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REPRESENTATION OF URBAN SUFISM IN CONSTRUCTING URBAN MUSLIM PIETY IN DIGITAL MEDIA

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Abstract: In recent years, social media has become an important arena for expressing religious identity, including the emergence of digital Sufism among urban Muslims. This study examines how urban Sufism is represented in digital media that blends Sufi values with elements of popular culture, addressing the limited scholarly attention toward its role in shaping contemporary religious identity. Specifically, this research analyzes digital content from prominent figures such as Hanan Attaki on platforms like YouTube and Instagram to illustrate how Sufi-inspired messages are communicated to urban audiences. This qualitative research employs content analysis and library study, drawing data from YouTube and Instagram. The analysis is guided by Stuart Hall's theory of representation and Charles Taylor's theory of identity. The findings show that digital representations of urban Sufism function not only as a medium of da'wah but also as a dynamic space where pious identity is negotiated and socially validated through online engagement. These representations illustrate how Islamic spirituality adapts to urban lifestyles while interacting with global popular culture. However, the phenomenon also raises concerns such as spiritual simplification, authority fragmentation, and the commodification of religiosity. The study concludes that maintaining authenticity and spiritual depth is crucial for content creators and preachers in utilizing digital platforms for inclusive da'wah.

Keywords: urban Sufism, digital religion, religious identity, representation, social media

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INTRODUCTION

The landscape of Islamic expression in Indonesia has undergone significant transformation, particularly among urban Muslims. Digital platforms such as YouTube and Instagram have shifted expressions of piety from traditional religious spaces into publicly visible digital arenas. This transformation has given rise to the phenomenon of urban Sufism, a form of Sufi practice integrated into the fast-paced lifestyle of modern urban communities. As some scholars argue, millennial Muslims increasingly negotiate their pious identities through social media to remain relevant within the demands of modernity.[1]

[1] Bouziane Zaid et al., "Digital Islam and Muslim Millennials: How Social Media Influencers Reimagine Religious Authority and Islamic Practices," *Religions* 13, no. 4 (2022): 335.

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Despite this development, a research gap persists regarding how urban Muslim piety is shaped through contemporary Islamic digital content. Earlier studies mainly focused on ethical concerns and forms of online piety,[2] or on the role of digital da'wah during the pandemic.[3] Although these studies offer valuable insight, they largely address functional and ethical dimensions. They do not fully explore how Islamic digital content contributes to shaping religious identity in urban contexts.

Recent scholarship has begun addressing this gap through various forms of cultural and media analysis. Some researchers demonstrate that YouTube-based Islamic web series influence the lifestyle and perceptions of urban Muslim piety,[4] while others show that digital da'wah figures often operate at the intersection of spirituality and commercialization.[5] These findings resonate with studies highlighting the rise of Islamic consumerism in urban Muslim lifestyles,[6] as well as research showing that digital da'wah consumption contributes to the spiritual well-being of Generation Z.[7] However, these works still do not explicitly connect their findings to urban Sufism as a framework for understanding pious identity construction.

Other research provides additional nuance by showing how psychological, sociocultural, and political factors shape digital expressions of piety,[8] indicating that online religiosity is far from neutral. A related study argues that cyber ethics influence how Muslim piety is negotiated in Indonesia,[9] yet it does not specifically address how urban Sufism operates in digital environments. Taken together, these studies suggest that urban Sufism characterized by its fluidity, inclusivity, and alignment with cosmopolitan values provides a compelling analytical lens for understanding digital expressions of piety among urban Muslims.

This study seeks to fill that gap by examining how urban Sufism is represented and how it contributes to shaping pious identity through contemporary Islamic digital content. Rather than

[2] Fatimah Husein and Martin Slama, "Online Piety and Its Discontent: Revisiting Islamic Anxieties on Indonesian Social Media," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46, no. 134 (2018): 80–93.
[3] Heni Ani Nuraeni and Novie Kurniasih, "The Role of Social Media Da'wah in Improving Individual Piety during the COVID-19 Pandemic," *Ilmu Dakwah* 15, no. 2 (2021): 343–364.
[4] Andina Dwifatma, "YouTube Islamic Web Series and Mediatized Piety among Urban Muslims in Indonesia," in *Trending Islam: Cases from Southeast Asia* (Singapore: ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute, 2023), 183–197.
[5] Syamsul Haq, "Piety and Commercialization Da'wah: The Influence of Hanan Attaki's Kajian on Young Urban Muslims in Indonesia," *Al-Misbah (Jurnal Islamic Studies)* 12, no. 1 (2024): 18–31.
[6] Julian Millie and Emma Baulch, "Beyond the Middle Classes, Beyond New Media: The Politics of Islamic Consumerism in Indonesia," *Asian Studies Review* 48, no. 1 (2024): 1–18.
[7] Akhmad Kastalani Sirun and Surawan Surawan, "Konsumsi Konten Dakwah Digital dan Kesejahteraan Spiritual Mahasiswa: Kajian Empiris di Kalangan Generasi Z," Indonesian Journal of Islamic Studies 1, no. 2 (2025): 220–226.
[8] Teguh Fachmi and Fauzan Nazil Ramadhan, "What Drives Indonesian Muslim Youth Express Their Piety on Social Media: Do Psychological, Socio-Cultural, and Politics Interfere?" in *Proceeding of Annual International Conference on Islamic Education and Language (AICIEL)* (2024), 409–416.
[9] Raudotul Jannah and Sholahuddin Al Ayubi, "Negotiating Ideal Piety in Digital Age: A Mixed-Methods Study on Muslim Cyber Ethics in Indonesia," *Komunike* 17, no. 1 (2025): 115–138.

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focusing solely on content consumption, this research also analyzes how urban Sufism is produced, framed, and negotiated within digital spaces. Through this approach, the study provides a more comprehensive understanding of the interplay between digital media, Sufi practices, and religious identity formation in modern society. This more holistic view allows urban digital religiosity to be understood as a culturally and spiritually situated phenomenon.

The novelty of this study lies in its integration of urban Sufism within the broader framework of digital religion. In academic discourse, urban Sufism is understood not as a formal Sufi order (ṭarīqa) but as a flexible mode of spirituality that emphasizes aesthetic expressions, emotional resonance, and ethical sensibilities without requiring institutional affiliation.[10] This form of spirituality differs significantly from classical Sufi orders, which rely on structured rituals, hierarchical leadership, and formal initiation.[11] Urban Sufism instead manifests through what scholars call Sufi style, a popular and mediatized aesthetic that communicates Sufi values through accessible language, minimalist visuals, and emotionally driven narratives that resonate with urban youth.[12]

By clarifying this distinction, the present study positions digital preachers such as Hanan Attaki within the spectrum of urban Sufism not because they belong to any formal ṭarīqa, but because their digital content adopts Sufi inspired language, themes of inner purification, and contemplative aesthetics that are commonly associated with modern spiritual seekers in urban settings[13]. This analytical lens bridges earlier debates that categorize such figures under Pop Islam or the Hijrah movement, demonstrating that their practices also intersect with contemporary expressions of Sufi style spirituality.

Methodologically, this study employs Stuart Hall's theory of representation, which conceptualizes media as active producers of meaning rather than passive transmitters.[14] Charles Taylor's theory of identity further supports the analysis by showing that identity is shaped through ongoing processes of social recognition in both offline and online spaces.[15] Together, these

[10] Jaenuri Jaenuri, "Urban Sufism: The Dynamic of Cosmopolitan Religious Community," *Teosofia: Indonesian Journal of Islamic Mysticism* 11, no. 2 (2022).
[11] Zulfan Taufik and Muhammad Taufik, "Mediated Tarekat Qadiriyah Wa Naqshabandiyah in the Digital Era: An Ethnographic Overview," *Esensia: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 22, no. 1 (2021): 35–43.
[12] Luthfi Makhasin, "Urban Sufism, Media and Religious Change in Indonesia," *Ijtima'iyya: Journal of Muslim Society* 1, no. 1 (2016): 23–36; Ratri Rizki Kusumalestari, "Hijrahtainment: Composing Piety and Profane as Commodification of Religion by Media," *Mediator* 13, no. 2 (2020): 290–306.
[13] Syamsul Haq, "Piety and Commercialization Da'wah: The Influence of Hanan Attaki's Kajian on Young Urban Muslims in Indonesia," *Al-Misbah: Jurnal Islamic Studies* 12, no. 1 (2024): 18–31.
[14] Stuart Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (London: SAGE Publications, 1997).
[1515] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989).

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frameworks enable this research to examine digital representations of Sufi practices as both spiritual expressions and identity building processes in contemporary urban Muslim life.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative research design with a descriptive approach, as this framework is considered most suitable for capturing the complexity of contemporary Islamic phenomena within their natural contexts.[16] Because all data analyzed in this study are derived from online sources, specifically YouTube and Instagram the methodological approach is refined to digital ethnography/netnography, which is appropriate for research relying exclusively on digital interactions, online representations, and platform-based religious expressions.[17] Although urban Sufism is a broader phenomenon, this study focuses primarily on Hanan Attaki as a representative case of urban Sufi-style spirituality in Indonesian digital media.

Primary data consist of digital materials, including videos, visual posts, captions, and audience interactions, while secondary data include books, scholarly articles, and previous studies addressing urban Sufism, representation, and religious identity.[18] Data were collected through systematic digital observation, involving documentation of online content, archiving screenshots, capturing user engagement patterns, and organizing all materials based on emerging thematic relevance.[19] All digital materials were archived and organized according to emerging thematic relevance.

Data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis following the procedures of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing.[20] Thematic categories digital piety, Sufism in popular culture, and the commodification of religiosity were developed inductively from recurring patterns in the digital dataset. Because this study draws exclusively on qualitative digital data, statistical analysis was not required. Methodological rigor was ensured through source triangulation by comparing primary digital materials, secondary literature, and broader public discourse.[21] Supporting materials such as screenshots, tables, and diagrams are incorporated with appropriate references to enhance analytical transparency and strengthen the credibility of the findings.

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[16] John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 2013).
[17] Robert V. Kozinets, *Netnography: Redefined* (London: SAGE, 2015); Sarah Pink et al., *Digital Ethnography: Principles and Practice* (London: SAGE, 2016).
[18] Robert Bogdan and Sari Knopp Biklen, *Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theories and Methods*, 5th ed. (Boston: Pearson, 2007).
[19] Glenn A. Bowen, "Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method," *Qualitative Research Journal* 9, no. 2 (2009): 27–40.
[20] Matthew B. Miles, A. Michael Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 2014).
[21] Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods*, 4th ed. (Thousand Oaks: SAGE, 2015).

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The phenomenon of religious representation in digital media does not simply reproduce religious teachings or practices but actively contributes to shaping both social and spiritual identity. The concept of digital religion highlights that digital spaces operate not merely as channels of communication but as cultural arenas where individuals construct, negotiate, and affirm their religious identities.[22] Similar perspectives are offered by scholars examining Southeast Asian Muslim communities, who argue that online pious expression often serves as a form of public identity that responds to the broader social dynamics of urban life.[23] In this context, the representation of urban Sufism within digital content becomes inseparable from the efforts of urban Muslims to articulate their pious identities amid globalization, the rise of popular culture, and the commodification of religion. These dynamics illustrate how digital platforms increasingly mediate the ways contemporary Muslims imagine and perform their spirituality.

REPRESENTATION OF URBAN SUFISM AND URBAN LIFE

Urban Sufi communities increasingly utilize public spaces such as cafés, campus mosques, and community hubs to share Sufi teachings in more accessible and relaxed formats.[24] This transition from exclusive ritual spaces to inclusive urban settings reflects how urban Sufism operates both as a spiritual and social practice that blends with the fluid, cosmopolitan rhythm of city life. Through Hall's theory of representation, Sufi teachings presented via café discussions, short social media videos, and popular aesthetics can be viewed as encoded messages shaped to fit contemporary cultural tastes, which audiences then decode either as spiritual reinforcement or simply as religious entertainment.[25]

A clear example appears in the YouTube video "Berharap dan Bergantung Hanya pada Allah Ustadz Hanan Attaki Dakwah Motivasi Penyemangat" uploaded by Aljabar Media. In this video, Hanan Attaki communicates spiritual values such as tawakal and sincerity through soft narration, minimalist visuals, slow paced transitions, and contemplative background audio. These stylistic choices reflect what scholars describe as Sufi style spirituality, an urban form of religiosity

[22] Heidi A. Campbell and Ruth Tsuria, eds., *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in Digital Media* (London: Routledge, 2021).
[23] Martin Slama and Bart Barendregt, "Online Publics in Muslim Southeast Asia: In between Religious Politics and Popular Pious Practices," *Asiascape: Digital Asia* 5, nos. 1–2 (2018): 3–31.
[24] Achmad Zaini Arifin, "From Magics, Dances, to Cafés: The Role of Sufism in Constructing Identity among the Urban Youth," in *Proceedings of the 1st Annual International Conference on Social Sciences and Humanities (AICOSH 2019)*, vol. 33 (Paris: Atlantis Press, 2019), 166–169.
[25] Luthfi Makhasin, "Urban Sufism, Media and Religious Change in Indonesia," *Ijtima'iyya Journal of Muslim Society* 1, no. 1 (2016): 23–36; Rubaidi Rubaidi, "Kontekstualisasi Sufisme bagi Masyarakat Urban," *Jurnal Theologia* 30, no. 1 (2019): 127–152.

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that emphasizes emotional calmness, affective intimacy, and reflective moods rather than formal ritual structures.[26] This aesthetic orientation differs from the more assertive tone commonly associated with Pop Islam or the Hijrah movement, which frequently highlights moral discipline, identity consolidation, or lifestyle change rather than interior refinement.[27]



Figure 1. Screenshot of the video "Berharap & Bergantung Hanya pada Allah" from Aljabar Media (YouTube, 2024)

The use of minimalist design and meditative soundscapes aligns with the preferences of urban Muslim youth who seek spiritual grounding within fast paced city environments. Such techniques subtly embed Sufi inspired sensibilities into everyday digital consumption, positioning spirituality as part of the visual and emotional rhythm of contemporary urban culture. A similar pattern appears on his Instagram account (@hanan_attaki), where short reflective captions such as "Sometimes destiny feels unbearably heavy, but believe that" emphasize themes of surrender, emotional healing, and reliance on God. These elements demonstrate how Hanan Attaki's digital persona resonates with characteristics of urban Sufism, including affective spirituality, contemplative aesthetics, and accessible moral encouragement tailored to modern urban audiences.[28]

[26] Luthfi Makhasin, "Urban Sufism Media and Religious Change in Indonesia," *Ijtima'iyya: Journal of Muslim Society* 1, no. 1 (2016): 23–36; Ratri Rizki Kusumalestari, "Hijrahtainment Composing Piety and Profane as Commodification of Religion by Media," *Mediator* 13, no. 2 (2020): 290–306.
[27] Wahyudi Akmaliah, "When Islamism and Pop Culture Meet A Political Framing of the Movie 212 The Power of Love," *Studia Islamika* 27, no. 1 (2020): 1–33; Syamsul Haq, "Piety and Commercialization Dakwah The Influence of Hanan Attaki's Kajian on Young Urban Muslims in Indonesia," *Al Misbah: Jurnal Islamic Studies* 12, no. 1 (2024): 18–31.
[28] Syamsul Haq, "Piety and Commercialization Dakwah The Influence of Hanan Attaki's Kajian on Young Urban Muslims in Indonesia," *Al Misbah: Jurnal Islamic Studies* 12, no. 1 (2024): 18–31; Julian Millie, *Hearing Allah's Call Preaching and Performance in Indonesian Islam* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017).

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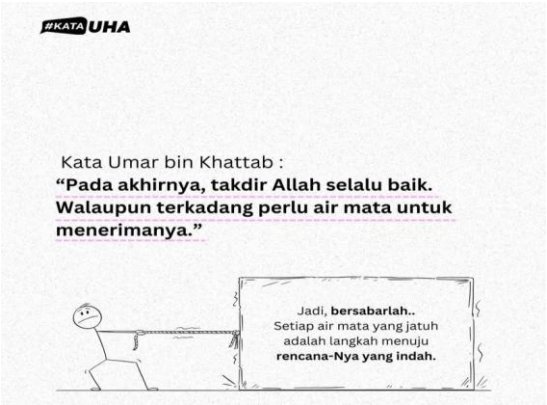


Figure 2. Instagram post by Ustadz Hanan Attaki with the caption "Kadang takdir terasa berat banget, tapi percayalah, …"

These examples demonstrate how Sufi values are reframed through emotionally appealing and aesthetically modern digital formats that resonate with urban digital natives. In line with Taylor's theory of identity, online recognition—manifested through likes, comments, and shares—functions as a form of social validation that shapes and legitimizes urban Muslim piety.[29] Previous studies affirm that digital media serve not merely as da'wah channels but as performative arenas where religious identity is negotiated between spiritual values, popular culture, and market logic.[30] Research on the Qadiriyah wa Naqshabandiyah order further shows how traditional Sufi practices are strengthened through digital presence, forming hybrid identities that combine classical spirituality with modern adaptation.[31]

Taken together, these dynamics illustrate that the representation of urban Sufism in digital and public urban spaces is a continuous negotiation between Sufi spiritual values and the pressures of modernity. Global research also highlights similar trends: Sufism has shifted from exclusive ritual practice to a more open, popular, and accessible expression aligned with the preferences of contemporary urban Muslims.[32] This convergence of spirituality, media aesthetics, and urban culture demonstrates how urban Sufism produces new, fluid forms of piety suited to the complex realities of modern urban life. Other urban religious figures such as Gus Baha and Habib Ja'far Al-

[29] Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*, 26.
[30] Dwifatma, "YouTube Islamic Web Series and Mediatized Piety among Urban Muslims in Indonesia," 183–197.
[31] Zulfan Taufik and Muhammad Taufik, "Mediated Tarekat Qadiriyah Wa Naqshabandiyah in the Digital Era: An Ethnographic Overview," *Esensia: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 22, no. 1 (2021): 35–43.
[32] Wijaya Wijaya et al., "The Integration of Sufism in Contemporary Indonesian Islam: The Case of Urban and Rural Communities," *Islamic Studies in the World* 2, no. 1 (2025): 42–51; Julian Millie, *Hearing Allah's Call: Preaching and Performance in Indonesian Islam* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017); Jaenuri Jaenuri, "Urban Sufism: The Dynamic of Cosmopolitan Religious Community," *Teosofia* 11, no. 2 (2022).

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Hadar also reflect urban Sufi-oriented spirituality in Indonesia, although their digital content is not the primary focus of this study.

URBAN MUSLIM PIETY: FROM RITUAL TO LIFESTYLE

Urban Muslim piety in the digital era is no longer understood solely as a set of ritual obligations but also as an expression of a modern lifestyle. Practices such as dhikr, Sufi studies, and even simple religious interactions like greeting one another after a study session are now seen as spiritual practices relevant to everyday life. These activities serve not only to fulfill religious duties but also as means to relieve stress, find inner peace, and provide guidance in the search for meaning amidst the hustle and bustle of urban life. As such, piety is increasingly framed as a holistic practice that integrates spiritual, emotional, and social dimensions of urban life.[33]

Religious identity in digital spaces is performative and often presented through social media. Urban Muslim youth frequently share Sufi quotations, short lecture videos, or daily activities infused with Islamic values. These representations demonstrate that piety is no longer confined to private spaces but is also publicly displayed in online environments. Recognition of one's piety is obtained through likes, comments, and shares, meaning that the legitimacy of religious identity is increasingly dependent on online social interactions and the digital audience's approval.[34]

This transformation highlights the fluid and flexible nature of urban Muslim piety. Young generations not only emphasize formal worship but also engage with Sufism as a medium to fulfill psychological and emotional needs. Religious study sessions are perceived not merely as knowledge transfer but also as "healing spaces" where participants can find tranquility and cope with life pressures. Social media further supports these practices, as intensive engagement with digital platforms can reinforce belief, religious experience, and the enactment of spiritual practices among students.[35]

Popular aesthetics also play a significant role in shaping urban religious practices. Sufi studies presented with indie music, visually appealing designs, or contemporary communication styles make religious content more engaging and relatable for urban audiences. This phenomenon, often referred to as hijrahtainment, merges spirituality and entertainment, allowing piety to appear more accessible, light, yet meaningful. Such approaches demonstrate how modern urban piety is

[33] Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity*; Husein and Slama, "Online Piety and Its Discontent: Revisiting Islamic Anxieties on Indonesian Social Media," 80–93.
[34] Dwifatma, "YouTube Islamic Web Series and Mediatized Piety among Urban Muslims in Indonesia," 183–197.
[35] Teguh Fachmi and Fauzan Nazil Ramadhan, "What Drives Indonesian Muslim Youth Express Their Piety on Social Media: Do Psychological, Socio-Cultural, and Politics Interfere?" *Proceeding of AICIEL* (2024): 409–416; Khairil Anwar, Surawan Surawan, and Sarimah Awang, "Social Media and Religiosity: Shifting the Lifestyle Paradigm of Urban Muslim Students," *Akademika* 29, no. 2 (2024): 195–204.

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negotiated not only through spiritual devotion but also through cultural tastes and media sensibilities.[36]

There has also been a shift in religious authority among urban Muslims. While traditional scholars previously dominated the legitimacy of piety, new figures such as young preachers, influencers, and content creators gain recognition due to their proximity to digital audiences. Social media has created a fragmented authority landscape, allowing youth to select religious figures in accordance with their personal lifestyles. This development indicates that modern piety emerges from a negotiation between spiritual values and socially mediated recognition, reflecting both individual agency and collective approval.[37]

In conclusion, urban Muslim piety has evolved from simple ritual observance to a broader, lifestyle-oriented practice. Sufi practices serve as stress relief, a tool for searching life's meaning, and a form of flexible religious identity. Social media amplifies this transformation by providing a space where piety can be performed, accessed, and evaluated publicly. Consequently, urban piety in the digital era is dynamic, fluid, and continuously adapting to the social and cultural context of contemporary city life.[38]

THE ISLAMIC CONTEXT OF CONTENT & THE CHALLENGES OF URBAN SUFISM

The rise of Islamic content in digital media responds to the spiritual needs of urban communities who navigate fast paced and distraction filled environments. In many cases, these needs are mediated not through formal Sufi orders, but through Sufi style spirituality that emphasizes emotional calmness, inner reflection, and accessible moral encouragement tailored for digital audiences.[39] This form of spirituality resonates with contemporary urban Muslims who prefer affective guidance and contemplative aesthetics rather than heavily institutional or doctrinal forms of religious engagement.

[36] Ratri Rizki Kusumalestari, "Hijrahtainment: Composing Piety and Profane as Commodification of Religion by Media," *Mediator* 13, no. 2 (2020): 290–306.
[37] Eko Saputra, Dony Arung Triantoro, and Ardiansyah, "Urban Muslim Youth, Pengajian Communities and Social Media: Fragmentation of Religious Authorities in Indonesia," *Al-Qalam* 27, no. 2 (2021): 335–346.
[38] Dwifatma, "YouTube Islamic Web Series and Mediatized Piety among Urban Muslims in Indonesia," 183–197; Kusumalestari, "Hijrahtainment: Composing Piety and Profane as Commodification of Religion by Media," 290–306; Eva Anzani Siregar, Mufida Tullaili, and Zul Afdal, "Social Media on Islamic Lifestyle Trends: A Systematic Review," *Indonesian Interdisciplinary Journal of Sharia Economics* 8, no. 1 (2025): 2270–2286.
[39] Luthfi Makhasin, "Urban Sufism Media and Religious Change in Indonesia," *Ijtima'iyya: Journal of Muslim Society* 1, no. 1 (2016): 23–36; Ratri Rizki Kusumalestari, "Hijrahtainment Composing Piety and Profane as Commodification of Religion by Media," *Mediator* 13, no. 2 (2020): 290–306.

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Haq highlights the approach of Hanan Attaki, who uses friendly language, gentle vocal delivery, meditative visuals, and youth oriented aesthetics to communicate spiritual messages.[40] While previous scholarship often categorizes Hanan within Pop Islam or the Hijrah movement due to his accessible preaching style and strong social media presence, his emphasis on emotional refinement, inner purification, and contemplative calm aligns closely with the characteristics of urban Sufism.[41] His content does not echo the disciplinary tone typical of Pop Islam, but instead reflects Sufi inspired sensibilities that frame spirituality as a source of emotional grounding and personal healing for urban youth. This blend of affective guidance and aesthetic intimacy positions Hanan's digital persona within Sufi style urban religiosity rather than within the structure of formal Sufi orders.

However, this transformation brings major challenges. One of them is the commodification of religion, where piety becomes a consumable lifestyle. Trends such as syar'i fashion, da'wah merchandise, and paid religious content on social media show how religion is marketed like cultural products. Khadijah warns that such commodification risks stripping piety of its spiritual depth.[42] Nonetheless, evidence also shows that digital da'wah content enhances inner peace and spiritual well-being among young people, although commercialization may create ethical dilemmas when monetization shifts religious orientation toward economic interests.[43]

Another challenge is the fragmentation of religious authority. While authority was once centered on ulama and traditional scholars, it is now also held by influencers and young preachers who have risen to prominence in digital spaces. Social media has produced new forms of authority not always grounded in scholarly lineage, leading many urban audiences to evaluate piety based on follower counts rather than religious knowledge.[44] This shift is reinforced by the rise of "digital Islamisation," where celebrity preachers gain legitimacy through online performance and personal branding.[45]

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[40] Syamsul Haq, "Piety and Commercialization Dakwah The Influence of Hanan Attaki's Kajian on Young Urban Muslims in Indonesia," *Al Misbah: Jurnal Islamic Studies* 12, no. 1 (2024): 18–31.

[41] Wahyudi Akmaliah, "When Islamism and Pop Culture Meet A Political Framing of the Movie 212 The Power of Love," *Studia Islamika* 27, no. 1 (2020): 1–33; Julian Millie, *Hearing Allah's Call Preaching and Performance in Indonesian Islam* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017).

[42] Siti Khadijah, "Commodification of Religion and Islamic Cultural Industry through Social Media," *IPERCOP* 2, no. 1 (2025): 46–55.

[43] Sirun and Surawan, "Konsumsi Konten Dakwah Digital dan Kesejahteraan Spiritual Mahasiswa: Kajian Empiris di Kalangan Generasi Z," 220–226; Dinda Ayu Pratiwi et al., "The Commercialization of Da'wah: An Islamic Perspective," *Hunafa: Jurnal Studia Islamika* 22, no. 1 (2025): 33–46.

[44] Saputra, Triantoro, and Ardiansyah, "Urban Muslim Youth, Pengajian Communities and Social Media: Fragmentation of Religious Authorities in Indonesia," 335–346; Ziaulhaq Hidayat, "Transforming Sufism into Digital Media: Eshaykh and Simplification of Tarekat Orthodoxy," *Epistemé* 17, no. 2 (2023): 197–223.

[45] Moch. Khafidz Fuad Raya, "Digital Islam: New Space for Authority and Religious Commodification among Islamic Preachers in Contemporary Indonesia," *Contemporary Islam* 19, no. 1 (2024): 161–194.

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Even so, these challenges also create opportunities. Religious commodification, for instance, can introduce Sufi values to young people who were previously distant from spiritual traditions. Kusumalestari's concept of *hijrahtainment* suggests that popular culture can bridge entertainment with spiritual values, expanding the reach of da'wah.[46]

Overall, Urban Sufism in digital media holds a dual position: it fulfills the spiritual needs of urban communities while facing the risks of commercialization and diluted meaning. Maintaining balance between media innovation, aesthetic appeal, and spiritual depth is therefore essential so that digital Islamic content remains rooted in the essence of Sufism as a path to inner tranquility and enlightenment.[47]

CONCLUSION

This study finds that the representation of urban Sufism in digital media functions not only as a medium for religious preaching but also as a space for negotiating the religious identity of urban Muslims. The presence of urban Sufism illustrates how Sufi values are adapted within digital spaces and urban public spheres, allowing them to merge with the fluid, cosmopolitan, and distraction-filled rhythms of modern life. In this way, piety is no longer understood exclusively as a ritual practice but instead appears as a social expression that is easily accessible and closely integrated into the everyday life of urban communities.

Furthermore, this study shows that digital media plays a crucial role in shaping a performative image of piety. The religious identity of urban Muslims is constructed through social recognition, both offline and online, with shifting standards of legitimacy that increasingly move away from traditional authorities toward public figures and content creators. Consequently, piety is displayed through popular communication styles, contemporary aesthetics, and media logics that emphasize connectivity, recognition, and public participation.

Another finding indicates that the phenomenon of urban Sufism presents both opportunities and challenges. On one hand, Sufi-oriented dakwah can reach a wider and more diverse audience through digital content that is inclusive and communicative. On the other hand, there are risks of spiritual shallowness, the commodification of religion, and the fragmentation of religious authority, which may shift the orientation of Sufism from spiritual depth toward symbolic and economic

[46] Kusumalestari, "Hijrahtainment: Composing Piety and Profane as Commodification of Religion by Media," 290–306.
[47] Haq, "Piety and Commercialization Da'wah: The Influence of Hanan Attaki's Kajian on Young Urban Muslims in Indonesia," 18–31; Khadijah, "Commodification of Religion and Islamic Cultural Industry through Social Media," 46–55.

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interests. Therefore, maintaining a balance between media innovation and spiritual substance becomes an urgent necessity.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that preachers and digital content creators adopt a more reflective and critical approach when presenting Sufi messages so that the spiritual depth is not lost. Future research may expand the discussion by comparing urban Sufi practices across platforms or cultures, as well as employing ethnographic approaches that trace the dynamics of interaction between digital spaces and offline communities. In doing so, studies on urban Sufism can provide a more comprehensive understanding of how the religious identity of urban Muslims continues to be shaped and negotiated amid the currents of modernity, globalization, and mediatization.

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