



Religion in the Metaverse Scheme: Practices of Worship in the New Media Age

The simulation of religious practices within the metaverse represents a new phenomenon in the discourse of religion and technological adaptation in the era of new media. Through the use of virtual reality technology, spiritual experiences can be presented in immersive forms within digital spaces. However, this phenomenon remains underexplored in existing academic studies. This research aims to address that gap by analyzing the discourse surrounding the simulation of religious practices in the metaverse through a contextual interpretation of Muslim perspectives. The study employs a qualitative descriptive method with a case study approach. The findings indicate that the simulation of worship in the metaverse is generally accepted by Muslims as a form of technological adaptation, functioning as a tool for education and the dissemination of religious knowledge, as long as it does not compromise the theological meaning or orientation of religious practices. The significance of this study lies in its contribution to building a reflective framework for understanding the interplay between religion and technological adaptation in the new media age.

Keywords: Virtual of religion; community interpretation; muslim; worship activities; metaverse.

Praktik ibadah yang disimulasikan dalam ruang metaverse merupakan fenomena baru yang muncul dalam wacana agama dan adaptasi teknologi di era new media. Melalui pemanfaatan teknologi berbasis *virtual reality*, pengalaman spiritual dapat dihadirkan dalam bentuk representasi imersif di ruang-ruang digital. Namun fenomena tersebut masih jarang dikaji secara mendalam pada studi-studi yang pernah dilakukan sebelumnya. Studi ini bertujuan untuk mengisi kekosongan studi-studi yang ada, dengan menganalisis wacana simulasi praktik ibadah dalam ruang metaverse berdasarkan interpretasi kaum Muslim secara kontekstual. Metode yang digunakan dalam studi bersifat deskriptif kualitatif dengan pendekatan studi kasus. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa simulasi ibadah dalam ruang metaverse, dapat diterima oleh kaum Muslim sebagai bentuk adaptasi teknologi yang berfungsi sebagai media pembelajaran dan penyebaran pengetahuan agama, selama tidak menggeser makna teologis dari fungsi maupun orientasi dari praktik peribadatan. Signifikansi studi ini dapat berkontribusi dalam memberikan kerangka pemahaman yang reflektif terhadap wacana agama dan adaptasi teknologi di era new media.

Kata Kunci: *Virtual of religion*; pemaknaan komunitas; kaum Muslim; aktivitas peribadatan; metaverse.

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Introduction

The discourse surrounding the simulation of religious practices in the metaverse has become a significant issue in contemporary religious studies in the new media era. This phenomenon reflects the advancement of digital technology and has sparked various debates among Muslims regarding the authenticity, meaning, and legitimacy of religious practices. According to Taufik and Taufik,¹ the digitalization of religion in the new media age represents a form of transformation that can potentially shift understandings of the existence and nature of worship practices. This context reveals emerging patterns in religious expression that may alter the ideal orientation of worship,² thereby raising theological and ideological challenges within Muslim communities. In other words, the simulation of worship in the metaverse reflects characteristics of contemporary culture and marks the emergence of a new trend in religious expression. As such, this phenomenon is both important and relevant for deeper exploration, particularly within the scope of contemporary religious studies in the digital age.

In the new media era, religion is often presented as a performative, visually driven activity disseminated through various digital

platforms, including the metaverse. According to Johari,³ the simulation of religious rituals has become an integral part of the development of metaverse platforms, enabling adherents to engage in worship practices without time and space constraints. This phenomenon reflects a shift in the representation of religion within social media activism, which often goes beyond religion's normative essence and function. Fikri⁴ also argues that adopting technology in the new media age tends to render religious practices into formalized rituals, which risk being interpreted as symbolic acts lacking a deep connection to transcendental values. Therefore, the discourse surrounding the simulation of worship activities in the metaverse is a highly significant phenomenon that warrants critical examination in order to understand its implications for how Muslims interpret and experience religion in the era of new media.

During the past five years, studies addressing religion in the new media era have focused on three dominant themes. First, research examines the characteristics of religious activities presented across various social media platforms.⁵ Second, studies that emphasize the factors driving the emergence of religious trends in digital spaces, particularly on social media.⁶

¹ Zulfan Taufik and Muhammad Taufik, "Mediated Tarekat Qadiriyyah Wa Naqshabandiyah in the Digital Era: An Ethnographic Overview," *ESENSIA: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 22, no. 1 (May 29, 2021): 35–43, <https://ejournal.uin-suka.ac.id/ushuluddin/esensia/article/view/2511>.

² Henky Fernando, Yuniar Galuh Larasati, and Novita Cahyani, "Being #wanitasalihah: Representations of Salihah Women on TikTok," *IAS Journal of Localities* 1, no. 1 (May 24, 2023): 1–15, <https://iasjournals.org/index.php/iasjol/article/view/8>.

³ Siti Nuramalina Binti Johari et al., "Non-Immersive Virtual Reality Umrah Simulation: A Functionality Test," in *2022 International Conference on Innovation and Intelligence for Informatics, Computing, and Technologies (3ICT)* (IEEE, 2022), 138–143, <https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/document/9990678/>.

⁴ Mursyid Fikri et al., "The Potential Utilization of Metaverse as a Praying Space from the Perspective of Masalah Mursalah," *Journal of Ecohumanism* 3, no. 4 (August 16, 2024): 2143–2160,

<https://ecohumanism.co.uk/joe/ecohumanism/article/view/3713>.

⁵ Dindin Solahudin and Moch Fakhruroji, "Internet and Islamic Learning Practices in Indonesia: Social Media, Religious Populism, and Religious Authority," *Religions* 11, no. 1 (December 31, 2019): 19, <https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/11/1/19>; Bouziane Zaid et al., "Digital Islam and Muslim Millennials: How Social Media Influencers Reimagine Religious Authority and Islamic Practices," *Religions* 13, no. 4 (April 8, 2022): 335, <https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/13/4/335>; Muhammad Maga Sule and Yahaya Sulaiman, "Enhancing Da'wah and Spread of Knowledge Via Social Media Platforms," *Jurnal Ilmiah Peuradeun* 9, no. 1 (January 30, 2021): 145–160, <https://journal.scadindependent.org/index.php/jipeuradeun/article/view/549>.

⁶ Shoaib Ul Haq and Ray Yiu-keung Kwok, "Encountering 'the Other' in Religious Social Media: A Cross-Cultural Analysis," *Social Media + Society* 10, no. 4 (October 29, 2024), <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/205630512413033>





Third, research that explores the implications of religious practices disseminated through social media on people's understanding and expressions of religiosity.⁷ Based on these themes, it can be concluded that existing scholarship remains limited and has yet to comprehensively address issues such as the significance of simulated worship practices in the metaverse within the context of contemporary religion.

The simulation of worship practices in the metaverse is often discussed through immersive visual displays, enabling religious experiences to be virtually presented in similar real-life settings. For instance, DJ Soto founded VR Church, conducts Christian worship services entirely in virtual reality environments, allowing congregants to participate through avatars in a simulated church space.⁸ According to Dos Santos and Rodriguezda Cruz,⁹ the interactive and boundless nature of the metaverse is frequently utilized to imitate various real-life activities, including religious practices. This context allows activities such as communication, interaction, and worship to be manifested in a convergent manner within virtual spaces. Consequently, the discourse on simulating worship practices in the metaverse emerges as a significant and relevant issue within contemporary religious studies. However, previous studies on this topic tend to be descriptive and normative, and thus have yet to

offer a comprehensive understanding. This study seeks to address that gap by evaluating the discourse surrounding simulated worship practices in the metaverse based on contextually grounded interpretations within the Muslim community.

This study was conducted amid the growing discourse and trend of adaptation of metaverse technology for immersive representations of cultural and religious activities in the new media era. However, the research specifically focuses on worship activities, the simulation of worship practices, and Muslim interpretations of worship practices simulated within the metaverse in the context of new media. The choice of this focus is based on three primary considerations. First, the discourse on the simulation of worship practices in the metaverse remains a central issue that has not yet received comprehensive scholarly attention. Second, this discourse possesses unique characteristics and holds significant implications for the essence of religion in the new media age, thereby warranting deep reflection. Third, the simulation of worship practices in the metaverse reflects contextually grounded interpretations among Muslims, which are important to evaluate critically. These three considerations serve as the foundational basis for formulating the direction of this research thoroughly and comprehensively.

63; Putri Rahmah Nur Hakim et al., "Mediatization of Clothing Consumption Among Muslim Teenagers," *IAS Journal of Localities* 2, no. 1 (June 30, 2024): 52–68, <https://iasjournals.org/index.php/iasjol/article/view/41>; Moch. Khafidz Fuad Raya, "Digital Religion: The Packaging and Persuasion of Celebrity Preachers in Contemporary Indonesia," *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 23, no. 67 (2024): 80–94, <https://www.thenewsri.ro/index.php/njsri/article/view/512>.

⁷ Jing Wang et al., "The Revival of Spiritual Practices: Factors Influencing the 'Seeking Deities and Offering Prayers' Behavior of China's Generation Z on Social Media in an Atheistic Context," *Frontiers in Psychology* 15 (January 30, 2025): 1485265, <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1485265/full>; Supriadi and Muhammad Roy Purwanto, "Religious Learning with Social Media and Its Implication

for Understanding Religion," *International Journal of Engineering and Advanced Technology* 8, no. 6s3 (November 22, 2019): 352–354, <https://www.ijeat.org/portfolio-item/F10560986S319/>; Jauhara Ferguson, Elaine Howard Ecklund, and Connor Rothschild, "Navigating Religion Online: Jewish and Muslim Responses to Social Media," *Religions* 12, no. 4 (April 7, 2021): 258, <https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/12/4/258>.

⁸ Wired, "This Pastor Is Putting His Faith in a Virtual Reality Church," *Wired*, February 2, 2018, <https://www.wired.com/story/virtual-reality-church/>.

⁹ Victoria Dos Santos and Eduardo Rodriguez da Cruz, "Materiality, Religion and the Digital: A Theoretical Exploration of Material Religion in Immersive Platforms," *Poligrafi* 29, no. 113/114 (December 24, 2024): 7–31, <https://ojs.zrs-kp.si/index.php/poligrafi/article/view/483>.





This study adopts a qualitative descriptive method with a case study approach to analyze the discourse on the simulation of worship practices in the metaverse. The primary data for this study were obtained through descriptive excerpts from online news articles. Data collection was conducted by three authors who performed online searches using the keyword phrase "Discourse and simulation of worship practices in the metaverse" via the Google search engine. The search was carried out from 12 April to 28 May 2025. Skimming techniques were applied during the initial stage to identify informative and relevant news headlines, particularly those related to worship activities, the simulation of worship practices, and Muslim interpretations of worship within the metaverse. Additionally, this study also utilized data from readings of relevant websites, books, and journal articles to strengthen the arguments and analysis presented in the research.

Data analysis in this study follows the stages outlined by Miles and Huberman,¹⁰ consisting of three key phases. First, data reduction was conducted to filter and organize the data into a more systematic and structured format aligned with the research focus. Second, data display was performed to present the data visually through tables, quotations, and summaries of relevant news findings, facilitating easier comprehension of the results. Third, data verification was undertaken to draw conclusions based on patterns and trends identified from the analyzed data. Following these steps, an inductive descriptive analysis was conducted as the foundation for interpreting the data in depth. This approach enabled the study to critically evaluate Muslim interpretations of the discourse

on simulated worship practices within the metaverse in contemporary cultural contexts.

The discourse on the simulation of worship practices in the metaverse during the new media age has sparked various debates among Muslims, both regarding practical aspects and religious orientations. This phenomenon raises important questions about how religion is represented, practiced, and interpreted in digital contexts. To address these questions, this study formulates three research questions. First, what are the characteristics of worship activities as discussed within the metaverse? Second, how are simulated worship practices presented in the metaverse? Third, how do Muslims interpret the discourse on simulated worship practices within the metaverse? This study is also grounded in the argument that the discourse on simulated worship practices generates critical meanings among Muslims and serves as a form of evaluation concerning worship practices that may conflict with integral and transcendental values in Islamic teachings in the new media age.

The Characteristics of Worship Practices in the Metaverse Discourse

Worship practices within metaverse-based simulations are often manifested through various activities, such as virtual Hajj, which represents spiritual experiences in a digital form. According to Lazić,¹¹ religious activities in virtual spaces frequently aim to provide access to spiritual experiences for individuals who face physical, financial, or geographical limitations. As a result, discussions surrounding these practices often center on inclusivity and democratizing access to religious experiences. Fernando and Larasati¹² also argue that

¹⁰ Matthew B. Miles and A. Michael Huberman, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*, ed. Johnny Saldana, 3rd ed. (United State of America: SAGE Publication, 2014),

https://books.google.co.id/books?id=3CNrUbTu6CsC&printsec=frontcover&hl=id&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0.

¹¹ Tihomir Lazić, "An Abductive Study of Digital Worship through the Lenses of Netnography and Digital Ecclesiology," in *Music and Spirituality: Theological*

Approaches, Empirical Methods, and Christian Worship (Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2024), 327–354, <https://www.openbookpublishers.com/books/10.11647/obp.0403/chapters/10.11647/obp.0403.16>.

¹² Henky Fernando and Yuniar Galuh Larasati, "Metaverse and Hajj: The Meaning of Muslims in Indonesia," *Kuriositas Media Komunikasi Sosial dan Keagamaan* 15, no. 2 (2022): 195–217.





Advancements in communication technology have facilitated a convergence between real-world worship practices and those conducted in virtual environments. The imitation of religious rituals through digital simulations has the potential to shape public perceptions regarding the authenticity of religious experiences. This context is essential to understand as it informs deeper reflections on the meaning of spirituality in the digital age, as reported by Detiknet¹³:

“The discourse on performing Hajj in the metaverse began when a digital replica of the Kaaba at the Masjid al-Haram was introduced into the virtual space. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia officially developed this metaverse version of the Kaaba in collaboration with Umm Al-Qura University. The initiative aims to provide Muslims with the opportunity to experience touching the Black Stone (Hajar Aswad) virtually.”¹⁴

The discourse surrounding the practice of Hajj through the virtual act of touching the Black Stone (Hajar Aswad) within a metaverse simulation reflects a form of religious ritual adaptation to advancements in digital technology. According to Aboelnagah,¹⁵ this discourse has emerged as technological developments now allow for the virtual imitation of every stage of religious worship, creating

experiences that, while not identical to real-life religious practices, still offer meaningful alternatives for those facing limitations. Such practices symbolize a convergence between spiritual experience and digital space, potentially reshaping believers’ understanding of authenticity and the essence of worship.¹⁶ Beyond Hajj, discussions around performing Umrah in the metaverse extend beyond ritual acts, encompassing aspects such as education, tourism promotion, and cultural diplomacy. Kompas¹⁷ emphasizes that this phenomenon raises important questions about the boundary between virtual representation and authentic spiritual experience:

“The Kaaba visitation program via the metaverse, initiated by Saudi Arabia, is also seen as a potential tool for preparing individuals for the performance of Umrah. Virtual visits can be utilized for worship preparation, such as practicing the Umrah (*manasik*) rites, similar to the training sessions typically held at Hajj dormitories.”¹⁸

In addition to the practice of Hajj, emerging discussions on performing Umrah in metaverse simulations illustrate the growing influence of religious digitalization in the new media age. According to Alsulami,¹⁹ the digitalization of religion in this context reflects the faithful’s

¹³ Detik News, “Apa Itu Metaverse Yang Bakal Hadirkan Ibadah Haji Virtual,” *Detik News*, 2022, <https://inet.detik.com/cyberlife/d-5934263/apa-itu-metaverse-yang-bakal-hadirkan-ibadah-haji-virtual>.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Hadeer Aboelnagah, “Digital Narratives of Hajj as Literature in Motion: An Analytical Study of Contemporary Travelogues in Live Streaming and Vlogs,” in *2022 Fifth International Conference of Women in Data Science at Prince Sultan University (WiDS PSU)* (IEEE, 2022), 112–116, <https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/document/9764863/>.

¹⁶ Esam Ali Khan and Mohd Khaled Yousef Shambour, “An Analytical Study of Mobile Applications for Hajj and Umrah Services,” *Applied Computing and Informatics* 14, no. 1 (January 2018): 37–47, <https://linkinghub.elsevier.com/retrieve/pii/S2210832716301272>; Wiji Nurasih, Ainiyatul Latifah, and Adil Hassan

Ibrahim Mohamed, “Spirituality Transformation from Metaphysical to Metaverse,” *IAS Journal of Localities* 1, no. 2 (December 22, 2023): 114–123, <https://iasjournals.org/index.php/iasjol/article/view/17>.

¹⁷ Kompas, “MUI: Kabah Di Metaverse Bisa Dimanfaatkan Untuk Persiapan Haji Dan Umrah,” *Nasional.Kompas.Com*, 2022, <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2022/02/08/20322981/mui-keliling-kabah-di-metaverse-tak-penuhi-syarat-ibadah-haji?page=all>.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Amnah A. Alsulami et al., “Secure Pilgrims Assistance System Using an Augmented Reality,” in *2025 2nd International Conference on Advanced Innovations in Smart Cities (ICAISC)* (IEEE, 2025), 1–6, <https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/document/10959561/>.





response to the limitations of space and time when practicing religious values. Such innovations are not merely spontaneous products of the digital age, but rather emerge from the religious imagination in creating representations of devotion that transcend physical boundaries.²⁰ This context marks a paradigm shift in religious practice, where the virtualization of worship serves as both an adaptation to and a negotiation with digital realities. Religious simulations in the metaverse may blur the boundaries of spiritual authenticity and introduce the risk of decontextualizing core religious values. This concern is reflected in the Tempo²¹ report, which highlights the growing discourse on the possibility of performing *Salat* (prayer) in virtual environments:

“The use of the metaverse is considered incompatible with the performance of Tarawih prayer, as it involves human-made avatars. This is because the practice of *Salat* is not merely about physical movements, but also entails a spiritual connection between the worshipper and the Creator.”²²

The simulation of Tarawih prayer within the metaverse has become part of contemporary religious discourse in the modern era. According to Lingad,²³ digital-based religious practices often overlook the natural, lived experience of religiosity and instead emphasize the formal

routines of worship. This context reflects a shift in the orientation of religious practice from authentic spiritual experience to digital representations, prioritizing form over essence.²⁴ The movement from conventional religious practices to digital spaces can also be seen in the growing phenomenon of religious study sessions (*pengajian*) conducted in virtual environments. From the perspective of Mudhofi²⁵, this trend suggests a possible reduction in the meaning of spirituality when it becomes dependent on digital content or simulation. This concern is further reinforced by the report of CNN,²⁶ which highlights how religious study sessions are increasingly being discussed within the framework of digital worship practices:

“President of the Republic of Indonesia, Joko Widodo stated that in the future, members of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) may be able to hold religious study sessions (*pengajian*) in the metaverse. He predicted that within the next 5 to 10 years, much of human physical activity will be transferred to virtual spaces. In the future, he said that preaching and religious study will all take place virtually in the future, transformed by the metaverse system.”²⁷

The discourse on religious study sessions (*pengajian*) conducted through metaverse spaces reflects a shift in how believers interpret religion

²⁰ Mohammad Badruddoza Talukder et al., “E-Tourism and Religion: Online Platforms and Religious Tourism Marketing,” in *Technology and Religious Tourism: Emerging Trends, Cases and Futuristic Perspectives* (Emerald Publishing Limited, 2025), 177–190, <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/978-1-83662-260-420251013/full/html>.

²¹ Tempo, “*Salat Tarawih Di Metaverse, Bisakah?*,” *Tempo.Co*, 2022, <https://www.tempo.co/ramadhan/salat-tarawih-di-metaverse-bisakah-370200>.

²² Ibid.

²³ Reiner B. Lingad, Ivan Efreaim A. Gozum, and Archimedes T. David, “Analyzing Physical to Virtual Religious Practices on Filipino Catholic Religiosity and Spirituality During the COVID-19 Pandemic,” *Journal of Religion and Health* (May 7, 2025), <https://link.springer.com/10.1007/s10943-025-02331-5>.

²⁴ Nesrine Mansour, “The Holy Light of Cyberspace: Spiritual Experience in a Virtual Church,” *Religions* 13, no. 2 (January 26, 2022): 121, <https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/13/2/121>.

²⁵ M. Mudhofi et al., “Deradicalizing Digital Islamic Space Through The Ahl Al-Sunnah Wa Al-Jama’ah (Aswaja) Thoughts: Indonesia and Malaysia Cases,” *Journal of Religious & Theological Information* 24, no. 2 (April 3, 2025): 64–85, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10477845.2024.2381917>.

²⁶ CNN, “Terinspirasi Zuckerberg, Jokowi Sebut Warga NU Bisa Ngaji Di Metaverse,” *Cnnindonesia.Com*, 2021, <http://cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20211222112941-20-737201/terinspirasi-zuckerberg-jokowi-sebut-warga-nu-bisa-ngaji-di-metaverse>.

²⁷ Ibid.





in the new media age. Religion is often emphasized more on formalistic and visual experiences rather than profound spiritual engagement. According to Semwal and Tyagi,²⁸ virtually simulated religion risks creating experiences prioritizing visual representation, potentially reducing spiritual values to mere displays or ritual performances. This is further highlighted by Abokhodair²⁹, who notes that religious study sessions on social media serve not only as platforms for sharing religious knowledge but also as means of constructing religious identities that are packaged visually and pragmatically. This phenomenon indicates a potential transformation in the meaning of worship, where virtual encounters replace physical presence and spiritual experience. This shift is similarly observed in preaching practices reported by Adhitya³⁰:

“...the religious study space at the original Istiqlal Mosque features a red carpet, large silver-colored pillars, and calligraphy adorning the ceiling. Within this space, there is a pulpit for the preacher (Khatib), accompanied by two large screens on the left and right sides of the virtual mosque room, capable of displaying sermon videos.”³¹

The existence of religion in the new media age involves not only an expansion of expressive spaces but also a fundamental epistemological transformation. According to Zaluchu,³² religion is a value system rooted in authentic spiritual

experiences and a visual and performative construction produced through the logic of digital media. Phenomena such as virtual Hajj and Umrah, simulated Tarawih prayers, and religious study sessions in the metaverse illustrate a paradigm shift in religious practice from a spiritual-transcendental orientation toward symbolic experience. Concepts of “presence” and “religious experience” are being redefined, with virtual spaces becoming new loci for the manifestation of faith. This context risks the reduction of spirituality into representational forms, where religious values become fragmented and standardized by the logic of digital platforms. Fernando and Larasati³³ argue that awareness of the boundary between authentic religious experience and digital simulation is crucial to prevent normalizing ritual formalism reproduction in the new media age.

Simulated Worship Practices in the Metaverse Space

Worship practices within the metaverse are not only discussed across various religious activities but have also been simulated through complex virtual engagements. According to Fikri,³⁴ the metaverse serves as a medium for interaction and communication, and it has been utilized to simulate immersive and interactive social and religious activities. This phenomenon suggests that the metaverse has the potential to become a new platform for expanding religious knowledge and experiences, allowing believers

²⁸ Rajeev Semwal and Pankaj Kumar Tyagi, “Cyber Sanctuaries: Exploring the Intersection of Virtual Reality and Spiritual Experience,” in *Technology and Religious Tourism: Emerging Trends, Cases and Futuristic Perspectives* (Emerald Publishing Limited, 2025), 139–151, <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/978-1-83662-260-420251010/full/html>.

²⁹ Norah Abokhodair, AbdelRahim Elmadany, and Walid Magdy, “Holy Tweets: Exploring the Sharing of Quran on Twitter,” *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction* 4, no. CSCW2 (October 14, 2020): 1–32, <https://dl.acm.org/doi/10.1145/3415230>.

³⁰ Fajar Adhitya, “Berkunjung Ke Istiqlal Metaverse, Ada Ruang Salat Dan Mimbar Khatib,” *Langit7.Id*, 2023,

<https://langit7.id/read/30069/1/berkunjung-ke-istiqlal-metaverse-ada-ruang-salat-dan-mimbar-khatib-1677240151>.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Sonny Eli Zaluchu, “Theological Insight of Digital Religion,” *Bogoslovni vestnik* 83, no. 3 (2023): 597–610, <https://www.teof.uni-lj.si/uploads/File/BV/BV2023/03/Zalucho.pdf>.

³³ Fernando and Larasati, “Metaverse and Hajj: The Meaning of Muslims in Indonesia.”

³⁴ Fikri et al., “The Potential Utilization of Metaverse as a Praying Space from the Perspective of Maslahah Mursalah.”









to manifest their spiritual orientation in a digital context.³⁵ Worship simulations in the metaverse are typically realized through avatars that visually represent individual identities, enabling collective worship experiences despite being conducted virtually. This context indicates a transformation in the orientation of worship, from activities previously confined to physical spaces to practices that can be carried out within digital spaces in the new media age.

In the new media age, various real-life activities have transformed into virtual spaces, notably through metaverse platforms. These activities extend beyond communication and social interaction practices to include immersive

simulations of diverse religious rituals.³⁶ According to Niu,³⁷ worship practices have been discussed and adapted within the metaverse by utilizing avatar-based virtual technology as individual representations during ritual activities. This context, as noted by Abidin,³⁸ indicates a shift in the orientation of worship from physical experiences to virtual simulations that enable collective participation across spatial and temporal boundaries. The simulation of religious rituals within the metaverse reflects new dynamics in religious practices in the digital age, while also opening discourse on the transformation of religious values in the context of digital technology development (Table 1).

Table 1. Simulated worship practices in the metaverse space

| Worship | Figure | Description | Source |
|--|---|--|---|
| Haji |  | A virtual simulation of touching the Black Stone (<i>Hajar Aswad</i>) during the Hajj pilgrimage within the metaverse environment. | https://www.suara.com/video/2022/02/10/173000/viral-haji-metaverse-tak-perlu-ke-mekkah-untuk-sentuh-hajar-aswad |
| Umrah |  | A simulation of performing Tawaf around the Kaaba during the Umrah pilgrimage within a metaverse environment. | https://medan.tribunnews.com/2022/02/10/masjidil-haram-bantah-ada-ibadah-haji-metaverse-ini-pandangan-ketua-mui-bidang-fatwa |
| Salat (prayer) |  | "A simulation of performing the prayer (<i>Salat</i>) within a metaverse environment. | https://kumparan.com/beritaanaksur-abaya/kata-pakar-soal-ibadah-di-metaverse-1xt093gNZ5u/gallery/1 |
| Pengajian (religious study gatherings) |  | A simulation of religious study gatherings (<i>pengajian</i>) conducted within a metaverse environment. | https://langit7.id/read/30069/1/berku-njung-ke-istiqlal-metaverse-ada-ruang-salat-dan-mimbar-khatib-1677240151 |

³⁵ Justin Thomas, Mohammad Amin Kuhail, and Fahad AlBeyahi, "The Metaverse, Religious Practice and Wellbeing: A Narrative Review," *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking* 27, no. 1 (January 1, 2024): 57–63, <https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/10.1089/cyber.2023.0003>.


³⁶ Biliana Popova, "Embracing the Metaverse: The Future of Islamic Teaching and Learning," in *2023 20th Learning and Technology Conference (L&T)* (IEEE, 2023), 1–7, <https://ieeexplore.ieee.org/document/10092367/>.

³⁷ Song Niu, "Virtual Hajj as a Response to Demographic and Geopolitical Pressures," *Contemporary Islam* 17, no. 1 (April 23, 2023): 95–108, <https://link.springer.com/10.1007/s11562-023-00512-1>.

³⁸ Abdul Rahman Zainal Abidin et al., "Virtual Hajj: The Development of Virtual Environment for Learning about Hajj and Umrah," in *International Conference of Information and Communication Technology 2021, ICICTM 2021*, 2022, 040005, <https://pubs.aip.org/aip/acp/article/2830800>.





| | | | |
|-------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Ceramah (religious sermon) |  | A simulation of religious sermons conducted within a metaverse environment. | https://langit7.id/read/30069/1/berkunjung-ke-istiqlal-metaverse-ada-ruang-salat-dan-mimbar-khatib-1677240151 |
|-------------------------------|---|---|---|

Source. Online news via Google.

Table 1 illustrates various worship practices that have been simulated within the metaverse. It highlights three main contexts in the transformation of virtual-based religious practices. First, the ritual of touching the Black Stone (Hajar Aswad) during the Hajj and Umrah pilgrimages has been simulated in the metaverse, enabling a symbolic experience for pilgrims who are unable to be physically present. Second, the practice of congregational prayer in places of worship has also been replicated through the metaverse, offering a collective spiritual experience in a virtual setting. Third, religious activities such as study sessions (pengajian) and sermons have been accommodated within the metaverse as an effort to expand the reach of Islamic preaching (dakwah). These three contexts reflect a new orientation in worship, shifting from physical to digital practice, which enables technology-mediated religious experiences. According to Niu,³⁹ this shift indicates that worship practices are becoming increasingly inclusive, adaptive, and capable of broadening access to religious rituals in the new media era.

The simulation of worship practices within the metaverse reflects a shift in spiritual orientation in the new media era, from sacred religious experiences to more profane forms.⁴⁰

This context is further emphasized by Semwal and Tyagi,⁴¹ who argue that the new media age not only reshapes social discourses but also transforms religious and cultural rituals into mere formalities, emphasizing performative aspects. This shift indicates a growing tendency in worship practices to focus more on visual display, interactivity, and symbolism rather than on the deeper, substantive meaning of the rituals. George⁴² also argues that such a transformation may contribute to the formation of new values among religious communities, wherein acts of worship are increasingly perceived as performative simulations. Consequently, the simulation of religious rituals in the metaverse carries the latent potential to degrade the sacredness of religious practices and shift their orientation from the transcendent to the secular and representational.

The simulation of worship practices within the metaverse holds significant implications for the orientation of religious practice in the context of religion in the new media age. As argued by Fernando,⁴³ this context reflects a fundamental shift in how religious communities understand, access, and engage in ritual practices. Adria⁴⁴ argues that the orientation of worship in the new media age is no longer confined to sacred physical spaces, but increasingly emphasizes representational aspects, where spiritual

³⁹ Niu, "Virtual Hajj as a Response to Demographic and Geopolitical Pressures."

⁴⁰ Hasse Jubba et al., "Between Reality and Virtuality: A Study of Muslim Perceptions of Metaverse Hajj as a Religious Practice," *Khazanah Theologia* 6, no. 1 (August 7, 2024): 13–26, <https://journal.uinsgd.ac.id/index.php/kt/article/view/33244>.

⁴¹ Semwal and Tyagi, "Cyber Sanctuaries: Exploring the Intersection of Virtual Reality and Spiritual Experience."

⁴² Reena George, "Faith in the Digital Age: Exploring the Changing Diaspora of Religious Tourism," in *Technology*

and Religious Tourism: Emerging Trends, Cases and Futuristic Perspectives (Emerald Publishing Limited, 2025), 119–137, <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/978-1-83662-260-420251009/full/html>.

⁴³ Henky Fernando et al., "Narrative of Religion: The Experiences of Muslim Worship on the Umrah Pilgrimage," *Jurnal Kawistara* 14, no. 1 (April 30, 2024): 138–150, <https://jurnal.ugm.ac.id/kawistara/article/view/82323>.

⁴⁴ Marco Adria, "How to Worship in the Metaverse: Religious Experience and the Affordances of a New Medium," *Religions* 15, no. 4 (April 15, 2024): 487, <https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/15/4/487>.





experiences are simulated through avatars and digital environments such as the metaverse. The simulation of worship practices in metaverse spaces can, either directly or indirectly, generate new interpretations of rituals,⁴⁵ in which they are not only viewed as acts of transcendental devotion but also as elements of digital culture that prioritize visualization and interactivity. As a consequence, the orientation of worship becomes more flexible and adaptive. Yet, it also risks reducing its substantive meaning, shifting the focus from spiritual values to symbolic expressions that may lean toward the profane.

Muslim Interpretation: Worship in the Metaverse

The discourse surrounding the simulation of religious practices within the metaverse has elicited various responses and interpretations among Muslims. Lyngsøe⁴⁶ argues that while Muslim communities can accept the integration of technology into religious activities, it deemed appropriate only in educational contexts and not as a substitute for actual ritual practice. This perspective is supported by the findings of Nafi'an,⁴⁷ which indicate that worship simulations in the metaverse are understood as beneficial educational tools, particularly in enhancing the understanding of ritual procedures. However, such acceptance remains highly contextual; the metaverse is not regarded as a legitimate alternative space for the physical performance of religious rituals. Muslim interpretations of worship simulations in the

metaverse reflect a selective approach to modern technology, acknowledging its potential to support religious learning while firmly maintaining the spiritual integrity and irreplaceable nature of actual worship.

The adaptation of technology into religious rituals within the metaverse has become a complex issue, sparking various controversies. Jubba⁴⁸ argues that the debate surrounding the digitalization of religion extends beyond questions of values and orientation, encompassing also the ways in which religious rituals are represented beyond the limitations of physical space. Nevertheless, technological adaptation in the context of religious ritual often only accepted when it falls outside the core purpose of ideal worship, as illustrated in the report by Wulansari.⁴⁹ According to this report, religious practices conducted in the metaverse are understood by some Muslims as a form of religious tourism rather than a legitimate substitute for physical rituals. This interpretation reflects a clear distinction between educational or entertainment functions and the essential nature of religious rites. As Fernando and Larasati⁵⁰ highlights, this context underscores the careful evaluation by Muslims in engaging with modern technology, while consistently upholding fundamental spiritual values.

The simulation of religious worship activities in the metaverse has emerged as a noteworthy phenomenon in the era of new media, generating a wide range of interpretations among Muslims. Farisi⁵¹ notes

⁴⁵ Teresa Berger, *Worship: Liturgical Practices in Digital Worlds* (Routledge, 2017), <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/9781351670630>.

⁴⁶ Maria Lindebæk Lyngsøe, "Digitizing the Field of Women's Islamic Education," *Approaching Religion* 12, no. 1 (March 1, 2022): 184–200, <https://journal.fi/ar/article/view/111015>.

⁴⁷ Muhammad Ilman Nafi'an, "MUI: Haji Metaverse Tidak Sah!," *IDN Times*, 2022, <https://www.idntimes.com/news/indonesia/muhammad-ilman-nafian-2/mui-haji-metaverse-tidak-sah?page=all>.

⁴⁸ Hasse Jubba et al., "Social Media Construction: Making Sense of Hadith Dissemination on Instagram," *ESENSIA: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 24, no. 2 (May 20,

2023): 98–111, <https://ejournal.uin-suka.ac.id/ushuluddin/esensia/article/view/4782>.

⁴⁹ R.A Wulansari, "Lembaga Dakwah Khusus PP Muhammadiyah Menyatakan Haji Metavers Tidak Sah Pp," *Bogor Daily*, 2022, <https://bogordaily.net/2022/02/lembaga-dakwah-khusus-pp-muhammadiyah-menyatakan-haji-metavers-tidak-sah-pp/>.

⁵⁰ Fernando and Larasati, "Metaverse and Haji: The Meaning of Muslims in Indonesia."

⁵¹ Mualifu Rosyidin Al Farisi, "Ramai Haji Metaverse, Begini Hukumnya Menurut Para Ulama," *Pikiran Rakyat*, 2022, <https://trenggalekpedia.pikiran-rakyat.com/khazanah/pr-1653705297/ramai-haji-metaverse-begini-hukumnya-menurut-para-ulama?page=2%0D%0A>.





that worship practices such as tawaf, when simulated in the metaverse, may visually resemble the actual ritual but remain invalid according to Islamic law, as they do not fulfill the requirement of physical presence at the sacred site. Fernando⁵² also argues that the mediatization of religious rituals not only risks diminishing the sacred value of worship but also introduces the problem of “physical absence,” which fundamentally contradicts the communal nature of religious observance in Islam. These interpretations reflect the existence of both theological and conceptual boundaries in the acceptance of technology as part of collective worship practices. In other words, the simulation of religious rituals in the metaverse may be acceptable as an educational tool, but not as a replacement for the transcendent essence of physical worship.

Muslim interpretations of simulated worship practices within the metaverse often reflect the understanding that the technical aspects of ritual worship cannot be visually replicated in the new media age.⁵³ This perspective is reinforced by findings in Saptohutomo,⁵⁴ which cites a fatwa issued by the Nahdlatul Ulama Central Board (PBNU), declaring that virtual simulations of Hajj and Umrah in the metaverse are not legally valid according to Islamic law, as they do not meet the

essential requirement of physical presence. These simulated religious activities in the metaverse have also given rise to tensions between the collective values embedded in traditional worship practices and the inherently individualistic and fragmented nature of social media platforms.⁵⁵ The discourse on technological adaptation in religious practices has been interpreted by Muslims as a movement that risks obscuring the transcendental dimension of ritual worship, and potentially reorienting it toward a form of visually driven performance.

The use of metaverse technology to simulate religious worship activities has raised profound conceptual questions, particularly concerning the boundary between the symbolization and the actualization of worship.⁵⁶ While some groups view the metaverse as a promising alternative space for religious education, its emergence has, in fact, intensified the discourse on the essential role of physical presence in collective worship practices. As argued by Arsyam,⁵⁷ the simulation of Hajj at the Kaaba within the metaverse is deemed invalid under Islamic law, as it fails to fulfill the physical requirements essential to the legitimacy of the ritual. This concern is further emphasized by Fakhruroji,⁵⁸ who argues that collective and transcendent forms of worship risk a loss of meaning when adapted into digital

⁵² Henky Fernando, Irwan Abdullah, and Mohamad Yusuf, “Reception of Law Worship: The Experiences of Muslims Worship During Pandemic Covid-19,” *Nurani: Jurnal Kajian Syari’ah dan Masyarakat* 22, no. 2 (January 1, 2022): 201–212, <http://jurnal.radenfatah.ac.id/index.php/Nurani/article/view/14402>.

⁵³ Popova, “Embracing the Metaverse: The Future of Islamic Teaching and Learning.”

⁵⁴ Aryo Putranto Saptohutomo, “Suara Para Ulama Soal Polemik Haji Metaverse,” *Kompas.Com*, 2022, <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2022/02/09/13384341/sua-ra-para-ulama-soal-polemik-haji-metaverse?page=all>.

⁵⁵ Mursyid Fikri and Indriana, “Performing Salah in the Metaverse: Analysing the Perspectives of Ahl Al-Hadith and Ahl Al-Ra’yi within the Intersection of Technology and Religion,” *Manchester Journal of Transnational Islamic Law and Practice* 20, no. 3 (2024): 135–143, <https://www.electronicpublications.org/stuff/1117>.

⁵⁶ Lea Taragin-Zeller and Edward Kessler, “‘It’s Not Doctrine, This Is Just How It Is Happening!’: Religious Creativity in the Time of COVID-19,” *Religions* 12, no. 9 (September 10, 2021): 747, <https://www.mdpi.com/2077-1444/12/9/747>.

⁵⁷ Ilham Arsyam, “Muhammadiyah: Haji Di Metaverse Tak Sah, Ibadah Tidak Dapat Dipindahkan Ke Dunia Fiksi,” *Tribun News*, 2022, <https://makassar.tribunnews.com/2022/02/11/muhammadiyah-hajidimetaversetak-sah-ibadah-tidak-dapat-dipindahkan-ke-dunia-fiksi>.

⁵⁸ Moch Fakhruroji, “Socially Distanced, Digitally Engaged: Mediatization of Religious Practices of Indonesian Digital Natives during Covid-19 Pandemic,” *Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture* 14, no. 1 (March 21, 2025): 23–44, https://brill.com/view/journals/rmdc/14/1/article-p23_002.xml.





formats, which tend to be more individualistic and fragmented. In other words, such interpretations reflect a critical response from Muslims toward the integration of technology into worship practices particularly when it is perceived to conflict with the concept of collective spirituality.

Muslim interpretations of the discourse on simulated worship activities in the metaverse during the new media age reflect a critical understanding of the transcendental essence of religious values as inherently collective practices. This perspective aligns with the assertion of Karaca,⁵⁹ who emphasizes that acts of worship are not merely symbolic expressions represented visually, but rather concrete practices involving direct interaction between the individual, the community, and God. In this sense, the simulation of worship in the metaverse is seen as potentially diminishing the spiritual meaning of Muslim worship, shifting it from the sacred to the profane by emphasizing artificial visual representation. This critical view not only serves as a significant reflection on the impact of technological penetration into religious practices, but also underscores the need to preserve the spiritual depth and collective meaning of worship, so that religious experience does not become trapped in visual formalism in the new media age.⁶⁰

Conclusion

Simulated worship practices in the metaverse reflect emerging characteristics within contemporary religious discourse, where spiritual experiences are represented through immersive, virtual reality-based technologies. This development not only signals a new phase in religious thought and practice in the new media age but also illustrates how Muslims are interpreting the values of worship within an

increasingly digital context. Worship activities in the metaverse, such as virtual Hajj, Umrah, congregational prayer, or religious study sessions, are generally accepted by Muslims only as forms of education or simulation, not as legitimate or legally valid expressions of worship according to Islamic law. Therefore, it can be concluded that the discourse on worship simulation in the metaverse represents an adaptation to technological advancement, without altering the theological status of worship itself. Rather, it is viewed as a tool for learning and disseminating religious knowledge in the age of new media.

The discourse on simulated worship practices within the metaverse carries significant global implications, particularly in the context of shifting paradigms of worship in the new media age. Theoretically, the findings of this study contribute to the development of a deeper understanding of the interaction between digital technology and religious practice, especially within the fields of religious studies, cultural studies, and media studies. Worship practices in the metaverse have generated new discourses among religious communities that have the potential to reshape how individuals perceive concepts of space, authority, and community in the context of collective worship. As such, the key findings of this study not only illuminate emerging dynamics in religious interpretation but also reflect a broader shift from traditional, physically grounded practices to virtual spaces that transcend national boundaries. This context reveals that worship simulation in the metaverse is both a discourse and a new arena where tradition, technological innovation, and religious meaning converge within contemporary culture.

This study has limitations, particularly in its reliance on online media sources accessed through Google searches using the keyword

⁵⁹ Faruk Karaca, "Experiential Research on the Individual Outcomes of Hajj Worship [Hac İbadetinin Bireysel Çıktıları Üzerine Tecrübî Bir Araştırma]," *darulfunun ilahiyat* 34, no. 1 (June 20, 2023): 189–210, <https://iupress.istanbul.edu.tr/tr/journal/ilahiyatjournal/arti>

cle/hac-ibadetinin-bireysel-ciktilari-uzerine-tecrubi-bir-arastirma.

⁶⁰ Fernando and Larasati, "Metaverse and Hajj: The Meaning of Muslims in Indonesia."





"Discourse and simulation of worship in the metaverse." Consequently, the data is restricted to archived online news content and does not reflect a broader range of perspectives especially those of individuals directly involved in metaverse-based worship practices. Despite these limitations, the findings of this study can serve as a foundation or reference for future research, particularly studies that seek to explore more comprehensively how various religious communities, beyond Muslims, perceive and engage with the discourse surrounding simulated worship in virtual environments. Future investigations would benefit from more intensive qualitative approaches, such as in-depth interviews, to develop a richer and more comparative understanding of the meaning of worship in the metaverse within the context of the new media age.

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