Ideological Contestation in Social Media:  
a Content Analysis of the Promotion of Islamic Education Institutions

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ABSTRACT: Faith-based schools utilize social media as a new public space to promote their Islamic identity. This research focuses on the competition between three faith-based schools in Indonesia, as depicted through their digital content on social media platforms. This research observes the social media accounts of educational institutions that are the object of research. This study uses a qualitative method. The research design follows the qualitative content analysis framework developed by Bengtsson. Data collection was obtained from in-depth interviews and documentation. The analysis technique used is content analysis. The validity of the data was triangulated. This research has significant findings that the three Islamic educational institutions investigated proactively compete to articulate the meaning of Islam according to their ideological affiliation, including concepts, content, activities and identity of educational approaches. The implications of this competition are significant because it encourages healthy competition in promoting educational ideology and categorizing Islam based on ideological affiliation. In addition, this research opens the way to a deeper understanding of the diversity of Islamic interpretations and practices in society.

Sekolah berbasis agama memanfaatkan media sosial sebagai ruang publik baru untuk mempromosikan identitas keislaman mereka. Penelitian ini berfokus pada persaingan antara tiga sekolah berbasis agama di Indonesia, seperti yang digambarkan melalui konten digital mereka di platform media sosial. Penelitian ini mengamati akun media sosial lembaga pendidikan yang menjadi objek penelitian. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode

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**I. INTRODUCTION**

Numerous aspects have been encompassed in the study of ideology in Islamic education. This is attributed to the diverse ideological backgrounds of stakeholders in Islamic education (Hefner, 2010). Nevertheless, the non-formal function of Islamic education continues to exert greater influence than its formal accomplishments (Burhani, 2012). Meanwhile, Islamic education still tends to emphasise the indoctrination process rather than the role of knowledge transfer (Suwaed & Ali, 2016). This phenomenon arises due to paradigmatic gaps and disparities between modern educational philosophy on the one hand and Islamic educational philosophy on the other (Araújo et al., 2015). In Islamic education, the main focus is on ideological discussions rather than efforts to promote personal development, and this is closely tied to the Islamic identity of the overseeing organisation (Sakai & Isbah, 2014). As a result, there is a need to reconsider the paradigms and worldviews associated with Islamic education to advance while preserving its traditions.

In Indonesia, Islamic education involves diverse religious teaching processes such as Pesantren (a traditional Islamic boarding school in Java) and surau (a traditional Islamic boarding school in Aceh), as well as studying in religious education institutions like madrasah (Saeefudin et al., 2023). The aspect of religiosity prioritises al-ta'dib wa al-tarbiyah (authentic education) over a focus on sciences that can foster critical reasoning (Araújo et al., 2015). Islamic education encompasses any form of teaching or learning grounded in Islamic principles and values (Sakai & Isbah, 2014). Historically, Islamic education employed various methods to instil religious traditions, culture, and values (Maemonah et al., 2022). The educational aspect indeed takes centre stage in the development of the Islamic movement. The Islamic identity finds reflection in the learning process taking place within formal school institutions. Modern educational institutions play a role in shaping the Islamic identity among students. The school environment significantly influences the shaping of an Islamic identity. While the development of an Islamic identity might at times appear exclusive,
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a study by (Tayeb, 2017) demonstrates that this process also moulds the socio-demographic characteristics of today’s increasingly intricate Muslim population.

While differences and competition exist among Islamic movements worldwide, Indonesia possesses unique and distinct characteristics. In Indonesia, a novel model of Islamic education, termed an Integrated Islamic School (Sekolah Islam Terpadu / SIT), has emerged. These schools impart Islamic knowledge and infuse Islamic values into daily interactions (Arifin, 2016). In this approach, Islamic schools not only incorporate the fundamental subjects of Islamic sciences into the curriculum, akin to pesantren, madrasah, and conventional Islamic public schools, but also aspire to cultivate students’ Islamic character grounded in religious ethics and values (Aminnuddin, 2022);(Azmi et al., 2020). However, the challenge of reconciling traditional and modern paradigms is the reason why Islamic education continues to be bound by its traditional vision (Aminnuddin & Hamid, 2021);(Mufid, 2020);(Rahman et al., 2021). The advancement of Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia has witnessed significant strides. These institutions vie to manifest their Islamic identity in alignment with their ideological underpinnings. Moreover, Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia have embraced social media as a means to adapt to societal progress (Indrioko, 2023). Social media has become a fresh platform for these Islamic educational institutions to engage with the community (Ikhwan et al., 2020).

Recent research has delineated distinct types of Islamic education based on various criteria. In Indonesia, Islamic education institutions can be categorised into four groups according to their ideological affiliations (Sulistianingsih et al., 2022). First, some Islamic education institutions compromise their principles, prioritising synthesis or compromise between conflicting principles and practices. Second, there are institutions with an Aswaja-traditionalist ideology, emphasising Islamic teachings rooted in traditional Islamic sources. Third, there are institutions with a modernist-reformist ideology, aiming to nurture Muslims who are well-rounded, modern, and adaptable to the evolving changes of the era. Fourth, there are institutions with a revivalist ideology, emphasising a return to the Quran and Hadith, and seeking to reinstate the social order as observed during the time of Prophet Muhammad.

The evolution of Islamic education has given rise to three main trends: normative orientation, ideological orientation, and scientific orientation (Damir-Geilsdorf et al., 2019). Within the normative orientation, two styles exist: declarative and apologetic. The declarative approach emphasises da’wah, while the apologetic approach responds to orientalists’ study of Islam. This apologetic approach often magnifies Islam, while the ideological orientation is rooted in the ideology of Islamic organisations. The scientific approach adopts and acknowledges the contributions of Western scholars. Emerging learning models also pose challenges to the research development on the typology of Islamic education. The offline to online learning transition has shifted Islamic education (Dressier et al., 2019);(Hidayatullah, 2021). This transformation affects not only the learning aspect but also the broader dimensions of the educational context. The internet, progressively permeating the educational realm, fosters the use of social media as an information source (Ansori, 2022);(Azmi et al., 2020);(Masuda & Yudhistira, 2020). Conversely, social media has emerged as a new platform for the younger generation to express their religious beliefs. Beyond mobilising the masses, social media also serves as a space to fortify religious identity (Maemonah et al., 2022). With increased accessibility, social media also influences the formulation of notions of authority and knowledge within 21st-century Islam.

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Previous studies have only discussed typologies based on the structure of Islamic education institutions to a limited extent. The discourse on competing identities among Islamic educational institutions is also presented. Even with changes in religious authority brought about by online learning systems, the competition between educational institutions persists. This research sheds light on diverse manifestations of religious identity competition among Islamic boarding schools in Islamic education by analysing their use of social media. This study offers a fresh perspective on ideological rivalry in religious education via social media, which serves as a novel public space for promotion to attract new students.

II. METHOD

This research uses qualitative methods to examine data and obtain interpretations of its meaning (Feltham-King & Macleod, 2016). The research design used in this study follows the qualitative content analysis framework developed by Bengtsson (2016). This research analyzes social media posts containing news, images and all content uploaded from three faith-based schools in Purwokerto City, Central Java, Indonesia. The main focus of this research is three schools selected for their diverse affiliations and ideologies. These schools are SDIT Mutiara Hati Purwokerto, which is affiliated with Muhammadiyah and Nahdatul Ulama, which has a revivalist ideology; SD Muhammadiyah 1 Purwokerto, which is affiliated with the modernist-reformist organization Muhammadiyah; and MI Darul Hikmah Purwokerto which is affiliated with the Nahdatul Ulama Aswaja-Traditionalist organization. Each of these schools presents a unique flavour of Islamic education. The existence of these three schools of thought provides a valuable opportunity to compare and analyze how Islamic education is practised in different ways.

Data collection was obtained from in-depth interviews and documentation. Looking at the design and focus of this research, the analysis technique used is content analysis. Content analysis is used to understand, interpret and extract meaning from data regarding competing ideologies in Islamic education. Data were analyzed using an online social media analysis method, which includes three main stages: (a) Observation, namely observing content to identify behaviour or statements related to the specified components; (b) Memo, involving memo documentation and journals to record video or photo content and their interpretation; and (c) Magnitude Coding, which involves applying the first cycle of qualitative coding using a magnitude coding approach (Bengtsson, 2016). To ensure the validity of the data, triangulation was carried out. Source triangulation was used in this research, involving various data sources to gain a comprehensive understanding.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research investigates the competition among religious schools representing distinct religious sects in Indonesia. The ideological rivalry among the three schools is evident through key indicators observed on their social media accounts. Eight primary indicators are employed to scrutinise the social media accounts of SDIT Mutiara Hati Purwokerto, SD Muhammadiyah 1 Purwokerto, and MI Darul Hikmah Purwokerto. These indicators encompass curriculum, educational model, uniform, terminology (verbal symbols), scientific authority, religious discourse, textbooks, and stakeholders.
These indicators are classified by religious authorities into four strata in reconciling religious beliefs with internet use: hierarchy, structure, ideology, and text (Hamrah, 2011). In this study, curricula and educational models constitute the structure layer of religious education, while uniformity of terms and stakeholders pertain to the ideology and text layers. Conversely, religious discourse, scientific authority, and textbooks fall within the hierarchy and religious text layers.

A significant portion of the content uploaded by these three schools centres on achievements, encompassing both academic and non-academic realms. These achievement-oriented materials aim to spotlight the schools' excellence to the public and serve as a strategic marketing approach to attract parents to enrol their children. One key indicator assessed pertains to the form of curriculum employed. All three schools adhere to the national curriculum mandated by the government. Nevertheless, disparities in certain aspects exist among these institutions. MI Darul Hikmah places greater emphasis on aswaja NU values. Aswaja NU denotes the moderate Sunni interpretation of Islam within Indonesian society. This approach predominantly focuses on theological aspects rather than political ones. These ideological values underpin a perspective characterised by tolerance, pluralism, and multiculturalism (Ansori, 2022).

SD Muhammadiyah 1 places a strong emphasis on Muhammadiyah values. Muhammadiyah encompasses a concept that delves into the nature, vision, and mission of the Muhammadiyah movement (Santoso, 2016). These values stress the modernisation of Islam, underscoring the incorporation of science and technology into education at SD Muhammadiyah. Within the framework of this modernisation ideology, SD Muhammadiyah has achieved higher academic performance compared to other institutions. On the contrary, SDIT Mutiara Hati gravitates towards salafi values. At SDIT Sahabat Al-Quran, salafi values prioritise the endeavour to restore community life akin to the time of Prophet Muhammad. The past imagery in Islam becomes the focal point of learning, reflected in the curriculum that aligns with these values. Instances are observable in extracurricular activities on social media, where archery, horse riding, and swimming, considered in line with the learning during the Prophet's era, constitute part of the school's extracurricular offerings.

The second indicator utilised to analyse social media involves the educational model employed by the three schools. MI Darul Hikmah adopts a boarding school-based education model. As a distinctive educational subculture in Indonesia, Islamic boarding school plays a pivotal role in the nation's educational landscape. SD Muhammadiyah 1 employs a more contemporary school education model. Conversely, SDIT Mutiara Hati underscores a boarding school-based education model. Nonetheless, the boarding school model implemented at SDIT Mutiara Hati can be elucidated as a form of modern boarding school with distinct attributes.

The third observed indicator pertains to students' uniforms in the three schools. All three exhibit resemblances by including the veil as a uniform component. Additionally, the sarong and black cap are distinguishing attributes consistently linked with the boarding school education model. Through the portrayal of students on the Facebook and Instagram accounts of MI Darul Hikmah, it's evident that students frequently wear sarongs and black caps, a hallmark of their study routine. Within the Indonesian context, using the sarong symbolises a traditional representation of Islam (Aminnuddin & Hamid, 2021). On the contrary, SD Muhammadiyah 1 and SDIT
Mutia Hati exhibit distinct student uniforms. They incorporate long trousers, while SDIT Mutia Hati includes a larger jilbab in its uniform. Furthermore, it's notable that SDIT Mutia Hati presents a relatively smaller number of student images, particularly the visages of female students. This practice stems from the belief that women's faces constitute aurat and should not be exposed on social media (Damir-Geilsdorf et al., 2019).

Figure 1. Posts on IG and FB, khataman 30 Juz and spreading ideology

The fourth observed indicator pertains to the verbal terms or symbols employed by each school. This contention is evident in how teachers are addressed across the three schools. While SD Muhammadiyah 1 and MI Darul Hikmah employ the term teacher, akin to usage in non-religious schools, SDIT Mutia Hati employs the terms Ustadz and Ustadzah to address its teachers on social media. Furthermore, in the comments on SDIT Mutia Hati social media content, Arabic terms are more prevalent than in the other two schools. Regarding attire, although retaining white shirts and red trousers, the design of the shirts worn by SDIT Mutia Hati more closely resembles those commonly donned by Salafi Muslim communities (Damir-Geilsdorf et al., 2019). The shirts exhibit a longer hem and lack a collar.

Figure 2. Posts on IG and website, school promotion, and saying santri day

The fifth indicator under observation is scholarly authority. One distinctive aspect of the social media content from these three schools is the inclusion of unique religious quotations. Within these quotations, variations arise regarding the positioning of religious authority among the three schools. The content emanating from MI Darul Uloom Al-Huda hinges on the authority of Kiai and the bahtsul masail forum. This platform facilitates NU scholars’ responses to religious matters (Mufid, 2020). Conversely, the content shared by SD Muhammadiyah 1 Purwokerto is anchored in the majlis tarjih forum. This forum allows Muhammadiyah scholars to formulate policies concerning religious issues (Ansori, 2022). In the case of SDIT Sahabat Al-Quran's content, it draws from the fatwa of its ustadz, though this authority is not centralised.

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The sixth indicator under observation is religious discourse. The social media content of MI Darul Hikmah exhibits numerous attributes of traditional-moderate Islam. This content traditionally reflects Islamic values cultivated in Indonesia for generations. The content portrays values intertwined with local customs and wisdom within the context of Islam. Conversely, the social media content from SD Muhammadiyah 1 highlights the attributes of modern-moderate Islam. An evident facet of modernity is the accentuation of content linked to science and its advancements. Furthermore, SD Muhammadiyah also showcases collaboration with Islamic schools in other countries, indicating a global and open-minded orientation in its religious approach.

On the flip side, the social media content from SDIT Sahabat Al-Quran exhibits more attributes of Islamic revivalism. The term "revivalist" can be construed as an aspiration to restore Islam to the era of Prophet Muhammad, both in terms of religious comprehension and daily life practices. The disseminated content steers toward a return to the Quran and Al-Hadith as the primary founts of religious instruction. The ethos of global Islam is also evident in posts that spotlight international matters, such as the Palestinian issue, underscoring the school's engagement with the struggles of Muslims worldwide. This signifies the school's recognition of the global panorama and the significance of active participation in international endeavours to advance Islam.

This discovery gains further support from the seventh indicator, which involves the utilisation of textbooks as reference sources. MI Darul Uloom Al-Huda underscores the adoption of yellow Islamic classic books as a fundamental pillar of religious education. These yellow books represent a reservoir of classical Islamic wisdom that the Nahdlatul Ulama organisation perpetuates through boarding school, serving as the primary wellspring of learning at MI Darul Uloom Al-Huda. Contrastingly, SD Muhammadiyah 1 relies on contemporary Islamic books that amalgamate traditional and modern dimensions of the faith. These books encapsulate a more contemporaneous understanding of Islam pertinent to the current era. Additionally, SDIT Sahabat Al-Quran emphasises using books stemming from the Salafi Movement as pedagogical tools for religious instruction. These books reflect the specialised approach the school adopts in teaching Islam.

The eighth indicator pertains to stakeholders. MI Darul Uloom Al-Huda and SD Muhammadiyah 1 each have stakeholders who are affiliated with their respective organisations, such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah. The presence of these stakeholders significantly contributes to and impacts school activities and policies. Both institutions possess a more palpable and structured base of stakeholders, as compared to SDIT Sahabat Al-Quran. The latter engages a broader spectrum of the
The study's findings reveal that the three Islamic educational institutions strongly emphasise their distinct religious identities. Each institution exhibits unique characteristics, which may not always align with the aspirations for unity within the national education system. Nevertheless, although these educational establishments share the same position and rights, the study's outcomes demonstrate that their implementation doesn't consistently yield analogous outcomes. The results also indicate that each educational institution adheres to the national education curriculum, albeit not always in full integration due to ideological disparities. Several factors contribute to the inertia within Islamic education, including issues concerning the curriculum. The burden of a uniform curriculum akin to general education impedes the progression of Islamic education in Indonesia (Wahyudi & Alanshori, 2023);(Ahmed, 2018);(Saada, 2018). This substantial curriculum load becomes a hindrance that retards the advancement of Islamic education.

Curriculum alterations have transpired over time, shaped by societal and political influences (Dressier et al., 2019). Despite suggestions for more substantial curriculum revisions (Dolunay et al., 2017), these changes often clash between commitments and competencies. The curriculum frequently becomes embroiled in a tug-of-war between an individual's dedication to religion, ethics, and society and the proficiency-driven interests linked to their knowledge. MI Darul Uloom Al-Huda adheres to the Moderate Traditionalist ideology, SD Muhammadiyah 1 aligns with the Modern Moderate Ideology, while SDIT Sahabat Al-Quran adheres to the Revivalist ideology. This underscores the significance of cultivating a profound comprehension of religion's
place and presence. Religion permeates various facets of life in Indonesia, but it does not encompass everything (Sahin, 2018). With an in-depth comprehension of religion, individuals can increasingly avoid the temptation to implant human creations within the curriculum of Islamic education. The importance of religious epistemology and curriculum manifests as both elements serve complementary roles (Tayeb, 2017).

The vision of Islamic education in Purwokerto City mirrors the impression of modernity epitomised by SD Muhammadiyah 1. Nonetheless, traditional and Salafi Islamic education institutions persist in grappling with the challenges of educational modernisation (Saada, 2018); (Sahin, 2018); (Suwaed & Ali, 2016). In this milieu, SD Muhammadiyah shares certain parallels with the rational-religious school. The modernity of SD Muhammadiyah is discernible through the information it conveys, reflecting a fervour for the rejuvenation of Islam. (Sakai & Isbah, 2014) expressed sanguinity that Islamic education in Indonesia has effectively propagated the notion of Islamic moderation devoid of violence. This suggests that the role and presence of Islamic education may have transitioned from a concentration on scientific advancement to undertaking a socio-political function.

Islamic education, as practised by SD Muhammadiyah, also underscores the advancement of science. However, in the context of the competition among the three Islamic educational institutions, the scientific discourse frequently takes a backseat in the contest for constructing socio-political significances grounded in Islamic boarding school (Masuda & Yudhistira, 2020). Islamic education is founded on religious texts and teachings, while humans exist in the real world. Individuals persistently endeavour to achieve spiritual equilibrium within themselves, navigating the intricacies of both worldly existence and the pursuit of their fitrah (Aminnuddin & Hamid, 2021); (Rahman et al., 2021). Jihad and ijtihad present the potential energy that empowers humans to shape themselves and society by reexamining pre-existing mystical perceptions. Critique signifies the act of challenging and transcending the confines of existence without evaluating it solely on transcendental criteria (Haryanto, 2022); (Oviana & Rijal, 2021). Consequently, education must transform into an arena of critical discourse and tradition, embracing the critical essence of Islam through the vehicles of jihad and ijtihad.

Islamic education remains within the confines of its traditional attributes, primarily emphasising a learning tradition anchored in the past rather than the future (Sakir et al., 2022). This is evident in MI Darul Uloom Al-Huda's resolute adherence to tradition. However, the imperative is not merely the search for novel alternatives but something more pressing. As (Burhani, 2012) asserts, education should not function as a constraining environment for students; it should foster dialogue and establish connections between individuals and the world. When education engenders exclusivity and mental and physical oppression, it loses effectiveness (Dolunay et al., 2017). The history of Islamic education is intertwined with schools due to the textualist essence of Islamic education. Consequently, Islamic education becomes bifurcated into two perspectives: the Salafis, who profess adherence to the truth via the Qur'an and Sunnah. Lastly, Islamic education often assumes the role of tradition preservation (Tayeb, 2017). This ultimately engenders the production of exclusive learners who assert their correctness.

This situation poses a complex challenge for Islamic education. Islamic education must adopt an open, dialogical approach that respects differences and strives for future
harmony. These attributes embody a social perspective and the emancipatory nature of knowledge. Firstly, the educational paradigm must be reconfigured to shape the trajectory of Islamic education. Islamic education must uphold its historical dimension while accounting for the normative dimension. The historical facet of Islamic education is more human-centred (anthropocentric) than God-centered (theocentric). The liberation of Islamic education does not entail selecting between worldly matters and the hereafter. The historical paradigm of Islamic education necessitates embracing new knowledge in a dynamic world (Belonozhko et al., 2017); (Saada, 2018). A fresh tradition of interpretation is imperative, grounded in the deconstruction of historical and ideological frameworks and archaic texts, to uncover the previously concealed epistemological core of Islamic knowledge construction.

IV. CONCLUSION

Competition between Islamic boarding schools representing different religious sects in Indonesia. In this contestation between educational institutions, different ideological variations emerged in the construction of the significance of Islamic education. Even though the three Islamic educational institutions compete to articulate the essence of Islam according to the ideological affiliation of their respective Islamic boarding schools, there still needs to be more between them. This research illustrates that specific religious values are the subject of contestation in the three sects. This contestation permeates all school activities, including regulations, systems, policies, student attitudes and behaviour. Often, the arena of contestation conflicts with the values espoused by each institution. However, this research has limitations: it limits itself to contested manifestations via social media or media channels. Therefore, comprehensive research using objective indicators is still needed to achieve a deeper understanding of the identity of Islamic education. A survey covering multiple dimensions must be conducted to ascertain how curriculum values and contestation influence student identity, using more measurable objective indicators.

V. REFERENCES


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