

## Digital Feminism in Indonesia: The Counter-Narratives to Gender Inequality on Instagram

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### **Abstract:**

*The rise of digital media has significantly transformed the landscape of religious authority and feminist activism in Indonesia. This research examines how Mubadalah.id, an Instagram-based digital Islamic platform, serves as a counter-narrative to patriarchal interpretations of Islamic texts by promoting inclusive and reciprocal perspectives rooted in Islamic teachings. The research aims to explore how feminist reinterpretations of religious authority are articulated, mediated, and contested in online spaces, particularly through visual and narrative strategies. Addressing a critical gap in the literature on Islamic digital feminism, this research situates the intersection of religion, gender, and media within the Indonesian context, where women ulama are both emerging and negotiating their presence. Using a qualitative virtual ethnographic approach, data were collected through in-depth interviews with the editorial team of Mubadalah.id and content analysis of selected high-engagement Instagram posts. The findings reveal that Mubadalah.id employs visual aesthetics, storytelling, and moderate Islamic jurisprudence to challenge misogynistic narratives, empower women's roles in public discourse, and foster a more gender-equitable understanding of Islam. This research concludes that Islamic digital feminism on Instagram not only challenges dominant narratives but also signifies a broader reconfiguration of Islamic authority and gender dynamics in contemporary Indonesian society.*

**Keywords:** *Digital Feminism, Islamic Authority, Gender Counter-Narratives, Instagram, Mubadalah.id*

## INTRODUCTION

The digital era has profoundly reshaped the dynamics of religious expression and gender discourse in Indonesia. As the internet increasingly serves as a platform for both piety and protest, social media has emerged as a critical space for negotiating religious authority and constructing identity. Campbell and Tsuria (2013) introduced the concept of cyber religion as a framework for understanding the rise of online religious practices, communities, and engagements. In particular, Helland's (2000) classification of "religion online" illustrates how contemporary Muslims utilize the internet to assert religious interpretations. This transformation in religious practice is especially significant in Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim-majority country, where social media has evolved into a platform not only for religious observance but also for challenging conventional power structures—including patriarchal religious interpretations. The intersection of online religion and digital activism provides a crucial lens for examining how emerging forms of Islamic expression challenge gender inequality in culturally embedded ways.

The digitalization of religion, particularly within Islamic contexts, has generated significant scholarly interest in issues of authority, authenticity, and contestation. While some scholars argue that the internet undermines traditional Islamic educational institutions (Rusli & Nurdin, 2022), others highlight its role in democratizing access to religious knowledge (Hosen, 2008). Online religious authorities increasingly compete with institutionalized counterparts through platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook, resulting in a fragmented space for fatwa circulation (Hegazy, 2020). This shift has driven dynamic social transformations, particularly among Muslim youth, who engage with online platforms to explore new identities, expressions of piety, and gender relations (Lengauer, 2008; Halim, 2018; Rijal, 2020). Social media thus serves as both a site of preservation and contestation, enabling religious influencers and scholars to reframe dominant narratives through vernacular expressions and symbolic acts. However, despite the democratizing potential of these technologies, male-centric interpretations and patriarchal discourses continue to dominate digital religious ecosystems.

Within this contested digital space, feminist interventions have emerged as a crucial counter-narrative. Digital feminism—defined as the mobilization of feminist ideals through online platforms—has revitalized women's activism by utilizing digital affordances to promote inclusivity, agency, and justice. Jouët (2018) situates digital feminism within a framework of generational resurgence, albeit marked by intergenerational tensions and questions of inclusivity. In Indonesia, feminist digital activism navigates a complex landscape shaped by Islamic values, cultural expectations, and political contestations. Patriarchal messages—often cloaked in religious authority—continue to circulate widely online, reinforcing gendered moral hierarchies. Simultaneously, female scholars, activists, and preachers increasingly utilize digital media to advance gender-equitable interpretations of Islam. Nisa (2021) identifies digital feminism as a means of identity formation, movement building, and collective resistance. Likewise, Nisa (2019) underscores the role of new media in amplifying the voices of female Islamic scholars, particularly in issuing alternative religious discourses through online fatwas and advocacy campaigns.

This research examines Mubadalah.id, a prominent Instagram account affiliated with the Fahmina Foundation, which strategically challenges gender inequality through Islamic-based feminist discourse. Mubadalah.id represents a creative intersection of da'wa, feminist theology, and digital aesthetics, aiming to counter misogynistic religious interpretations. Instagram's performative culture provides an interactive and affective space for mobilizing followers, fostering safe discursive zones, and constructing

alternative imaginaries of womanhood, authority, and piety. With over 45 million active users in Indonesia, Instagram has become a pivotal platform for contesting gendered narratives. Prior studies have explored Instagram as a medium for self-presentation, identity negotiation, and symbolic resistance (Rosyidah & Nurwati, 2019; Lövheim & Lundmark, 2019). The concept of digital ulama—used here to encompass both male and female scholars engaged in gender-justice-oriented Islamic discourse—expands our understanding of religious authority beyond traditional institutions, emphasizing its embodiment in digital performances.

The primary objective of this research is to examine how Mubadalah.id negotiates Islamic teachings and gender equality through digital performances on Instagram. Specifically, it analyzes how visual, textual, and discursive strategies are utilized to challenge patriarchal narratives and promote alternative interpretations grounded in reciprocity, justice, and inclusivity. This research addresses a gap in the literature on the intersection of Islamic feminism, digital media, and religious authority in the Indonesian context. Additionally, it highlights the creative and affective dimensions of Islamic feminist digital activism, thereby broadening contemporary Islamic discourse and expanding theoretical perspectives on authority and gender in Southeast Asia.

Based on the assumption that digital media is not merely a neutral tool but a performative and political space, this research argues that platforms like Instagram can serve as transformative sites for producing and disseminating counter-narratives to dominant patriarchal Islamic discourses. Mubadalah.id illustrates how religious content, when framed through aesthetics, interactivity, and affective resonance, can challenge hegemonic interpretations and construct a more inclusive vision of Islam. Data from the Indonesian Ministry of Communication indicate that social media engagement among Muslim youth continues to rise annually, reinforcing the role of platforms like Instagram as critical arenas for ideological negotiation and gender discourse. This research investigates whether Mubadalah.id effectively utilizes this digital space to reconfigure gender authority and Islamic scholarship.

This research adopts virtual ethnography as its methodological foundation, integrating content analysis and in-depth interviews with Mubadalah.id's founder and editorial team. Using a descriptive qualitative approach, it examines selected Instagram posts to analyze how meaning is constructed and disseminated within digital da'wa practices. The article is structured as follows: the next section contextualizes Islamic feminism in Indonesia, situating it within broader religious and political movements. This is followed by an analysis of Mubadalah.id's platform and networks. The subsequent sections explore the aesthetics, strategies, and narratives employed to counter patriarchal interpretations. Finally, the concluding section synthesizes the findings and reflects on their broader implications for feminist religious activism in digital public spheres.

In conclusion, this research argues that Mubadalah.id's digital activism represents a transformative intervention in Indonesian Islamic discourse, offering a compelling model of feminist da'wa that challenges normative hierarchies and broadens the boundaries of religious authority. This research contributes to ongoing discussions in social and religious studies by demonstrating how digital spaces facilitate inclusive interpretations of Islam, enhance the visibility of female religious scholars, and resist gendered oppression. Ultimately, this research underscores the need for further interdisciplinary inquiries into the cultural, political, and theological dimensions of digital religious activism in Muslim-majority societies.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Islamic Feminism in Contemporary Indonesia

The discourse on Islamic feminism in Indonesia is deeply intertwined with the country's socio-cultural dynamics shape varying interpretations and practices. The presence of women in the public sphere dates back to the colonial era, as evidenced by the role of prominent female figures in Indonesia's independence movement. Consequently, discussions on gender equality are closely linked to women's activism through various organizations. Throughout Indonesian history, concepts of gender and power relations in Islam have been shaped by evolving and often fluctuating perceptions of what constitutes ideal men, women, and gender relationships within both Indonesian and Islamic contexts (Qibtiyah, 2009). The election of Megawati Soekarnoputri as Indonesia's first female president sparked intense public debates on women's leadership in Islam, with scholars offering diverse interpretations regarding its legitimacy. Nevertheless, her presidency marked a significant moment in Indonesia's gradual acceptance of women's leadership and broader participation in the public sphere. However, the recognition of women's roles in political and social domains does not automatically translate into widespread gender equality (Arimbi, 2009). Structural challenges persist, as evidenced by the continued prevalence of discriminatory practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation in Indonesia and beyond.

As evidence of progressiveness, Indonesian Muslim women have actively articulated the concept of gender equality in Islam through their movements. These movements advocate for gender equality from an Islamic perspective, which they argue aligns with the broader mission of Islam. One of the most influential movements is the Indonesian Women Ulama Congress (KUPI), first held in 2017, which gathered more than 1,500 participants from diverse backgrounds (Nisa, 2019). As the world's first women's ulama congress, KUPI successfully established gender equality as a central theme in Islamic thought. This moment marked significant progress in Indonesia's feminist Islamic discourse. Furthermore, Nisa (2019) highlights that the agency of progressive Muslim women is evident in how they negotiate their presence in the Indonesian public sphere, navigating the complexities of both Islamic and Islamist actors.

Indonesian digital feminist activists have emerged with the agency of young women's movements to address gender inequality by engaging in various educational activities. They have increasingly promoted these movements on social media, aiming to create digitally safe spaces, share personal stories, facilitate online discussion forums, organize marches and offline events, respond to criticisms and opposing viewpoints, as well as conduct and publish research (Parahita, 2019). The basic literacy of digital tools enables women to explore their capabilities and voice their ideas effectively. Despite challenges, several women's voices in Indonesia have become particularly prominent due to their effective use of information and technology. Highlighting the progressive movement of Indonesian Muslim women is significant for both Indonesian democracy and the expression of pluralism.

### Mubadalah.id: An Overview

In 2015, Mubadalah.id began as a personal blog created by Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, a writer focused on Islamic feminism. As the originator of the concept of *Mubadalah* (reciprocal), which advocates for equal interpretations of Islamic texts, he sought to digitally share this idea, derived from his popular book "Qiraah Mubadalah". The term *Mubadalah* refers to the concept of reciprocal relationships among human beings (Kodir, 2019), defined by equality, reciprocity, and cooperation between two parties. In his book, he elaborates on the concept of gender equality through Islamic

texts, including the Qur'an and Hadith. With the advancement of technology, Kodir realized that his blog, featuring long-form writing, would become less relevant. Thus, he adapted his ideas into short videos and images with simpler explanations, making them more accessible to a broader audience.

He formally began modernizing the book through images and posts on the Instagram account @mubadalah.id, which was launched during the first Indonesian Women Ulama Congress (KUPI) in April 2017. Promoting the concept of Islamic gender equality, the platform has undergone several name changes, from Mubadalah.com to Mubadalahnews.com, and is now known as Mubadalah.id, with its website and Instagram account @Mubadalah.id, which has 41.1K followers. With the tagline "Relationship Justice Inspiration," it also operates a YouTube channel with 6.49K subscribers and 632 videos. Additionally, it is active on Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, and Spotify (accessed on January 8, 2023).

The previous works of Mubadalah.id as an Instagram account include addressing women's issues from an Islamic perspective, often presented as memes featuring Hadith, delivered through creative images and posts (Mukarromah, 2020). These Hadith sources are portrayed in cartoon dialogues or memes. Specifically, the memes focus on themes such as the recognition of women's existence in the public sphere, marriage relationships, and other issues related to contemporary women's dynamics. The posts refer to the book "60 Hadis Shohih (Khusus Tentang Hak-Hak Perempuan dalam Islam dilengkapi dengan Penafsirannya)" or "60 Authentic Hadith (Specifically Regarding Women's Rights in Islam, Equipped with Interpretation)," which was also written by Kodir and published in 2019.

Other scholars argue that Mubadalah.id plays a role as a political communication tool for the women's movement in Indonesia, supporting the ratification of the bill through various strategies. These include channeling messages regarding the urgency of passing the bill, countering narratives that oppose its ratification, and fostering public support for the bill's approval (Khairani et al., 2021). Rifani and Tambunan (2020) state that Mubadalah.id cultivates a sense of digital sisterhood through its social media activism, which is constructed through the use of personal narratives and hashtags to articulate the ideology of Islamic feminism. In related research, Amarilisyaringtyas (2020) examines how Mubadalah.id challenges the discourse of women's marginalization, arguing that it contradicts the principles of gender equity taught in Islamic teachings.

As of January 8, 2023, the Instagram account @Mubadalah.id has 41.1K followers, 1,323 posts, and follows 234 accounts. Generally, the posts are categorized into three main themes: the recognition of women's position in Islamic perspectives, marital relationships, and gender-based violence. In addition to these three primary themes, the account also covers topics such as environmental issues, selected weekly articles from the web, parenting styles, and life motivation. Specific issues like abortion, child marriage, female genital mutilation, and polygamy are also highlighted. Zahra, the head of Mubadalah.id, outlines the objectives of the platform as follows:

Mubadalah.id represents Islamic media and women's rights, aimed at strengthening the capacity and authority of female ulama by promoting the mubadalah (reciprocal) perspective, which emphasizes the values of reciprocity, equality, cooperation, and justice in marital, familial, and broader social relations. Mubadalah.id also focuses on themes of tolerance, peace, nationalism, gender justice, and environmental sustainability, engaging millennial students as the core community to collectively create a more Islamic, peaceful, dignified, just, and *maslahah* (beneficial) life.

Mubadalah.id routinely organizes posts based on selected articles from its website. Zahra explains that the editorial team is divided into several divisions, each responsible for determining content and publication. The team identifies the most engaging articles, which are later used as source material for all social media platforms, including Instagram, YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, and Spotify. These articles are consistently published daily across these platforms.

### **Creativity in Countering the Gender Inequality Narratives**

Counter-narratives have been used by scholars as a term to describe new alternative perspectives that challenge existing narratives. Tuck and Silverman (2016), in “The Counter-Narrative Handbook,” suggest that countering narratives are increasingly utilized in cyber interactions, particularly around controversial issues such as extremist propaganda, discrimination, marginalization, and other debatable topics. Counter-narratives encompass a wide range of activities, aiming to present positive arguments from diverse perspectives while deconstructing or delegitimizing common notions. Lien (2022) refers to the concept of the subaltern counter-public, which allows subordinated social groups to intervene in public debates. These groups—such as women, people with disabilities, workers, and others—form their identities in resistance to coercive forces. Fraser (1990), as cited in Lien (2022), describes the marginalized counter-public as a discursive space where marginalized groups promote oppositional ideas, offering alternative arguments to articulate their identities and needs. In the realm of digital debate, these oppositional ideas serve to reinforce religious identities, as seen in the posts shared by Mubadalah.id. Particularly, when addressing contentious issues such as the veil, polygamy, or childfree lifestyles, Mubadalah.id fosters engagement by inviting diverse arguments from its audience, encouraging them to express their views.

Indeed, the growing use of social media across generations requires content creators to be increasingly creative in engaging with their followers. Furthermore, borrowing from Nisa’s (2018) hypothesis that “a picture is worth a thousand words,” the idea suggests that a complex concept can be conveyed through one or a few images, simplifying a longer explanation. This phenomenon of using digital platforms for spiritual engagement is often referred to as “spiritualizing the internet.” Campbell (2005) introduced this term, recognizing the internet as a space conducive to religious engagement, allowing users to incorporate online activities into the rhythm of their spiritual lives. In this context, we focus on presenting and analyzing a high-engagement post, as it demonstrates how ideas are expressed and how responses are generated.

One of the enduring and contested issues for Muslim women is their decision to engage in paid work, and whether this decision aligns with Islamic principles. This debate has evolved from the classical period to the modern era. In Indonesia, the discussion often intersects with cultural beliefs and social constructions. Women who work outside the home, often referred to as working women, are subject to public discourse that justifies their decision, focusing on their contributions beyond domestic responsibilities. For Muslim Women, Mubadalah.id has addressed this issue in the following ways:



Figure 1. Content Regarding Double Social Accusations

This post was uploaded on December 27, 2020, and has received 1,135 likes and over 30 comments. It challenges the prohibition against women working, portraying such restrictions as unrealistic and utopian. The post references research conducted by Rumah KitaB, a national NGO in Indonesia focused on women's empowerment. The research highlights a widespread social media campaign that, for a certain period, promoted narratives warning against the risks women face when they choose to work. These narratives, rooted in Islamist perspectives, argue that women are not obligated to work because providing for the family is a man's duty. Additionally, they claim that women's faith is easily compromised outside the home and that women themselves are sources of *fitnah* (temptation) in the public sphere. Mubadalah.id counters these narratives with the following response:

Most Indonesian women, especially Muslims, come from middle- to lower-class family backgrounds, such as agrarian communities. The tradition of working women has always existed and has never been an issue. Men and women have equal rights and opportunities in this regard. If women's participation in the workforce is considered to expose them to discrimination, then rather than restricting their mobility, why not improve public spaces to ensure their safety and protect them from discrimination? The solution should not be to confine women to their homes, depriving them of access to self-development.

This post sparked debates among commentators. The discussion began in response to a comment from an account that expressed agreement with the idea that "Islamic teachings are never wrong; a woman is indeed better off not working outside the home, as her primary duty is to protect her family and uphold her dignity." The commenter supported this claim by citing Quranic verses, Hadith, and opinions from Islamic scholars. This statement, in turn, prompted reactions from other users, most of whom supported the post's perspective. Critics of the conservative view argued that relying solely on religious verses without considering contemporary socio-economic realities overlooks the struggles faced by single women and single mothers who must work to support themselves and their families. The traditionalist stance, which asserts that women should remain financially dependent on their fathers or brothers if unmarried, was met with counterarguments emphasizing that economic circumstances vary widely. Nonetheless, conservative opinions continued to assert their position, reinforcing the notion that a woman's primary role is within the domestic sphere.

Tuck and Silverman (2016) emphasize the importance of understanding the target audience and their characteristics when posting content and countering narratives. Delivering a message effectively requires careful consideration of the diverse audience it reaches. They stress the importance of using appropriate language and expressions tailored to the target readers. A review of the debates reveals several key points. First, the post is grounded in research that supports the argument that women should have the ability, competence, and opportunity to work, challenging the notion that staying at home is an absolute Islamic requirement. However, it lacks specific Islamic references from the Quran, Hadith, or scholarly interpretations to support its argument regarding working women. Second, the use of the term *utopic* in the post may be perceived as judgmental, particularly by those who view domestic roles as a legitimate and valuable choice for women. Third, the post's framing and captions appear to be intentionally structured to invite responses from readers. In this regard, Lien (2022) highlights that debates in the comment sections reveal competing counter-publics within Islam, which also emerge in mainstream news outlets. Furthermore, the articulation of religious identity in digital spaces is increasingly regarded as significant, paralleling its importance in offline interactions.

However, let us examine a countering opinion presented in another post on a similar topic:



Figure 2. Content regarding double social accusations

This post, titled “Unemployed Men Are Not the Fault of Working Women,” was published on June 27, 2022, and garnered 575 likes along with several comments. It argues that domestic work is not exclusively the responsibility of wives, citing examples from the Prophet's time where women were actively engaged in the public sphere. This argument is further supported by stories of the Prophet and his female companions, who participated in various public activities. In other related posts, Mubadalah.id highlights a hadith illustrating how the Prophet engaged in domestic chores, such as sewing, milking goats, and serving his own needs. Additionally, notable women such as Khadijah, a successful entrepreneur, and Aisyah, a renowned hadith narrator, are presented as examples of women who demonstrated active public roles. These two posts, though addressing similar topics, were published at different times. The counter-narratives become more comprehensive when they integrate both Islamic sources and feminist perspectives. This approach also appears to be a strategic way to engage followers by offering varying viewpoints on a similar topic, reinforcing the idea that consistent storytelling or messaging is key to building rapport with an audience (Tuck & Silverman, 2016).

Another debatable issue is the hijab (veil), which is often regarded as a symbol of piety for Muslim women. In this context, Mubadalah.id addresses the topic as follows:



Figure 3. Content addressing the hijab issue

This post, uploaded on December 23, 2020, garnered 9,795 likes and more than 800 comments. Most commentators engaged in lengthy debates concerning the validity of the post, the permissibility of removing the veil, interpretations of Quranic verses, incomplete references to scholars' opinions, and the rejection of certain scholars cited in the post. Some commentators even attacked the account admin, urging them to block or remove the account. This indicates that raising the issue of the veil, which remains a subject of contestable opinions, generates significant responses. Commentators' perceptions are shaped by their personal views, interpretations of texts, and affiliations with specific sects. The post attempts to articulate different scholarly perspectives on the interpretation of the *hijab* (veil) verse. The caption reads:

“How come you're in a rush to criticize a woman wearing a headscarf/veil but exposing her hands or half of her calves? Moreover, why does seeing women take off their headscarves seem to be like your hobby for some to denounce? Some people fail to understand that Islamic scholars have different schools of thought and perspectives. Regardless, we are valid as Muslim women and humans, whether we wear the hijab or not.”

The caption promotes the idea of learning from diverse opinions on certain Islamic issues presented by different Islamic scholars. Not all commentators are women; some are recognized as men based on their profile photos and usernames, though these are not definitive indicators of gender. The arguments among them mainly focus on the belief that the Islamic instruction to wear the hijab is absolute and non-negotiable. They argue that this post may influence Muslim women to remove their hijabs. Some commentators also warn that removing the hijab could result in an eternal sin that must be accounted for in the afterlife. What is particularly striking is that some individuals question the religion of the account admin, attack personal matters, and accuse them of being a “ost” Muslim.

This post is based on the writings of Nadirsyah Hosen, a prominent Islamic scholar from Indonesia who currently resides in Australia, serving as a senior lecturer at Monash University. Hosen addresses the issue of the *hijab* (veil) in a column for the Mubadalah website, responding to a statement by Shinta Nuriyah, a well-known Islamic scholar, who states that wearing the hijab is not obligatory for Muslim women. This statement sparked public debate, and Hosen seeks to clarify her statement in his article. In his writing, Hosen examines the differing opinions among scholars across various

periods and social conditions. He also presents exegeses of the verse an-Nur: 31 from multiple sources. His thorough investigation concludes that covering the *aurat* (the body parts that must be covered) is obligatory, although the specific boundaries of what constitutes *aurat* remain subject to debate.

Interpreting Islam solely as a religion represents a narrow understanding of Islam itself. For Islamists, wearing the hijab is viewed as an absolute act, based on the commands of the Quran, without further exploration of the reasons for revelation or the context behind the varying opinions among scholars. In the context of Indonesian Muslim women, Arimbi (2009) argues that fanaticism toward religious symbols demands Indonesian Muslim women to emphasize their Islamic identity through fashion. The prevailing narratives on social media encourage followers to consume the content avidly, often overlooking the context. New media, faith, and online fragmentation play a significant role in shaping, as well as reshaping, digital identity or persona (Kavakci & Kraeplin, 2017).

In response to the debates, Mubadalah.id strives to articulate a broad perspective in countering gender inequality narratives. Some strategies they employ include responding to opposing comments by directing users to the primary source of the post. Nearly all posts are based on articles published on their website. The editorial team selects the top ten articles each week to feature in the website's column, which are then used as source material for social media content, including infographics, videos, animations, podcasts, and audio snippets. A closer look at the strategies used to counter gender injustice narratives is reflected in Zahra's statement:

We aim to approach every controversial issue related to women's problems with moderation, considering both men's and women's perspectives. This requires significant effort to gather detailed resources from various schools of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) when legal matters are involved. Additionally, we engage with many Islamic scholars, both male and female, who are consistent in their teaching and study of classical texts to understand the interpretations of specific arguments. Achieving an objective opinion is challenging, but our goal is to present alternative narratives that, of course, also align with the legitimacy of Islamic scholars' views.

Lien (2022) categorizes the characteristics of Islamic counter-publics into three types: (1) an Islam-hostile/anti-Islamist counter-public sphere, (2) an Islam-sympathetic counter-public sphere, and (3) a mainstream public sphere. The debates in the comments do not demonstrate anti-Islamist or religious hostility, but rather reflect a mainstream ideological perspective that differs from the one presented in the post. The Islam-sympathetic counter-public sphere is now expressed through new media, allowing individuals to convey their religious tendencies. Furthermore, Hosen (2008) argues that religious self-identity in the context of cyber religion is an expression of the influence of digital *fatwas*. For modern society, this represents an effort to establish their religious identity by embracing what they perceive as the most appropriate interpretation.

In another case, we also interviewed Faqihuddin Abdul Kodir, the primary promoter and originator of Mubadalah. He expressed concern over the growing trend of online stereotyping and gender-biased posts on social media, particularly those relying on textual interpretations of religious texts. These posts often multiply content with visually appealing designs, citing verses or hadiths with only superficial, lexical meanings, and minimal interpretations from expert scholars of *fiqh*. Sometimes, these posts offer their interpretations, which, in his view, tend to be filled with patriarchal tendencies. This digital phenomenon has been on the rise over the last decade, as social media platforms are increasingly filled with feminist propaganda. However, in the last five years, many

social media accounts have emerged, challenging these stereotypical narratives and countering mainstream patriarchal interpretations of religious texts. This represents a form of balance, providing an alternative narrative to readers, often with equally attractive presentations.

What requires more attention is how Islamists use these narratives to imply their own perceptions, which are often seen as authoritative within misogynistic interpretations. Regarding such misogynistic readings of religious texts, Kodir offers the following perspective:

No religious texts are misogynistic. What remains are the misogynistic views of the readers and interpreters. Any source of religious texts, whether from the Qur'an or Hadith, must be interpreted fairly, as the core principles of Islam are justice, mercy, and a vision guided by akhlaqul karimah (good manners). When we encounter an authoritative verse, we must first understand its primary message and then refer to other arguments that support that verse. Verses that are considered authoritative should be interpreted in light of the main principles and the broader vision of Islam's great mission, namely tawhid (monotheism), rahmatan lil alamin (mercy for all), and akhlaqul karimah. If our perspective aligns with these principles, then there is no misogynistic text. This is what is meant by the concept of mubadalah interpretation.

Regarding the strategy employed by Mubadalah.id in countering mainstream patriarchal narratives, Kodir suggests that Indonesian Muslim women activists need to expand their ideas across as many posts as possible. Broadening their perspectives through personal social media accounts is essential. At the same time, Islamic women's organizations must promote their ideas using creative visuals, engaging performances, and high-quality content. Networking among organizations is crucial for creating a large-scale movement and voicing public ideas. Therefore, participation in social media should be guided by the understanding that the managers of these accounts must hold the right perspective on Islamic feminism. Additionally, strong communication skills are necessary to ensure that messages are effectively received by readers. However, challenges remain, as women ulama still need to continue their work in offline spaces, especially considering the many Indonesian women who lack access to social media. Enacting the struggle for women's equality and justice is thus a long and ongoing journey.

## CONCLUSION

This research reveals that Mubadalah.id, through its creative engagement on Instagram, creates a counter-discursive space that challenges dominant patriarchal narratives by offering alternative religious interpretations in visually appealing formats. By utilizing the affordances of digital media, particularly Instagram, this platform rearticulates Islamic teachings on women's rights through aesthetic content and contemporary communication styles. The analysis demonstrates that Mubadalah.id functions not only as a site of digital da'wa but also as a dynamic arena where women ulama negotiate identity, authority, and legitimacy within a Muslim-majority society. These digital interventions effectively challenge misogynistic readings of Islamic texts, offering perspectives of reciprocity, justice, and gender equality grounded in Islamic traditions. The posts curated by Mubadalah.id illustrate how digital spaces facilitate religious reinterpretation and participation, particularly for marginalized voices. This confirms that Instagram is not merely a tool of expression but an epistemic space where Islamic feminism can develop new strategies to thrive.

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to understanding how digital religion intersects with gender justice, offering empirical evidence of how religious authority is reconfigured through social media. This work expands the scope of Islamic studies by examining how feminist interpretations of religious texts are negotiated online amid conservative backlash. In doing so, it repositions the role of women ulama and Islamic feminist activists in creating alternative religious knowledge. Furthermore, this research enriches the growing body of literature on digital feminism, Islamic counter-publics, and the performativity of piety in digital spaces. By highlighting the creative strategies employed in the content production of Mubadalah.id, this research emphasizes the need to recognize social media as a site for contemporary Islamic reform and gender activism. It challenges static and essentialist representations of Islamic tradition by demonstrating the multiplicity of voices and interpretations active in the Indonesian Muslim public sphere.

However, this study has limitations, particularly in its focus on a single social media account and selected examples of its content, which may not fully capture the broader landscape of Islamic digital feminism in Indonesia. Future research should explore a comparative analysis of various feminist Islamic platforms, the reception of their messages among different audience segments, and the influence of algorithmic curation on the visibility of gender-just narratives. Further inquiry could also examine how offline and online activism are intertwined and how Islamic feminist actors balance textual authority with popular engagement. Despite these limitations, this research affirms the transformative potential of digital spaces in amplifying moderate Islamic voices and fostering inclusive religious discourses. It offers vital implications for policymakers, educators, and religious institutions committed to gender justice and pluralism in the digital era.

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