology studies, which recognize that online authority is actively performed, contested, and fluid, rather than simply inherited or formalized (Prajanto & Kertamukti, 2023). By focusing on interpretation, the research is able to holistically contextualize the da'wah content within the broader youth culture, facilitating a nuanced understanding of digital influence and its subsequent social impacts (Darmayanti, 2022). This multi-layered interpretative design ensures comprehensive coverage of both the message's substance and its persuasive delivery.

2.2 Data Collection

The data collection phase is executed through non-participatory, systematic observation of the primary source: the "Jeda Nulis" YouTube channel. This platform is identified as the central hub for the subject's digital religious outreach and authority-building endeavors. Primary data consists of a carefully curated selection of video content spanning the period from 2022 to 2024, gathered through a focused purposive sampling technique (Ulfah & Bustomi, 2023). The selection criteria prioritize videos that exhibit high virality, relevance to current socio-religious issues, and a clear demonstration of the subject's unique performative communication strategies. This intentional focus ensures that the collected dataset is maximally representative of the most impactful and characteristic examples of his digital influence (Bakhri, 2020). The collected artifacts are meticulously processed, which includes the detailed transcription of relevant audio segments and the systematic logging of non-verbal cues and visual elements. Complementing this primary data, secondary data comprising academic journals (2020-2025) and media reports related to digital authority and Islamic communication in Indonesia are gathered to provide robust contextual and empirical grounding. This comprehensive collection process yields rich data, which is essential for the subsequent in-depth content analysis, allowing the study to proceed with a robust empirical foundation.

2.3 Data Analysis

The collected data will undergo a continuous, iterative process of interpretative content analysis, structured around three main phases: reduction, display, and conclusion drawing/verification. The initial phase, reduction, involves systematic open coding to identify key concepts, followed by axial coding to link these concepts to the theoretical framework of performative communication and digital authority (Suadi, 2024). This process transforms raw data (transcripts and observation notes) into manageable analytical units, distilling the essence of the digital performance. The display phase organizes these coded units into matrices and thematic networks, clearly illustrating the patterns in communication style, message framing, and audience engagement strategies, thereby facilitating comparative assessment. Finally, the conclusion drawing and verification stage interprets these synthesized patterns in light of the research questions, confirming how digital and performative elements contribute to the subject's authority and ensuring that the final interpretation is grounded in evidence (Darmayanti, 2023). The constant comparison and iterative nature of this analytical framework ensure that the final findings are deeply rooted in the empirical evidence gathered from the digital environment.

2.4 Research Instruments

The core research instrument utilized is a detailed and custom-built Structured Coding and Observation Protocol, designed to effectively capture the complex interplay between the content and the performance aspects of the digital da'wah. The instrument is dichotomous, featuring a segment dedicated to content analysis and another focused on assessing performative communication. The content analysis section systematically documents theological themes, message framing, linguistic style (e.g., use of irony, colloquialisms, classical references), and the contextualization of the religious message within contemporary life (S. Bakhri, 2023). Simultaneously, the performative checklist focuses keenly on recording digital delivery elements: specifically, non-verbal cues, vocal dynamics, rhetorical techniques, visual aesthetics, and audience engagement methods, such as utilizing trending platform features or collaborative video formats (Pranoto, 2023). The integration of these two components—substance and presentation—is critical, enabling the research to interpret the strategic self-representation of the subject as a key driver for the establishment of his digital authority (Ulfah & Bustomi, 2023). This composite instrument guarantees that all relevant data dimensions are comprehensively captured and analyzed, providing a systematic basis for qualitative interpretation.

2.5 Validity and Reliability

The rigor and quality of this qualitative research are established through the four criteria of Trustworthiness: Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, and Confirmability. Credibility is actively pursued through source and data triangulation, which involves the systematic comparison of primary content findings with supporting evidence from secondary sources, including academic literature and relevant media reports, thereby ensuring the consistency and coherence of interpretations (Bustomi, 2025). Dependability is secured by creating a comprehensive audit trail, maintaining meticulous documentation of all research phases—from the initial observation notes and sampling decisions to the final coding scheme and analytical justifications—which allows for external review and procedural validation. Confirmability ensures that the research findings and conclusions are objectively derived from the collected data, minimizing the risk of researcher bias, by requiring that all major interpretations are substantiated by direct references to the content artifacts. Finally, Transferability, while not equivalent to statistical generalization, is achieved by providing rich, contextualized descriptions of the research setting and subject (Section 2.6), thereby allowing other scholars to assess the potential applicability of the findings to similar digital religious phenomena (Suadi, 2020).

2.6 Research Subject and Location

The focal research subject is the digital religious discourse propagated by Habib Husein Ja'far Al Hadar, with the investigation strictly limited to his output on the Jeda Nulis YouTube Channel. This particular subject was strategically chosen because he represents a paradigm shift in Islamic preaching, successfully synthesizing traditional scholarly authority with an appealing, youth-oriented digital aesthetic, making him a critical case study in the dynamics of modern religious influence (Prajanto & Kertamukti, 2023). The channel's content demonstrates a unique ability to connect with the skeptical and culturally diverse millennial and Generation Z demographics through conversational, philosophical, and often humorous content. The research location is defined as the digital communication environment of this specific YouTube channel, as the analysis fundamentally concerns the digitally constructed performance, not a physical context. The data corpus comprises videos from January 2022 to the current period, capturing the subject's authority during his most significant ascent into digital prominence (Ulfah & Bustomi, 2023). This selection ensures the most dynamic and relevant data are utilized for the analysis of his transformation of religious authority, focusing on the intersection of spirituality and digital media.

The research questions guiding this investigation are systematically matched with the appropriate analytical techniques, as detailed in the following table:

Figure 2 systematically outlines the alignment between the two central research questions and the advanced analytical methods employed to answer them. Research Question 1, which seeks to identify the form of authority, is tackled through Interpretative Content Analysis, involving meticulous qualitative coding and thematic categorization of the video content to map the substance of his religious claims and discursive style. This method allows the researcher to define the attributes that constitute his digital authority, such as the blending of Islamic traditions with popular culture references and the adoption of modern pedagogical styles (Darmayanti, 2022). Conversely, Research Question 2, which focuses on the role of communication, is addressed using a Performative Analysis, utilizing the observation protocol to interpret the specific rhetorical, visual, and non-verbal cues that enhance his credibility and connection with the audience. This establishes how the strategic act of communication itself is crucial to the authority-building process (Pranoto, 2023). This structured approach ensures that the investigation of both the content (what is said) and the delivery (how it is said) is handled with the appropriate analytical rigor to yield comprehensive and empirically supported results based on digital communication theory (Bustomi, 2024).

3. Biography of Habib Husein Ja'far al-Haddar

Husein Ja'far Al Hadar, widely known as Habib Ja'far, is a 38th-generation descendant of the Prophet Muhammad, born in Bondowoso, East Java, on June 21, 1988. His lineage, through his father Ja'far of the Al Hadar clan, combines prophetic ancestry with Madurese heritage. Recognized by the honorific Habib due to his lineage, he has become known as a prominent millennial preacher who actively writes and disseminates Islamic teachings, particularly through digital media. His YouTube channel Jeda Nulis serves as a platform for promoting a moderate interpretation of Islam. Beyond this, he frequently collaborates with public figures, including entertainers and

comedians. The name Jeda Nulis (literally "Pause Writing") reflects his foundational identity as a writer. In addition to his online presence, he contributes to mass media as a columnist, speaks publicly on Islamic themes, and currently serves as the Director of the Jakarta Islamic Cultural Academy.

Before entering higher education, Habib Ja'far studied at the Bangil Islamic Boarding School Foundation (YAPI) in Pasuruan, East Java. He then earned a Bachelor's degree in Islamic Philosophy from Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University (UIN Jakarta), followed by a Master's degree in Qur'anic Studies and Tafsir at the same institution. Drawing on his academic background in philosophy and interpretation, he presents Islamic teachings with philosophical depth but in language that is accessible and relatable. Unlike conventional preachers who rely heavily on scriptural citations, Habib Ja'far often communicates religious messages through dialogue, simple logic, and everyday analogies, allowing his da'wah to resonate with broader audiences.

Despite his public influence, Habib Ja'far has faced accusations regarding the authenticity of his lineage. In response, during a 2020 interview, he addressed these claims by referencing formal documentation from the Daimi College, a division of Robithah Alawiyah—an institution responsible for the genealogical verification and record-keeping of the Prophet's descendants in Indonesia.

Habib Husein Ja'far has strengthened his public presence and connection with millennial audiences through his successful adaptation to digital media. His distinctive preaching style—marked by informality, politeness, and emotional warmth—is particularly evident on social media platforms. As noted by Deddy Corbuzier in a podcast conversation with him, Habib Ja'far frequently delivers messages that emphasize love, peace, and familiarity, often resembling casual conversations among young people. This approach has led him to collaborate with public figures who embody youth culture, such as Tretan Muslim, Boris Bokir, and Onadio Leonardo. One widely discussed moment on social media occurred when Habib Ja'far responded to Onadio's question regarding whether non-Muslims can enter heaven—an episode that sparked significant engagement and debate online.

Habib Ja'far deliberately chose social media as a medium for da'wah due to its widespread usage across various demographic groups. In one podcast, he stated that he never intended to profit through YouTube monetization and emphasized that his da'wah is driven by sincerity, not financial gain. Beyond his digital presence, he also appears regularly on television programs dedicated to Islamic discourse, including Hikmah Podcast (RTV, 2021), Kapsul Ramadan (SEA Today, 2021), Amanah Islam (NET., 2021), Sahur Lebih Segerr (Trans7, 2022), Kurma (Kuliah Ramadan) (Kompas TV, 2022), Tonight Show Ramadan (NET., 2022), and Ruang Ngaji (MetroTV, 2023).

Prior to gaining recognition as a public preacher, Habib Ja'far established himself in the field of writing. He has authored numerous works, including *Refreshing Our Islam*, *My Son Killed by Israel*, *Islam 'Madhhab' Fadlullah*, and his most well-known book, *God Is in Your Heart*. He is also an active contributor to several major Indonesian media outlets such as Kompas, Jawa Pos, and Tempo.

While Habib Husein Ja'far's popularity may partly be attributed to his status as a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad, this alone does not fully explain his widespread appeal. Unlike many other habib figures who adhere to conventional Islamic dress—such as robes and turbans—Habib Ja'far often appears in more casual attire, typically wearing trousers. Nonetheless, he maintains a distinctive visual identity through his backward-slanted white peci, which leaves his front hair visible, reminiscent of cinematic depictions of Abu Nawas.

More significantly, Habib Ja'far's message centers on the humanistic dimensions of Islam. He consistently emphasizes that Islam is a religion that uplifts human dignity and affirms the value of every individual, regardless of ethnicity, race, religious background, or genealogical status—including whether one is a habib or not. He does not self-aggrandize based on his lineage, nor does he rely on his honorific title to assert religious authority. Instead, he projects these values through his media presence, which enables millennial audiences to relate to him more easily. His relaxed, engaging, and accessible communication style has made Islamic teachings more approachable while retaining their ethical and spiritual substance.

Jeda Nulis is the YouTube channel through which Habib Husein Ja'far first began his da'wah activities, officially

launched on May 4, 2018. In the channel description, he explains that its purpose is to promote the concept of peaceful Islam. While his primary identity is that of a writer, he acknowledges that video content holds greater appeal for millennial audiences. Therefore, while continuing to write, he created the Jeda Nulis channel during his breaks, a fact reflected in the channel's name itself.

From the launch date until the end of 2018, most videos on Jeda Nulis took the form of solo monologues, with Habib Ja'far delivering Islamic teachings alone. Only a few episodes involved interaction with other figures. Starting in 2019, he began integrating more dialogical content, and by 2020, dialogic videos had become the dominant format.

Habib Ja'far's approach also differs significantly from conventional da'i in terms of presentation and content. While many preachers adopt formal religious language and pious titles, he often chooses unusual or humorous branding. For example, in 2021 he launched another channel titled Lost Youth. Whereas most preachers address serious subjects with solemnity, Habib Ja'far frequently discusses light or mundane topics with wit and irony. However, he remains consistent in upholding core religious principles—he continues to use the terms sin, vice, and haram with clarity and precision, ensuring that theological meanings are preserved.

4. Islamic Content on the Jeda Nulis YouTube Channel

The following content categories have been mapped based on two primary criteria: latest and popularity. As previously noted, the data used for this classification was gathered through observations conducted between July 2023 and September 2023. Therefore, any developments or changes occurring after this period are not included in the scope of the analysis.

Videos in 2023:

No.	Titles and Links	Upload Date	Likes	Comments
1	Spesial Hari Santri: Bersama Onad, Merayakan Keberagaman Dengan Sarung Nusantara - YouTube	22 October 2023	4.6 thousand	232
Content: This video features a dialogue and reflection in commemoration of <i>Hari Santri</i> (Santri Day), focusing on the sarong as a cultural and symbolic object. Within the discussion, the sarong is portrayed as a representation of openness, adaptability, and resistance to colonialism. Comments: Given that Habib Ja'far and Onad frequently produce content revolving around the theme of religious conversion—often referred to as “login”—many viewers interpreted this video within that ongoing narrative. As a result, numerous comments were directed toward Onad, expressing positive sentiments, offering prayers, and encouraging his anticipated conversion to Islam.				
2	Cerita Santri Muslim & “Santri” Katolik (Spesial Hari Santri 2023) - YouTube	21 October 2023	1,0 thousand	68
Content: This video features an interfaith dialogue between Habib Ja'far and Father Antonio, a Catholic priest from Timor-Leste, presented in the context of National <i>Santri</i> Day. Both participants shared perspectives from their respective religious traditions, emphasizing the values of religious moderation. Father Antonio described himself as a <i>santri</i> due to his seminary education, which closely resembles the daily life and discipline of Islamic boarding schools. He also expressed familiarity with the white robe traditionally worn by Muslim <i>santri</i>, interpreting it as a symbol of purity. Habib Ja'far elaborated on the symbolic significance of the turban in Sufi tradition, associating it with a teacher's recognition of a <i>santri</i>. The dialogue ultimately underscored a shared historical narrative: across religious lines, <i>santri</i> have contributed to the struggle for independence and resistance against colonialism. Comments: The video received broad support from viewers, particularly in appreciation of its interfaith dialogue on such a nationally significant day. A notable number of non-Muslim viewers, including those with seminary				

backgrounds, shared their own reflections and experiences, further enriching the spirit of mutual understanding conveyed in the content.				
3	Bahaya Dalam Beragama: Dunning-Kruger Effect - YouTube	14 October 2023	1,9 thousand	237
Content: This monologue video addresses the epistemological and psychological dangers of adopting a know-it-all attitude in religious discourse. Habib Ja'far critiques the tendency of individuals to assume absolute correctness in their understanding of religion, warning that such certainty can easily devolve into dogmatism and blame. He links this phenomenon to the Dunning-Kruger effect, a cognitive bias wherein individuals with limited knowledge overestimate their competence. According to him, this attitude is not constant but fluctuates with prevailing social and cultural trends. He further identifies three intersecting dimensions of the problem: psychological (overconfidence), cognitive (premature entitlement to speak authoritatively), and intuitive (arrogant self-assurance). Habib Ja'far frames these as symptoms of a deeper cultural reluctance to admit ignorance. He also references Imam al-Ghazali's classification of four types of people in relation to knowledge and ignorance, highlighting the ethical importance of intellectual humility. Commentary: One viewer expands the discussion by quoting Bertrand Russell to support the critique of overconfidence: "<i>The whole problem with the world is that fools and fanatics are always so certain of themselves, and wiser people so full of doubts.</i>" This comment reinforces the central thesis of the video and situates the argument within a broader philosophical context.				
4	Dakwah Koplo : Mangku Purel - YouTube	8 October 2023	6,2 thousand	389
Content: In this video featuring comedians Yono and Nopek, Habib Ja'far engages in a reflective conversation centered around the dangdut song <i>Mangku Purel</i>, often perceived as vulgar. He reinterprets the song through a moral and socio-economic lens, arguing that it should not be dismissed as mere entertainment but viewed as a critique of adultery and the systemic conditions that sustain it. Habib Ja'far explains that "mangku purel" reflects not only a moral lapse but also broader structural issues, such as poverty and the commodification of intimacy. Drawing upon prophetic teachings, he underscores that adultery encompasses more than physical acts; it can manifest in digital spaces through offensive or suggestive commentary. The Prophet's guidance, according to Ja'far, includes redirecting one's attention and seeking solace in one's marital relationship when confronted with temptation. He emphasizes that even content regarded as morally questionable can offer instructive value. According to him, wisdom is derived not only from virtuous narratives but also from negative examples that teach avoidance. This aligns with his aphorism that "smart people learn from their own experience, wise people learn from the experience of others, while the ignorant fail to learn from either." The song, in this context, becomes a metaphor for the trials of pre- and post-marital life: the temptation of adultery before marriage and the emotional distance after. Commentary: Audience responses were largely supportive, with some suggesting that the content be adapted as educational entertainment during Ramadan. Several commenters provided interpretive extensions, noting that <i>Mangku Purel</i> is, in fact, culturally critical and akin to other socially reflective songs such as <i>Tutupen Botolmu</i>. These songs, while stylistically provocative, offer critiques of societal preoccupation with sexual morality. Another viewer observed that although the video was delivered in a humorous tone, it maintained pedagogical depth and offered meaningful reflections on ethics and popular culture.				
5	Makan Pecel Madiun Legendaris Bareng Nopek - YouTube	3 October 2023	6,7 thousand	382
Content: This episode features a culinary review accompanied by a relaxed dialogue between Habib Ja'far and comedian Nopek. Although the video does not adopt a didactic preaching format, it subtly integrates religious values through reflective remarks. Habib Ja'far articulates a moral insight on the expression of gratitude in business,				

suggesting that one way to demonstrate thankfulness is by resisting the urge to increase product quantity merely because of a surge in demand. According to him, such restraint not only reflects gratitude but also guards against greed. He further notes that refraining from expanding a business—for instance, by not opening new branches—may stem from an ethical consideration rather than just a culinary one, such as preserving the integrity of taste.

Habib Ja'far also offers a theological distinction between sustenance (*rezeki*) and wealth (*uang*), asserting that sustenance, however small, brings contentment, whereas even abundant wealth may fail to do so, especially if one lacks a sense of sufficiency. His commentary illustrates how everyday practices, such as food entrepreneurship, can become mediums for ethical reflection and spiritual grounding.

Commentary:

The audience response was largely positive, as is common with much of Habib Ja'far's content. One comment noted that even seemingly secular segments, like culinary reviews, retain a preaching dimension. Viewers appreciated the seamless integration of moral reflections into casual conversation, suggesting that the approach resonates well with a broad, often younger, audience.

Videos by popularity:

No.	Titles and Links	Upload Date	Likes	Comments
1	Boris Belajar Islam, Tak Takut Mualaf? - YouTube	5 June 2022	86 thousand	3,266
Content: This episode features a dialogue between Habib Ja'far and Boris Bokir, a comedian of Christian background, centered around the foundational teachings of Islam. Interestingly, Boris reveals that he was already familiar with certain Islamic practices from a young age and had even engaged in Muslim prayer during childhood. His parents did not prohibit these activities but instead explained the religious obligations of Muslims and encouraged a thoughtful exploration of faith. This response reflects a parental approach that frames religion as an individual right, where spiritual commitment must be rooted in personal conviction and readiness. The conversation further touches on the nature of genuine religious tolerance. Habib Ja'far offers an illustrative analogy: true tolerance resembles a sparrow resting in a mosque—present without disturbing or undermining the sanctity of the space. He emphasizes that interreligious learning is vital for broadening understanding, noting that many Islamic expressions such as <i>astaghfirullah</i> , <i>subhanallah</i> , <i>bismillah</i> , and even the greeting <i>salam</i> have entered common usage, including among non-Muslims, without inciting controversy. He also observes that some Muslims receive their education in Christian institutions while maintaining their Islamic identity, which underscores the strength of religious grounding amid pluralistic interactions.				
Commentary: Viewer responses were overwhelmingly supportive of the video's message on interfaith respect and tolerance. Many comments praised the portrayal of harmonious Muslim–non-Muslim relationships. Notably, both Muslim and non-Muslim viewers shared personal stories reflecting mutual understanding, peaceful coexistence, and constructive engagement across religious boundaries. This suggests the content resonates not only on a theological level but also within the lived experiences of diverse audiences.				
2	Kultum Pemuda Tersesat - YouTube	23 August 2020	106 thousand	5,316
Content: In this episode, Habib Ja'far appears alongside comedian Tretan Muslim to respond to a range of humorous and curious questions submitted by netizens. Throughout the video, Habib Ja'far is humorously referred to as a "level 3 armor protector," highlighting his perceived ability to defend faith with both strength and grace. Amid the light-hearted tone, he delivers substantive reflections on the essence of religious practice, particularly prayer (<i>shalat</i>). He explains that prayer, ideally, should lead to moral and spiritual improvement. If one continues to engage in harmful behavior despite regular prayer, this may indicate a deficiency in the quality or				

sincerity of the act itself. Thus, rather than using prayer as a cover for repeated wrongdoing, individuals are encouraged to continually refine its practice.

Habib Ja'far also offers a theological analogy that contrasts human logic with divine logic, particularly in the context of charity. In "God's mathematics," he explains, acts of giving—such as almsgiving—lead to increase, not loss. Likewise, if someone leads a life marked by sin but sincerely repents and performs good deeds before death, their prior transgressions can be fully forgiven. This framework emphasizes divine mercy and the transformative power of repentance.

Commentary:

Audience responses largely underscore the humanitarian ethos conveyed in the discussion. Many comments stress that a person's moral worth is most clearly reflected in their interpersonal behavior rather than formal religious affiliation. Viewers also express appreciation for the light and engaging style of the presentation, which makes complex religious ideas more accessible and enjoyable. Several comments highlight wise aphorisms from the episode, particularly Habib Ja'far's remark that "humility is in the heart," emphasizing inner virtue over external displays of piety.

3	Begini Kalau LOG IN Live Offline (Perdana) - YouTube	16 June 2023	43 thousand	3,800
Content: This video presents a reflective summary of the Islam Fest event, featuring Habib Ja'far and Onadio Leonardo (Onad) recounting their personal experiences and impressions. Through casual conversation, they revisit the moments and messages encountered during the event, highlighting the spirit of inclusivity, openness, and contemporary Islamic expression that characterized the festival. The discussion not only captures the atmosphere of Islam Fest but also reinforces its broader significance as a platform for bridging religious understanding with modern youth culture.				
4	Azan Subuh Bisa Bangunkan Orang Mati? - YouTube	29 March 2021	88 thousand	6,168
Content: This video features a dialogue between Habib Ja'far, Tretan Muslim, and Coki Pardede, where humorous and provocative questions from netizens become the entry point for religious reflection. Once again nicknamed "the light of the darkness," Habib Ja'far responds to unconventional questions—such as the permissibility of performing <i>istighasah</i> before gambling—with clarity and theological grounding. He emphasizes that supplication is meant for good deeds, and because God is All-Good, He accepts only what is inherently good: in action, intention, and process. Therefore, associating <i>istighasah</i> with gambling is theologically unsound. Another question, "Is there a form to join or leave a religion?", while absurd on the surface, reflects genuine curiosity and a lack of religious literacy among some audiences. The conversation also includes Pastor Yerry, who affirms that in Christianity, conversion should not provoke hostility. Further, when asked about interfaith space-sharing for prayer, Habib Ja'far references the historical precedent of the Prophet Muhammad allowing Christians to pray inside the mosque, signaling inclusivity and religious tolerance. Comments: Audience reactions are generally positive, with many appreciating the open yet respectful interfaith dialogue. Although humor was present, it was perceived as measured and not offensive, reinforcing the accessibility and relevance of religious discussion in contemporary digital spaces.				
5	Kultum Pemuda Tersesat: Masjid Pakai Penglaris? - YouTube	11 October 2020	86 thousand	3,623
Content: In this video, Habib Ja'far engages in a dialogue with Tretan Muslim and Coki Pardede, responding to unconventional questions with a blend of theological insight and humor. One question posed was whether it is permissible for a place of worship to use <i>pesugihan</i> (charms or supernatural means) to attract more congregants. Habib Ja'far replied humorously that if such a place used a charm, the sermons delivered within it would likely dispel it. He emphasized that <i>da'wah</i> must be conducted in a <i>hasanah</i> (good and ethical) manner,				

without resorting to coercive or superstitious practices, because it is humans who need the mosque, not the mosque that needs humans.

Another question explored whether believing in medical prognoses—such as when doctors predict a patient has little time to live—constitutes *shirk* (idolatry). Habib Ja'far clarified that the determination of death is solely within God's authority. Medical professionals are meant to provide health advice to preserve life, not to assert certainty over divine matters such as the moment of death.

Comments:

The video's comment section featured a similarly provocative question: if individuals involved in morally illicit industries (e.g., drug dealers, providers of sexual services, or alcohol vendors) pay taxes, does the national budget become tainted with *haram* (illicit) wealth? This question sparked a broader discussion among viewers. Additionally, some comments quoted Coki Pardede's statement, "Sesat tapi tahu sopan santun" ("Astray but still knows etiquette"), which underscores the idea that despite personal moral failings, ethical behavior in social relations remains paramount.

From the various videos featured on the *Jeda Nulis* YouTube channel, it can be inferred that Habib Ja'far, as part of the millennial generation, intentionally fosters dialogue and collaborates with diverse public figures. His appearance—casual yet consistently marked by the wearing of a *peci*—contributes to a relaxed and relatable aesthetic that renders the content approachable and seemingly entertainment-oriented. However, beneath this informal presentation, Habib Ja'far systematically embeds Islamic values that emphasize religious moderation (*wasatiyyah*), thereby offering a model of da'wah that is both contextual and inclusive in the digital era.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

4.1 Shifting Authority in the Digital World

An information society is characterized by the centrality of information in shaping the everyday lives of its members. In such a society, information becomes a driving force that influences social, cultural, economic, and political dimensions. Individuals are not only able to access and consume information but also actively utilize and disseminate it through digital devices. Gadgets function as portals to the digital realm, enabling individuals to establish diverse forms of social interaction and communication via internet networks. As Wattimena notes, these devices serve as gateways to a broader and more expansive world.

This type of society is marked by several defining characteristics: (1) it is heavily exposed to mass media and global communication flows; (2) its members possess information awareness and access to adequate information resources; (3) information is commodified and possesses significant economic value; (4) it maintains connectivity with other societies in a globalized system; and (5) it benefits from high-speed information networks or information superhighways.

Moreover, the information society is often referred to as a virtual community. Rheingold conceptualizes the virtual community as a social environment emerging from internet technologies, where individuals engage in public dialogue and develop personal relationships within cyberspace—what he calls "a slice of life in my virtual community". Similarly, Yasraf Amir Piliang explains that within digital networks, alternative realities—counter-realities—emerge, forming new types of communities called virtual communities. These communities construct their own virtual realities, in which daily social practices are transformed into digital forms within imagined or artificial spaces. The internet thus functions as a medium that facilitates the construction of an imagined community—one that mirrors but also reconfigures the structures of real-life social interactions.

Budi Hardiman refers to this emergent form of society as *homo digitalis*, a term that encapsulates the transformation of human cognition and existence in the digital age. According to Hardiman, smartphones have evolved into extensions of human mental capacity, storing not only physical data—such as heart rate, calorie

count, sleep duration, and step count—but also mental data, including emotional content, personal plans, opinions, and intimate exchanges. These digital repositories increasingly substitute for memory and critical reasoning. As such, the Cartesian dictum "Cogito, ergo sum" ("I think, therefore I am") has been supplanted by "I browse, therefore I am". Human subjectivity is progressively defined by digital activity—what Hardiman terms the "I-online"—while the "I-offline" retreats into obscurity. The statement "I click, and I am" captures this ontological shift, where the act of thinking is metaphorically and literally transferred to the fingers, referencing the Latin root *digitus* (finger), from which the term "digital" is derived. Thus, *homo digitalis* may be interpreted not as a wise man (*homo sapiens*), but ironically as a "finger man."

This redefinition of human identity manifests in the proliferation of digital communities. Modern individuals simultaneously inhabit both physical and virtual spaces, participating in digitally mediated relationships through platforms such as WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Consequently, human social existence is bifurcated into two overlapping yet distinct spheres: the physical community and the digital community.

In the context of religious authority, the digitalization of socio-cultural life has disrupted traditional modes of authority, forcing religious actors to reassess the social terrain they once dominated. Face-to-face interactions, offline religious education, and embodied ritual practices are increasingly supplemented—or even supplanted—by digital engagements. The new reality is volatile, rapidly shifting, and fundamentally shaped by accessibility and algorithmic visibility. Within this landscape, religious authority is undergoing a process of reconfiguration. The former regime of religious power, rooted in institutional legitimacy and physical presence, is being challenged by digital influencers who wield significant influence in shaping online religious discourse. As Zaid et al. argue, this marks a broader cultural transformation in which social media figures possess the capacity to reconstitute religious meaning within the digital cultural field, signifying a profound shift in how authority is formed, performed, and perceived.

While the internet may signify the potential for cultural progress and democratization of knowledge, it simultaneously poses significant challenges to traditional religious authority. As Barker notes, digital platforms undermine established religious hierarchies by offering alternative sources of information that can disrupt the transmission and monopoly of orthodox religious knowledge. These platforms facilitate the emergence of new, critical voices who often question or reject the legitimacy of conventional religious leaders in matters of doctrine and practice. The consequence is not only a decentralization of authority but also the creation of contested epistemologies within religious discourse.

Moreover, the internet can erode the social cohesion of religious communities. Personal engagement with online religious content—often individualized and algorithm-driven—tends to detach users from shared rituals, collective identities, and communal participation. This privatization of religiosity contributes to the fragmentation of the religious self and the weakening of communal bonds that have traditionally sustained religious life.

In more extreme cases, the internet serves as a potent tool for radical Islamic groups to construct ideological identity and mobilize collective action. In cyberspace, such groups cultivate and sustain a global fundamentalist consciousness while simultaneously forging localized expressions of identity aligned with specific socio-political contexts. Thus, the digital realm is not merely a neutral medium of religious expression, but a contested arena where authority, identity, and power are constantly negotiated.

It is undeniable that this radical transformation in communication has not only altered human lifestyles but also reshaped fundamental understandings of reality, selfhood, and moral categories. In this new condition, the boundaries between the real and the unreal become increasingly ambiguous. What is perceived as fact may no longer refer to objective reality; what is accepted as existence may transcend traditional metaphysical categories. As Piliang describes, we are now confronting the dissolution of ontological certainties—the very questions of being and non-being, reality and illusion, are destabilized.

In such a digitally mediated environment, the concept of truth itself undergoes a paradigmatic shift. From classical notions of truth as correspondence to reality or coherence within a rational system, we now encounter what

Hardiman terms the performative theory of truth. In this framework, truth is not discovered but enacted—brought into being by those who possess digital authority or competence (Azizah, 2022; Rohmatulloh et al., 2023; Ummah, 2021), simply by asserting it. Within the digital sphere, this performative truth functions as a form of symbolic power, shaping perception and belief not through verification (Khamis, 2024; Rahman, 2023), but through visibility and repetition.

Consequently, digital society operates increasingly like a spectacle in the Debordian sense—truth becomes what is seen, liked, and shared, rather than what is verified. This reconfiguration of epistemology necessitates a renewed examination of the locus of authority in digital life. The emergence of digital authority—figures or platforms that command attention and shape belief through performativity—demands critical reflection and theoretical reformulation, especially as it pertains to ethics, knowledge, and community in a digitized world.

4.2 Digital Authority as a Post-Authority Phenomenon

Digital Islamic authority represents a transformative form of religious legitimacy emerging within the context of digital modernity. It can be understood as a post-authority phenomenon, in which legitimacy is no longer anchored in the conventional structures of religious knowledge production—such as the status of a mujtahid, judge (qāḍī) (Brumen et al., 2023; Cimoli, 2023), or mufti—but rather in the capacity of the actor to navigate and influence the socio-technological matrix of the digital sphere. As the structure of the social world itself has shifted—from hierarchical institutions to decentralized networks—the criteria for religious authority have become fluid, contingent, and performative.

In the digital milieu, social action is shaped less by institutional power and more by access, visibility, and symbolic capital. Individuals make decisions based on a multiplicity of mediated choices, shaped by algorithmic exposure and audiovisual persuasion, rather than by long-established doctrinal hierarchies. While recognition in digital platforms may be ephemeral, the symbolic forms they generate—memes, catchphrases, soundbites—often attain a kind of timeless reference that transcends traditional boundaries of scholarly authority.

This post-authority condition challenges earlier paradigms of religious authority which were centered on cognitive depth, scriptural mastery, or institutional designation (George, 2024; KOCAOĞLU et al., 2023). In contrast, digital authority is often predicated on adaptability, charisma, and the ability to present religious knowledge in visually appealing, emotionally resonant, and culturally contextualized ways. Truth, in this configuration, is not evaluated solely on the basis of rational coherence or theological rigor, but also on its communicative efficacy within the attention economy of digital life.

As Saat and Burhani observe, the classical model of authority—based on scholarly legitimacy and institutional standing—has been disrupted by a new symbolic economy (Guimarães Junior et al., 2024; Sharp & Parkes, 2023), wherein markers of piety (such as clothing, tone, or visual presentation) often outweigh intellectual or theological substance. Religious scholars who lack digital presence or persuasive affect are increasingly marginalized as “outsiders,” regardless of their formal expertise. Conversely, figures who successfully deploy emotional rhetoric—mobilizing anxiety, fear, or enthusiasm—are often perceived as protectors of the faith, even in the absence of doctrinal depth.

In this sense, *digital Islamic authority* is not merely a reconfiguration of older models, but a qualitatively different paradigm—one that reflects broader epistemological and sociological transformations. It redefines who can speak authoritatively about religion, how authority is constructed, and what it means to be a credible religious voice in a digitally saturated world. In this framework, the content produced by Habib Ja'far on the *Jeda Nulis* YouTube channel can be understood as a concrete manifestation of digital Islamic authority. His digital presence illustrates how religious legitimacy in contemporary society is no longer monopolized by institutional or formal clerical structures, but is increasingly mediated through personal branding, affective interaction, and performative engagement within digital platforms.

Drawing on Prajanto and Kertamukti's findings, Habib Ja'far employs two dominant strategies of self-presentation: *ingratiation* and *self-promotion*. The first fosters an image of approachability and humility, while the second affirms his credibility and expertise in Islamic discourse. This dual strategy enables the formation of a compelling online persona that resonates strongly with the younger generation. The effectiveness of his da'wah lies not only in content accuracy but in how it is effectively framed and socially contextualized.

One of the distinguishing features of Habib Ja'far's approach is his dialogical interaction with the audience. By responding to questions submitted by followers, he creates a participatory discursive space that reflects the logic of reciprocity central to digital culture. This interactivity shifts da'wah from a top-down didactic model to a relational and affective engagement, positioning the audience not as passive recipients but as co-producers of meaning. Through this dialogic structure, he builds an intimacy that reinforces his legitimacy—not only as a *sayyid* (descendant of the Prophet), but as a technologically fluent *millennial cleric* whose authority is both inherited and performatively enacted.

This strategy aligns with Hardiman's argument that the digital age necessitates new forms of pluralist leadership to counterbalance the rise of digital populism and religious fundamentalism. In his view, digital communication requires exemplary figures who model inclusive and dialogic modes of public religiosity. Habib Ja'far's presence thus serves as a performative intervention in the contested space of online religious discourse—one that prioritizes humor, openness, and pluralist ethics over dogmatic rigidity.

Moreover, the architecture of YouTube itself supports what Jenkins terms a *participatory culture*—a media logic that resists passive consumption and instead encourages active co-creation, dissemination, and cultural negotiation. Within this participatory framework, religious influencers are not merely content creators but cultural intermediaries. As Zaid et al. argue, their religious practice relies more on entertaining narrative and moral storytelling than on traditional textual authority. They translate abstract theological concepts into emotionally compelling messages, tailored for a digitally native audience. Thus, Habib Ja'far exemplifies how the affordances of social media platforms reconfigure the landscape of religious authority. His influence illustrates a broader shift wherein digital Islamic authority becomes less about formal credentials and more about communicative fluency, affective resonance, and adaptive presence in the attention economy of the digital age. This is not merely a tactical change in da'wah delivery, but a paradigmatic shift in how religious meaning is produced, mediated, and legitimized.

The findings of this study confirm that digital Islamic authority is not merely a derivative or extension of traditional authority, but a qualitatively distinct mode of legitimation rooted in affective engagement, narrative fluency, and performative interaction. Habib Husein Ja'far's success in navigating the digital public sphere illustrates a broader epistemic shift: religious legitimacy today is co-constructed through visibility, audience interaction, and emotional resonance rather than formal scholarly recognition alone. This supports the thesis that authority in the digital age operates within the logic of "platform society," where power is embedded in algorithmic circulation, interactivity, and stylistic coherence. As such, this study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how symbolic capital and charismatic appeal are reconfigured in the digital religious field—marking a departure from static, institutional models of authority toward dynamic, participatory, and culturally responsive forms of legitimation.

6. Conclusion

Digital transformation has fundamentally reshaped the formation and exercise of religious authority. Authority is no longer solely based on social or institutional status, but on the ability to build adaptive, affective, and performative communication in digital spaces. Habib Husein Ja'far exemplifies this new form of Islamic digital authority by combining religious knowledge with media creativity and a culturally relevant approach for younger audiences. Through Jeda Nulis, he demonstrates that contextual, dialogical, and narrative-based da'wah can effectively establish strong authority in the digital era. Social media platforms like YouTube have become new pulpits where religious knowledge is produced and contested. In this context, the effectiveness of da'wah depends not only on content but also on delivery. Therefore, traditional religious institutions must adapt to the digital logic or risk being left behind in shaping Islamic discourse that resonates with today's digital society.

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