

# POLITICS OR PIETY? UNDERSTANDING PUBLIC PIETY AND POLITICAL EXPRESSIONS OF INDONESIAN MUSLIM IN SOCIAL MEDIA

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## **Abstract**

*In today's digital age, one of the most significant shifts in the field of Islam in Indonesia is the increasing reliance of Muslims on social media when practicing and expressing their faith and religiosity. The expressions are generally reflected in the consumer behaviors and everyday lives of Indonesian Muslims, with their preference for Islamic banking, Islamic schools, Islamic fashions, Islamic medicines and most importantly, today's Indonesian Muslims have a strong preference to present these practices on their social media accounts. However, public expressions of piety have been apparent in the political life of Indonesian Muslims as Indonesia's political landscape has undergone significant changes after the controversy surrounding the Jakarta gubernatorial election. Although religion has often been ignored as an important political factor, but it cannot be denied that both are actually the biggest public parts of many people's lives. Therefore, this paper argues that political contexts are critical aspects of modern formations of piety. Based on online observations combined with computational method, this paper tries to analyze intriguing examples of how social media, the religious, and the everyday politics intersect, focusing on contemporary expressions of piety through political attitudes in an online sphere.*

**Keywords:** Indonesia, Islam, Piety, Politics, Social Media

## **Introduction**

Today we are in the middle of a new media revolution. We are at least witnessing the shift of all social, cultural and political landscapes to computer-mediated forms of production, distribution and

communication. According to Sonia Livingstone<sup>1</sup>, the author of several popular books on new media studies, media are always embedded in a social landscape, which precedes, shapes, contextualizes and continues after any specific technological innovation. Therefore, it is imperative to put new media into context, to locate them within the social landscape, and to map the changing media environment in relation to the human activities which, in turn, structure that environment. Indeed, people in this era keep in touch with friends and families, express themselves, and discuss various aspects of their lives on social media. In short, the presence of new media is reshaping our social landscape.

I concur with Livingstone's analysis while the new media is reshaping our today's social landscape including of how society practicing and showing their religious loyalty, particularly in Indonesia, as Indonesia is the world's most populous Muslim-majority country and a home of highly religious society where Islam infuses the daily lives of millions. But before entering the advance of the new media, as Fealy and White<sup>2</sup> have argued, Indonesian Muslims express and communicate their faith, beyond the traditional five pillars of faith, in various ways, such as they wear 'traditional Islamic dress, buy only halal products, put their money in *sharia* bank accounts, observe the voluntary prayers and engage in charitable work for Islamic foundations. The list can be extended by additional practices such as watching television broadcasts of Islamic preachers, undertaking pilgrimages to the burial sites of Islamic saints, and buying Islamic art that is displayed in homes and workplaces; and most importantly, today Indonesian Muslims like to present these practices on their social media accounts.

The growing dependence of Muslims on social media is in line with the common perception of how religious identities, affiliations, and pieties are becoming important for positioning individuals and communities in politics, as well as in the public sphere. In other words, in order to be a Muslim, there must be evidence of religious piety embedded in behaviours, ethical and cognitive levels<sup>3</sup>. But if we

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1 Livingstone, S. 2002. The changing social landscape. In Lievrouw, L., and Livingstone, S. (Eds.), *Handbook of New Media: Social shaping and Social Consequences*. London: Sage.

2 Fealy, G. and White, S. 2008. Introduction. In G. Fealy and S. White (eds.), *Expressing Islam: religious life and politics in Indonesia*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, pp. 1-13.

3 Hassan, Riaz. 2005. On Being Religious: Patterns of Religious Commitment in Muslim Societies (Working Paper No. 80) Retrieved from Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies Singapore.

looking back to the Indonesian history, the New Order ideology was eager to emphasize that technological advancement and spiritual well-being were compatible<sup>4</sup>, which had effects on the rise of the internet in the late New Order and the post-Suharto eras when the available communication technologies were used by a variety of (religious and political) actors<sup>5</sup>. What I want to emphasize is that the contemporary trend of employing social media for enhancing one's piety can be seen as a continuation of earlier development after the fall of Suharto in 1998. In this sense, it is arguable that media practices have become indistinguishable from religious practices and, most importantly, Muslims themselves often perceive their online activities as part of their pious endeavours to improve their religiosity<sup>6</sup>, which is very interesting to discuss further.

Indeed, the religion, and Islam in particular, is the critical parts of life of most Indonesian people. Based on the last survey by Pew Research Center Global Attitudes Spring 2015 found that 95 percent of Indonesians claimed that religion is an important part of their lives. That put Indonesia to be the fifth on the list of countries that consider religion as important<sup>7</sup>. It makes religion plays a significant part in the daily lives of many Indonesians, even for their involvement in political activities. Meanwhile, recently, public expressions of piety have been apparent in the political life of Indonesian Muslims as Indonesia's political landscape has undergone significant changes after the controversy surrounding Jakarta Gubernatorial Election.

Jakarta Gubernatorial Election is one of the most interesting phenomena in the discussion of the relationship between religion and politics in Indonesia. Unlike other regional elections, the previous Jakarta election was shown huge polarizations of its people, where religion turned into a hot-button issue. The incumbent Basuki Tjahaja Purnama known as Ahok, a double minority (Christian-Chinese) politician who was seen as the closest ally of President Joko Widodo was decisively defeated in a gubernatorial election after enjoying 70 percent approval rating. More surprisingly, after the announcement of the

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4 Amir, S. 2009. A message from Ashabirin: high technology and political Islam in Indonesia. In F.K.G. Lim (ed.), *Mediating piety: technology and religion in contemporary Asia*. Leiden: Brill, pp. 73-90.

5 Hill, D. and Sen K. 2005. *The internet in Indonesia's new democracy*. London: Routledge.

6 Slama, Martin. 2018. *Practising Islam through social media in Indonesia*, *Indonesia and the Malay World*, 46:134, 1-4.

7 According to Survey Results by Pew Research Center on Pew Research Center's Global Attitudes Project

election result, he was sentenced to a two-year prison term on charges of violating the 1965 Blasphemy Law as the (edited) video of his speech in a provocative manner spread online. The video exactly triggered anger toward the society. Driven by radicals and conservative Muslim group who were able to tap into religious sensitive and mobilized hundreds of thousands in “Action to Defend Islam” to demand the arrest of Ahok for allegedly insulting the holy book Quran. Here, the power of grassroots activism cannot be underestimated. While, the continuous slogans to defend the Quran and Islam widely spread online and offline, and messages emblazoned on banners in mosques that Muslims found to have supported Ahok would not be granted funeral rights are salient examples of how politicisation of religion is always divisive.

According to the last survey conducted by the Indonesian Survey Institute (LSI) for the period 1-7 August 2018 involving 1,520 respondents, there were 52 percent of Muslim respondents who expressed objections if there were non-Muslims becoming regents or mayors. This figure is up compared to August 2016 and August 2017, which were 39 percent and 47 percent respectively. The same trend also occurs for the choice of political leaders such as vice presidents and presidents. The number of Muslims who objected to non-Muslim vice presidents increased from 41 percent in August 2016 to 50 percent in August 2017. In August 2018, this figure rose again to 55 percent. Meanwhile, the number of Muslims who objected if non muslim became president rose from 48 percent in August 2016 to 53 percent in August 2017 and 59 percent in August 2018<sup>8</sup>. Once again, the survey proves that the boundary between politics and religion in the context of Indonesia is increasingly blurred and indistinguishable.

Distancing myself from the new media intervention, religion and politics may be understood as distinct concepts, but they overlap since both are concerned with the pursuit of values – personal, social, or transcendent, and when the spheres of religion and politics overlap, the relationship can be supportive, neutral, or opposing, influence the type and scope of benefit or conflict<sup>9</sup>. In this case, and based on current Indonesia’s political landscape, it is clear that the overlapping connection between religion and politics are even more problematic. No wonder if President Jokowi’s call to separate religion from politics

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8 According to Survey Results by Lembaga Survei Indonesia (LSI)

9 Epley, Jennifer L. 2010. *Voices of The Faithful: Religion and Politics in Contemporary Indonesia* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <https://deepblue.lib.umich.edu/handle/2027.42/77766>

as an attempt to against the politicisation of religion which would divide our plural society.

There are at least two conceptual departure viewpoints concerning the relationship between religion and political (and behavior)<sup>10</sup>. One argues that religious membership and activities of members with distinctive values and orientations have a formative influence on political behaviour. The other suggests that the political preference of any group in society does not need to be motivated by its religious beliefs and that any relationship in this sense is “spurious”.

To date, it does not come as a surprise that the field of religion and politics, and its new online forms appear so popular among scholars these days. Several studies have shown a great interest on the online piety and the ways of being digitally pious<sup>11</sup>, how internet users and religious communities shape media technologies in line with their religious values<sup>12</sup>, the relationship between social media and political expression and its consequences to political participation<sup>13</sup>, and even the complex and subtle links between religion and political beliefs in a critically important Muslim democracy<sup>14</sup>. However, most research looking into the relationship between piety and digital media, politics and digital media, or piety and politics merely as the separate concept, thus this article try to fill a gap in the area and bringing together theories of religion, politics and new media. As it is important for research to continue to explore the effects of digital mediation on our conceptualizations of religion, culture, and communication.

Therefore, examining how social media use affects political activities and other outcomes is an important inquiry. Rather than

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10 Hammond, J.L. 1979 *The Politics of Benevolence: Revival Religion and American Voting Behaviour*. Noorwood: Ablex Publishing Corporation. Turmudi, E. 1995. Religion and Politics: A Study on Political Attitudes of Devout Muslims and the Role of the “Kyai” in Contemporary Java, *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science*, 23 (2), pp. 18-41

11 Slama, M. 2017. Social media and Islamic practice: Indonesian ways of being digitally pious. In E. Jurriens and R. Tapsell (eds), *Digital Indonesia: connectivity and divergence*. Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, pp. 146-162.

12 Dawson, Lorne L. & Cowan, Douglas E. (Eds.) 2004. *Religion Online: Finding Faith on the Internet*. New York: Routledge. Rashi, Tsurriel & McCombs, Maxwell. 2015. ‘Agenda Setting, Religion and New Media: The Chabad Case Study’. *Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture*, 4(1), 126-145.

13 Vaccari, C., Valeriani, A., Barbera, P., Bonneau, R., Jost, J. T., Nagler, J., Tucker, J. A. 2015. Political expression and action on social media: Exploring the relationship between lower- and higher-threshold political activities among Twitter users in Italy. *Journal of Computer-mediated Communication*, 20, 221-239.

14 Pepinsky, Thomas B, Liddle, R William, and Saiful Mujani. 2018. *Piety and Public Opinion: Understanding Indonesian Islam*. New York: Oxford University Press.

continuing to debate on religion as a weapon for politics, this article mainly deals with cases where social media are appreciated as enabling platforms of new forms of piety and political expressions. To date, the intersection between religion, politics, and social media has received relatively little scholarly attention, thus this study provides a better understanding of how Internet, religious, and everyday politics intersect, through the patterns of contemporary piety and political expressions of Indonesian Muslim in an online sphere. The main contribution of this study is to propose general social media use as a new antecedent of political expression, and how piety and religious devotion are also expressed behind it. This study deliberately draws on social media as social media provide a useful analytical orientation to examine the latest dynamics of religious and political life of Indonesian. This study generally refers to Fairclough's<sup>15</sup> definition of that define language as mode of 'social action'. Language is not simply a system of sentences, but language reflect 'action' that also define as power. On the other hand, this study also finds how minority religious groups were often violated verbally through language in online sphere (Twitter hashtag, Instagram posts, etc).

## Result and Discussion

Across the globe, social media has increasingly become an important venue to spread ideas, influence opinions, becoming people's trusted sources of information, even more than the websites and conventional mass media. Although motivations for social media usage patterns may vary widely among individuals, the adoption of social media is an unequivocal trend that has increased every year over the last decade. Today, we can observe myriad ways in which the internet and social media are turned into platforms of religious and political mediation. While religion, politics and social media may seem like separate realms of social life, ethnographic analysis highlights their shared features and connections<sup>16</sup>. Key events, for instance, Arab Spring in 2010 and Action Defend Islam 212 in 2016 have become emblematic of the power of social media. This paper presents an overview of how social media are appreciated as enabling platforms of political expression, while piety and religious devotion are also

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15 Fairclough, N. 1989. *Language and Power*. London: Longman.

16 Jones, Carla and Martin Slama. 2017 "Introduction: Piety, Celebrity, Sociality." In "Piety, Celebrity, Sociality: A Forum on Islam and Social Media in Southeast Asia," Martin Slama and Carla Jones, eds., *American Ethnologist* website, November 8. <http://americanethnologist.org/features/collections/piety-celebrity-sociality/introduction>

expressed behind it. Thus I argue that the value of piety and politics have been increasingly blurred by the Internet. However, before going deeper it is imperative to begin with conceptual discussion of what piety means in the context of Indonesia.

## **What is Piety? Defining Piety in Contemporary Indonesian Islam**

To begin with, it is necessary to understand what it means to be religiously pious. One could argue that there are as many conceptualizations of Islamic piety as there are various sects and doctrines in Islam. Based on the place and time of the doctrine is developed, then in Indonesia, it is commonly known as Islam Nusantara or Southeast Asian Islam. Yet, the most thorough discussion of the conceptual foundations of religiosity is from Steven Fish, who attempts to compare religiosity between Muslims and non-Muslims, notes that “defining religiosity is so difficult,”<sup>17</sup>. In a further degree, it is also subject to social desirability bias, long understood to be a major problem in the study of individual religious behavior and participation<sup>18</sup>. Even if individuals agreed on what piety means, they may overstate their own adherence to their faith.<sup>19</sup>

However, understanding religious piety can be done through an intuitive level, which is most simply defined as a person’s degree of devotion to the teachings of their religion. But to understand piety within an analytical framework, we need to identify some practical indicators. The most holistic analytical understanding of piety comes via Thomas Pepinsky, who constructs a piety index which measures the relative piety among individuals through a mix of indicators representing adherence to religious rituals, perception of religious orientation, and practice of non-obligatory religious behaviours<sup>20</sup>. Most scholars, however, still rely on single indicators to define piety, which is usually related to mosque involvement, or attendance of religious

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17 Fish, M. Steven. 2011. *Are Muslims Distinctive? A Look at the Evidence*. New York: Oxford University Press.

18 Hadaway, C. Kirk, Penny Long Marler, and Mark Chaves. 1993. “What the Polls Don’t Show: A Closer Look at U.S. Church Attendance.” *American Sociological Review* 58 (6):741-52. Presser, Stanley, and Linda Stinson. 1998. “Data Collection Mode and Social Desirability Bias in Self-Reported Religious Attendance.” *American Sociological Review* 63 (1):137-45. Brenner, Philip S. 2014. “Testing the Veracity of Self-Reported Religious Practice in the Muslim World.” *Social Forces* 92 (3):1009-37. Pepinsky, Thomas B. 2016. Measuring Piety in Indonesia. Paper presented at AALIMS Conference on the Political Economy of Islam and Muslim Societies, April 16.

19 Pepinsky et al., 2018

20 Retrieved from <http://www.newmandala.org/distinguishing-piety-fundamentalism-indonesian-muslims/> (Accessed Nov 10, 2018)

service, or support for Shari'a law.

In this sense, there are few examples of practice and ritual, the adherence to which distinguishes pious from non-pious Indonesian Muslims. This naturally requires attention to the theology of Islam itself. As a purely theological matter, Islamic piety requires belief in and practice of the five pillars of Islam: belief in Allah and Muhammad as his prophet (Arabic Shahadah, Indonesian Syahadat), required daily prayers (Arabic and Indonesian Salat), obligatory tithing (Arabic Zakah, Indonesian Zakat), fasting during the holy month of Ramadan (Arabic Sawm, Indonesian Puasa), and intent to make the pilgrimage to Mecca if economically affordable (Arabic Hajj, Indonesian Haji)<sup>21</sup>. These examples clearly reflect the Indonesian context. Furthermore, in recent Indonesia's social landscape there seems to be an interchangeability between the concepts of religious piety as an identity and religious intolerance and violence as behaviors (Satria, 2017) toward minority religious groups, particularly after the controversy surrounding Jakarta gubernatorial election in 2016. Then, what about online piety? And how is it manifested in the digital media?

Islamic expressions of piety in contemporary Southeast Asia, particularly in Indonesia, are embedded in the everyday practices and uses of social media and new communication technologies<sup>22</sup>. A researcher finds the forms of online piety in Indonesian context such as online Qur'an reading groups (ODOJ) and sedekah (charity) activities that utilize social media<sup>23</sup>. Indeed, all traditional and face-to-face religious activities like forming Islamic socialities, reading the Qur'an, running charities and donating, following particular preachers and preaching itself have all become practices that more or less connect to the platforms and communication channels of today's social media. As Campbell<sup>24</sup> find the so-called digital religion to describe how online and offline religious spheres have become blended or integrated.

Furthermore, what is currently popular among female Indonesian Muslim youth is to spread religious messages and practicing piety on Instagram. Instagram is one of the fastest-growing social media platforms, where the so-called hijabers are creating an image of the

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21 Pepinsky et al., 2018

22 Jones and Slama, 2017

23 Husein, Fatimah, and Martin Slama. 2018. Online piety and its discontent: revisiting Islamic anxieties on Indonesian social media, *Indonesia and the Malay World*, 46:134, pp. 80-93.

24 Campbell, Heidi A. 2013. 'Introduction: The Rise of the Study of Digital Religion'. In: Heidi A. Campbell (Ed.), *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds*. London: Routledge, 1-21.

ideal, modern Muslim woman<sup>25</sup> and they often express their religious expressions of piety on the Instagram account, for instance, uploading pictures of the religious (pengajian and charity) activities and spreading moral messages inspired by the Quran on their posts.

The above phenomenon inspired me to do this research, particularly after one of the leading Instagram celebrity and famous modest fashion designer Dian Pelangi, whose global reputation and 4.6 million Instagram audience, posted a picture with caption about the importance of a Muslim to vote for Muslim leader rather than non-Muslim (kafir) leader. As an influencer, no wonder if her post has gone viral, followed by many Muslim youths to post the same thing. As the result, #muslimvotemuslim hashtag had become extremely popular, and henceforth, many female Muslim (Muslimah) practice their piety through the political expression with the use of #muslimvotemuslim hashtag on their personal Instagram, even until today. Dian Pelangi, however, often evidencing her pious practice in social media, for instance, uploading a photo of her wrapped in white mukena (prayer covering). From that, her followers repeatedly praising her and calling her “super Muslim” or “ideal Muslimah” (Muslimah banget).

This research, however, rather than using Instagram as a platform for data collection, I will use Twitter as this platform is certainly more accessible than Instagram, and the affordances of Twitter to record online conversation from a variety of publics with its chronological timeline that work against bias introduced by a filtering algorithm as well.

## **Piety and Political Expressions in an Online Sphere**

We already know what piety means, while we leave behind how to define political expression. Here, researchers propose general concept of political expression as the communications that express a specific opinion on current events or political processes or that disseminate information relevant to the interpretation of those events or processes<sup>26</sup>. Talking about political expression in today’s digital era, cannot currently be separated from the so-called social media. Social media play a pivotal role for those kind of expressions. Facebook,

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25 Retrieved from [https://theconversation.com/hijabers-of-instagram-the-muslim-women-challenging-stereotypes-79416#comment\\_1340260](https://theconversation.com/hijabers-of-instagram-the-muslim-women-challenging-stereotypes-79416#comment_1340260) (Accessed Nov 09, 2018)

26 Velasquez, A., and Rojas, H. 2017. Political Expression on Social Media: The Role of Communication Competence and Expected Outcomes. *Social Media + Society*. 1-13.

Youtube and Twitter in particular, has emerged as a major location for political interaction<sup>27</sup>. Facebook statuses, tweets, and Tumblrs are just a few of myriad online outlets for individual identity expression that enable not only social, but political and civic expression<sup>28</sup>, and now including piety expression. Furthermore, research has found that online settings might be more politically diverse than face-to-face settings<sup>29</sup>. Research has also found that the written and asynchronous characteristics of the medium may support more reflexive, rational and argumentative conversations<sup>30</sup>.

On top of that, it is known that political expression on social media has been found to positively influence other political behaviors such as traditional types of political participation<sup>31</sup>, including political mobilization<sup>32</sup> and electoral campaigning<sup>33</sup>. That is relevant with what recently happen in Indonesia where some groups who can adept at online expression and disruption successfully mobilized hundreds of thousands in “Action to Defend Islam” to influence election, where finally the incumbent Basuki T Purnama who was enjoying 70 percent approval rating decisively defeated in the election.

However, in today’s digital era, analysis on public expression requires sophisticated methods, where researchers in this field must possess a skill on the computational approaches. The relatively recent flourishing of computer-supported approaches to the study of social and

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27 Hanna, A., Wells, C., Maurer, P., Friedland, L., Shah, D. and Matthes, J. 2013. Partisan alignments and political polarization online: a computational approach to understanding the French and US presidential election. In *Proceedings of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Workshop on Politics, Elections and Data* (pp. 15-22), ACM.

28 Weinstein, C. Emily. 2014. The Personal Is Political on Social Media: Online Civic Expression Patterns and Pathways Among Civically Engaged Youth. *International Journal of Communication*, 8 (24), pp 210-233.

29 Baek, Y. M., Wojcieszak, M., & Delli Carpini, M. X. 2012. Online versus face-to-face deliberation: Who? Why? What? With what effects? *New Media & Society*, 14(3), 363-383. Bakshy E, Messing S, Adamic L. 2015. Exposure to ideologically diverse news and opinion on facebook. *Science*. 348 (6239) pp. 1130-1132

30 Stromer Galley, J. and Wichowski, A. 2011. Political Discussion Online. In *The Handbook of Internet Studies* (eds M. Consalvo and C. Ess). pp 168- 187. doi:10.1002/9781444314861.ch8

31 de Zaniga, H. G., Bachmann, L., Hsu, S.-H., & Brundidge, J. 2013. Expressive versus consumptive blog use: Implications for interpersonal discussion and political participation. *International Journal of Communication*, 7, 1538-1559.

32 Rojas, H., & Puig-i-Abril, E. 2009. Mobilizers mobilized: Information, expression, mobilization and participation in the Digital Age. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 14, 902-927.

33 Dimitrova, D. V., Shehata, A., Str.m.b.c.k, J., & Nord, L. W. 2014. The effects of digital media on political knowledge and participation in election campaigns: Evidence from panel data. *Communication Research*, 45, 95-118.

cultural phenomena – digital methods<sup>34</sup>, computational social science<sup>35</sup>, digital humanities<sup>36</sup>, each with their set of significant precursors – has led to an encounter between technology and methodology that deeply affects the status and practice of research in the social sciences and humanities. Especially in communication and media studies, which has long focused on analyzing technologies as media, that is, as artifacts or institutions that do not merely transport information, but, by affecting the scale, speed, form, in short, the character of expression and interaction, contribute to how societies and cultures assemble, operate, and produce knowledge<sup>37</sup>. Indeed, a major change is happening in the field of media studies, as we move from an era where data was very hard to come by to an era where the digitisation of social life such as big data is making it increasingly easy to collect.

Therefore, this paper focuses on piety and political expression in Twitter, as Twitter is considerably an excellent medium for message propagation. Twitter is a microblogging application that allows users to share, comment, or express themselves in no more than 140 characters and to follow others based on their own interests<sup>38</sup>. Twitter is less a site for making or maintaining social connections, and more for building less formal relationships and weak connections with others<sup>39</sup> and sharing political news and information; therefore, it is more suitable for expressing and learning what others have to say about specific (political) issues.

My starting points to analyze piety and political expression is tracing the proliferation of hashtags (user-generated keywords organized around #symbol) on Twitter to find specific issue positions, as they provide a potentially power full way to track everyday political expression<sup>40</sup>. In this paper, I am using a KeyHole software to capture

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34 Rogers, R. 2013. *Digital Methods*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

35 Lazer, D., Pentland, A.(S.), Adamic, L., Aral, S., Barabasi, A.L., Brewer, D., Christakis, N., Contractor, N., Fowler, J., Gutmann, M., Jebara, T., King, G., Macy, M., Roy, D. and Van Alstyne, M. 2009. "Life in the network: the coming age of computational social science", *Science*, 323(5915), pp. 721-723.

36 Kirschenbaum, M.G. 2010. "What is digital humanities and what's it doing in English departments?", *ADE Bulletin*, Vol. 150 No. 7, pp. 55-61.

37 Borra, Erik, and Bernhard Rieder. 2014. "Programmed method: developing a toolset for capturing and analyzing tweets", *Aslib Journal of Information Management*, Vol. 66 Issue: 3, pp. 262-278.

38 Velasquez and Rojas, 2017

39 Chen, G. M. 2011. Tweet this: A uses and gratifications perspective on how active Twitter use gratifies a need to connect with others. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 27, 755-762.

40 Bruns, A., and Burgess, J.E. 2011. The use of Twitter hashtags in the formation of ad hoc publics. Paper presented at the 6<sup>th</sup> European Consortium for

and analyzing Twitter hashtag. I use the software only to draw some results from the raw data, not for sentiment analysis or critical and text analysis. As Twitter limits the retrieval of tweets then the data collected is also limited consisting to only a few hashtags.

In this case, I picked the hashtags that closely reflects the piety and political expression, for example, #muslimvotemuslim, #saatnyaumatmemilih, #manutkiai. The chosen hashtag derived from my personal observation on social media and I conclude that these hashtags are quite popular, and therefore they are generally reflect piety and political expression of all Indonesian Muslim. In order to prove that the chosen hashtag is worth for this research, I also using the same software to verify the popularity of hashtags, to count the number of tweets/posts generated by the hashtag. Below are the results of the total number of the chosen hashtags:

Table 1. Total number of hashtag’s mentions for Twitter

Hashtag	Count
#muslimvotemuslim	22,000
#saatnyaumatmemilih	920
#umatbersatu	6247
#manutkiai	30
#kamibersamaulama	63,000

Source: Author

In practice, given the nature of Twitter user accounts, these numbers mentioned above shrank slightly because some users’ accounts were suspended or might be deleted. On the one hand, Twitter provides access to only a limited history of tweets through the search mechanism, and due to limitations of time and skills, the collected data may be fewer than all many tweets that are available. Therefore, the data result above cannot be generalized or represent the entire population of Twitter users.

Furthermore, to uncover the relationship between piety and political expression, this research uses the same software to track some of the most frequently used hashtags that closely associated with the chosen hashtag mentioned above, such as #muslimvotemuslim and #saatnyaumatmemilih.



with separating relevant tweets to those that are irrelevant. The process of the data cleaning is performed by human coders manually, without the help of computational software. After clearing the data, the human coders need to select tweets that only contain personal opinions or contents. The term refers to types of tweets that appear from personal opinions shared by personal accounts. Most of the personal tweets using #muslimvotemuslim, #saatnyaumatmemilih, #manutkiai hashtag express negative sentiment toward certain political actors and toward minority. One can we note that in these tweets clearly contains statements from Islamic preachers and Al-Qurán verses in addition to political expression.

Time	Content
06.01 - 26 Mar 2017	Kalau udah ada yang HALAL ngapain pilih yang HARAM... #MuslimVoteMuslim #SaatnyaUmatMemilih
16.48 - 17 Sep 2018	Mengapa kita tak boleh GOLPUT? Begini penjelasan TEGAS Ustadz Abdul Somad tentang Kewajiban Muslim utk #MuslimVoteMuslim #PrabowoSandiBersamaUlama #2019PrabowoSandi Jangan sampai karena orang2 baik tak memilih mk kita akan dipimpin orang2 yg tak bela ISLAM #2019GantiPresiden
01.43 - 18 Feb 2017	Sama janji manusia kalian yakin, masa sama janji Allah ga yakin?? Padahal jelas-jelas Allah sudah melarang pilih pemimpin kafir #MuslimVoteMuslim
17.43 - 18 Apr 2017	Ayoo.. Baca bismillah ajak saudara, tetangga Utk Coblos #MuslimVoteMuslim
5:11 PM - 9 Feb 2018	Orang NU ya harus milih @jokowi dan @cakimiNOW. Karenah jamaah menjadi unsur penting membina kesatuan, persatuan dan kekompakan. #nderekulama #manutkiai #mantaPKB#menjagaideologi

4:52 PM - 17 Sep 2018	Temans... Mari resapi nasehat UAH tentang #MuslimVoteMuslim dg #PrabowoSandiBersamaUlama Jangan Golput temans! Bersikaplah #2019GantiPresiden krn kekaduahan ini harus diakhiri #2019PrabowoPresiden
6:01 PM - 17 Feb 2017	Jika Muslim tetap milih pemimpin Non-muslim, apakah tidak takut ini perintah Allah Pilih Pemimpin Muslim #MuslimVoteMuslim

(Source: Twitter and Author)

As can be seen in Table 2 that the content of Tweets tends to be only a short sentence as the result of Twitter policy to limit the user expression to no more than 140 characters. However, the number of relevant tweets is quite a lot, so I intentionally chose only 7 tweets to be included in this article based on the diversity and relevance of the content with this study. A similar method is also applied by other researchers where Lee JL et al<sup>41</sup> randomly selected 15 of the 100 tweets of each group of Twitter users.

The majority of the tweets using the chosen hashtags have shown how the dangerous it is for a Muslim to choose a leader who is not Muslim. This was the classic challenge that Muslim face in term of electing a non-Muslim as a “leader” that is considerably against Islamic belief, as referring to the Al Maidah [5:51] and Al Imran [3:28] in the Quran, the Islamic holy book. The english translation of Al-Maidah [5:51], according to internationally-legitimate translation<sup>42</sup>, says as follows:

*“O you who have believed, do not take the Jews and the Christians as allies. They are [in fact] allies of one another. And whoever is an ally to them among you - then indeed, he is [one] of them. Indeed, Allah guides not the wrongdoing people.”*

Similarly, Hanafi<sup>43</sup> explained that in Q.s. al-Imran / 3: 28 contained a prohibition for believers to make disbelievers as leader and

41 Lee, J.L., DeCamp, M., Dredze, M., Chisolm M.S., Berger, Z.D. 2014. What are health-related users tweeting? A Qualitative Content Analysis of Health-Related Users and Their Messages on Twitter. *Journal Of Medical Internet Research*. 16 (10): 1438-8871. Thomas, R., David. (2006). A General Inductive Approach for Analyzing Qualitative Evaluation Data. *American Journal of Evaluation*. 27 (2): 237-242.

42 Retrieved from <https://www.thejakartapost.com/academia/2016/12/02/islamic-religious-texts-must-be-read-in-context-to-understand-blasphemy.html> (Accessed Nov 18, 2018)

43 Hanafi, Muchlis M. 2011. *Al-Qurán dan Kenegaraan: Tafsir al-Qurán Tematik*. Jakarta: Lajnah Pentashihan al-Qurán.

allies, because it would harm themselves and the general interests of the Ummah. Even so, the verse was subject to debate among everyone, from noted Islamic scholars to ordinary members of the public. One argues that “The Quran is very clear” that Christian leaders are forbidden, while other suggested that Indonesia’s Islamists take such a hard stance toward non-Muslim leaders is due to mistranslation of the Quran from Arabic. This generally occurs due to differences in the views of the scholars in interpreting the Qur’an.

As a matter of fact, I can say that the tweet posted based on genuine religious emotions of each Twitter user and yet departs from the trust and devotion toward the religious beliefs. However, back in the topic, besides conveying the political expressions, the tweet at the same time also expressed piety toward Islam. They want to show their identity as a good Muslim by expressing their political preference based on the perspective of Islam. As pointed out by Pepinsky<sup>44</sup> that piety is an unobservable interior mental state that is not reducible to ritual, we also believe that it is likely to be manifest in other beliefs or actions, even including on their political preference, expression and even political behavior could possibly measure one’s piety, and to distinguish the pious from non-pious Muslims.

On the other hand, it is becoming more relevant with a common perception about how religious piety correlates positively with religious intolerance, that a person’s intolerance is caused by their religiosity<sup>45</sup>. The results of this research show how minority religious groups in Indonesia were violated verbally through language. The piety and political expression in this case has done symbolic coercion by using Islamic ideology for marginalizing the minority. The discourse has exclude minority from the political discussion particularly in defining ideal leader for Indonesian people. Indeed, this to prove what Epley<sup>46</sup> suggest about the condition of when the spheres of religion and politics overlap, the relationship can be supportive, neutral, or opposing, influence the type and scope of benefit or conflict. In this case, the relationship is find to be more problematic. To conclude, religion has always been recognized as an influential tool for political mobilization in the process of Indonesia’s political constellations.

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44 Pepinsky, 2016

45 Satria, 2017

46 Epley, 2017

## Conclusion

This article has provided an overview of how social media, everyday religious, and the politics intersect among Indonesian Muslims. It is known that the personal piety of Indonesian Muslim increasingly manifested through the digital media in many various ways. Whereas, after the Jakarta Gubernatorial election, personal and public piety have been blurred and indistinguishable with politics. Based on the result of the data collection, it is very likely that more and more Indonesian Muslims convey their piety and political expressions together at the same time and at the same post, making it increasingly difficult to distinguish these two separated concepts. Therefore, it can be said that political preference of any group in Indonesian society need to be motivated by its religious beliefs, and at the same time, religion is so deeply embedded in the process of Indonesia's political constellations.

The piety and political expression in social media, however, the goal is whether to emphasize and remind others of the ideal Islamic life (*da'wa*) in which they invite and motivate others to become proper Muslim by choosing the right leader, or maybe for political campaign and any other political purposes. Then the further question that this research ask, is it purely religious or political? Due the limitations of time, this study did not have the chance to answer this important question because this research was only able scratching the surface in term of relationship between three concepts, and therefore future research would do well to investigate precisely yet entirely on how the connection between social media use and piety and political expression works.

While this research also suggests the importance of moving beyond content-analytic or survey-based assessments of online phenomena, instead using the big data with computational approaches that is consider to be easier and able to reach wider audience on analysis of public expression. Moreover, the use of this method provide unique insights into how the expression should be understand, illuminate how particular issues connected with other different issues. Although the use of computational methods on this research are still very lack, and therefore, it will be interesting for future research to do more thoroughly.

In addition, given the relevance of these topics and the continuing popularity of digital ways of being pious and the rise of Islamic populism in Indonesia, it will not sound too prophetic to state

that the intersection between piety, politics and the use of social media platforms represents a field of enquiry that will remain with us in the years to come. This research area could certainly benefit more from additional works such as face-to-face interviews and field research.

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