

Ngajiblox Hyperreality: a Netnographic Study of Simulacra in Virtual Qur'anic Study Practices by Majelis Roblox Indonesia on the Roblox Platform

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Abstract:

This study examines Ngajiblox, a virtual Qur'anic study initiative organized by Mario (Majelis Roblox Indonesia) on the Roblox platform, to analyze how digital environments produce religious simulacra and hyperreal experiences. As religious practices increasingly move online, the research explores how Islamic learning, ethical conduct, and communal interaction are reconfigured in virtual space. A descriptive qualitative method with a netnographic approach was employed. Data were gathered through online observation, in-depth interviews, and content analysis, and interpreted using Jean Baudrillard's theory of simulacra and simulation. The findings reveal that the virtual mosque functions as a socio-religious arena where Islamic practices are reconstructed through digital symbols, avatars, spatial design, and virtual artifacts. Rather than simply imitating offline gatherings, the sessions generate an autonomous religious reality in which learning and spirituality are experienced as authentic. Elements such as mosque icons, gender-segregated areas, and live broadcasts from a physical mosque in Klaten strengthen the sense of hyperreal religiosity. Participants engage in study, ethical reflection, and social interaction in ways that parallel offline life, while remaining aware of limitations such as distraction and "instant" spirituality. Islamic subjectivity thus emerges through negotiation between digital simulation and embodied faith.

Keywords: *hyperreality, netnographic study, Roblox, simulacra, virtual Qur'anic study*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technologies has significantly transformed religious practices, shifting them from physically co-present interactions toward mediated and virtual environments. While traditional Islamic studies have long relied on face-to-face interactions in mosques and religious assemblies, contemporary practices increasingly occur within digital platforms. However, existing research has largely focused on social media and streaming platforms, leaving immersive online game environments such as Roblox

underexplored. This gap is critical because such platforms do not merely mediate communication but provide persistent, interactive virtual spaces where users engage through avatars and user-generated environments. In this context, religious activities—such as virtual Qur’anic study sessions conducted by Majelis Roblox Indonesia—raise a fundamental question: how religious practices in immersive digital spaces are constructed as simulacra and experienced as hyperreality, rather than simply extensions of offline religious life.

Previous studies have examined hyperreality and simulacra in digital environments, particularly online games. Using Baudrillard’s framework, qualitative research shows that roleplay communities and games such as Free Fire create immersive simulations experienced as reality itself (Alwan et al., 2025; Wardhana, 2022). These findings suggest that online games function not only as entertainment but as hyperreal social spaces. Similarly, research on digital religiosity reveals how mediated religious practices reflect hyper-religiosity shaped by simulacra and postmodern media logic (Saumantri, 2023). Theoretical discussions on the shift from reality to hyperreality further argue that digital platforms reshape lived experience through simulations that precede and replace referential reality. In the context of religion, Srinawati et al. (2020) examine simulacra formation in women’s Majelis Taklim, showing how religious practices are reshaped through symbolic representations and mediated spaces. However, their study remains grounded in offline and semi-digital contexts rather than fully immersive virtual environments. Expanding this discussion, Saumantri (2023) conceptualizes hyper-religiosity in the digital era as a simulation in which religious symbols become embedded in consumerist logics, reorienting practice toward consumption. Similarly, Sulaeman et al. (2024) demonstrate that digitally mediated Islamic learning among adolescents produces hyper-spirituality shaped by circulating hyper-semiotic representations. Gürel & Mencet (2024) further argue that platforms such as YouTube function as sites of religious hyperreality by commodifying and circulating syncretic belief practices as simulated experiences. Meanwhile, Fernando et al. (2025) find that virtual worship in the metaverse (e.g., Hajj, prayer) is generally accepted as educational but not as a legitimate substitute for physically embodied rituals requiring theological authenticity. Despite these contributions, research on online gaming platforms as sites where religious simulacra are actively produced remains limited. This study addresses that gap by examining the construction of religious simulacra in Roblox, a fully user-generated environment, through Baudrillard’s theory.

This study argues that immersive platforms such as Roblox enable the construction of religious practices as simulacra, where religious symbols, spaces, and interactions operate beyond their original material referents. According to Jean Baudrillard (1994), the dominance of signs and images in contemporary society marks a shift from material production toward simulation, generating a reality detached from empirical reference. This condition produces hyperreality, where representations precede, construct, and ultimately replace the real. Drawing on this perspective, virtual Qur’anic study sessions conducted by Majelis Roblox Indonesia (commonly known as Mario) can be understood not merely as mediated religious activities but as simulated environments in which religious experience is reconstructed. Empirically, these sessions involve dozens to hundreds of participants represented as avatars gathering in various virtual environments, including mosque replicas, mountain landscapes, and interactive maps. Congregants listen to sermons delivered by religious teachers (*ustaz* or *ustazah*) represented through avatars, while simultaneously interacting through text and voice-based communication. Supported by Roblox’s

features—such as customizable avatars, persistent spaces, and group systems—these practices enable continuous interaction, community formation, and the development of shared norms. In this sense, Roblox does not merely function as a gaming platform but as a structured virtual social space in which religious activities are organized, performed, and experienced collectively.

A descriptive qualitative approach with a netnographic orientation is employed to analyze the construction of hyperreality in Mario’s “*Ngajiblox*” practices within the Roblox environment. Netnography is appropriate for this study as it enables in-depth analysis of interactions, meanings, and symbolic practices within online communities. This approach aligns with hyperreality analysis, which focuses on how meanings and simulations construct social reality rather than empirically measure it (Baudrillard, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Data collection was conducted through three complementary methods: (1) online observation within the Roblox environment, including participation in virtual study sessions and related platforms such as Discord and TikTok; (2) in-depth semi-structured interviews with 12 informants selected through purposive sampling, consisting of 10 active congregants and 2 key individuals, including the founder of Majelis Roblox Indonesia—who also serve as religious teachers and advisors with strategic roles in the virtual sessions namely Rozan Avif and Luthfi Hamdan; and (3) content analysis of digital artifacts, including avatars, virtual spaces, chat interactions, and symbolic representations. This approach enables an in-depth analysis of how meanings, interactions, and religious practices are constructed within immersive digital environments.

Table 1. Information on the Congregants of Mario virtual qur’anic study on Roblox

Informant Code	Nickname Game	Gender (M/F)	Age	Occupation	Note on Islamic Study Perception
MRI01	Padilauning	F	20 years old	Tahfiz Teacher	Prefers online interaction due to reduced social pressure and physical insecurities, but notes risks of instant spirituality.
MRI02	Powww	F	20 years old	Freelance	Values the time or cost efficiency and flexible nightly schedule, seeing it as a valid complement to offline.
MRI03	Thunderbpack	M	21 years old	Employee	Appreciates the comfort of joining without specific Muslim attire and sees equal value in knowledge transfer.
MRI04	Zhao_Lusuh	F	24 years old	Novel Writer	Virtual study nurtured limited social skills and created a sense of real-world presence and family like belonging.
MRI05	Nieca	F	24 years	Freelance	Attention is divided between listening to the

			old		study and monitoring interactions in the game chat box, which sometimes disrupts concentration.
MRI06	Mellaski	F	26 years old	Freelance	Joined for distraction an healing; stays for the lively, fun, and supportive social interactons during study.
MRI07	Kapurung	F	31 years old	Housewife	Found mental healing and cosistent religious practice through virtual study, especially as a mother with limited mobility.
MRI08	Ophay	F	32 years old	Housewife	Equal comfort, different medium, briefly states that the experience, while different, is equal value in knowledge transfer.
MRI09	Dracowisely	M	34 years old	Freelance	Emphasizes post-study bonding and support within the virtual community, while acknowledging the need for balance with offline life.
MRI10	Ultramilk	M	38 years old	Factory Employee	Roblox as spiritual-social hub. Values the interactivity, avatar, and community feel of Roblox as a supplement to offline constraints.

Source: Interviews conducted by the researcher (2025).

Primary data consist of visual archives, including screenshots documenting Islamic signs, user avatars, and, sequences of study activities, along with interview transcripts. Secondary data were gathered from literature, books, Mario's social media posts in Instagram (@majelisrobloxindonesia) and Discord. The analysis employs Baudrillard's theory of simulation and simulacra as a framework to examine how religious practices are digitally constructed and represented. According to Baudrillard (1994), simulation evolves through three orders of simulacra: (1) the first order, where signs are faithful copies of reality; (2) the second order, where signs mask or distort reality; and (3) the third order, where signs become autonomous and create a hyperreality, in which the distinction between reality and simulation collapses.

The collected data were analyzed interactively using the Miles et al. (2020) model, comprising three stages: 1) Data reduction, involving filtering and simplifying raw data through initial thematic coding based on Baudrillard concept of simulacra and mediation of

religion, 2) Data Presentation, employing matrices, charts, and descriptive narrative to identify patterns and relationships among themes, and 3) conclusion and verification, entailing interpretation of findings regarding the stages of simulacra and the hyperreal aspects of Ngajiblox, with continuous cross-checking across observations, interviews, and documents to ensure validity.

DISCUSSION

Production of Religious Simulacra in Mario's Virtual Qur'anic Study





The rapid growth of digital platforms has reshaped how religious activities are organized and practiced, particularly among younger generations. Islamic learning is no longer confined to face-to-face study circles in sacred spaces Zhang (2025), traditional religious communication practices typically involve studies conducted through face-to-face interactions in sacred spaces. However, Roblox, as a user-generated gaming platform, has emerged as a space where religious activities are creatively adapted into virtual formats.

Roblox's architecture—avatars, virtual maps, and constrained interaction systems—enables the production of religious simulacra. Digital platforms create simulations that blur the boundary between representation and reality, generating symbolic environments that may gradually detach from their physical referents (Asharudin, 2023). According to Baudrillard (1994), argues that simulacra operate by replacing reality with self-referential systems of signs, shaping how individuals perceive and engage with the world. At the same time, digital spaces open new possibilities for expanding religious knowledge and experience (Thomas et al., 2024).

Interviews with Mario's founder and advisors reveal that religious study practices within Roblox have developed into structured simulations of ritual activities. Through platform mechanisms, conventional elements such as "ustaz," "majelis," and "presence" are symbolically reconstructed. From Baudrillard's perspective, Ngajiblox cannot be understood merely as an imitation of offline Islamic study circles. Instead, it reflects the third order of simulacra, where religious signs no longer refer directly to physical reality but circulate within the internal logic of the Roblox system. As noted by Rozan Avif, Roblox functions as an interactive medium that enables immersive socio-religious simulations, indicating its potential as a new platform for articulating and enacting religious life in digital contexts.

Beyond communication, these platforms enable immersive simulations of religious rituals. Based on interviews and in-platform observations, religious study practices within Majelis Roblox Indonesia have been adapted to Roblox through avatar-based technologies, where avatars represent participants during ritual activities. According to community advisor Luthfi Hamdan, this system allows members to engage collectively in religious sessions within a shared virtual space. As noted by Rozan Avif, this adaptation signals a shift in the orientation of worship—from embodied, physical gatherings toward virtual simulations that enable participation beyond spatial and temporal constraints. The simulation of religious rituals in Roblox thus reflects evolving dynamics of religious practice in the digital age, while also raising critical questions about how religious values are transformed, mediated, and renegotiated through technological development presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Forms of Practice Simulation Studies in the Mario Virtual Space on Roblox

Figure	Simulation Model	Description
	Mosque Based Map	A simulation of a mosque as the gathering space for a majelis taklim session.
	Segregation of Congregants	A simulation of Islamic gender segregation norms in religious activities.
	Virtual Banner	A simulation of congregational engagement and religious expression, exemplified by posing questions or sharing inspirational quotations during the session
	Muslim Avatars	A simulation of personal religious identity and modest appearance within an Islamic study setting.

Source: Screenshot of Mario's virtual study in Roblox (2025).

Table 2 presents four core simulation models shaping Mario's virtual religious reality. Each adapts elements of conventional Islamic study circles, yet within Roblox they form an autonomous religious space. Following Baudrillard's notion of simulacra, these signs no longer refer to physical reality but operate within the platform's internal logic. First, the mosque-based map simulates the spatial setting of a learning assembly. Although it does not reproduce the sanctity or architecture of a real mosque, it serves as a symbolic cue that redirects users from a gaming mindset toward participation in religious study. As Rozan explained,

It's flexible; it can be in an outdoor field or a constructed mosque, or a study session in the yard like that...We collaborate with the mosque, and the mosque in our map is Ar-Rohmah Mosque, in Klaten. They hold study sessions, and we livestream them on Discord and TikTok. Because of this, we can introduce Ar-Rohmah Mosque (interview with founder Mario, Rozan Avif, 2025).

In this case, the virtual mosque functions not merely as a symbolic anchor but as a socially recognized religious space within the game. Although inspired by a physical mosque, Ngajiblox does not replicate offline reality; it operates as an autonomous signifier through which users organize practice, meaning, and identity. Digital spaces, as Hutchings (2017) notes, are socially constructed through shared practices and perceptions. From Baudrillard (1994) perspective, simulacra no longer mediate reality but precede and shape it, dissolving the boundary between the real and its representation as simulation generates its own self-referential reality. Thus, the map establishes a distinct virtual religious sphere that structures subsequent interactions.

Second, the platform simulates Islamic social norms governing gender interaction. Avatars are arranged according to selected gender, though the founder acknowledges the possibility of identity disguise. As Rozan explained, “*A female avatar with a male player beside her. They are separated, as indicated by their names and clothing, and there is also a feature to select gender: ikhwan or akhwat*”. (interview with founder Mario, Rozan Avif, 2025).

This indicates that the platform simulates not the biological basis of gender segregation but the performative display of adherence to social norms. Compliance is reduced to menu selections and avatar appearance, producing an ordered social scene while sidelining the physical body as its ontological foundation. In Baudrillard (1994) terms, the sign—such as the “*akhwat*” avatar—becomes more real than the reality it signifies.

Third, virtual banner simulates communication and participation within the study forum. In offline assemblies, participation is multimodal: verbal, visual (nods, facial expressions), and contextual. In Roblox, this complexity is simplified into the act of carrying a text banner. “*The avatar carrying the banner is used to ask questions or to express things such as quotes*”. (interview with founder Mario, Rozan Avif, 2025).

The use of the banner in *Ngajiblox* exemplifies how complex social and religious interactions are transformed into simplified, programmable signs in a virtual environment. According to Baudrillard (1994), a simulation moves beyond merely representing reality to constructing a system of signs that can operate independently of the physical referent. In this context, the banner acts as a simulacrum: it no longer simply represents verbal or visual participation in a study forum, but constitutes a self-contained signal of engagement that conveys intention, recognition, and social presence within the platform.

Fourth, muslim avatars simulate self-presentation and religious identity in public spaces. The emphasis on modest dress reflects an effort to transfer real-world dress ethics into the virtual realm. However, avatars are essentially digital skins that can be changed at any time. Rozan noted, “*For avatars in Roblox, we only recommend and suggest using avatars that are modest. We do not enforce this for those who have converted (hijrah) or those who have not, whether they are Muslim or non-Muslim*”. (interview with founder Mario, Rozan Avif, 2025).

However, avatars function as changeable digital skins, making religious identity in Roblox fluid, temporary, and largely aesthetic rather than deeply devotional. This reflects the modular and interchangeable nature of identity in digital spaces (Bosman, 2019). Together, these simulations form a coherent religious experience, although ontologically distinct from offline gatherings. Rather than merely digitizing conventional study circles, Mario produces new cultural rituals meaningful only within the logic of Roblox (Karlina et al., 2025).

This is evident in the deliberate decision not to simulate core ritual worship. In Islamic jurisprudence, worship is divided into *mabdhah* and *ghairu mabdhah* (Syahputra & Miftahuddin, 2024). *Mabdhah* worship—such as prayer, fasting, and Hajj—has fixed rules

based on clear scriptural evidence and is not open to modification (Shobri & Masnawati, 2025; Kallang, 2018). By contrast, *ghairu mabdhah* refers to worldly activities imbued with religious value when aligned with Qur'an and Sunnah (Rosidi et al., 2024). Because ritual obligations risk being trivialized as “play,” they are excluded from virtual simulation.

Thus, Mario's simulacra are suited to socio-religious forms of *ghairu mabdhah* worship but not to sacred rites requiring physical presence and specific intention. The platform operates as a socio-religious laboratory where Islamic norms and identities are reconfigured through digital media logic (Fernando et al., 2025). Through interactive participation and role-play, users engage religious behavior in ways that mirror—without replicating—offline practice.

Within this framework, religious representation shifts into digital substitution. *Ustaz* appear as authoritative avatars whose legitimacy emerges not only from scholarly credentials but from digital presence, reinforced through platforms such as Instagram. Authority is therefore constructed through a network of Discord voices, Roblox avatars, and social media verification, collectively recognized as legitimate within the digital ecosystem. The founder of Mario, Rozan Avif, emphasizes this foundation of authority by stating, “*In Majelis Roblox Indonesia, especially myself, when delivering religious teachings (da'wah), one must have the proper knowledge... and I make sure that all instructors in Majelis Roblox Indonesia possess this scholarly grounding*”. (interview with founder Mario, Rozan Avif, 2025).

The founder affirms legitimacy by noting that all instructors have verifiable credentials displayed on the majelis' official Instagram. Thus, authority extends beyond the virtual space, linking digital presence to external validation. In Mario, an *ustaz* becomes a composite figure—a Discord voice, a Roblox avatar, and authenticated social media credentials—collectively recognized as legitimate by the community. “*All religious teachers possess a solid foundation of real-world knowledge, including graduation from Islamic boarding schools (pesantren), degrees in Sharia, and certified credentials*”. (interview with advisors Mario, Luthfi Hamdan, 2025).

Mario intentionally connects traditional religious legitimacy with digital engagement, ensuring that its teachers are not merely virtual avatars but figures supported by formal education and recognized credentials. Several instructors also serve as advisors, such as Ustaz Hammad Rosyadi, Lc., a graduate of Al-Azhar University in Cairo, and Ustaz Luthfi Hamdan, Lc., an Al-Azhar graduate in Sharia Law. This transmedia authority—distributed across Roblox avatars, live Discord voices, and Instagram-verifiable profiles (@majelisrobloxindonesia)—makes legitimacy traceable beyond the virtual space and helps address skepticism toward online religious content. Consequently, Mario cultivates a trust-based digital community in which religious learning is perceived as both credible and accessible within youth-oriented platforms like Roblox.

Hyperreal Religious Experiences in Mario's Virtual Studies

The emergence of Mario creates a form of religious engagement in which digital environments become primary spaces for practicing and experiencing Islamic piety. Rather than simply mediating religion, Mario produces a hyperreal experience in which the boundary between virtual and physical practice is blurred. As Franco & Birenboim (2024) suggest, simulated spaces can reshape rather than diminish, perceptions of authentic practice, and in some cases feel more immediate and meaningful than offline settings (Zuhri, 2021). Drawing on Baudrillard's notion of hyperreality, Mario's digital mosque, avatar interactions, and mediated social bonds generate a blended sacred space that congregants experience as emotionally engaging and spiritually significant.

For congregants, the virtual mosque in Roblox, complete with gender-segregated areas, mimbar, prayer carpets, and courtyards—functions not merely as representation but as an operative sacred space where religious identity is actively formed. Its design produces instant recognition and a sense of legitimate sanctity. As @Ultramilk noted, “*The most prominent thing is the mosque icon. Inside, there's a separator between male and female congregants... the vibe already feels like an offline study session, almost*”. (interview with informant Ultramilk, 2025).

The mosque’s faithful design anchors the experience in recognizable Islamic tradition, even within a game environment. Hyperreality intensifies through live streams from a physical mosque in Klaten, broadcast via Discord and TikTok in collaboration with Ar-Rohmah, merging physical and digital spaces into a layered religious venue.

Visual elements such as mosque icons and gender segregation function as religious markers that construct a sense of presence in virtual environments. These features do not simply replicate a physical mosque; they generate an experience that feels religiously authentic within a simulated space (Campbell & Evolvi, 2020). In Baudrillard (1994) terms, the digital mosque functions at the level where signs of religion no longer refer back to an original, physical referent, but instead generate their own sense of authenticity and meaning.

Avatar-based interaction also reduces social barriers tied to appearance, geography, and introversion, strengthening participants’ sense of belonging. @Zhao_Lusuh shared,

Because of virtual meetings via Roblox, it feels as if we are in the same place in reality... In Mario, indirectly, it nurtures my very limited social soul. So in the real world, I also started to open myself to socialize (interview with informant Zhao_Lusuh, 2025).

It is that Mario's presence influences others to become more socially open in their offline lives. This testimony shows how a digitally simulated religious space can be perceived as a socially and emotionally authentic space, even without physical presence together. This sense of authenticity is further reinforced by post-lecture social interactions that extend beyond formal religious instruction. @Dracowisely emphasized that, “*After the study session we can gather... and grow closer between congregants. Even though we only meet online, that's what makes us feel more like it's a second home*”. (interview with informant Dracowisely, 2025).

These narratives describe the community as a “second home.” They show that religious participation in Mario is not limited to consuming sermons, but has developed into a sustainable relational practice. The community, referred to affectionately as “Anu Community” serve as symbolic markers of collective identity, strengthening emotional bonds and reinforcing group cohesion. In this case, the community operates as a form of digitally mediated ukhuwah, similar to an imagined but emotionally real religious community. This means that Anu Community provides support that goes beyond religious lectures.

Importantly, the data also reveal that this digital ukhuwah carries significant emotional and psychological dimensions. @Mellaski noted that her initial motivation for joining was to “keep busy so as not to be alone” and that she received “a lot of support” from the group. Similarly, for congregants such as @Kapurung, who has a history of depression, the Mario community provides not only spiritual engagement but also meaningful mental and emotional support. “*Alhamdulillah, I feel better after downloading Roblox. Because before, I was hospitalized due to mental issues, diagnosed with depression*”. (interview with informant Kapurung, 2025).

These accounts show that the virtual religious space operates as a site of care, companionship, and healing, where spiritual practice intersects with emotional well-being. The *ukhuwah* formed within Mario reflects a hyperreal social bond—digitally mediated yet experienced as authentic and emotionally meaningful. Rather than functioning as a substitute for offline relationships, these ties are often perceived as more accessible and consistently supportive, illustrating how digital communities reshape religious belonging and Islamic subjectivity through shared interaction and participation (Alrissa et al., 2025; Alam & Iqbal, 2024).

At the same time, congregants display an ambivalent awareness of this hyperreality. They recognize both its benefits and the potential risks of “instant” spirituality. Participants highlight accessibility, affordability, flexibility, and a sense of safety for those who are socially or geographically constrained—findings that align with studies on digital religion showing how online platforms extend and transform traditional religious practice (Sirun & Surawan, 2025). As noted by @Padilauning, @Pommm, and @Ophay, the platform enables sustained religious engagement without logistical burdens, while also accommodating domestic responsibilities. This sense of comfort is further emphasized by @Thunderbpak, who stated that, “*The virtual space feels more accommodating because participants can join without having to use Muslim attributes*”. (interview with informant Thunderbpak, 2025).

This statement shows that the relationship between religious identity and performativity can be negotiated more flexibly in online spaces. Digital religion as a hybrid space between online and offline practices (Zuhri & Alfin, 2022). Rather than reducing religious commitment, this lower threshold of performativity appears to facilitate participation by separating spiritual engagement from external appearance. Therefore, reshape the way Islamic subjectivity is experienced and expressed in digitally mediated religious spaces.

At the same time, congregants express a critical reflexivity toward the limitations of hypermediated spirituality. The ease and immediacy of access are acknowledged as double-edged, as they can also foster distraction and fragmented attention. @Nieca, for example, described, “*Divided focus between listening to the study and monitoring interactions within the game’s chat box, which occasionally disrupts concentration*”. (interview with informant Nieca, 2025).

This experience does not indicate disengagement, but rather a reconfiguration of religious attention shaped by digital multitasking and immediacy. The informant’s awareness of distraction reflects a form of negotiated piety, in which religious participation adapts to the rhythms of digital platforms. Thus, virtual religious space becomes both enabling and limiting, reshaping how concentration, discipline, and attentiveness are experienced. Participants also question the depth and sustainability of spiritual engagement. @Padilauning warned of “getting used to instant spirituality,” contrasting it with offline lectures that demand embodied presence and sustained focus. While digital hyper-spirituality can generate rapid and emotionally intense experiences (Sulaeman et al., 2024), it does not necessarily foster deep theological reflection beyond content consumption.

Importantly, most congregants do not position the virtual religious experience as a substitute for offline religious practice. Instead, they conceptualize it as a complementary and parallel mode of engagement within a broader ecology of faith. This perspective is clearly articulated by @Dracowisely, who noted that, “*Sooner or later the digitalization era will also have an important influence in the real world, but it needs to be balanced with offline social interaction... it returns to each individual*”. (interview with informant Dracowisely, 2025).

These reflections show that hyperreal religious experiences are appreciated for their unique possibilities while still being positioned alongside embodied, offline practices. Hyperreality does not replace religious authenticity; rather, it becomes a negotiated space where religious subjectivity is continuously shaped.

In Jean Baudrillard (1994) theoretical framework, hyperreality emerges when representations and simulations no longer reflect reality but replace it, creating experiences perceived as more real than the original. Through simulacra, copies lose their referent and operate as autonomous realities. Mario's virtual religious gatherings function as a religious simulacrum: they do not merely imitate offline Islamic study circles but generate a distinct religious reality experienced as spiritually authentic. Comfort, emotional proximity, and spiritual presence—mediated by avatars and digital environments—indicate that the hyperreal space becomes a legitimate site of religious experience.

At the same time, congregants remain aware of its limits. Distraction, fragmented attention, and concerns about “instant spirituality” reveal tension between emotional intensity and spiritual depth. Rather than replacing embodied worship, the hyperreal operates as a complementary form, reconfiguring Islamic subjectivity through ongoing negotiation between digital simulation and offline religious practice.

CONCLUSION

This study finds that Roblox, through Mario's virtual Qur'anic sessions, operates as a digital space that produces religious simulacra rather than simply representing offline worship. Drawing on Baudrillard, Ngajiblox constructs an autonomous religious reality where Islamic symbols, rituals, and communal interactions are experienced through avatars and game environments. These simulations create hyperreal experiences perceived as spiritually meaningful and inclusive across gender and age, despite the absence of physical embodiment.

At the same time, participants remain aware of its limitations, such as distraction and “instant” spirituality. Virtual kajian is viewed not as a substitute for offline worship but as a complement to it, reflecting an ongoing negotiation between digital simulation and embodied faith. Future research should examine the long-term impact of hyperreal participation on offline religious life and compare similar phenomena across digital platforms. The author thanks the Mario community and all research participants.

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