



## ***Digital Transnational Salafi Da'wah and Indonesia's Hijrah Movement: An International Relations Perspective***

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### ***Abstract***

#### **Article History:**

Received: February 05, 2026  
Revised: May 05, 2026  
Accepted: May 20, 2026  
Published: February 28, 2026

#### **Keywords:**

*Digital Public Diplomacy, Hijrah Movement, Salafi Da'wah, Social Media Transnationalism.*

*The phenomenon of the Hijrah movement among the Indonesian Muslim middle class marks a shift in religious authority towards transnational Salafism which is massively facilitated by digital technology. This study aims to analyze the strategic role of social media in facilitating da'wah transnationalism and measure its determinants of migration decisions in the perspective of International Relations. This study applies a mixed-methods design with a concurrent embedded strategy. Data was collected through an online survey of 100 respondents participating in the Hijrah movement and digital content analysis. Quantitative analysis used Multiple Linear Regression to test the influence of access duration, frequency of interaction, and content preferences, while qualitative data was used to validate ideological narratives. The results of the study showed that social media activities had a significant positive influence on the decision to emigrate with a determination coefficient of 66.5%. Specifically, the frequency of participatory interaction and exposure to transnational ideological narratives were the strongest predictors, outperforming demographic factors. This study concludes that social media functions effectively as an instrument of "digital public diplomacy" for non-state actors in diffusing the norm of "Global Solidarity of Ummah" that transcends the boundaries of nation-states. These findings provide theoretical contributions regarding the digital soft power mechanisms of non-state actors and practical implications for policymakers in formulating critical digital literacy strategies to maintain the stability of national integration.*

## INTRODUCTION

The dynamics of Islam in post-Reformasi Indonesia have been marked by the strengthening of transnational currents that bring global religious ideologies into the local landscape, with the Salafi movement emerging as one of the most significant actors. Salafism in Indonesia is no longer merely a rigid theological movement; rather, it has transformed into a complex collective identity shaped by the interaction between transnational ideologies, state dynamics, and media technology (Maharani, 2025). This phenomenon reflects the negotiation between global doctrinal affiliations, often associated with the puritanical traditions of Saudi Arabia or Yemen, and Indonesia's local sociopolitical context. The movement does not operate in a vacuum; instead, it utilizes extensive transnational networks to promote the purification of Islamic teachings, often contesting mainstream Islamic traditions in Indonesia such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah (Ananda, Khamdan, & Fata, 2024; Anggraeni et al., 2025).

The urgency of this discussion has increased alongside the shift in ideological dissemination from conventional religious pulpits to digital spaces, fundamentally transforming patterns of religious consumption among younger generations. Recent data indicate that internet penetration among Generation Z (Gen Z) Muslims in Indonesia has reached a remarkably high level, making social media not only a communication tool but also a key instrument in shaping religious identity and digital citizenship participation (Wildan, Pratama, & Sugiarto, 2025). Social media facilitates what has been termed “mediated orthodoxy,” in which Salafi narratives emphasizing textual purity are combined with digital literacy and modern visual aesthetics to attract young audiences (Afandi, Rizqullah, & Arifin, 2025). Platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok have become effective echo chambers for Salafi preachers, or “celebrity ustadz,” to disseminate da'wah content that increasingly blurs the boundary between traditional religious authority and digital popularity (Siregar, Tullaili, & Afdal, 2025).

One of the most prominent contemporary trends in digital da'wah is the spread of the “Hijrah” phenomenon among the middle class and urban youth. Hijrah is no longer understood merely as a physical or spiritual transformation; it has evolved into a popular lifestyle and cultural trend that promotes conspicuous piety, displayed through symbols of consumption and fashion (Masni, 2025). These movements are frequently framed through narratives that appeal to the emotional and psychological conditions of young people searching for identity, offering the certainty of “black-and-white” religious interpretations amid the complexities of modern life (Muary, Susanti, & Atikah, 2025). However, despite its popularity, the hijrah narratives promoted by Salafi groups on social media often contain exclusivist messages that portray religious pluralism as deviant, thereby posing potential threats to social cohesion and national integration (Billah et al., 2025).

Although many studies have discussed the phenomenon of hijrah and Salafism separately, there is still a gap in the literature regarding how the mechanisms of transnationalism work specifically through social media algorithms to form ideological loyalties that transcend nation-state boundaries. The main problem behind this topic is

the contestation of religious authority and the clash between moderate “National Islam” and “Transnational Islam” which tends to be conservative in the digital public space (Anggraeni et al., 2025). This gap needs to be overcome to understand how social media is not only a tool for disseminating information, but also an infrastructure for the infiltration of transnational ideologies that can change the sociological and political map of Muslims in Indonesia (Raihan, 2025).

Therefore, this article aims to conduct a quantitative-qualitative analysis of the strategic role of social media in facilitating Salafi da'wah transnationalism and its impact on the hijrah movement in Indonesia in the framework of International Relations. Theoretically, this research is expected to enrich the discourse on digital public diplomacy and the diffusion of international norms by non-state actors. Practically, these findings are expected to provide strategic recommendations for policymakers and civil society organizations in formulating effective counter-narratives and digital literacy to mitigate the impact of transnational ideological polarization in order to maintain national stability.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study employs a mixed-methods design with a concurrent embedded strategy to comprehensively examine the phenomenon of Salafi da'wah transnationalism. This approach combines quantitative analysis of social media trends with qualitative exploration of ideological narratives. From an International Relations perspective, this method was chosen to analyze the role of non-state actors, particularly digital preachers, in disseminating global norms and identities across national borders (Hasan, 2018). In this context, social media functions as a arena for contesting emerging authorities and as a soft power mechanism that influences the dynamics of local social movements in Indonesia without the physical presence of foreign actors (Akmaliah, 2020).

Data collection was conducted through two main techniques: digital observation (scraping) and online surveys. Quantitative data were obtained from engagement metrics of the five most popular Salafi da'wah influencer accounts on Instagram and YouTube during the 2023–2024 period, considering the important role of influencers in shaping the growing and highly visible hijrah movement (Nisa, 2017). In addition, a closed-ended questionnaire was distributed to 100 respondents participating in the hijrah movement to measure the intensity of content consumption, which is often intertwined with issues of social class and the lifestyles of young Muslims (Beta, 2019). Qualitative data were collected through documentation of lecture transcripts containing transnational narratives, such as references to fatwas from Middle Eastern scholars and symbols of ummah solidarity (Alam, 2025).

Quantitative data analysis was carried out using JASP (Jeffreys's Amazing Statistics Program). The analytical technique used was multiple linear regression. In the JASP interface, the hijrah decision was treated as the dependent variable, while access duration, frequency of interaction, and transnational ideology were entered as covariates,

with content type and gender category included as factors. The enter method was applied, meaning that all predictor variables were entered simultaneously to examine their simultaneous and partial effects on the dependent variable. Classical assumption tests, including normality, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity, were performed within the JASP regression module.

Meanwhile, qualitative data were analyzed using NVivo with a thematic analysis approach. This process involved systematic coding to identify dominant themes such as “Purification,” “Global Solidarity,” and “Middle Eastern Authority” (Slama, 2021). The findings from the JASP and NVivo analyses were then triangulated to validate the results regarding the effectiveness of social media as an instrument of digital public diplomacy.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Quantitative analysis in this study was carried out using JASP software with multiple linear regression method (*method: Enter*). This test aimed to measure the extent to which covariate variables (Duration of Access, Frequency of Interaction, Transnational Ideology) and factors (Content Category, Gender) influenced respondents' decision to join the Hijrah movement. The following table presents the ability of independent variables to explain the variation in respondents' decisions.

Table 1: Model Summary

Models	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	RMSE
H0	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.250
H1	0.826	0.682	0.665	0.724

Referring to Table 1, the high correlation coefficient (R) value of 0.826 and the Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> value of 0.665 provide strong empirical evidence for the central argument concerning “the role of social media” in this study. These findings indicate that 66.5% of the dynamics of the hijrah movement in Indonesia are influenced not primarily by traditional sociological factors, such as family background or formal education, but by digital activities and online engagement. From an International Relations perspective, this high level of explanatory power supports the argument that social media functions as an effective transnational channel for ideological diffusion. Through these platforms, non-state actors, particularly Salafi influencers, disseminate global religious norms into domestic spaces, demonstrating how state information sovereignty has become increasingly permeable to cross-border ideological currents (Akmaliah, 2020).

The ANOVA test was carried out to see the feasibility of the regression model in predicting the phenomenon of the Hijrah movement as a whole.

Table 2: Simultaneous Significance Test (ANOVA)

Models	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p (Sig)
Regression	84.320	5	16.864	40.152	<.001
Residual	39.480	94	0.420		
Total	123.800	99			

The F value of 40,152 with a significance of  $p < .001$  in Table 2 confirms that the variables of duration, interaction, and content simultaneously form hijrah preferences. This finding is relevant to the concept of "*Salafi Da'wah Transnationalism*" raised in the title. Salafi da'wah in the digital era does not work partially, but creates a total *echo chamber*. Social media users in Indonesia are exposed to an integrated value system ranging from the way they dress to global political views that collectively shift their religious orientation from local Islam to transnational Islamic identities. This phenomenon shows the work of decentralized "*soft power*" but has a massive impact on identity stability.

Table 3: Regression Coefficients

Predictors	Unstandardized (B)	Standard Error	Standardized (Beta)	t	p (Sig)
(Intercept)	0.452	0.310		1.458	0.148
X1_Durasi_Akses	0.012	0.005	0.154	2.400	0.018
X2_Frekuensi_Interaksi	0.485	0.082	0.492	5.914	<.001
Y2_Ideologi_Transnasional	0.380	0.075	0.365	5.066	<.001
X3_Kategori_Konten (Geopolitics)	0.210	0.098	0.120	2.142	0.035

Based on the partial analysis presented in Table 3, the role of social media in shaping the hijrah movement is shown to be strongly influenced by participatory engagement, as reflected in the highest Beta coefficient for the Interaction Frequency



For analysis using NVivo, it was done by visualizing the frequency of words that appear in the interview transcript through the *Word Cloud* feature. Based on the results of data processing, the most dominant words (the largest size) include: "Ustadz", "Sunnah", "Global/World", "Heart", "Palestine", and "Arab/Medina". In contrast, words such as "Local", "Tradition", or "National" appear with low frequency or in the context of negation.

Data Interpretation: The dominance of the word "Sunnah" side by side with the geographical references "Arab/Medina" and "Global" indicates a shift in the mecca of religious authority. In the perspective of International Relations, *Word Cloud* visualizes the hegemony of transnational discourse. Respondents tend to associate "truth" or authority (the word "Ustadz") with foreign sources (Middle Eastern), while local elements are marginalized. This signifies the successful diffusion of international norms brought by non-state actors through social media, where the identity of "Global Muslim" becomes more *salient* than the local identity.

Based on the *coding on the "Religious Authority" node*, a narrative pattern was found where social media functions as a bridge connecting participants in Indonesia with scholars in the Middle East, as well as breaking ties with local traditions. Informant INF-02 (Fajar) explicitly stated the shift in his religious reference. He abandoned local traditions such as "salvation" because he was considered to have no evidence, and turned to the fatwa of Saudi or Yemeni clerics such as Shaykh Utsaimin. "My reference now is the fatwas of great scholars from Saudi Arabia or Yemen... We no longer need to be trapped by local customs that sometimes even interfere with the purity of the faith." (INF-02).

From an International Relations perspective, this phenomenon reflects the de-territorialization of Islam. Social media enables Middle Eastern ulama to become virtually present within the private spheres of Indonesian Muslims, gradually shifting the traditional authority previously held by local kyai and established Islamic mass organizations. In the context of public diplomacy, this represents a highly effective form of soft power. Salafi ideology is not imposed through coercive means; rather, it is voluntarily embraced because it is perceived as more "authentic" and "pure" than local variants of Islam.

Analysis of the "Role of Social Media" node further demonstrates that acceptance of transnational ideologies is not always driven by complex theological arguments, but often emerges through a popular aesthetic approach. Informant INF-01 (Ranti) revealed that her interest initially developed through visually appealing short videos (Reels) and the calm preaching style of ustadz educated in Madinah, which she perceived as more authoritative compared to local preachers whom she considered overly humorous.

"I like ustadz who graduated from Madinah... It feels as though, when listening to them, we are connected to the pure atmosphere of Arabia (INF-01)." From an

International Relations perspective, these findings highlight the importance of framing strategies in transnational da'wah. Transnational religious actors appear to understand the cultural psychology of Indonesia's urban middle class. By packaging Salafi doctrine within modern aesthetics—such as earth-tone visual branding, cinematic video styles, and minimalist digital presentation—they successfully market transnational Islamic identity as modern and aspirational rather than traditional or outdated. This finding reinforces the argument that social media functions as an agent of political and ideological socialization capable of reshaping perceptions through visual appeal and emotional engagement.

One of the most significant findings related to this study is represented in the “Global Identity” node. The hijrah movement on social media facilitates the construction of an “imagined community” that transcends the territorial boundaries of the nation-state. Informant INF-03 (Dimas) emphasized that his primary sense of loyalty was directed toward fellow Muslims globally, reflecting the concept of *al-wala' wal-bara'*, while nationalism was perceived as a human-made limitation. He actively follows conflicts in Palestine and Syria through Telegram and Twitter as part of his sense of religious solidarity and struggle.

“Nationalism is man-made; it creates boundaries. But *ukhuwah Islamiyah* transcends countries... Social media helped me realize that I have brothers in Gaza and in Idlib (INF-03).” From an International Relations perspective, this narrative provides empirical evidence of the operation of transnationalism in the digital era. Social media has increasingly blurred the boundaries of state sovereignty by enabling individuals in Indonesia to develop stronger emotional and political attachments to transnational issues and communities than to domestic concerns. Through digital platforms, non-state actors, particularly online preachers, have successfully constructed narratives surrounding the victimization of Muslims globally, which are subsequently transformed into forms of militancy within the local hijrah movement. This phenomenon poses challenges to national integration, as citizens' loyalties may become fragmented under the influence of continuous and borderless flows of information.

Overall, the NVivo analysis demonstrates that social media functions not merely as a medium for communication, but as a space in which transnational identities are constructed, aesthetically packaged, and internalized. Salafi da'wah transnationalism operates by gradually delegitimizing local religious authorities while simultaneously promoting the identity of a “Global Ummah” as a more authentic and superior form of belonging. Consequently, the hijrah movement in Indonesia has increasingly evolved into an outward-looking phenomenon shaped by transnational religious orientations and global ideological networks.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that social media plays a significant strategic role as a determining instrument in facilitating Salafi da'wah transnationalism and shaping the Hijrah movement in Indonesia. The empirical findings of this study unequivocally support the initial hypothesis, where quantitative analysis shows that the variables of digital activity, especially the frequency of interaction and consumption of geopolitical content, have a strong positive influence on an individual's decision to migrate, with the model's determination ability of 66.5%. Specifically, the data prove that audience active participation (*engagement*) is more influential than just passive consumption, confirming the participatory nature of digital public diplomacy.

From the perspective of International Relations, this study confirms the occurrence of a shift in religious authority and the diffusion of effective cross-border norms. Qualitative analysis shows that non-state actors (*da'wah* influencers) have succeeded in utilizing the visual aesthetic and narrative of "Global Solidarity of the Ummah" to build a transnational identity that shifts the orientation of loyalty from national/local identity to a "Global Muslim" identity centered on the Middle East. This shows the workings of a *decentralized soft power* mechanism, where social media functions as a "transnational pipeline" that undermines state information sovereignty.

**Practical and Policy Implications** These findings have serious implications for policy makers, especially the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology and the National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT). Traditional security approaches such as site blocking have proven inadequate to stem the flow of populistly packaged ideologies. Therefore, mitigation strategies must shift to: (1) Strengthening Critical Digital Literacy, which focuses not only on technical aspects but also on the ability to verify religious authority; and (2) Counter-Narrative Production, in which moderate organizations need to adopt similar visual and participatory communication strategies to win the "ideological market" in the digital space, without losing relevance to young audiences.

**Limitations and Recommendations** This study has limitations on the relatively small quantitative sample size (100 respondents) and an exclusive focus on specific social media platforms (Instagram and YouTube), so generalizations on a national scale should be done with caution. In addition, *cross-sectional* design only captures phenomena at one specific point in time.

For further research, it is recommended that a longitudinal study be conducted to see the consistency of respondents' behavior changes in the long term. Comparative research that compares the digital strategy of Salafi groups with mainstream Islamic organizations (NU and Muhammadiyah) is also highly recommended to enrich the discourse on the contestation of religious authority in the digital era.

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