

Transformation of new media in Aswaja al-Nahdliyyah da'wah: Strategies and challenges in the contestation of religious authority in Indonesia

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Abstract

The presence of new media has caused contestation between religious authorities in Islamic society. However, what stands out most is that new media has given birth to new spaces where every individual and group, including those who are often considered splinter, are free to present themselves and their identities in public. This research aims to examine the specific challenges Aswaja Al-Nahdliyyah faces in maintaining doctrinal purity, combating misinformation, and navigating the complexities of digital communications. This research uses qualitative research in an interpretive paradigm, utilizing online data from the NU Website and YouTube channels. The narrative of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah al-Nahdliyyah is very important to be promoted and mainstreamed, so that it is increasingly strengthened into a complete narrative which is called the new cultural environment of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah al-Nahdliyyah. This new environment can be seen from the digitization of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) figures and the yellow books (turats) taught at NU Islamic boarding schools. This digitalization seeks to show that new religious spaces in the online world must be under the control of authorized religious figures.

Abstrak

Kehadiran media baru telah menimbulkan kontestasi antar otoritas agama dalam masyarakat Islam. Namun yang paling menonjol adalah media baru telah melahirkan ruang-ruang baru di mana setiap individu dan kelompok, termasuk mereka yang kerap dianggap pecahan (sempalan), bebas menampilkan diri dan identitasnya di depan publik. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji tantangan spesifik yang dihadapi Aswaja Al-Nahdliyyah dalam menjaga kemurnian doktrin, memerangi misinformasi, dan menavigasi kompleksitas komunikasi digital. Penelitian ini

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new media; Aswaja Al-Nahdliyyah; da'wah strategies; religious authority; Nahdlatul Ulama

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menggunakan penelitian kualitatif dengan paradigma interpretatif, memanfaatkan data online dari Website NU dan channel YouTube. Narasi *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah al-Nahdliyyah* sangat penting untuk dipromosikan dan diarusutamakan, agar semakin kuat menjadi sebuah narasi utuh yang disebut dengan lingkungan budaya baru *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah al-Nahdliyyah*. Lingkungan baru ini terlihat dari digitalisasi tokoh Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) dan kitab kuning (turats) yang diajarkan di pesantren NU. Digitalisasi ini berupaya menunjukkan bahwa ruang keagamaan baru di dunia online harus berada di bawah kendali tokoh agama yang berwenang.

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INTRODUCTION

Recently, there has been a significant change in how religious communication and spreading of beliefs occur, mainly due to the emergence and fast progress of new media technologies (Evolvi, 2021; Evolvi, 2022). This change has deeply influenced different religious groups, such as Aswaja Al-Nahdliyyah in Indonesia. Aswaja Al-Nahdliyyah stems from the traditions of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and is a key part of Indonesian Islam, highlighting the combination of traditional Islamic teachings and local cultural customs (Riyadi & Karim, 2024). In the past, sharing religious teachings and da'wah within the Aswaja Al-Nahdliyyah community mainly involved in-person interactions, preaching, religious events, and written materials. Nevertheless, the emergence of new media platforms like social media, online forums, and digital publications has transformed the approaches and scope of da'wah efforts (Karim et al, 2021; Riyadi & Karim, 2023). These platforms provide never-before-seen chances for religious leaders and preachers to interact with a wider and more varied audience.

NU uses various types of new media platforms, namely websites, YouTube, and several supporting social media such as Facebook, Twitter (X), Instagram, and TikTok. Through these media, NU presents moderate Aswaja narratives based on kiai figures, pesantren values, and the treasures of kitab turath (yellow books). This is where the strength of the Aswaja al-Nahdliyyah narrative lies in the online space, because NU tries to revive offline reality in the online space. So, the reality in the online space built by NU is something that is indeed based on the actual reality in the offline space.

The incorporation of new media in Aswaja Al-Nahdliyyah da'wah brings about both advantages and obstacles. Allowing for more efficient and widespread spreading of religious knowledge enables Aswaja Al-Nahdliyyah to combat radical ideologies and promote moderate Islam more effectively (Aziz et al., 2023). However, there is intense competition in the digital sphere as various individuals compete for religious power and

impact. This dispute could result in the division of religious power and the possible dissemination of false or radical beliefs (Syam et al., 2020). The quick progression of new media technologies has greatly changed how religious communication and distribution are done (Adeni et al, 2021). Aswaja Al-Nahdliyyah, a conservative Islamic movement in Indonesia, is confronted with both possibilities and obstacles in adjusting to these transformations. Researching how Aswaja Al-Nahdliyyah da'wah utilizes digital platforms is crucial to comprehend its use of new media for spreading teachings and values without compromising its religious authority (Hasanah et al, 2024). In light of the growing impact of social media and other digital platforms, it is crucial to examine the approaches utilized by Aswaja Al-Nahdliyyah to connect with a wider audience and remain significant in today's digital era.

Furthermore, the challenge to religious authority in Indonesia has become more noticeable due to the rise of new media. Different Islamic factions and religious leaders vie for supporters and power, leading to a dynamic yet occasionally confrontational religious climate. The main goal of this research is to investigate the particular obstacles that Aswaja Al-Nahdliyyah encounters in this situation, which include upholding doctrinal integrity, battling misinformation, and dealing with the intricacies of digital communication. Through analyzing these concerns, the study aims to offer a deeper understanding of the wider impacts of new media on religious power and the prospects of Islamic outreach in Indonesia.

Many previous studies focused on the general impact of digitalization on the transformation of da'wah. This study will look at certain strategies used by the NU organization in carrying out digital da'wah activities, and how the digital space strengthens NU's identity in the public space while countering other narratives that are counter-productive to da'wah.

METHODS

This research is a type of qualitative research with an interpretive paradigm, the interpretive paradigm is one of the paradigms of non-positivism (Sukoharsono, 2022). This paradigm focuses on efforts to explore something that is complex and requires in-depth exploration and interpretation. Due to its in-depth nature, the author's direct involvement in the data is very necessary. The approaches used are Islamic thought approach and new media approach. The Islamic thought approach is used to understand the Aswaja al-Nahdliyyah thinking championed by NU. The new media approach is needed to see how NU uses various new media platforms to mainstream the Aswaja al-Nahdliyyah narrative in online spaces.

The data in this field research is based on online data sourced from the Website and YouTube managed by NU, which are located at <https://www.nu.or.id/> and <https://www.youtube.com/c/NUOnlineID>. Data collection was conducted using two techniques: first, online observation. Online observation was conducted on the Website and YouTube managed by NU. This is done to find out the face/appearance of the NU Website and YouTube pages which are also related to the tendency of the titles of the content loaded. Second, documentation. This technique is carried out by searching, reading, watching and listening to Aswaja al-Nahdliyyah content contained in NU's new media.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Digitisation of NU figures

The digitisation of NU figures or kiai is an important element in the effort to build a new environment of Aswaja al-Nahdliyyah in the new media era. NU, especially in Java, refers to religious figures as Kiai, Kiai Haji, Abah, Gus, Nyai, Ning, Habib (for descendants of the Prophet), and several other similar nicknames, but rather rarely uses the nickname 'ustadz' or 'shaikh'. In NU's new media, religious figures or kiai are central to any religious information conveyed or posted. Since NU has long viewed figures as religious authorities, it is not uncommon for every decision made by religious figures in NU to be followed by the community at the grassroots. In the online space as well, NU's new media features various central figures who are recognised both scientifically and socially.

This can be seen for example in NU online, there is a separate space on the site to post profiles of NU figures from time to time. But what is more important is when NU discusses religious issues by always referring to authoritative figures. Among the names of figures that appear in NU new media are KH. Hasyim Asy'ari, KH. Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur), Gus Baha, Gus Muwafiq, KH. Mustofa Bisri, Gus Miftah, KH. Anwar Zahid, KH. Cholil Yahya Staquf, KH. Ma'ruf Amin, KH. Afifuddin Muhajir, Gus Ulil Abshar Abdalla, Gus Dhofir Zuhry, Gus Yaqut Chalil Qaumas, Ning Imaz, Ning Mila, Ning Shila Hasina, Gus Rifqil Muslim, Gus Kholili Kholil, Nyai Hannah, Gus Ghofur, KH. Zulfa Mustofa, KH. Shofy al-Mubarak, KH. Mifathul Achyar, Habib Hamid Ba'agil, Habib Muhammad Muthohar, Habib Umar Muthohar, KH. Achmad Chalwani, KH. Marzuki Mustamar, KH. Anwar Iskandar, Gus Kautsar, and many other names.

The appearance of figures representing these various elements shows NU's efforts to colour the online space with figures who have broad influence, both scientifically and socially. The combination of scientific authority and social influence has an impact on the Aswaja al-Nahdliyyah narrative posted or promoted by NU in online spaces. This can offset or even counter the phenomenon of the emergence of "virtual ustadz" in the new media era whose scientific sanad is unclear and less acceptable to the public.

Muthohharun Jinan, in his study of new media and shifting religious authority, considers that among the most important changes in religious aspects is the shift in religious authority and patterns of relationships between followers and religious figures or leaders who are role models in everyday life (Jinan, 2012). According to him, the internet space has shifted religious authority that was previously only owned by scholars, murshids, religious teachers or ustadz, or could also be in the realm of government, such as the Ministry of Religious Affairs and non-governmental institutions such as religious organisations.

Religious authority has shifted in new media with impersonal tendencies based primarily on information networks. With the open access provided by new media, everyone can easily access any information according to their tastes and needs. The ulama and kiai are no longer the people's reference in asking religious questions. Religious fatwas are no longer the authoritative domain of conventional religious figures, but everyone can find answers and make decisions based on information available in the media. NU online features many qualified figures to ensure that religious fatwas in the online space really come from those who have the capacity (Pimay, 2023), unlike the assumption of some people who assume that the openness of new media has allowed everyone to freely express opinions or provide religious fatwas in the online space.

The NU's tendency to feature authoritative figures in new media refutes previous findings that religious new media is antithetical to traditional religious institutions (Burhanudin & Baedhowi, 2003). In fact, it also rejects findings that call for the "death of the da'i," due to the fact that religious messages in new media have been transformed into electronic formats (Ridwanulloh, 2023). NU online shows that religious figures in the offline space who are recognised by the community should also be an authoritative force in the online space.

Among the NU kiai who appear in the new media space (NU online), generally have study communities managed by various personal YouTube channels, such as Gus Baha, Gus Miftah, KH. Mustafa Bisri, Gus Muwafiq, Gus Kautsar, KH. Marzuki Mustamar, KH. Anwar Zahid, and several others. They have online study communities that are managed structurally by several channels, such as the following channels:

1. @Gus Baha's recitation on the YouTube link [https://www.youtube.com/@GusBaha's Recitation](https://www.youtube.com/@GusBaha's%20Recitation). Currently, Gus Baha's YouTube channel has 372K subscribers and 460 videos. The Gus Baha recitation channel presents various aspects of Islamic religious knowledge from a pesantren kiai figure named KH. Ahmad Bahauddin Nursalim Al-Hafidz or familiarly called (Gus Baha'). Gus Baha's videos are updated daily through this channel. This YouTube channel also states that

promotion rights, copyright, re-upload requests, must contact the admin via email: PengajianGusBahak@gmail.com.

2. Santri Gayeng Channel, located at the link: <https://www.youtube.com/@gayengco/featured>. This channel has 73K subscribers and 2.3K videos. In the channel description it is stated that this channel is managed by Santri Syaikhona Maimoen Zubair, and as a chaperone of Gus Taj Yasin Maimoen. However, most of the content in this channel contains videos of Gus Baha's studies or recitations.
3. GusMus Channel, located at the link: <https://www.youtube.com/@GusMusChannel/about>. This channel has 161K subscribers and 1.8K videos. The description states that this YouTube account is the official account of KH. A. Mustofa Bisri or known as Gus Mus. On this channel, there are various videos of Islamic studies, short tausiyah, interviews, poetry and video documentation of other activities of Gus Mus and friends.
4. Gus Muwafiq Official Channel, which is located at the link: <https://www.youtube.com/@GusMuwafiqChannel/about>. This channel has 251K subscribers and 861 videos. In the description it is stated, Gus Muwafiq Channel (GMC) is the official channel for science and da'wah media KH. Ahmad Muwafiq. Kiai, who is familiarly called Gus Muwafiq, is a young NU scholar of this era who has a speciality in conveying religious knowledge and messages to Indonesia. With his characteristic long hair, straightforward language, simple, and easy to digest, Gus Muwafiq has become an icon and vanguard in spreading and grounding Islam Nusantara as an articulation of the spirit of Islam rahmatan lil alamin. The management of the GMC channel is officially directly under the direction of KH. Ahmad Muwafiq and Nyai Ella Muwafiq.
5. Lentera NU, which is located at: https://www.youtube.com/@LENTERA_NU/videos. This channel has 21K subscribers and 297 videos. The description states that this channel was created for any figure, but the majority of the content is about Gus Muwafiq,
6. Shalawat TV, whose address is: <https://www.youtube.com/@SholawatTV1/videos>. This channel has 83.4K subscribers and 246 videos. The description states that Sholawat TV is a channel for video content creators, educational lectures and public figures, especially NU scholars, including Gus Muwafiq [reciting history] KH. Anwar Zahid [reciting together]. Also for ustadz-ustadzah and santriwan-santriwati, as well as other sholawat artists,
7. Gus Miftah Official which is located at: <https://www.youtube.com/@GusMiftahOfficial/about>. This channel has 928K subscribers and 608 videos. The description states that this account is the official channel of Gus Miftah Maulana

Habiburrohman or better known as Gus Miftah. He is a favourite disciple of Maulana Al-Habib Muhammad Luthfi bin Ali bin Hasyim bin Yahya (Pekalongan), a favourite disciple of Abah Syarif Hidayatulloh Hadiwijoyodiningrat (Sragen), as well as the caretaker of Majelis Mujahadah Dzikkrol Ghofilin at Ora Aji Islamic Boarding School in Jogjakarta, which is held every Sunday night. Gus Miftah is a preacher or lecturer at recitation assemblies, ranging from communities in rural areas and urban communities throughout the archipelago, to foreign countries. Gus Miftah is also known as a preacher or preacher in night entertainment places, such as discotheques, cafes, plus salons, places of localisation or prostitution). His characteristics and da'wah material are easily digested and accepted by the congregation, with solid, straightforward, contained, and humorous material,

8. KH. Marzuqi Mustamar Channel which is located at: <https://www.youtube.com/@ngaosabah>. This channel has 82.6K subscribers and 1.6K videos. In the description, it is stated that this channel is the official Youtube account of Dr KH Marzuqi Mustamar, M.Ag., caregiver of Pondok Pesantren Sabilurrosyad Gasek Malang and Chairman of PWNU East Java 2018-2023.
9. Anza Channel KH. Anwar Zahid, which is located at: <https://www.youtube.com/@AnzaChannelKHAnwarZahid/about>. This channel has 1.92M subscribers and 823 videos. The description states that this channel is included in the Anza Media Group as a medium for da'wah of the Sabilun Najah Islamic Boarding School. Users are strictly forbidden to reupload all videos without the permission of Anza Channel, An-Najah Magazine, Anza Media Publishing House, and Mas as-Syafiiyah.sch.id. This media is orientated as a means of publication of Sabilun Najah Simorejo Islamic Boarding School which is Fostered by KH. Anwar Zahid, which is located at the MA Salafiyah As-Syafi'iyah Office, Jl. Baitul Abidin Mosque RT. 03 RW. 04 Simo Hamlet Simorejo Village Kanor District Bojonegoro Regency East Java.
10. Ghazalia College, which is located at <https://www.youtube.com/@GhazaliaCollege/about>. This channel has 17.9K subscribers and 784 videos. In the description, it is said that this channel is an official channel hosted by Gus Ulil Abshar Abdalla (son-in-law of Gus Mus). Gus Ulil studies books by Imam Ghazali, such as Ihya' Ulumiddin, al-Munqidz min al-Dlalal, Misykat al-Anwar, Faishal al-Tafriqah, and Al-Iqtishad fi al-I'tiqad. In addition to the accounts above, there are still many other accounts that also feature NU figures, but the management is not structured. The appearance of NU figures in official and organised channels or personal channels contributes to the strengthening of the Aswaja al-Nahdliyyah narrative in the online

space. Of course, their appearance on certain channels (other than the official NU Online channel) cannot always be attributed to NU structurally, but it is well known that the narratives they carry in every lecture and recitation always refer to the Aswaja al-Nahdliyyah narrative.

The existence of non-structural NU online media based on the teachings of Aswaja al-Nahdliyyah, actually shows the strength of the cultural da'wah of NU clerics. In fact, there are mutually reinforcing religious narratives between online media or social media managed structurally by NU and NU-affiliated online media or social media managed personally by NU figures. This narrative continuity stems from the fact that the knowledge (which is the source of the narrative) of NU scholars is always tied to the strength or continuity of the scientific sanad between one scholar and another, or between santri and kiai, so it can be said that religious (not political) narratives conveyed by NU figures in the online space always reinforce each other in the frame of the Aswaja al-Nahdliyyah narrative. Therefore, the many and varied online media channels or social media of NU figures lead to the same goal, namely the mainstreaming of the Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah al-Nahdliyyah narrative.

Digitisation of the yellow book (turats)

The yellow Islamic classic book is an important reference in NU religion. The yellow book is a treasure of turats passed down by previous scholars. Aswaja religious moderation within NU (Aswaja al-Nahdliyyah) is inseparable from the role of the yellow book taught in pesantren (Fajrussalam, 2020). Conceptually, Aswaja al-Nahdliyyah has a formula: in the aspect of belief, it refers to the Ash'ariyah and Maturidiyah madhhabs; in the aspect of fiqh based on one of the four madhhabs (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafii, and Hambali); and in the aspect of tasawwuf adhering to the al-Ghazali or Junaid al-Baghdadi tasawwuf models. This formulation refers to what has been passed down by previous scholars through turats, one of which is the yellow book.

NU life in the online space also refers to the spirit of Aswaja al-Nahdliyyah which is based on the yellow book. When referring to Campbell, it appears that what becomes the reference of a community's religious life will affect the way the community uses the media (Campbell, 2012). In the online space managed by NU, it can be seen how turats colour every Aswaja al-Nahdliyyah narrative presented by NU.

NU is trying to digitalise or mainstream Aswaja al-Nahdliyyah content by providing various contents. In the issue of faith, for example, digitalisation efforts can be seen from the titles of the narratives displayed, as follows:

1. Theological Reasoning in Artificial Rain (Tuesday, 3 October 2023 | 14:00)

2. The Science of Tawheed of Wahdaniyah Nature: A Study of Monotheism and the Oneness of God (Thursday, 31 August 2023 | 23:00)
3. The Science of Tawheed Qiyamuhu bi Nafsihi: A Study of God's Independence and Self-Reliance (Sunday, 27 August 2023 | 09:00)
4. The Science of Tawheed Mukhalafatu lil Hawadits: A Study of God's Distinction and Uniqueness (Tuesday, 22 August 2023 | 22:00)
5. The Tawheed of the Baqa Nature: The Study of God's Pereniality and Eternity (Tuesday, 15 August 2023 | 15:30)
6. The Tawheed of the Qidam Nature: A Study of the Origin of God (Monday, 14 August 2023 | 22:00)
7. The Science of Tawheed of the Mu'tazilah School: Thoughts and Refutations (Wednesday, 3 November 2021 | 23:00)

Meanwhile, in the aspect of madhhab-based fiqh, NU discusses various religious and social issues using cross-mazhab fiqh reasoning. NU's digitalisation efforts can be seen, for example, from the titles of the results of NU's bahtsul masail as follows:

1. Bahtsul Masail on the Ruling of Supporting a Family from Slot Gambling Money (Saturday, 16 September 2023 | 20:00)
2. Bahtsul Masail Does Selling in an Immoral Place Contribute to Immorality? (Monday, 11 September 2023 | 16:30)
3. Bahtsul Masail on the ruling on having intercourse while the wife is pregnant (Friday, 8 September 2023 | 14:00)
4. Bahtsul Masail Hukum Makmum Makes Loud Voice to the Point of Disturbing the Imam (Thursday, 7 September 2023 | 19:00)
5. Bahtsul Masail on the ruling of a man marrying twin women at the same time (Thursday, 7 September 2023 | 16:30).

The digitalisation efforts in the online space in the aspect of tasawwuf can be seen, for example, in the following titles:

1. Tasawwuf/Akhlak 3 Virtues of Celebrating the Prophet's Birthday (Friday, 22 September 2023 | 14:00)
2. Tasawwuf/Akhlak Criteria for a Good Leader According to the Prophet (Tuesday, 12 September 2023 | 18:30)
3. Tasawwuf/Akhlak When Prof. Quraish Shihab Recalled Life Advice from His Father (Monday, 14 August 2023 | 21:00)
4. Tasawwuf/Akhlak Kecendikiawanan Ketib Anom Kudus in Serat Cabolek (Tuesday, 8 August 2023 | 19:00)
5. Tasawwuf/Akhlak Wooing God with Tahajud Prayer (Monday, 7 August 2023 | 19:00).

The narrative titles in the three fields above (akidah, fiqh and tasawwuf) are NU's efforts to mainstream Aswaja al-Nahdliyyah values in the online space. NU discusses and posts almost all religious and social issues by referring to the manhaj turats (yellow books). The above titles also automatically make NU online a new Islamic space, where various narrative contents become answers to various social problems. With the availability of various contents, Muslims can therefore enter certain keywords into the NU online search field to obtain the religious information needed.

Interestingly, issues of faith in NU online are discussed in accordance with the common beliefs of Indonesian Muslims, such as discussions of the nature of wujud, qidam, baqa', wahdaniyat, and so on. These divine attributes have clearly become the mainstream understanding of faith in Indonesia (Akbar et al., 2022). One title also explicitly counters the Mu'tazilah creed, to emphasise the Aswaja al-Nahdliyyah position. Other titles, such as "Getting to Know Aqli Law: The Obligatory, Impossible, and Jaiz Attributes of Allah" and "Knowing the Obligatory, Impossible, and Jaiz Attributes of the Messengers", are also in line with the principles of faith of the majority of Muslims in Indonesia.

As for fiqhiyyah issues, NU online displays many bahtsul masa'il results. From the titles of fiqhiyyah displayed in the online space, it can be seen that NU's fiqhiyyah discussion is very contextual to the needs of the community, no longer dwelling on textual fiqh that only uses the text of the classic book as it is (Asa'ari, 2017).

Solving social problems is done through the bahtsul masa'il space, as a space for discussion and discussion carried out by NU santri by referring to the mazhabqauli and manhaji mazhab of the previous Ulama spread in the books of mazhab (Syafi'i, 2018). The fiqhiyyah posts resulting from bahtsul masail prove that every fiqhiyyah thought posted is born from a long discussion and review of various sources, using various approaches. This is done to counter the instant tendency to produce a law. Instant action in producing a legal construction is found in many recent religious groups that call themselves 'only back to the Qur'an and al-Sunnah'. The Qur'an and sunnah are indeed the main reference in solving various social problems, but the authoritative scholars' interpretations of these two sources contained in classical books are very important to read and examine, so as to produce legal formulations that can be accounted for. This is what NU does through bahtsul masail in producing legal decisions, namely by considering various views of scholars, then taking some of the views or words of scholars only, but there are also those who only take the legal manhaj. What NU constructs in the online space is of course inseparable from these two approaches, namely the qauli and manhaji approaches.

On the issue of tasawwuf, NU displays the akhlaq style of tasawwuf. This is a model of tasawwuf that can coexist with sharia. The themes of discussion that appear in

NU online illustrate how NU online revives morals in various aspects of life, both in personal life and socio-cultural and socio-political life. The choice of tasawwuf akhlaqi that refers to al-Ghazali is acceptable to the general public, although within NU there are some people who also seem to study falsafi tasawwuf but only as knowledge, not as amaliah (life practice).

Digital space of Aswaja al-Nahdliyyah in the contestation of religious authority propaganda

NU's digital content in the online space was initially a reactive action against the narratives of radical groups that often attack NU traditions (Akmaliyah, 2020). This reactivity then shifted into a media awareness, to then at the highest level present its own religious media format in accordance with the traditions, teachings and thoughts based on Aswaja al-Nahdliyyah values believed by NU.

NU online focuses on developing media based on Aswaja al-Nahdliyyah moderation values. In the context of a media institution based on Aswaja al-Nahdliyyah moderation values, NU online has several important functions, namely:

1. Disseminating Aswaja al-Nahdliyyah traditions, teachings and thoughts.
2. Preserving Aswaja al-Nahdliyyah traditions, teachings and thoughts.
3. Strengthening the practice of Aswaja al-Nahdliyyah tradition.
4. Countering the narratives of puritanical groups that often attack NU traditions and practices.
5. Disseminating the values of moderation as an element of strengthening harmony in the life of the nation and state.
6. Promoting NU's intellectual treasures as an alternative solution to the problems of the ummah and nationality.
7. Bridging the aspirations of the people with the government (state).

Religious propaganda in the context of new media is often trapped in efforts to negate other different entities. In fact, the freedom of new media makes anyone who is not accepted in the context of the real world, prefer new media as a new propaganda space. This is shown by Ayang Utriza Yakin's explanation in Setara Institute, that the reason for the strengthening and proliferation of salafi media in Indonesia is because they are not accepted by the offline community in mosques. They then move online by building various websites and online networks between regions, which of course can promote their ideology massively, especially since the government is not too strict about the movement (Sunarwoto, 2013). But recently, after the mainstream community's

awareness of the urgency of the media has strengthened, there has been a contestation between the mainstream group and the splinter group (Akmaliyah, 2020).

In the above context, NU is maturing its existence in the *online* space by posting as much content as possible that is based on *Aswaja al-Nahdliyyah* traditions, teachings and thoughts. NU uses various new platforms, ranging from websites to social media. These platforms are used to ensure that NU's narrative is present in all lines of public media. Website and YouTube media are the main media, while social media is the supporting media (Mudhofi et al., 2023). Some of NU's *new media* religious content, both centralised in NU *online* and independently managed by NU-affiliated figures, is more of a response (reaction) to various stigmas accused of NU as a citizen institution or community of "heretics," because of its practices such as *tahlilan*, *istighatsah*, *shalawatan*, *manaqiban*, *maulid Nabi*, *haul*, *grave pilgrimage*, and so on, but on the other hand it is also an effort to preserve and strengthen NU's teachings and traditions.

CONCLUSION

The evolution of new media has had a significant influence on the way *Aswaja Al-Nahdliyyah* da'wah is conducted in Indonesia, presenting both advantages and difficulties in the assertion of religious power. The advent of new media platforms has expanded the audience reach and facilitated increased interaction with followers, resulting in a more dynamic and accessible spread of religious teachings. This change has made da'wah more inclusive and participatory, allowing religious leaders to engage directly with their audience's concerns and questions in real-time. Utilizing social media, websites, and digital tools strategically has enabled *Aswaja Al-Nahdliyyah* to stay pertinent and authoritative in a digital society, opposing the impact of competing religious groups and ideologies.

This study can contribute to the development of Islamic media. Islamic media is actually media that focuses on spreading peaceful narratives that reflect *Islam rahmatan lil alamin*.

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