ISLAMIC LAW, THE CONSTITUTION, AND DIGITAL MEDIA:
A Study of Islamic Discourse Construction in Contemporary Indonesia

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Abstract: Over the past decade, popular Islamic websites in Indonesia have functioned not only as platforms for da'wah but also as arenas for articulating and contesting legal and ideological discourses concerning Islam and the Constitution. This qualitative descriptive study employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine digital texts from four high-traffic Islamic websites: NU Online, Islami.co, Eramuslim.com, and Voa-Islam.com, identified using Alexa (2017–2019) and SimilarWeb (2020) data. The analysis reveals two dominant discursive formations. Legal-formalist platforms such as Eramuslim.com and Voa Islam.com, influenced by the DDII network, advocate for the constitutional integration of sharia, echoing the thought of Abu A'la al-Maududi. In contrast, substantive contextual platforms such as NU Online and Islami.co emphasize ethical compatibility between Islamic values, democracy, and Pancasila, reflecting Abdullah Saeed's humanistic interpretation of Islamic law. The findings demonstrate that digital media are not neutral conduits but sites of ideological negotiation where Islamic authority is reconfigured through communicative performance and platform logics that reward dialogical, verifiable, and inclusive narratives. The study contributes theoretically by extending Fairclough's CDA into the digital ecology, linking textual analysis with metrics of visibility and communicative legitimacy.

Keywords: Popular Islam Website, Islam and Pancasila, Legal Formal, Ideal Substantive

Abstrak: Dalam satu dekade terakhir, situs-situs Islam populer di Indonesia berfungsi tidak hanya sebagai media dakwah, tetapi juga sebagai arena artikulasi dan kontestasi wacana hukum serta ideologi tentang relasi Islam dan Konstitusi. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan metode Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) untuk menganalisis teks digital dari empat situs Islam dengan lalu lintas tinggi: NU Online, Islami.co, Eramuslim.com, dan Voa-Islam.com berdasarkan data Alexa (2017–2019) dan SimilarWeb (2020). Hasil analisis menunjukkan dua formasi wacana utama. Kanal legal-formalist seperti

Eramuslim dan Voa-Islam, yang dipengaruhi jaringan DDII, mendorong integrasi syariat ke dalam kerangka konstitusi sebagaimana gagasan Abu A'la al-Maududi. Sebaliknya, kanal substantif-kontekstual seperti NU Online dan Islami.co menekankan kesesuaian etika Islam dengan demokrasi dan Pancasila, sejalan dengan pendekatan humanistik Abdullah Saeed. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa media digital bukan sekadar saluran penyebaran informasi keagamaan, tetapi arena negosiasi ideologis di mana otoritas Islam direkonstruksi melalui performa komunikatif dan logika platform yang menghargai narasi dialogis, verifikatif, dan inklusif. Secara teoretis, penelitian ini memperluas penerapan CDA Fairclough ke dalam ekologi digital dengan menghubungkan analisis teks, visibilitas, dan legitimasi komunikatif.

Kata Kunci: Website Islam Populer, Islam dan Pancasila, Legal-Formal, Ideal-Substantif

Introduction

The relationship among Islam, the Constitution, and digital media continues to evolve alongside Indonesia's democratic life, inviting closer attention to how religious and legal ideas circulate and interact in contemporary society. Digital platforms are no longer peripheral spaces. They shape how citizens reason, deliberate, and imagine the place of Islamic law in the state. The movement of constitutional debates into online environments also reflects broader shifts in public communication, where visibility is mediated by algorithms and discursive influence does not always depend on institutional authority. [1] These shifts underscore the need to examine how ideas about Islam and the Constitution are reframed within emerging forms of digital governance and power.[2] Discussions on Islam and the state in Indonesia have produced a rich body of scholarship. Yet, most of it remains grounded in historical and political analyses of constitutional debates, ideological contestations, and institutional responses.[3] At the same time, studies on digital Islam have documented how online spaces reshape patterns of religious authority, ethical orientation, and the everyday practice of

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[1] Mohammed el-Nawawy and Sahar Khamis, "Collective Identity in the Virtual Islamic Public Sphere," *International Communication Gazette* 72, no. 3 (April 2010): 229–50, https://doi.org/10.1177/1748048509356949; J Svensson, "Computing Swedish Salafism: An Example of a Digital Humanities Approach to Collecting, Organizing, and Analyzing Data on Web-Based Salafi Missionary Activity in Sweden," *Journal of Religion in Europe* 13, no. 1–2 (2020): 1–22, https://doi.org/10.1163/18748929-20201472.

[2] Ugur Aytac, "Big Tech, Algorithmic Power, and Democratic Control," *The Journal of Politics*, 2024; Abu Bakarr Bah and Sirojuddin Arif, "Digitalized Electoral Democracy, Subversive Politics, and Islam," *Comparative Sociology* 23, no. 4 (September 2024): 547–82, https://doi.org/10.1163/15691330-bja10115.

[3] Greg Barton, "Contesting Indonesia's Democratic Transition: Laskar Jihad, the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) and Civil Society," in *Security, Democracy, and Society in Bali*, ed. A Vandenberg and N Zuryani (Singapore: Springer Singapore, 2021), 305–31, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-5848-1_13; Andy Omara, "Why Not Indonesia an Islamic State? Constitutional Debate Concerning Religion-State Relation in A Muslim Majority Country," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 8, no. 1 (April 2024): 421, https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v8i1.15889; Hasanuddin Yusuf Adan et al., "Islam and the Foundation of the State in Indonesia: The Role of the Masyumi Party in the Constituent Assembly the Perspective of Fiqh Al-Siyāsah," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam* 7, no. 1 (March 2023):377, https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v7i1.16650.

being Muslim in mediated settings. [4] Although these bodies of research provide important insights, they often develop on parallel tracks. As a result, the constitutional dimensions of digital Islamic discourse and the legal implications of online religious communication remain undertheorized. Recent developments in Indonesia and other Muslim contexts show that the digital sphere has become an active site where Islamic ethics, sharia values, and constitutional principles intersect, sometimes reinforcing one another and at other times generating tensions. This dynamic is evident in debates on public ethics and governance, in discussions of digital rights and gender, and in the rise of online initiatives promoting religious moderation among younger audiences. [5] The controversies surrounding the application of Qanun Jinayat in Aceh illustrate how digital circulation can amplify disputes between Islamic criminal law and human rights principles. [6] Meanwhile, the emergence of digital tafsir practices and new modalities of issuing religious guidance demonstrates that legal reasoning increasingly interacts with technological infrastructures.[7]

Within this broader context, Islamic websites such as NU Online, Islami.co, Eramuslim, and Voa Islam constitute essential arenas in which constitutional ideas are articulated, contested, and normalized. These platforms do more than produce religious information. They cultivate interpretive frameworks that guide readers' understanding of the relationship between Islamic law and Indonesia's constitutional foundations. Examining their discursive choices provides insight into how public legitimacy is negotiated and how different visions of Islam within the nation-state are constructed. This study aims to explore this process by analyzing how digital Islamic media have become spaces in which legal formalist and substantive contextual interpretations of Islam and the Constitution engage with one another. Using Critical Discourse Analysis, the research examines how textual strategies, narrative framing, tagging practices, and circulation patterns contribute to the formation of competing ideas about the place of Islamic law in Indonesia's constitutional order. Instead of treating these websites as neutral channels, the study positions them as

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[4] Robi'atul Adawiyah and Nuraida Fitri Habi, "Gender and Labour Law: Protecting Women's Rights in the Digital Era in Indonesia and Malaysia," *Littera Legis: Journal of Law, Society, and Justice* 1, no. 1 (2025): 17–31; M Ibrahim, "Islam in the Digital Infrastructure: The Rise of Islamic Cyber Practices in Northern Nigeria," *Religion, State and Society* 52, no. 2–3 (2024): 114–32, https://doi.org/10.1080/09637494.2024.2353956; Rauha Salam-Salmaoui, Shajee Hassan, and Shazrah Salam, "Virtual Madrasas: Digital Governmentality and the Shaping of Islamic Subjectivity in Pakistan," *Journal of Media and Religion* 24, no. 2 (April 2025): 49–71, https://doi.org/10.1080/15348423.2025.2468455; Shaheen Amid Whyte, "Islamic Religious Authority in Cyberspace: A Qualitative Study of Muslim Religious Actors in Australia," *Religions* 13, no. 1 (January 2022): 69, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13010069.

[5] F Mahzumi et al., "Cyber-Islamic Moderation in Indonesia: Digital Activism of Islam.Co and IBTimes.Id and Its Implications for Young Muslims," *Miqot: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Keislaman* 49, no. 1 (2025): 22–49, https://doi.org/10.30821/miqot.v49i1.1290.

[6] P R N Hakim et al., "Contesting Sharia and Human Rights in the Digital Sphere: Media Representations of the Caning Controversy under the Qanun Jinayat in Aceh," *Journal of Islamic Law* 6, no. 2 (2025): 206–35, https://doi.org/10.24260/jil.v6i2.3600; Dahyul Daipon, "Komparatif Hukum Acara Pidana Positif dan Hukum Acara Pidana Islam (Jinayah) Aceh Dalam Proses Penyidikan," *El-Mashlahah* 10, no. 1 (2020), https://doi.org/10.23971/maslahah.v10i1.1780.

[7] A Sati et al., "The Digital Transformation of Tafsir and Its Implications for Islamic Legal Derivation in the Contemporary Era," *MILRev: Metro Islamic Law Review* 4, no. 1 (2025): 389–415, https://doi.org/10.32332/milrev.v4i1.10425.

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active agents in the production of constitutional meaning.

The contribution of this research lies in highlighting how the movement of religious authority into digital environments reshapes the public understanding of Islamic law, constitutional legitimacy, and national ideology. Through a multilayered analysis that attends to text, discursive practices, and social context, the study offers a more nuanced account of how legal-religious discourse takes shape within Indonesia's digital sphere and why these dynamics matter for broader democratic life. To make this contribution concrete, we pose three guiding questions: (1) What forms of discourse about Islam and Pancasila are constructed on popular Islamic websites? (2) Which ideological frameworks underpin these narratives (e.g., legal formalism vs. substantive contextualism), and how are they enacted through platform-specific practices? (3) How do these platforms position the relationship between Islamic law and the Constitution within Indonesia's democratic context, and with what implications for public legitimacy and constitutional imagination?

Method

This study employs a qualitative approach, focusing on critical discourse analysis of popular Islamic online media content in Indonesia. The selection of research objects is based on traffic data and metrics from Alexa.com and SimilarWeb.com, which serve as indicators of popularity and audience reach. Websites with high readability are assumed to have significant potential to influence public opinion and shape religious discourse. Therefore, the four selected websites are nu.or.id, islami.co, voa-islam.com, and eramuslim.com represent a diverse spectrum of Islamic discourse and serve as the primary sources in this study.

The analysis of these four websites is conducted using the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) developed by Norman Fairclough.[8] This approach enables the researcher to examine the relationships among text, discursive practices, and broader social practices in the production and consumption of Islamic and Pancasila discourse. Fairclough emphasizes that language is a form of social practice embedded with interests and always operates within complex structures of power.[9] Thus, this analysis does not focus solely on content but also examines how discourse structures are formed and reproduced within Indonesia's socio-political context. The ultimate goal is to reveal how the relationship between Islam and Pancasila is constructed and negotiated by various religious actors through online media.

The analysis integrated juridical and digital indicators, including references to constitutional provisions, Islamic legal terminology, and hyperlink or tagging patterns shaping meaning. Credibility was maintained through triangulation of data sources and researchers, as well as transparent documentation of analytic decisions and reflexive memoing to ensure interpretive consistency. Following Wodak and Meyer, credibility in Critical Discourse Analysis is grounded in methodological transparency, reflexivity, and contextual interpretation rather than statistical validation.[10] Transferability was supported by detailed descriptions of each site and

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8   Norman Fairclough and Isabela Fairclough, "A Procedural Approach to Ethical Critique in CDA," *Critical Discourse Studies* 15, no. 2 (March 2018): 169–85, https://doi.org/10.1080/17405904.2018.1427121.

9   Norman Fairclough, "Critical Discourse Analysis," in *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (Routledge, 2013), 9–20.

10 Michael Meyer Wodak, Ruth, *Methods of Critical Discourse Studies* (SAGE Publications, 2015).

representative excerpts. All materials originated from open-access online sources and did not involve any interaction with personal accounts. The study's scope is limited to four web-based platforms, excluding other platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, and it does not assess audience reception. Thus, findings are interpreted as a comparative snapshot of Islamic constitutional discourse within Indonesian digital media.

Results and Discussion
Critical Discourse Analysis of Islam Pancasila Across Four Websites

A critical discourse analysis of the NU Online (nu.or.id), Islami.co, Eramuslim.com, and Voa-Islam.com corpus reveals two relatively stable discursive formations in narrating the relationship between Islam and Pancasila. In legal-formalist channels such as Eramuslim and Voa-Islam, lexical choices tend to be prescriptive and categorical, marked by high-modality expressions such as *"harus"* ("must"), *"wajib"* ("obliged"), and *"diperintahkan"* ("commanded"), which position the implementation of *syariat* (Islamic law) as both a moral and constitutional imperative. Their intertextual references bind the texts to the Jakarta Charter, the BPUPKI/PPKI sessions, and the July 5, 1959 Decree, which are interpreted as affirmations of the *ruh syariat* (spirit of sharia) within the 1945 Constitution. On Voa-Islam, for instance, *"Jangan Lupakan Piagam Jakarta"* ("Do Not Forget the Jakarta Charter") by M. Rizal Fadillah[11] And *"Peristiwa 18 Agustus 1945: Pengkhianatan Kelompok Sekuler…"* ("The August 18, 1945 Event: The Betrayal of the Secular Group…") by Artawijaya narrates

August 18 as a moment of deviation from the nation's "original version."[12] Meanwhile, NU Online and Islami.co, representing the substantive-contextual axis, employ dialogical vocabularies such as "consensus," *hikmah* (wisdom), "public ethics," *kebinekaan* (plurality), *maslahat* (public good), and *maqāṣid* (objectives of sharia), while referring to Article 29 of the 1945 Constitution.[13] And the August 18, 1945, consensus as the *final clause* of nationhood.

This textual divergence extends to the level of framing strategies. The legal-formalist channels emphasize declarative–imperative headlines, event-driven rhythms, and polemical articulations that intensify around political or legal issue cycles. In contrast, the substantive–contextual channels produce knowledge-service genres such as policy explainers, *fikih kewargaan* (civic jurisprudence) Q&A columns, and "evergreen" articles that remain easily retrievable and are marked by descriptive titles and SEO-friendly keywords. On NU Online, the story *"Tirakat KH Hasyim Asy'ari dalam Mentashih Rumusan Pancasila"* ("The Spiritual Vigil of KH Hasyim Asy'ari in Revising the Formulation of Pancasila."[14] Links the principle of *ketuhanan* (divinity, the first sila) with *tawḥīd* (monotheism), thereby rendering the removal of the "seven words" (*tujuh kata*) theologically legitimate. On Islami.co, the framework of KH Ahmad Shiddiq underscores the distinction between Islam (a revealed religion) and Pancasila (a national ideology), suggesting that formalization is not a prerequisite for the validity of religious values.[15] The analogy of Ḥudaibiyah is invoked to rationalize political compromise as a long-term *maslahat* (public

11 Redaksi VOA-Islam, "Jangan Lupakan Piagam Jakarta," *VOA-Islam.Com*, 2021.

12 Artawijaya, "Peristiwa 18 Agustus 1945: Pengkhianatan Kelompok Sekuler Menghapus Piagam Jakarta," VOA Islam, 2009.

13 Patoni, "Berpegang Teguh Pada Pancasila Secara Kaffah," NU Online, 2020.

14 Fathoni, "Tirakat KH Hasyim Asy'ari Saat Mentashih Rumusan Pancasila," NU Online, 2020.

15 Muhammad Mujibuddin, "KH Achmad Shiddiq, Pancasila, Dan Wawasan Kebangsaan," Islami.co, 2017.

good), emphasizing public ethics over the formalization of religious labels.

At the level of discursive practice, the divergence becomes more pronounced. Voa-Islam and the DDII (Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia) network exhibit a pattern of reposting and interlinking among ideologically aligned websites, for example, their connection with Nahimunkar, which reinforces in-group resonance and concentrates audiences within tightly bound ideological clusters. [16] The dominant genre takes the form of polemical opinion pieces or ideological editorials that generate spikes in readership during political moments but remain volatile outside those cycles. Conversely, NU Online and Islami.co rely on an archivable, cross-flow content architecture characterized by collaborations with mainstream institutions, stable social referrals, and high return visits driven by citizens' demand for practical religious knowledge such as issues of state–religion relations, public religious ethics, and interpretations of Article 29 of the 1945 Constitution. As a result, engagement metrics

such as session length and shareability increase without resorting to antagonistic rhetoric.

At the level of social practice, the two ideological horizons articulate contrasting policy imaginaries. The legal-formalist camp advocates *theodemocracy* and the primacy of *sharia* as the state's highest legal reference, positioning the June 1 version of Pancasila as non-normative and framing the PPKI's August 18 decision as a political compromise that sacrificed the constitutional rights of the Muslim majority. [17] In contrast, the substantive–contextual camp conceptualizes Islam as a civic ethic within the *constitutional framework of Pancasila: sharia values are incorporated into positive law through the principles of maslahat* (public good) and *maqāṣid* (higher objectives of Islamic law), [18] while safeguarding religious freedom and pluralism. Within the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) tradition, from the 1983 Situbondo Congress to the writings of KH Hasyim Asy'ari and KH Ahmad Shiddiq Pancasila, the concept of Pancasila is accepted not as a religion but as an ethical–constitutional framework that

[16] Ahmed Widad, "Insan Media Harus Luruskan Niat Untuk Jihad Amar Maruf Nahi Munkar" (VOA Islam, 2013).

[17] Novendri M. Nggilu et al., "Indonesia's Constitutional Identity: A Comparative Study of Islamic Constitutionalism," *De Jure: Jurnal Hukum Dan Syar'iah* 16, no. 2 (2024): 480–500, https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.18860/j-fsh.v16i2.29851.

[18] For examples of the application of *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* theory in various fields, see Bambang Wahyudi et al., "Ecological Justice in Islamic Family Law: Integrating Maqasid Al-Shari'ah with Environmental Ethics in Post-Pandemic Societies," *Islamic Law and Social Issues in Society* 1, no. 2 (2025): 160–84, https://doi.org/10.64929/ilsiis.v1i2.24; Ardian Kurniawan Syarif Bin Muhammadromli Samae, Hamida Arbi, "From Judicial Discretion to Maqasid Al-Shari'ah Reasoning: The Case of Marriage Dispensation at the Muara Bulian Religious Court, Indonesia," *Islamic Law and Social Issues in Society* 1, no. 2 (2025): 63–83, https://doi.org/10.64929/ilsiis.v1i1.11; Edi

Kurniawan, Humaira Ahmad, and Muhamad Zaenal Muttaqin, "From Content Creators to Zakat Payers: The Fatwa of Indonesian Ulema Council and the Rise of Digital Fiqh," *Islamic Law and Social Issues in Society* 1, no. 2 (2025): 99–115, https://doi.org/10.64929/ilsiis.v1i2.9; Rahmi Hidayati Al Idrusiah et al., "Faskh Law Reformulation in Malaysia: A Critical Examination of Terengganu Sharia Court Case," *Journal of Islamic Thought and Civilization* 14, no. 2 (2024): 303–20, https://doi.org/10.32350/jitc.142.18; Ulfa Pirmani and Edi Kurniawan, "From the Debate on the Legality of Waqf Al-Ahlī to Its Implementation in Southeast Asia: Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore," *International Journal of Law and Society (IJLS)* 3, no. 2 (2024): 59–76, https://doi.org/10.59683/ijls.v3i2.81; Edi Kurniawan and Syed Arif Asyraf Bin Syed Zaiful, "Beribadah Di Tengah Wabak Covid-19: Analisis Terhadap Fatwa Majelis Ulama Indonesia No 14 Tahun 2020 Berasaskan Teori Maqāṣid Al-Sharī 'ah Al-Shāṭibī," *Jurnal Fiqh* 19, no. 1 (2022): 83–108.

enables the coexistence of Islamic and democratic values. This position also underpins NU's critique of *Perda Syariah* (regional sharia bylaws), which are considered prone to discrimination and less effective than the internalization of Islamic ethical values within public policy frameworks.

The post-2016 context, marked by identity polarization, the tightening of platform moderation, and increasing concern over brand safety, has created structural incentives for dialogical, informative, and verifiable narratives. Within such an ecology, digital legitimacy is increasingly produced through communicative performance: the capacity to construct arguments that are traceable, socially relevant, and institutionally collaborative. Consequently, educational–service formats that are both SEO-friendly and platform-safe tend to achieve cross-channel circulation, whereas highly polemical opinions often encounter distributional frictions and audience segmentation. Put simply, visibility is not merely a function of network scale but the result of genre alignment with platform governance and the demands of public rationality. This provides a conceptual bridge for understanding why websites with a substantive contextual orientation exhibit more sustainable audience metrics over time.

These micro and meso-level findings are corroborated by macro-level evidence in the data: Alexa rankings from 2017–2019 and SimilarWeb statistics for 2020. In 2017, Eramuslim ranked first, followed by Portal-Islam and Voa Islam, with NU Online remaining in fourth position. By 2018, NU Online had risen to first place; in 2019, it maintained its top position, while Islami.Co advanced to second, and BincangSyariah emerged as a newcomer in third. In 2020,

SimilarWeb recorded NU Online surpassing two million visitors, whereas Voa-Islam experienced a relative decline. This pattern aligns with the CDA logic outlined above: service-oriented genres that are search-compatible and moderation-safe generate long-tail traffic and accumulative communicative legitimacy, whereas event-driven formats produce readership spikes that are difficult to sustain. Thus, linguistic structures and practices of production and circulation are not merely reflections of ideology but also operate as devices that shape visibility and, in turn, digital religious authority. [19] The micro, meso, and macro levels of analysis collectively reveal a consistent pattern of divergence between the legal formalist and the substantive contextual orientations across the four websites. These distinctions appear in lexical choices, modality, intertextual references, genre structures, and circulation practices. A concise synthesis of these key patterns is presented in Table 1 to highlight the study's core findings.

Table 1. Comparative Overview of Discursive Patterns in the Islamic Pancasila Corpus

Analytical Aspect	Legal Formalist Channels (Eramuslim, Voa-Islam)	Substantive Contextual Channels (NU Online, Islami.co)
Lexical Choices and Modality	Employ prescriptive, categorical, high-modality terms such as *"must,"* *"obliged,"* and *"commanded."*	Use dialogical, ethical, and deliberative terms such as *"consensus,"* *"wisdom,"* *"public ethics,"* and *"maslahat."*
Intertextual References	Reference the Jakarta Charter, BPUPKI/PPKI debates,	Refer to Article 29 of the 1945 Constitution, the 18 August constitutional settlement, *maqasid,*

[19] Asif Mohiuddin, *Navigating Religious Authority in Muslim Societies* (Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, 2023), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-44825-6.

	and the 5 July 1959 Decree.	and civic-oriented jurisprudence.
Framing and Genre	Characterized by declarative and polemical headlines; strongly event-driven.	Utilize *knowledge-service* genres, *civic fiqh* Q&A formats, evergreen educational articles, and SEO-oriented content.
Circulation Architecture	Circulate through reposting networks within ideological clusters; traffic is highly volatile.	Feature archivable and collaborative content flows, stable referral patterns, and high return-visitor rates.
Rhetoric and Ideological Positioning	Promote *theodemocracy* and the primacy of *sharia* as state law.	Frame Islam as a civic ethical tradition embedded within the constitutional principles of Pancasila.
Digital Authority Practices	Authority depends on short-term spikes driven by political moments.	Authority built through long-term communicative legitimacy and moderation-safe content.
Visibility Trajectory	Declining visibility after 2016 due to polarization and platform moderation.	Stable or increasing audience metrics over time.
CDA Implication	Language constructs authority through conflict and coercive framing.	Language constructs cumulative, sustainable authority through ethical and civic-oriented discourse.

Source: Processed from Various Sources, 2025

Differences in lexical choice, modality, and intertextuality; coercive legal versus ethical norms; *and dialogue correlate with divergent genres and circulation practices,* which, under platform incentives, generate distinct trajectories of visibility. The evidence presented in the articles, hyperlink networks, and traffic metrics substantiates that digital authority tends to accumulate more effectively through educational service formats that are search-engine compatible and moderation-safe, rather than through event-driven polemics. The CDA framework thus provides a coherent causal explanation for the observed shifts in cross-site popularity during the period of analysis.

Shifts in Popularity (2017–2020): From 2017 to 2020, data from

Between 2017 and 2020, data from Alexa.com and SimilarWeb.com show dynamic changes in the ranking of popular Islamic websites in Indonesia. In 2017, Eramuslim.com and Voa-Islam.com, both affiliated with the Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia (DDII, Indonesian Islamic Propagation Council), dominated the online Islamic landscape, promoting a legal-formalist narrative that emphasized the constitutional role of sharia and the symbolic importance of the Jakarta Charter. However, by 2019–2020, the popularity of these conservative websites declined, while NU Online (nu.or.id) and Islami.co emerged as the most visited Islamic websites in the country. This shift signals more than a change in digital consumption; it illustrates a reconfiguration of digital religious authority aligned with narratives of moderation and inclusivity championed by Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and its younger intellectual generation.[20]

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[20] Leonie Schmidt, "Aesthetics of Authority: 'Islam Nusantara' and Islamic 'Radicalism' in Indonesian Film and Social Media," *Religion* 51, no. 2 (April 2021): 237–58, https://doi.org/10.1080/0048721X.2020.1868387;

Rusli Rusli and Nurdin Nurdin, "Understanding Indonesia Millennia Ulama Online Knowledge Acquisition and Use in Daily Fatwa Making Habits," *Education and Information Technologies* 27,

Several factors explain this transition. First, the algorithmic visibility of moderate platforms increased as they engaged with contemporary social issues such as tolerance, democracy, and civic Islam, thereby making them more relatable to younger, urban Muslim audiences. Second, institutional credibility was crucial: NU Online benefited from strong organizational backing and access to mainstream networks, thereby enhancing both its legitimacy and reach. Third, the political context of post-2016 Indonesia was characterized by public fatigue with polarizing identity politics, which led audiences toward media outlets that offered moderate, dialogical narratives. Consequently, websites such as Islami.co became spaces for articulating an inclusive understanding of Islam compatible with Pancasila, whereas Eramuslim.com and Voa-Islam.com retained smaller, ideologically committed readerships emphasizing Islamic constitutional supremacy.

The transformation of website popularity thus mirrors deeper ideological realignments within the digital ecosystem of Indonesian Islam. What once represented the dominance of legal-formalist discourse, asserting Islam as the constitutional foundation of the state, has gradually given way to contextual-substantive narratives that reaffirm Pancasila as a unifying national ideology while maintaining Islamic ethical principles. This trend supports Campbell's argument that digital platforms are not merely tools for religious dissemination but active agents that reconfigure power relations,[21] Shape legitimacy, and mediate theological contestation in contemporary Islam.

In this light, website rankings are not just statistical indicators but expressions of discursive competition between divergent visions of Islam and the nation-state. The shifting prominence of these platforms demonstrates how digital authority increasingly shapes public understandings of Islamic law, democracy, and constitutional identity.[22] The following section explores this ideological dimension in greater depth by analyzing how popular Islamic websites construct narratives of Islam and Pancasila within Indonesia's digital public sphere.

The ideological contrast between legal formalism and substantive contextualism is not merely reflected in content but is actively enacted through distinct platform logics and communicative practices. Eramuslim.com and Voa-Islam.com operationalize legal formalist ideology by structuring their content around juridical imperatives and eschatological urgency, employing prescriptive headlines, scriptural citations, and binary moral framing that cast constitutional issues as a struggle between divine command and secular deviation. This performative mode turns their readers into participants of an imagined Islamic polity bound by normative obligation. In contrast, NU Online and Islami.co embody substantive-contextualist ideology through dialogical layouts, story-based narratives, and inclusive lexical repertoires that foreground civic ethics, interfaith dialogue, and Pancasila as shared moral ground. Their algorithmic engagement through interactive comment sections, user-generated essays, and social campaigns on tolerance translates theological inclusivism into participatory digital ethics. These differentiated digital grammars demonstrate that ideology in

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no. 3 (April 2022): 4117–40, https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-021-10779-7.

[21] Heidi A. Campbell and Ruth Tsuria, *Digital Religion: Understanding Religious Practice in Digital Media* (London: Routledge, 2021), https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429295683.

[22] Philipp Lorenz-Spreen et al., "A Systematic Review of Worldwide Causal and Correlational Evidence on Digital Media and Democracy," *Nature Human Behaviour* 7, no. 1 (November 2022): 74–101, https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-022-01460-1.

Indonesia's Islamic cyberspace is not only articulated through discourse but also performed through the architectures and affordances of each platform, revealing how theology, technology, and constitutional imagination converge to shape Islamic democratic expression.

From Legal Formalist to Substantive Ethical: Digital Constitutionalism and Religious Authority

The debate on the constitutional position of Islamic law in Indonesia reflects a broader tension between the legal-formalist and substantive-ethical paradigms within the Muslim world. Thinkers such as Abu A'la al-Maududi, Sayyid Qutb, and Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im represent three key nodes in this discourse. Maududi's notion of theo-democracy blends divine sovereignty with limited democracy, positioning sharia as the supreme law that guides all state functions.[23] Qutb radicalized this concept by rejecting secular democracy as a continuation of jahiliyyah,[24] An-Na'im inverted both models by advocating for a secular state that safeguards Islam's moral integrity through voluntary adherence rather than legal enforcement.[25] These contrasting frameworks illuminate how global Islamic thought has continuously negotiated the balance between divine authority and civic rationality,[26] And they provide analytical entry points for understanding how Indonesian Islam situates itself within this global continuum.

In the Indonesian digital context, these ideological positions are rearticulated through online discourse.[27] A textual reading of major Islamic websites reveals two dominant styles of linguistic construction. Eramuslim.com and Voa Islam.com employ prescriptive and absolutist vocabulary, modal verbs such as "must," "obliged," and "commanded by God," to assert a legal-formalist view that the Jakarta Charter constitutes the authentic constitutional foundation. Their discourse mirrors that of Maududi and Qutb, who insist on divine sovereignty and frame the implementation of sharia as a constitutional imperative. Conversely, NU Online and Islami.co use dialogical and inclusive linguistic patterns, emphasizing "consensus," "shared values," and "ethical compatibility." These lexical strategies construct a substantive-contextual narrative of Islam and Pancasila, one that aligns with An-Na'im's idea of moral religiosity within a plural constitutional democracy. The textual layer thus reflects two contrasting ways of legitimizing Islamic law in public reasoning: a coercive-legal and an ethical dialogical approach.

The ways these websites produce and circulate their content reveal how religious authority is being reshaped in digital space. Platforms linked to DDII reinforce Maududi's idea of theodemocracy through constant reposting and cross-linking of materials that affirm the centrality of *sharia* as the state's legal foundation. In contrast, NU-affiliated sites draw on the heritage of contextual

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23 Humeira Iqtidar, "Theorizing Popular Sovereignty in the Colony: Abul A'la Maududi's 'Theodemocracy,'" *The Review of Politics* 82, no. 4 (August 2020): 595–617, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034670520000595.

24 Sayed Khatab, "'Hakimiyyah' and 'Jahiliyyah' in the Thought of Sayyid Qutb," *Middle Eastern Studies* 38, no. 3 (November 2002): 145–70.

25 Abdullahi Ahmed An-Naʿim, *Islam and the Secular State* (Harvard University Press, 2008).

26 K Rahayu and A Y Tauvani, "Legal Review of the Contamination of Prohibited Substances in Certified Products: A Perspective of the Halal Product Assurance Law," *Littera Legis: Journal of Law, Society, and Justice* 1, no. 1 (2025): 47–60.

27 M. Kholili, Ahmad Izudin, and Muhammad Lutfi Hakim, "Islamic Proselytizing in Digital Religion in Indonesia: The Challenges of Broadcasting Regulation," *Cogent Social Sciences* 10, no. 1 (December 2024), https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2024.2357460.

Islamic thought that emphasizes ethical universalism, echoing the arguments of An-Na'im and Abdullah Saeed. Through this dynamic, digital media act as intermediaries that alter how religious legitimacy is constructed. Authority is no longer determined solely by established clerical hierarchies but increasingly by algorithmic visibility, patterns of interaction, and audience engagement. This shift has also encouraged the rise of instant preachers whose limited scholarly grounding often produces exclusivist or *takfiri* tones, posing challenges to efforts toward religious moderation in Indonesia.[28]

These competing narratives also show how the constitutional meaning of Islam continues to be negotiated within Indonesia's democratic environment. The legal-formalist strand holds that political legitimacy should rest on divine sovereignty, reflecting the vision of Maududi and Qutb, who place God's law above all other sources of authority. Meanwhile, the substantive-contextual approach argues that the ethical values of *sharia* are already embedded within Pancasila and Article 29 of the Constitution, guiding public life without requiring formal legal codification. This position resonates with An-Na'im's view that religious commitment is strongest when practiced voluntarily within a plural constitutional system. When these global perspectives intersect in Indonesia's digital arena, they give rise to a localized form of Islamic constitutionalism that blends universal Islamic principles with the country's diverse democratic experience. This synthesis aligns with the spirit of *fiqh al-*

wasaṭiyyah, which stresses balance, openness, and the pursuit of the common good.

The shifting nature of religious authority becomes evident in how these websites craft their narratives and establish credibility with readers. Digital media do more than transmit theological positions; they actively shape how *Sharia* and constitutional values are interpreted in everyday public reasoning. This process marks the emergence of a new configuration of religious authority, one grounded not only in institutional standing but also in the communicative power of circulating ideas that resonate and gain recognition within a digitally mediated public sphere.

Digital Islamic Authority and the Reworking of Islam Pancasila Narratives

Work on digital religion demonstrates that online platforms increasingly shape how individuals understand and negotiate Islamic authority in contemporary settings. This observation aligns with the ways the analyzed websites construct relationships between their readers and the Islam Pancasila discourse. Several studies show that digital spaces facilitate the formation of religious subjectivities through stylistic presentation, curatorial patterns, and linguistic choices that emphasize particular moral imaginaries.[29] These tendencies help explain why some websites rely on normative language, while others adopt more dialogical and ethically grounded approaches. The literature on the digital adaptation of Islamic law also highlights efforts to address social diversity through accessible explanations that are not entirely constrained by formal legal frameworks.[30] This tendency is evident in NU

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28 Akhmad Ainur Roziqin et al., "The Challenge of Religious Moderation amidst the Rise of Religious Extremism among Instant Ustadz in Indonesia," *Al-Wasatiyah: Journal of Religious Moderation* 4, no. 1 (2025): 1–30, https://doi.org/10.30631/jrm.v4i1.110.

29 Salam-Salmaoui, Hassan, and Salam, "Virtual Madrasas: Digital Governmentality and the Shaping of Islamic Subjectivity in Pakistan."

30 Muhammad Habibi Siregar et al., "Digital Fiqh and Ethical Governance: Negotiating Islamic Normativity and Online Narcissism in Contemporary Indonesia," *JURIS (Jurnal Ilmiah*

Online and Islami.co, where notions of hikmah, maslahah, and maqasid serve as key principles for reasoning about the relationship between Islam and the state. Conversely, several studies note the role of firm, instructive, and obligation-oriented language in shaping public understandings of moral boundaries and civic duties in the digital sphere. [31] This linguistic style helps clarify the inclination of Eramuslim and Voa-Islam to present sharia as a constitutional and ethical imperative. Research on the role of technology in enforcing constitutional rights and regulating ethical conduct online indicates that digitalization often opens new spaces for participation while simultaneously raising debates over who holds the authority to interpret law and public morality.[32] These dynamics appear in the contrasting architectures of content circulation. Conservative websites cultivate tightly knit internal networks through repeated reinforcement of links, whereas moderate websites extend their reach through collaborations, educational articles, and knowledge-service formats. These architectural differences are not merely technical; they reflect distinct ways of imagining religious authority in the digital age.

In global discussions on Islam, gender, and media, research shows that digital spaces often foster more participatory forms of authority, particularly when narratives are delivered through inclusive, story-driven styles. [33] These findings resonate with patterns observed on NU Online and Islami.co, which blend teaching, reflective storytelling, and constitutional explanations. Meanwhile, the more polemical tone of Eramuslim and Voa-Islam exhibits its own logic of mobilizing attention. However, its rhythm tends to depend more heavily on political dynamics and moments of crisis. Studies on the contestation of Islamic discourse in digital arenas further illustrate that media spaces often serve as sites where identities and constitutional values are negotiated. [34] Within this context, the differences between legal-formalist and substantive-contextual groups cannot be understood simply as linguistic choices. They represent distinct ways of negotiating Islam's position in national life. Perspectives that emphasize sharia as a reference for state law coexist with approaches that frame Islamic

Syariah) 24, no. 1 (2025): 181–91, https://doi.org/http://dx.doi.org/10.31958/juris.v24i1.1321.

[31] Muhammad Shuhufi et al., "Islamic Law and Social Media: Analyzing the Fatwa of Indonesian Ulama Council Regarding Interaction on Digital Platforms," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam*, 2022, https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v6i2.15011.

[32] Siti Fatimah, Jamal Wiwoho, and Isharyanto, "The Convergence of Islamic Law and Technology in The Enforcement of Citizen's Constitutional Rights in The Era Society 5.0," *KnE Social Sciences*, 2024, https://doi.org/10.18502/kss.v9i2.14977; Intisar Rabb and Sharon Tai, "Digital Islamic Law: Purpose and Prospects," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 50 (2018): 113–18, https://doi.org/10.1017/s0020743817000988.

[33] B Zaid et al., "Digital Islam and Muslim Millennials: How Social Media Influencers Reimagine Religious Authority and Islamic Practices," *Religions* 13, no. 4 (2022), https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13040335; Ansori Ansori and Muhammad Iqbal Juliansyahzen, "The Contestation of the Family Law Discourse in the Digital Age: Islam, State, and Gender," *Samarah: Jurnal Hukum Keluarga Dan Hukum Islam*, 2022, https://doi.org/10.22373/sjhk.v6i1.9128.

[34] Muhammad Haramain et al., "Contestation of Islamic Radicalism in Online Media: A Study with Foucault's Theory on Power Relation," *Proceedings of the Proceedings of the 19th Annual International Conference on Islamic Studies, AICIS 2019, 1-4 October 2019, Jakarta, Indonesia*, 2020, https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/chvu7; Saifuddin Dhuhri et al., "Dislocation of Islamic Scientific Tradition through Digital Public Sphere: Netnographic Analysis on the Discourse of Ahl Al Sunnah Wa Al Jama'a between Traditionalist and Modernist Muslims," *Jurnal Ilmiah Islam Futura*, 2025, https://doi.org/10.22373/jiif.v25i1.25776.

ethics as a moral foundation within the Pancasila framework. Both perspectives operate simultaneously in digital spaces, each developing its own form of authority, shaped by media rhythms, reader preferences, and mechanisms of online visibility.

This study opens the door to reconsidering how religious authority and national discourse are shaped, negotiated, and circulated within an ever-evolving digital landscape. The linguistic choices, curatorial patterns, and circulation structures across the websites analyzed indicate that the relationship between Islam and Pancasila is not an abstract debate but a lived process emerging from everyday interactions among readers, media platforms, and the values they recognize as legitimate. These insights invite readers to reflect on how modes of communication, forms of digital education, and models of online participation can either broaden or constrain the space for public dialogue and influence society's understanding of the place of religion in national life. In doing so, the study encourages deeper consideration of how diverse expressions of Islamic thought might contribute to a more ethical, inclusive, and civically grounded digital environment.

Conclusion

This study shows that two consistent discursive orientations shape the relationship between Islam and Pancasila across four Indonesian Islamic websites. The legal formalist discourse found on Eramuslim.com and Voa Islam.com frames sharia as a constitutional foundation that should be restored through the Jakarta Charter, expressed through prescriptive language and circulated within relatively closed ideological networks. In contrast, NU Online and Islami.co advance a substantive-contextual discourse that presents Islam as a form of public ethics operating within the Pancasila framework, supported by a collaborative and archivable content structure that aligns with platform dynamics. The analysis demonstrates that religious authority in the digital sphere is increasingly shaped by communicative performance, such as the traceability of arguments, the durability of content, and adherence to platform governance. Together, these factors contribute to new configurations of digital authority in debates on Islamic constitutionalism.

The findings deepen our understanding of how constitutional narratives are negotiated within Indonesia's digital communication space. Contestations over the constitutional meaning of Islam now unfold not only through formal institutions but also through algorithmically shaped discursive practices, where knowledge-service genres gradually build public legitimacy and maintain visibility more effectively than episodic polemical discourse. The shifts in website popularity from 2017 to 2020 further illustrate that the sustainability of digital authority is closely tied to the ability to articulate Islamic values in ethical terms compatible with both Pancasila and platform rules, enabling the emergence of a more participatory form of digital constitutional Islam. This study remains limited by its focus on four websites and the absence of an analysis of audience reception. Future research may broaden the range of platforms, examine different political contexts, or investigate user interactions to provide a more complete picture of how digital authority is constructed, negotiated, and sustained within Indonesia's contemporary Islamic public sphere. In doing so, subsequent studies can better capture the evolving interplay between digital media ecosystems, Islamic discursive authority, and Indonesia's shifting constitutional imaginaries.

Indonesia Bangkit (BIB) for providing research scholarships to support our doctoral studies at UIN Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta.

Author Contributions

The first author was responsible for data collection and field investigation in alignment with the research objectives. The second author contributed to the legal analysis, developed the methodological framework, and participated in the review and editing process. The third author conducted the media analysis, contributed to data interpretation, and led the drafting of the original manuscript. The fourth author provided theoretical insights and supported the development of the literature review. The fifth author was responsible for data validation and data visualization to support the accuracy and clarity of the findings.

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