

# Digital Activism by Muslim Groups in Digital Media

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**Abstract:** New media stimulates the birth of various changes in society. This research was conducted to answer several research questions, namely, who are the actors in digital activism by Muslim groups; and how are the forms of digital activism carried out by Muslim groups. The author conducts a literature review by collecting previous research using software Publish or Perish. The first search returned 786 posts. Then strict data filtering was carried out to leave 8 journal articles. The results of this study indicate that the actors driving digital activism in movements that are Muslim groups are carried out by scholars, artists, business people, women's groups, youth groups, and mass organizations. Then, this study also found that the forms of digital activism carried out by Muslim groups included campaigns on various social media platforms, the use of hashtag features on platforms Instagram and Youtube; and the formation of community networks in the media of various social media platforms. Factors driving the digital activism movement by Muslim groups come from encouragement from mass organizations, encouragement from student groups, encouragement from political elites, encouragement from social media, encouragement from the environment, and encouragement from oneself.

**Keywords:** Digital Activism, Muslim Groups, Digital Media.

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## Introduction

New media or *new media* turning contemporary society into an information society. Information circulates in countless numbers in the new media. The characteristics of new media are able to stimulate changes in society. Borrowing Jurgen Habermas' term about *public sphere* or public space, then the new media in an information society situation has succeeded in presenting a public space that gives freedom to as freely as possible. According to Jurgen Habermas, the existence of public space reduces the power of capitalism. Public space becomes an independent arena that is free from domination and dependence on the government (Webster, 2006). In a government system that adheres to democracy, public space is a space for conveying people's aspirations to the government.

The activism movement is an arena for control by the community over what happens in society

and aspirations from and to the government or the opposition. In the era of new media, the activism movement found its new form, namely digital activism. This allows for the displacement of activism movements which are usually carried out directly, such as boycotts, demonstrations taking to the streets and so on which are old forms of the activism movement. The presence of new media gives space for the activism movement to reach its masses even with relatively lower costs and being able to bring as many masses as possible.

Islam is a religion that has teachings that are universal, comprehensive, and contain elements of complex teachings. In certain parts there are teaching principles that are exclusive in terms of aqidah, and in other parts they are also inclusive in terms of social relations. The term exclusivism in this case is the view in Islam that believes in the superiority of the truth of Islamic teachings while at the same time negating the teachings of other religions. So that there is a tendency for different

actions and beliefs when appearing in a plural society (Askar Nur, 2021).

The Muslim group is one of the major groups in Indonesia. Islam is the majority religion in Indonesia. So that the movement of the majority group has sprung up a lot in community groups. Many Islamic groups carry out activism movements to inflame the spirit of religion. The massive digital activism movement has also encouraged many activism movements in digital media carried out by Muslim groups. Some of the digital activism movements carried out by Muslim groups are the Action to Defend Islam 212, the hijrah movement, the Indonesian Movement Without Dating (ITP). This research tries to find out who are the actors in digital activism by Muslim groups? What are the forms of digital activism carried out by Muslim groups? And the driving factors for digital activism by Muslim groups.

### **Digital Activism Movement in Muslim Groups**

Digital activism or online activism is part of the actualization of digital political practices in society. The majority of social media users in Indonesia are dominated by needs *leisure* and *pleasure* such as communication and advocacy. Social media provides an intimate public space relationship that is able to attract the attention of fellow netizens. The majority of social media users use the internet as a means of venting, both negative and positive in nature which are then responded to and commented on by netizens (Jati, 2016).

The existence of a real-time social media platform makes private issues then spread into other public discussion spaces. Social media does not only offer an intimate process and fast response, the advantage of the public space offered in this cyberspace is being able to attract strong mass support (Jati, 2016).

Technology is able to create and generate cohesiveness of the middle class artificially and communally. That is what often has the potential to create people power from the Indonesian middle class because it is only based on chatter on social media. The feeling of affection and affiliation towards certain issues has become the driving force for the middle class to demonstrate. These two

feelings then form a sense of collegiality to form a digital activism movement (Jati, 2016).

The Muslim world is experiencing a media explosion. The Muslim world has become familiar with television and da'wah tapes. Face-to-face activities in the form of sermons and fatwas are increasingly mediated. Islamic discourse is increasingly integrated and embedded in the media tools of modern society. Through the media, there has been an increase in the amount of taking public space in talks about Islam. (Anderson, n.d.).

The new media that make this change possible tend to functionally and experientially go beyond the familiar preacher tapes on television and radio. Conveyed narratives are often overlooked in intellectually focused text-based ones. Both scholars and non-*ulama* spread messages about how to be Muslim whether in a Muslim country or not (Anderson, n.d.).

Dale F Eickelman and Jon W Anderson in (Ahyar, 2019) explain the concept of *Muslim Public Sphere* or Muslim public spaces. This concept explains how Muslims, especially Muslim intellectuals in Muslim-majority countries, try to build an understanding of Islam and various ideas that cross boundaries of physical geography and culture. These activities may be carried out by utilizing new media technology (new media). This technology allows visualization as an Islamic da'wah strategy, then technology also allows for ease of duplicating activities, fast dissemination of information.

### **Actors and Forms of Digital Activism Movement**

Digital media provides space for communities and organizations to make movements in the digital space. Communities and organizations develop as the main drivers of activism movements both locally, nationally and globally. The movement actors here refer to the drivers of the emergence of the digital activism movement. Actors have an important role in a social movement (Hapsari et al., 2020). Digital activism movement actors can be carried out by individuals, groups of people, organizations, or institutions.

According to Van Laer and Aeist in (Zahira & Hermanadi, 2020) There are two categories of digital activism, namely internet-based digital

activism and internet-supported activism. Internet-based activism is a newer form of digital activism compared to internet-supported forms of activism. The activism movement based on the internet is a digital movement that since its inception has occurred on the internet. Whereas activism supported on the internet is physical activity in the form of traditional activism, but then facilitated on the internet.

The forms or methods used in digital activism can be in the form of online petitions, email bombings, virtual sit-ins, *hacktivism*, DOS attack (*Denial of Service*), hashtag activism, and usage advocacy *open source* (Zahira & Hermanadi, 2020). Either method can be used in digital activism activities. However, there are several things that will influence the impact of the activism movement being carried out, namely integration and changing from online interaction to offline interaction.

The media used by these activists changed rapidly along with technological developments. Various tools or tools that can be used to carry out activities include; online petitions; social network, this tool prove to be very useful for spreading messages, gathering support, highlighting information that is ignored by the mainstream media; Blogs, non-filtered communication – a lot *online campaigns* which starts with a blog; Micro-blogging: Twitter, Weibo. Use *hashtag* to quickly spread the concept of activism as a tool for resistance; proxy servers; and Crowdsourcing platforms: to help create global community collaborations, examples Wikipedia, Kickstarter (Rees, 2020)

Online and offline actions must complement each other. Digital activity that includes online shows that the group that drives this activism movement is real. The Internet will be a tool that helps disseminate information. In addition, the maximum use of social media features is also one that drives the success of digital activism activities (Kelley, 2013).

### Factors Driving the Digital Activism Movement

Digital activism is easily interpreted as the use of digital media to raise an issue with the aim of social and political change. The emergence of Facebook and Twitter in 2004 made it clear that a

digital activism campaign could be run online (sometimes without offline movement) and still be able to reach a wide audience. Many independent activists around the world use the internet and other digital media for several purposes, namely building community; associate with people whose minds agree with him; fundraising; and designing a movement/event (Rees, 2020).

According to Bruce Bimber, there are three types of encouragement for the digital activism movement. First *Organization Prompted Behaviour*, Organizations request citizen participation: interest groups, civic organizations, trade unions, social movement organizations, or campaign organizations. This urge no longer cares whether a citizen is part of an organization. What is emphasized is how to understand the residents to then mobilize (Bimber, 2017).

Second, *Socially Prompted Behavior* People make decisions to act because they realize that other people are doing it (Bimber, 2017). That the driving force for someone to do activism is not because of a request from someone else. However, when their environment all carries out acts of activism voluntarily, it also encourages them to do the same so they are not left behind in the social environment. Likewise in the digital world, when their circle of friends on social media does the same thing, it also encourages them to do so. Third, *Self-Directed Behavior*, people can be provoked to act individually through exposure to political information that does not contain requests to act or social signals about other people's behavior (Bimber, 2017).

### Materials and Methods

This study uses a systematic method of analysis of narrative type reviews. In systematic research narrative review. This type of narrative review is a common and widely used type of review. This species is also not strict in timing (Kastner et al. 2012). Systematic narrative reviews were used to explore topics related to compact development issues. His review is a persuasive presentation of the literature to support their overall conclusion

about the desirability of compact development as a planning objective (Xiao & Watson, 2019).

Researchers identify the selected topics selectively. to obtain a summary of the existing scientific literature. Then the author makes a comprehensive report on a summary of the existing scientific literature to find out the current position on the topic of digital activism carried out by Muslim groups. This research attempts to summarize various previous studies to answer several research questions, namely who are the actors in digital activism by Muslim groups? What are the forms of digital activism carried out by Muslim groups?

Preparation *literature review* It uses online based data. The author conducted an electronic search on the Google Scholar search engine which was carried out using software assistance *Publish or Perish* to get meta data about the research topic. The search is limited to documents published for five years, namely the range 2017 - 2021. The author uses the keywords "digital activism" and "Muslim" to find the right article.

In the first search process, the author found 786 papers that were successfully raised. Next, the author carries out the process of selecting the article document. The criteria for the selected articles are: Journal articles published in accredited places; Not the result of thesis research or thesis; Not a procedural seminar article; Good descriptive research using quantitative, qualitative, and survey methods; Journal in the form of full text; Journal articles done in Indonesia and in the Indonesian language; Research related to digital activism users and the Muslim community. As a result, the authors found 16 articles that passed category one based on reading the journal article journal

Then, the authors carried out the second selection process of the 16 articles that passed the first selection. The author tries to read the abstract of the article to make sure the article describes the digital activism movement carried out by the Muslim community. The results of the second process, produce 5 articles in accordance with the topic under study.

## Results and Discussion

### Actor Digital Movement Activism in Muslim Groups

The actors of the digital activism movement by Muslim groups in Indonesia can be divided into several, namely:

#### 1. Scholar

Ulama who are influential figures have great power in the digital activism movement. In the action to defend Islam, Habib Muhammad Rizieq Shihab was the leading figure. He became the first reference when followers or masses of the Islamic Defense Action. He also took part in making status posts on social media as a form of support for the action (Ahyar, 2019).

There are also many digital movements carried out by scholars and preachers, including Ustadz Abdul Somad who has more than 10 million followers on YouTube, Instagram and YouTube. Then Ustadz Adi Hidayat who conducts routine interpretation studies on his Youtube account, and Ustadz Hanan Attaqi who has a mass base of young people (Zahara & Wildan, 2022).

#### 2. Artist

Many digital activism movements are driven by artists. Starting from the former presenter Arie Untung, soap opera player Teuku Wisnu and Shireen Sungkar. They actively spread Islamic symbols on social media. They often share their changes after migrating through YouTube channels. They attract the attention of young people (Zahara & Wildan, 2022)

#### 3. Business man

Apart from that, individual actors are also behind business people, one of which is the Islamic Movement Without Dating (ITP) which was initiated by La Ode Munafar. This movement invites people not to engage in courtship and against adultery. This is considered incompatible with the teachings of Islam. This movement considers courtship as an activity that can damage the Indonesian generation (Zahara et al., 2020). The follower base of this account uses the Instagram platform with a relatively large number of followers. Even though they call themselves with

Islamic identity. Actually, this movement is also carried out while selling books, merchandais, accidentally followers of the account also buy sales as something that is not very visible on the surface of this movement.

#### 4. Women's Community

The activism movement was also carried out by the women's community. They use social media to carry out da'wah movements by suppressing the value of hijrah. These female members wear casar headscarves, niqabs, and syar'i. They use these attributes to post selfies on Instagram using the hashtag #cadarsquad (Zahara et al., 2020).

#### 5. Youth group

Young children's groups have also been involved in activating proselytizing movements on social media. The hijrah movement has become a trending movement on social media. There are also many young people who are familiar with the use of social media. The role and position of millennial actors in the hijrah movement have collectively built a new identity as religious people who obey Islamic rules. (Zahara & Wildan, 2022). One of the Muslim communities that carries out a lot of da'wah activities in digital media is Shift.

#### 6. Mass organization.

Mass organization is a designation for organizations founded by the public voluntarily whose aim is to support and support public activities or interests. This organization does not intend to take financial advantage (Herdiansah, 2016). In the 212 Islamic defense action carried out by Muslim groups, the big mover was the GNPf-MUI (National Movement to Guard Fatwas - Indonesian Ulema Council) which consisted of the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), the Islamic Community Forum (FUI), Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), The State Defense Movement, the Indonesian Mujahidin Council, the Gerindra Party, the Indonesian Islamic Boarding School Cooperation Agency, the Al Ersyad Leadership, and the Civilized Indonesia Movement (Ahyar, 2019).

### Forms of Digital Activism Movement in Muslim Groups

#### 1. Campaign through social media via Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp

During the Defending Islam Action 212 action, the online media used to spread campaign narratives included Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp as a private space (Ahyar, 2019). Facebook was the starting point for the emergence of news about religious blasphemy by Basuki Tjahaja Purnama alias Ahok. The post was first uploaded by a Facebook account named Buni Yani on October 6 2016. The post was viewed 346,354 times, and shared 11,033 times. It was the appearance of this video on social media that sparked the emergence of Actions to Defend Islam I and II. Then the video is uploaded by various accounts on Instagram with limitations on the time duration of the feature itself. A search for the hashtag #aksibelaislam produces 90,931 who use the hashtag in their uploads and produces 95,996 posts using the hashtag #penjarakanahok (Ahyar, 2019)

#### 2. Use of the Hatag Feature on Social Media

The activism movement activities on Twitter are familiar with terms such as tweeting, mentioning, replying, and retweeting. This makes it easy to spread information and reach masses with the right interests. One of the ways used by members. Each social media account follower can share Retweet content on Twitter, Share on Facebook in their account circle, so that the number of potential audiences from these accounts is exponential from the number of followers or fans (Harkan, 2019)

Action 212 to communicate their actions and movements to other parties widely using social media. Based on the author's search on December 18, 2018 on 3 major social media Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, there are accounts and posts regarding Action 212. There is #BelaIslam on Twitter where I am @MuslimMudaID. There are at least 81,300 uploaded photos and videos on Instagram that use the hashtag #aksi212 (Harkan, 2019).

### **3. Creation of Activism Community Networks on Social Media**

Twitter is a digital media that facilitates the communication of groups that have an activism movement. One of the proofs is the fact that the 212 Action participants are basically a community entity in the physical world, which then with digital media technology is represented on social media where they communicate with each other. The previous exposure became a representation of the community on social media which carried out the communication function in disseminating the 212 call to Action, so that the communication message was able to spread widely and resulted in an increase in the number of action participants on the physical entity in the form of the 212 Reunion so as to create a network (Harkan, 2019)

#### **Factors Driving the Digital Activism Movement**

##### **1. Mass organization push**

At the 212 action, the GNPf-MUI which was driven by the Islamic Defenders Front mass mobilization, especially among Muslims both in Jakarta and several places outside Jakarta. According to some brands, the mobilization model formed is coercion to carry out demonstrations. FPI forces their political agenda to influence political decisions by constructing public discourse by using religious sentiments as a basis for uniting political interests between the mass organizations involved, organizing and mobilizing the masses at the grassroots level (Ahyar, 2019).

##### **2. Encouragement from student organizations**

Action 212 has become widespread, especially since the Defending Islam II Action because it is also supported by extra-curricular organizations including those organized by the FS-LDK (Silaturahmi Forum for Campus Dakwah Institutions), even support from several activist Islamic student organizations such as HMI (Ahyar, 2019). Student organizations certainly have their own masses, so the encouragement for student groups to get involved is even greater.

##### **3. Encouragement from the Political Elite**

Even though the digitalism action belonging to Muslim groups looks like the mobilization carried

out by Muslim groups. However, it can be said that the Action to Defend Islam was a peak momentum – a mobocracy that was designed to be successful by the initiators and mass organizations driving the action as well as the political elites. Since the beginning, political elites have shown support for this action, for example as shown through the involvement of several non-Islamic mass organizations such as for example JMP (Network Merah Putih) which was also involved in mass mobilization for supporters of one of the presidential candidates from the Gerindra party in the 2014 election. The support of the political elites, especially those who are in opposition to the current government (Jokowi) in the Defend Islam Action, although it did not appear in their presence at the action, was visible in the statements they appeared in the mass media (Ahyar, 2019)

##### **4. Personal encouragement due to environmental factors in the form of media and public figures**

In the mass mobilization of the Islamic Defense Action III, the support given to this action experienced an expansion of sympathy. Many taklim communities and students from several areas outside Jakarta began to take part in the action. It is suspected that this expansion of sympathy arose especially when the mass media reported a lot of the reaction that was raised by the government of Joko Widodo (Jokowi) after the Defend Islam II Action in November 2016 through a series of accusations of treason against several opposition political figures who were allegedly involved in facilitating and providing support for the action. . The initiator of the Action to Defend Islam, especially the FPI and also the GNPf-MUI, interpreted the Jokowi government's reaction as a form of tyranny by the authorities against Muslims. This has also stimulated a wave of public sympathy, especially for Muslims (Ahyar, 2019).

##### **5. The Urge to Keep Up with Environmental Trends and Encouragements**

The hijrah movement is one of the digital activism movements carried out by millennials. The hijrah movement became one of the popular da'wah movements that developed in society and then became a social trend that was followed

communally (Zahara et al., 2020). The millennial group is a group that is easily provoked by current trends. So that many of them eventually took part in the activism movement in the digital world by accident about religious campaigns with the theme of hijrah.

The development of the hijrah phenomenon according to Widhana (2019) in his news article on Tirto.id in (Zahara et al., 2020) revealed that there were several reasons why the hijrah movement was so massive, namely (1) the popularity of various Islamic understanding books; (2) campus-based Islamic studies, mosques, and tablig congregations; (3) Internet and social media access regarding popular Islamic literature; (4) The Appearance of Ustadz and Celebrities; (5) Emergence of Mila Nabila Zahara, Dadan Wildan, Siti Komariah 56 hijrah communities; (6) Light lecture topics discussing youth association; and (7) Non-dakwah activities (Photography, Design, Marketing, etc.). An environment that supports indirectly also gathers other forces to carry out the same movement.

#### 6. Self encouragement.

Encouragement from oneself is of course also important in activism activities whether carried out digitally or not. Given this activity has a religious sentiment. So there is a push from within. The motivating factor for the millennial Muslim generation to migrate is because they feel an empty soul which causes boredom, they think more critically and easily access religious information. Millennial Muslims are more open to changing the eastern lifestyle as a new lifestyle that is in accordance with religious teachings. Indirectly, lifestyle changes that tend to be religious will form a cultural frame that supports the development of the hijrah movement among the millennial Muslim generation (Zahara et al., 2020). Which then also voluntarily invites others to do the same thing

#### Conclusion

Based on the results of the study that the authors conducted, it can be concluded that the actors driving activism in the digital world in movements

that are Muslim groups are carried out by scholars, artists, business people, women's groups, youth groups, and mass organizations. Each of these actors has their own way of moving the masses. Then, this research also confirms that the forms of digital activism carried out by Muslim groups include campaigns on social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Youtube. Use of the hashtag feature on the Instagram and Youtube platforms. As well as forming community networks on various social media platforms. Factors driving the digital activism movement by Muslim groups come from encouragement from mass organizations, encouragement from student groups, encouragement from political elites, encouragement from social media, encouragement from the environment, and encouragement from oneself.

#### Conflict of Interest

There are no conflicts of interest concerning the publication of this article.

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