

ISLAM AND DIGITAL ETHICS: MUHAMMADIYAH'S VALUES IN THE ECOSYSTEM OF DIGITAL DEMOCRACY

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ABSTRACT

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*This study examines how Muhammadiyah articulates and institutionalizes Islamic ethical values in response to the challenges of digital democracy in Indonesia. Using a qualitative interpretive design, it analyzes two key organizational documents (2020; 2025) and public statements by Muhammadiyah leaders (2017–2025). Guided by the frameworks of Islam Berkemajuan and digital democracy, qualitative content analysis identifies a hierarchical structure of digital ethics. Core epistemic–moral principles—*tabayyun* (verification), *ṣidq* (truthfulness), and *akhlāq al-karīmah* (moral character)—function as primary safeguards against misinformation and polarization. These are complemented by civic–institutional values such as *amanah*, *‘adālah*, and *maṣlahah*, linking personal virtue to democratic responsibility. The findings show an evolution from moral guidance to institutional norm-setting, positioning Islam Berkemajuan as a non-Western, faith-based model compatible with digital democracy and contributing to Digital Political Ethics scholarship.*

*Studi ini mengkaji bagaimana Muhammadiyah mengartikulasikan dan melembagakan nilai-nilai etika Islam dalam merespons tantangan demokrasi digital di Indonesia. Dengan menggunakan desain interpretatif kualitatif, penelitian ini menganalisis dua dokumen organisasi utama (tahun 2020 dan 2025) serta pernyataan publik para pemimpin Muhammadiyah (periode 2017–2025). Berlandaskan kerangka pemikiran Islam Berkemajuan dan demokrasi digital, analisis konten kualitatif mengidentifikasi struktur hierarkis etika digital. Prinsip-prinsip epistemik-moral inti—yakni *tabayyun* (verifikasi), *ṣidq* (kejujuran), dan *akhlāq al-karīmah* (karakter mulia)—berfungsi sebagai benteng utama dalam menghadapi misinformasi dan polarisasi. Prinsip-prinsip tersebut dilengkapi dengan nilai-nilai sipil-institusional seperti *amanah*, *‘adālah*, dan *maṣlahah*, yang menghubungkan kebajikan pribadi dengan tanggung jawab demokratis. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan adanya evolusi dari sekadar panduan moral menuju penetapan norma kelembagaan, yang memosisikan Islam Berkemajuan sebagai model berbasis iman yang bukan berasal dari Barat namun selaras dengan demokrasi digital, sekaligus memberikan kontribusi bagi kajian akademis mengenai Etika Politik Digital.*

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of digital technology has fundamentally transformed contemporary democratic life, particularly in the ways citizens communicate, deliberate, mobilize, and articulate political ideas. Social media and digital platforms have now become primary arenas of political engagement, where public opinion is shaped, collective identities are negotiated, and political participation is mediated by algorithmic logic, virality, and platform-based attention economies.¹ While the digitalization of democracy has expanded access to political involvement and opened broader spaces for civic engagement, it has simultaneously generated serious ethical challenges, including misinformation and disinformation, hate speech, identity-based polarization, and the erosion of civility in public discourse.² These conditions indicate that digital democracy is not merely a technological shift, but a transformation of political culture that demands renewed ethical frameworks and updated normative guidance.

Indonesia constitutes a particularly significant context for examining these dynamics. As one of the world's largest democracies and simultaneously one of the most digitally connected societies, Indonesia has experienced an increasingly intense convergence of political life, religious expression, and digital communication.³ According to the data by late 2025, Indonesia recorded approximately 331 million active cellular mobile subscriptions, representing around 116 percent of the national population. However, not all of these subscriptions necessarily provide internet access, as some are limited to basic voice and SMS services. At the same time, the number of internet users in Indonesia reached about 230 million, corresponding to an internet penetration rate of 80.5 percent.⁴

Hence, the digital platforms now play a decisive role in electoral processes, public policy debates, the construction of religious authority, and civic mobilization. In this context, the ethical conduct of digitally connected communities, including religious organizations and civil society groups, has become a critical factor shaping the quality and sustainability of democratic life. Digital media ethics, therefore, cannot be treated as a peripheral concern, but must be understood as a normative prerequisite for safeguarding democratic integrity within an increasingly digitized public sphere.

¹ Yannis Theocharis et al., "Platform Affordances and Political Participation: How Social Media Reshape Political Engagement," *West European Politics* 46, no. 4 (June 7, 2023): 788–811, doi:10.1080/01402382.2022.2087410.

² Dimas Subekti et al., "Social Media and Disinformation for Candidates: The Evidence in the 2024 Indonesian Presidential Election," *Frontiers in Political Science* 7 (July 17, 2025), doi:10.3389/fpos.2025.1625535.

³ Leonard Chrysostomos Epafros, Hendrikus Paulus Kaunang, and Syamsul Asri, "Religious Blasphemy And Monitory Society In Indonesian Digital Age," *Jurnal Kawistara* 9, no. 2 (October 19, 2019): 220–30, doi:10.22146/kawistara.41169; HS Sufyati, "Konvergensi Media Dalam Religiusitas Masyarakat Sufyati. HS - Google Search" 13, no. 2 (April 2019), <https://media.neliti.com/media/publications/492273-digitalization-of-mass-media-democracy-i-27560455.pdf>.

⁴ "Digital 2025: Indonesia," *DataReportal – Global Digital Insights*, February 25, 2025, <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2025-indonesia>.

Within Indonesia's civil society landscape, Muhammadiyah occupies a distinctive and influential position. As a reformist Islamic movement with tens of millions of members, an extensive organizational network, and a strong intellectual tradition, Muhammadiyah has long functioned as a moral, educational, and socio-political force.⁵ In the digital era, Muhammadiyah members and cadres actively engage in online spaces not only as individual users, but also as content producers, educators, community organizers, and participants in political discourse. Moreover, the presence of Muhammadiyah's overseas branches—such as the *Pimpinan Cabang Istimewa Muhammadiyah* (PCIM) in India, Japan, Malaysia, Türkiye, Australia, and other countries demonstrates how digital platforms are strategically utilized for da'wah, community consolidation, and transnational civic engagement.⁶ These practices underscore that Muhammadiyah is not a passive observer of digital politics, but an increasingly influential moral actor shaping public narratives and patterns of political communication in digital spaces.

Nevertheless, despite this growing engagement, Muhammadiyah's ethical response to political participation in digital environments has not been systematically examined nor fully articulated within a comprehensive analytical framework. Although Muhammadiyah consistently promotes virtuous online behavior—such as avoiding slander, provocation, and hostility—existing ethical references remain fragmented and are often conveyed as general moral advice rather than as an integrated ethical framework for digital political engagement. Initiatives such as the *Gerakan Pandu Digital* and the *Sembilan Poin Akhlaqul Sosmediyah* provide important normative guidance emphasizing verification, self-restraint, and social harmony.⁷ However, these principles are rarely analyzed in depth in relation to the complexities of digital political behavior, including online political persuasion, digital activism, algorithmic amplification, digital propaganda, and the ethical boundaries between political advocacy and information manipulation. This normative gap risks generating inconsistent practices that may ultimately weaken Muhammadiyah's foundational values of moderation, justice, and ethical rationality.

⁵ Aminullah Elhady, "Islamic Reform Movement in Indonesia: Role of Muhammadiyah in Social Empowerment" 7, no. 8 (August 11, 2017), https://kwpublications.com/papers_submitted/3234/islamic-reform-movement-in-indonesia-role-of-muhammadiyah-in-social-empowerment.pdf; Rudy Herlambang and Mappanyompa, "History of Muhammadiyah: An Islamic Reform Movement in Indonesia," *International Journal of Health, Economics, and Social Sciences (IJHES)* 7, no. 1 (January 22, 2025): 268~270-268~270, doi:10.56338/ijhess.v7i1.6674.

⁶ Ridho Al-Hamdi, *Internasionalisasi Muhammadiyah: Sejarah Dan Dinamika Pimpinan Cabang Istimewa Muhammadiyah Luar Negeri 2002-2022* (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Samudera Biru, 2022), https://www.academia.edu/82284316/Internasionalisasi_Muhammadiyah_Sejarah_dan_Dinamika_Pimpinan_Cabang_Istimewa_Muhammadiyah_Luar_Negeri_2002_2022.

⁷ Persyarikatan Muhammadiyah, "Muhammadiyah Digital Guide Initiative to Tackle Digital Disruption - Google Search," August 29, 2023, https://www.google.com/search?q=Muhammadiyah+Digital+Guide+Initiative+to+Tackle+Digital+Disruption&oq=Muhammadiyah+Digital+Guide+Initiative+to+Tackle+Digital+Disruption&gs_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbWUyBggAEEUYOTIHCAEQIRiPAtIBBzQ0NmowajeoAgiwAgHxByyM6Km4PqGh8QWMjOipuD6hoQ&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8.

Recent academic scholarship on digital democracy and Islamic ethics has increasingly recognized the importance of religious perspectives in digital governance. Several studies highlight the relevance of Islamic ethical concepts such as *ṣidq* (truthfulness), *ʿadl* (justice), *amanah* (trustworthiness), and *maṣlaḥah* (public benefit) in shaping ethical digital communication,⁸ while others explore digital daʿwah and the transformation of religious authority in online spaces.⁹ Nevertheless, existing literature remains fragmented across political communication studies, Islamic studies, and digital sociology. Very few studies have systematically examined how a large Islamic civil society organization translates normative religious ethics into operational guidance for digital political participation. As a result, Muhammadiyah's role as a *norm entrepreneur* in digital democracy remains relatively underexplored.

This study seeks to address this gap by analyzing Muhammadiyah's digital ethics through a systematic examination of institutional documents and leadership narratives produced between 2017 and 2025. Rather than treating digital ethics as abstract moral ideals, this article investigates how Islamic ethical principles associated with *Islam Berkemajuan* are hierarchically structured, prioritized, and operationalized in response to misinformation, polarization, and democratic pressures within Indonesia's digital public sphere. Through qualitative content analysis, the study identifies core ethical imperatives—most notably *tabayyun* (verification), *ṣidq* (truthfulness), and *akhlāq al-karīmah* (moral character)—and situates them within a broader framework of civic responsibility, institutional accountability, and ethical political communication.

Theoretically, this article contributes to the development of *Digital Ethics*¹⁰ by offering a non-Western, value-based perspective rooted in religious ethics, thereby complementing dominant procedural and regulatory approaches in digital democracy studies. Empirically, the study demonstrates how faith-based civil society actors can function as ethical stabilizers in digital environments characterized by weak governance by embedding moral responsibility into everyday practices of political communication. Practically, the findings provide value-based ethical indicators applicable to civic education, cadre training, and digital literacy programs within Muhammadiyah and similar organizations. By integrating Islamic ethics, democratic norms, and applied digital practices, this study enriches scholarly discourse on ethical digital citizenship and underscores the strategic role of faith-

⁸ Nur Aisyah and Hasyimsah Nasution, "Etika Komunikasi Di Media Sosial: Kajian Al-Quran Surat An-Nur Ayat 11-15," *Jurnal Ilmiah Mahasiswa Raushan Fikr* 13, no. 2 (July 2024), doi:10.24090/jimrf.v13i2.11932; Ulfi Amelia and Nasrulloh, "Konsep Etika Komunikasi Bermedia Sosial Bagi Generasi Milenial Perspektif Al-Qur'an," *Al-Fahmu: Jurnal Ilmu Al-Qur'an Dan Tafsir* 3, no. 2 (July 16, 2024): 163–74, doi:10.58363/alfahmu.v3i2.199; Novi Anggraini, "Etika Komunikasi Bagi Pengguna Media Sosial Menurut Al-Qur'an" 3, accessed February 24, 2026, doi:https://doi.org/10.56436/jocis.v3i1.242.

⁹ Deviolina Fitria Kholisari, "Dakwah Stylish Di Era Digital Dan Kontestasi Otoritas Keagamaan: Studi Kasus Hanan Attaki Dan Ustadz Selebritas Indonesia," *El-Hikmah: Jurnal Ilmu Dakwah Dan Komunikasi* 22, nos. 13, Januari (January 22, 2025): 101–19.

¹⁰ Cariss Veliz, *Oxford Handbook of Digital Ethics* | *Oxford Academic* (Oxford University Press, 2021), doi:https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198857815.001.0001.

based civil society organizations in shaping responsible participation within Indonesia's evolving digital democracy.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative interpretive research design to examine how Muhammadiyah articulates, prioritizes, and institutionalizes Islamic ethical values within the context of digital democracy. Rather than measuring individual online behavior or platform-specific interactions, the study focuses on normative discourse, analyzing how the principles of *Islam Berkemajuan* (Progressive Islam) are translated into ethical guidance for digital communication and political engagement. This approach is particularly suited to capturing moral reasoning, value hierarchies, and organizational perspectives embedded in religious and civil society discourses.

The empirical data consist of publicly accessible materials, primarily drawn from two main categories:

- (1) Official Muhammadiyah organizational documents related to digital ethics and information governance; and
- (2) Public statements and leadership narratives disseminated through mainstream online media and Muhammadiyah's official websites.

These sources were selected using purposive sampling, targeting authoritative figures and structural bodies within Muhammadiyah—such as the *Central Board of Muhammadiyah* (*Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah*), the *Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid*, and the *Majelis Pustaka dan Informasi*—that consistently address issues of democracy, ethics, media, and public morality in digital spaces.

Data selection was guided by three primary criteria:

- (1) explicit relevance to digital ethics, social media behavior, or political communication;
- (2) explicit or implicit reference to Muhammadiyah's ideological values, particularly *Islam Berkemajuan*; and
- (3) representation of official or influential voices possessing normative authority within Muhammadiyah's organizational structure.

Data analysis was conducted using qualitative content analysis, guided by the theoretical frameworks of *Islam Berkemajuan* and digital democracy, with particular attention to contemporary debates on Digital Ethics. The analytical process proceeded through three interrelated stages. First, recurring ethical themes, concepts, and moral narratives were identified across institutional documents and leadership statements. Second, these ethical values were systematically categorized and ranked based on their frequency of appearance, normative strength, and degree of institutional emphasis, enabling a distinction between core principles and supporting norms within Muhammadiyah's digital ethics framework. Third, the analysis interpreted how these values function as ethical norms in digital

democratic practices, particularly in responding to misinformation, political polarization, civic responsibility, and the ethics of political communication.

This methodological approach enables a systematic linkage between Islamic ethical principles and contemporary digital political discourse, while also illuminating how faith-based civil society organizations translate normative religious values into operational ethical guidance. By emphasizing discourse analysis, value hierarchy, and institutional articulation, the study contributes to a deeper understanding of the role of reformist Islamic ethics in shaping ethical governance within increasingly digitized democratic environments.

RESULT & DISCUSSION

Muhammadiyah's Reformist Foundations

Founded in 1912 in Yogyakarta by Ahmad Dahlan, Muhammadiyah has long positioned itself as one of the most influential reformist Islamic movements in Southeast Asia. From its inception, Muhammadiyah has emphasized *tajdīd* (religious renewal), rational engagement with modernity, and the translation of Islamic ethics into concrete social action.¹¹ Unlike revivalist or isolationist movements, Muhammadiyah has historically viewed Islam as a moral force for social progress, manifested through institution-building and public service, rather than relying solely on symbolic or identity-based politics. This orientation is most clearly reflected in Muhammadiyah's extensive contributions to education, healthcare, social welfare, and community reform, which collectively constitute its ethical capital in Indonesian public life.¹²

This historical trajectory is conceptually consolidated in the contemporary formulation of *Islam Berkemajuan* (Progressive Islam), as articulated by Muhammadiyah, which represents a reformist Islamic worldview that understands Islam as a religion of enlightenment and civilizational progress. It integrates *tawhīd* (monotheism), knowledge, reason, action, and moral character within a single ethical-transformative framework. Rooted in the Qur'an and the Sunnah and developed through *tajdīd* (renewal) and *ijtihād* (independent reasoning), Islam Berkemajuan affirms that genuine progress is that which is grounded in justice, oriented toward the public good (*maṣlaḥah*), and directed at the liberation and empowerment of humanity. Within this framework, Islam is not merely a system of belief but a moral

¹¹ Azaki Khoirudin and Qaem Aulassyahied, "Reinterpreting Muhammadiyah's Purification and Its Implications for the Educational Philosophy" 12, no. 2 (December 7, 2023), doi:10.22219/progresiva.v12i02.29596.

¹² Muhammadiyah, "Beragama yang Mencerahkan dan Memajukan Muhammadiyah ke Depan - Suara Muhammadiyah," February 16, 2019, <https://web.suaramuhammadiyah.id/2019/02/16/beragama-yang-mencerahkan-dan-memajukan-muhammadiyah-ke-depan/>.

and social force that shapes a moderate, inclusive, and ethically grounded civil society amid the dynamics of modernity and globalization.¹³

Muhammadiyah's organizational achievements provide empirical grounding for this ethical orientation. In the field of education, Muhammadiyah manages thousands of schools and universities across Indonesia, shaping generations of citizens through curricula that integrate religious values, civic responsibility, and scientific reasoning. In the healthcare sector, its extensive network of hospitals and clinics positions Muhammadiyah as a major non-governmental provider of public health services, particularly in underserved regions.¹⁴

Through 'Aisyiyah, Muhammadiyah has also played a pioneering role in women's empowerment by consistently advancing women's education, leadership, and social participation within an Islamic ethical framework.¹⁵ In addition, the Muhammadiyah Disaster Management Center (MDMC) has gained national and international recognition for its professionalism, humanitarian orientation, and ethical responsiveness in disaster relief and humanitarian crises.¹⁶ Other councils and institutions—such as the Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid, the Majelis Pustaka dan Informasi, Lazismu, and the Majelis Pendidikan Kader—further demonstrate how ethical principles are institutionalized across multiple sectors of public life.

These achievements are not merely indicators of organizational capacity; they represent manifestations of Muhammadiyah's ethical praxis. They illustrate how Islamic values—such as *ṣidq* (truthfulness), *amanah* (trustworthiness), *adālah* (justice), and *ta'āwun* (cooperation)—are operationalized within complex modern systems. This long-standing experience in managing ethical responsibility at scale provides Muhammadiyah with both moral authority and practical insight in responding to emerging ethical challenges within digital democracy.

Within the context of Indonesia's highly dynamic social media ecosystem, these ethical foundations acquire renewed relevance. Digital platforms have transformed political participation by making it more expressive and open, expanding the reach of public voices, and accelerating the circulation of information. At the same time, however, these platforms have intensified ethical risks, including misinformation, disinformation, political polarization, and the erosion of normative

¹³ Suara Muhammadiyah, "Ajaran Islam Berkemajuan," *Suara Muhammadiyah*, July 6, 2024, <https://www.suaramuhammadiyah.id/read/ajaran-islam-berkemajuan>.

¹⁴ Suara Muhammadiyah, "Refleksi 112 Tahun Muhammadiyah," *Suara Muhammadiyah*, November 16, 2024, <https://suaramuhammadiyah.id/read/refleksi-112-tahun-muhammadiyah>.

¹⁵ Nur Kholisatun, Fika Ratna Pratiwi, and Moh Nurhakim, "Aisyiyah Dan Pemberdayaan Perempuan Dalam Upaya Kesetaraan Gender," *Al-Tarbiyah : Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan Islam* 2, no. 3 (June 3, 2024): 306–19, doi:10.59059/al-tarbiyah.v2i3.1272.

¹⁶ DKP UMY, "WHO Verifies Muhammadiyah EMTs: Historic Achievements by Indonesia's Emergency Medical Team," *UMY*, October 21, 2025, <https://www.umat.ac.id/en/who-verifikasi-emt-muhammadiyah-capaian-bersejarah-tim-medis-darurat-indonesia/>.

standards.¹⁷ Under these conditions, political communication is no longer monopolized by formal institutions but is increasingly shaped by decentralized actors whose moral agency directly affects democratic quality. This shift places civil society organizations—particularly those with moral legitimacy—at the center of ethical governance in digital spaces.

The findings of this study indicate that Muhammadiyah responds to these challenges not through regulatory or coercive mechanisms, but through normative ethical discourse articulated by its leadership and institutional documents. Analysis of official texts and leaders' statements in mainstream online media reveals a consistent emphasis on ethical self-restraint rooted in *Islam Berkemajuan*. Rather than portraying social media as inherently harmful, Muhammadiyah leaders frame digital platforms as arenas of moral testing, in which Islamic ethics must be consciously enacted.

These leadership narratives represent a significant evolution in Muhammadiyah's ethical communication strategy. Public statements disseminated through news portals, sermons, webinars, and digital forums enable the delivery of ethical guidance that is contextualized, dialogical, and accessible—particularly for younger audiences deeply embedded in digital culture. Within these spaces, ethical principles are translated from abstract doctrine into practical moral reasoning, addressing everyday dilemmas such as sharing unverified information, responding to political provocation, and managing disagreement online. This finding suggests that Muhammadiyah's digital ethics are not a static set of rules, but rather adaptive moral narratives responsive to changing communicative environments.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings support the proposition that *Islam Berkemajuan* functions as a form of moral modernism compatible with digital democracy. Its emphasis on moderation (*wasatiyyah*), rational deliberation, and the common good closely aligns with democratic ethical norms such as inclusivity, accountability, and respect for pluralism.¹⁸ By embedding Islamic ethics within everyday digital political participation, Muhammadiyah contributes to a model of ethical citizenship that transcends procedural democracy and foregrounds moral responsibility as a core democratic virtue.

Crucially, Muhammadiyah's approach avoids both moral absolutism and ethical relativism. It neither instrumentalizes religion for partisan political interests nor withdraws from political engagement altogether. Instead, the organization occupies a mediating position in which religious ethics function as a compass for navigating democratic contestation without undermining social cohesion. This positioning is particularly significant within Indonesia's polarized digital landscape, where religious narratives are often mobilized in divisive and populist ways.

¹⁷ Itziar Castello et al., "Social Media Is a Threat for Democracy! A Political Perspective for Analysing and Diminishing Harm," December 22, 2025, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/joms.70053>.

¹⁸ Zakiya Darajat and Abd Chair, "Islam Berkemajuan and Islam Nusantara: The Face of Moderate Islam In Indonesia" (2nd Internasional Conference on Culture and Language in Southeast Asia (ICCLAS 2018), Atlantis Press, 2019), 60–63, doi:10.2991/icclas-18.2019.16.

Overall, this discussion demonstrates that Muhammadiyah's engagement with digital ethics is deeply rooted in its historical experience, institutional achievements, and reformist theology. Muhammadiyah's ethical discourse on social media reflects a continuity of moral commitment across offline and online domains. By leveraging its long-standing legacy in education, healthcare, women's empowerment, and humanitarian action, Muhammadiyah can articulate a credible and contextually grounded ethical framework for digital democracy. These findings reinforce the argument that faith-based civil society organizations can play a constructive role in shaping ethical digital governance, offering alternatives to both purely coercive state regulation and value-neutral technological determinism.

Indonesia's Social Media Environment and Ethical Tensions

Indonesia represents one of the highest levels of social media exposure globally, characterized by exceptionally high daily connectivity and the deep integration of digital platforms into social, religious, and political life. Recent data indicate that internet users in Indonesia spend an average of approximately three hours per day on social media and more than seven hours per day online overall, with mobile screen time exceeding six hours daily.¹⁹ By January 2025, Indonesia recorded 143 million active social media users, more than 122 million active Facebook users, approximately 103 million Instagram users, and over 108 million TikTok users, positioning the country as one of the world's largest markets for these platforms.²⁰ This level of digital saturation positions Indonesia among the most digitally connected societies, where social interactions, religious expressions, and political engagements are increasingly unfolding within platform-based ecosystems.

This digital environment generates substantial opportunities for democratic participation, religious outreach (*da'wah*), and civic mobilization. Social media platforms enable grassroots activism, broaden access to political discourse, and facilitate religious education beyond the confines of traditional institutional structures. At the same time, however, these affordances significantly intensify ethical risks.²¹ The speed, scale, and emotional intensity of digital communication heighten exposure to misinformation, hoaxes, hate speech, online harassment, and various forms of moral transgression, including the circulation of pornographic, defamatory, and provocative content. Consequently, Indonesia's digital public sphere exhibits a persistent paradox: exceptionally high levels of participation coexist with declining deliberative quality and the erosion of norms of public civility.

¹⁹ Statista, "Topic: Social Media in Indonesia," *Statista* (Statista, December 17, 2025), <https://www.statista.com/topics/8306/social-media-in-indonesia/?srsltid=AfmBOoof0jruR5WNnVD2g8CFwkRBu4s0KwHknD27r5YQBiUZEhZk6jA>.

²⁰ Simon Kemp, "Digital 2025: Indonesia" (Data Reportal, February 25, 2025), <https://indd.adobe.com/view/5355fd83-5476-4a1e-a611-80d786a600d7?allowFullscreen=true>.

²¹ Castello et al., "Social Media Is a Threat for Democracy! A Political Perspective for Analysing and Diminishing Harm."

The ongoing process of political platformization further deepens these tensions. Political communication in Indonesia is increasingly conducted through commercial digital platforms, whose algorithmic logics prioritize engagement, virality, and emotional resonance over accuracy, reflection, and rational judgment. Electoral campaigning, public opinion formation, and political identity performance are shaped by algorithmic recommendation systems that reward polarizing, sensational, and provocative narratives.²²

Empirical indicators reinforce these concerns. Indonesia has consistently ranked among the lowest countries in Southeast Asia in the Microsoft Digital Civility Index (DCI). In the 2020 survey, Indonesia recorded a digital civility score of 76, placing it near the bottom globally, with higher scores indicating lower levels of online civility. This decline was driven primarily by adult users, reflecting increased exposure to online risks such as hoaxes, fraud, hate speech, and cyberbullying. Surveys conducted during the same period further identified misinformation and online scams as the most prevalent digital risks, followed by hate speech and discriminatory expression, particularly during politically sensitive moments such as national elections and the COVID-19 pandemic.²³

Scholars attribute Indonesia's low level of digital civility to a set of interrelated structural conditions. First, the rapid expansion of internet access has not been matched by proportional growth in digital literacy, resulting in high levels of online participation but limited critical capacity to assess information quality. This imbalance leaves users particularly vulnerable to misinformation and manipulative content. Second, regulatory and governance frameworks governing digital spaces remain uneven and, at times, politicized, creating permissive conditions for the spread of disinformation and computational propaganda, especially during electoral periods. Third, a marked cultural disjunction exists between Indonesia's offline social norms—characterized by harmony, restraint, and communal ethics—and the prevalence of incivility, hostility, and aggression in online interactions. This gap indicates the absence of internalized ethical norms adapted to digital environments. Addressing these challenges requires not only strengthened regulatory governance but also sustained investments in digital education and the cultural translation of social and ethical values into online practices.²⁴

Within this fragmented and ethically volatile environment, religious authority has become increasingly decentralized and contested. Charismatic preachers, social media influencers, and anonymous accounts compete with established religious organizations for normative legitimacy in the digital public sphere. Religious discourse circulates rapidly and is often detached from institutional

²² Aisya Khairunnisa Burhanuddin, "Dampak Komunikasi Politik Melalui Media Sosial Terhadap Paradigma Masyarakat," *Publisistik: Riset Jurnalistik Dan Media Komunikasi* 2, no. 2 (October 30, 2025): 1–6, doi:10.35905/publisistikji.v2i2.15110.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Cut Afrina, Sri Rohyanti Zulaikha, and Jumila Jumila, "The Low Level of Digital Literacy in Indonesia: An Analysis of Online Media Content," *Record and Library Journal* 10, no. 2 (December 4, 2024): 374–87, doi:10.20473/rj.v10-i2.2024.374-387.

accountability, enabling both constructive moral guidance and ethical distortion.²⁵ This condition highlights the urgency of ethical actors capable of providing credible, non-partisan, and value-based guidance in digital public life.

In this context, Muhammadiyah occupies a strategic position as a moderating ethical actor within Indonesia's digital democracy. Its strong civil society capital, organizational discipline, and reformist theology enable Muhammadiyah to function as a moral counterweight to digital extremism and populist agitation. Rather than pursuing dominance or visibility through algorithmic competition, Muhammadiyah leaders consistently emphasize ethical self-restraint, information verification, and moral responsibility in digital engagement. This role becomes increasingly significant amid weak digital governance and fluid normative boundaries. By embedding ethics within everyday digital participation without moral coercion, Muhammadiyah contributes to the cultivation of civic virtue in digital political communication. Its ethical discourse illustrates how faith-based civil society organizations can help stabilize democratic communication by embedding moral responsibility in daily digital practices, while offering culturally resonant responses to the ethical tensions of Indonesia's social media environment.

Muhammadiyah's Digital Ethics Framework: Empirical Synthesis

The empirical materials of this study draw on two interrelated categories of data: (i) the institutional codification of digital ethics as articulated in Muhammadiyah's official organizational documents and ethical guidelines; and (ii) leadership narratives on digital ethics, expressed through public statements and disseminated across various digital media platforms. Together, these sources reflect Muhammadiyah's evolving ethical engagement within Indonesia's digital public sphere during the period 2017–2025, a phase marked by heightened public concern over misinformation, political polarization, and the erosion of ethical norms in digital communication—particularly during electoral cycles and moments of social crisis.

Institutional Codification of Digital Ethics

The institutional dimension of Muhammadiyah's digital ethics is primarily reflected in two authoritative organizational documents that are publicly accessible and represent distinct phases of institutional responses to the dynamics of Indonesia's digital public sphere. The first is a work by Roni Tabroni, published by the *Majelis Pustaka dan Informasi (MPI)*, *Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah*, entitled *Digital Society Confronting Hoaxes through Ethical Social Media Conduct (Masyarakat Digital*

²⁵ Muhyidin Abdilah, "Agama Dalam Cengkaman Algoritma: Polarisasi Otoritas Dan Wacana Keagamaan Di Media Sosial Indonesia," *Jurnal Cakrawala Akademika* 2, no. 4 (December 12, 2025): 168–75, doi:10.70182/jca.v2i4.1350.

Melawan Hoaks melalui Akhlak Bermedia Sosial, March 2020).²⁶ The second is the *Official Muhammadiyah Statement* entitled *Tanfidz Fikih Informasi*, issued under the authority of the *Majelis Tarjih dan Tajdid*.²⁷

Taken together, these two documents reveal a clear institutional trajectory: from an early moral-educational intervention responding to acute digital anxiety, toward a more systematic, juridical, and institutionalized ethical framework for governing digital information practices. The 2020 MPI document emerged at a critical moment characterized by the escalation of hoaxes, political polarization, and moral panic surrounding social media use in Indonesia, particularly in the aftermath of national elections and during periods of social crisis. Rooted in Muhammadiyah's reformist tradition, this text represents an initial ethical response that prioritizes moral awareness and individual responsibility. Digital media are framed as moral spaces requiring *akhlak bermedia sosial* (ethical conduct in media use), with character formation positioned as the primary antidote to hoaxes and digital hostility.

In this document, digital ethics are articulated primarily through the lens of personal moral discipline. The dominant ethical vocabulary—such as *tawhīd*, *akhlāq al-karīmah*, *tabayyun*, *amanah*, *ikhlas*, and *maṣlahah*—positions digital practices such as posting, commenting, and sharing information as morally consequential actions integrated into the Islamic moral economy of reward (*pahala*) and sin (*dosa*). The intended audience is broad, encompassing Muhammadiyah members and the wider Muslim public, and the pedagogical approach is largely persuasive and formative. Ethical violations, such as hoaxes, slander (*fitnah*), backbiting (*ghibah*), and privacy breaches, are strongly condemned; however, the overall orientation remains formative rather than regulatory, emphasizing conscience, self-restraint, and ethical awareness over formal enforcement.

By contrast, the *Tanfidz Fikih Informasi* document represents a more mature phase of institutional codification. Rather than relying primarily on moral exhortation, this document formalizes Muhammadiyah's collective *ijtihad* on information ethics through a structured *fiqh*-based framework. Digital ethics are explicitly situated within the architecture of Islamic jurisprudence, translating classical principles, *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*, and Muhammadiyah's *tarjih* methodology into normative guidance for contemporary information governance.

This document organizes ethical values into a clear normative hierarchy, beginning with *qiyam asasiyyah* (foundational values such as *tawhīd*, *akhlāq*, and *maṣlahah*), followed by *uṣūl kullīyyah* (general principles such as openness, selectivity, balance, rationality, and freedom), and culminating in *aḥkām far'īyyah* (specific rules and prohibitions, including bans on hoaxes, slander, and harmful content). Its ethical language reflects juridical precision, incorporating concepts such as proportionality,

²⁶ Roni Tabroni, *Masyarakat Digital* (Jakarta: Majelis Pustaka & Informasi Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah, 2020).

²⁷ Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah, "Berita Resmi Muhammadiyah: Tanfidz Fikih Informasi" (Yogyakarta: Berita Resmi Muhammadiyah: Tanfidz Fikih Informasi, May 2025).

transparency, verification through *sanad* and *matn* criticism, and functional classifications of information (*ta'lim*, *tanwīr*, *tarjīh*, and *tanzīm*). The intended audience extends beyond individual users to include institutions, media organizations, and civil society actors, signaling a shift from personal ethics toward digital governance ethics.

Hierarchical Emphasis of Ethical Principles in Muhammadiyah Digital Ethics

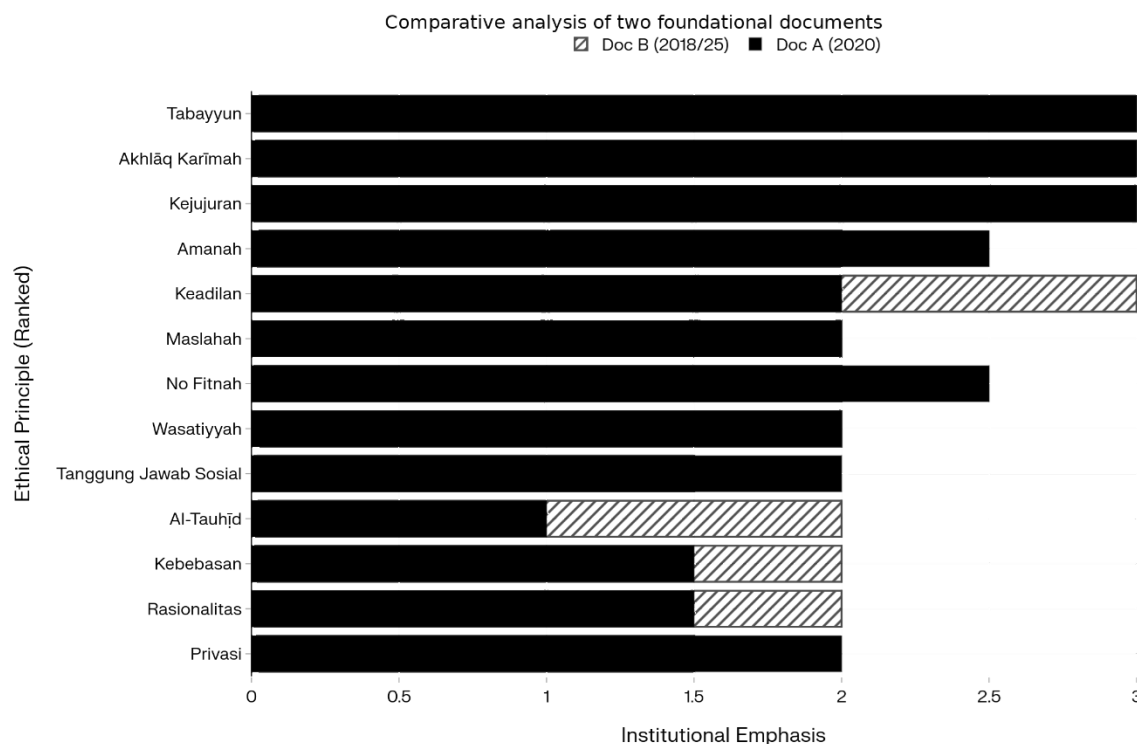


Figure 1 visualizes this comparative analysis. Horizontal bars represent levels of institutional emphasis (0–3, from low to high) derived from Document A (*Digital Society Confronting Hoaxes*, MPI 2020) and Document B (*Tanfīdz Fikih Informasi*, Tarjih 2018/2025).

Source: Doc A from *Majelis Pustaka dan Informasi (MPI)*, *Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah*, entitled *Digital Society Confronting Hoaxes through Ethical Social Media Conduct (Masyarakat Digital Melawan Hoaks melalui Akhlak Bermedia Sosial*, March 2020) & Doc B from *Official Muhammadiyah Statement* entitled *Tanfīdz Fikih Informasi* (May 2025)

Despite differences in form, style, and institutional maturity, both documents converge on a shared set of core ethical values that constitute the backbone of Muhammadiyah's digital ethics framework. Comparative analysis reveals an evolution in ethical articulation without a shift in foundational values. Both texts consistently prioritize the avoidance of hoaxes, falsehoods, slander, and

harmful content as high-level prohibitions, reflecting a shared perception of misinformation as a serious threat to social cohesion and democratic life.

Ethical principles are prioritized based on institutional emphasis—measured through frequency of appearance, structural positioning, normative force (e.g., *wājib*/*ḥarām*), and operational specificity—revealing a coherent reformist ethical architecture rooted in Islam Berkemajuan. The following five principles occupy the highest ranks and together form the shared epistemic–moral core of Muhammadiyah's digital ethics framework.

First, *tabayyun* (verification). *Tabayyun* is positioned as the first line of defense against hoaxes in both documents. The 2020 MPI text devotes an entire chapter to verification and repeatedly emphasizes it as the primary ethical discipline for digital users. The *Tanfidz Fikih Informasi* (2025) codifies *tabayyun* as a formal principle under *al-iḥtiyāt* (prudence and selectivity), explicitly grounding it in Qur'anic injunction (QS al-Ḥujurāt [49]:6) and extending classical verification into modern information practices. In both texts, *tabayyun* is treated as a non-negotiable obligation (*wājib*), operationalized through concrete steps such as source tracing, cross-checking, and confirmation with credible authorities, making it the highest-ranked ethical principle institutionally.

Second, *akhlāq al-karīmah* (noble moral character). *Akhlāq* functions as the organizing moral language across both documents. In the 2020 text, it serves as the primary lens for evaluating social media behavior, while in the 2025 document it is positioned as a foundational *qiyam al-asāsiyyah* underpinning all information principles. By integrating honesty, justice, trustworthiness, and moderation, *akhlāq* becomes the character framework within which all specific digital ethical rules are embedded, explaining its conceptual and textual priority.

Third, *ṣidq* (truthfulness). Truthfulness is consistently positioned as an absolute ethical boundary, particularly in relation to hoaxes. The 2020 document directly equates hoaxes with *dusta* (lying), while the 2025 document explicitly prohibits the production and dissemination of false information. This principle carries strong *ḥarām* normative language and is linked to both personal sin and societal harm, making it a crucial bridge between individual piety and democratic information integrity.

Fourth, *amanah* (trustworthiness and responsibility). Both documents conceptualize digital users as trustees of information rather than neutral conduits. The 2020 text links *amanah* to the Prophet's title *al-Amīn* and the obligation to share only truthful and beneficial content. The 2025 document incorporates *amanah* as a core moral value, emphasizing reliability in information handling as a structural prerequisite for a trustworthy public sphere. Positioned immediately after verification and truthfulness, *amanah* institutionalizes accountability within digital ethics.

Fifth, *ʿadālah* (justice and balance). Justice is regarded as essential to prevent digital ethics from collapsing into mere anti-hoax surveillance. The 2020 document associates *ʿadl* with balance and

fairness in information presentation, while the 2025 text elevates *information balance* as a general principle requiring the presentation of both favorable and unfavorable perspectives. Placing *'adālah* within the core tier ensures that Muhammadiyah's digital ethics demand not only accuracy and honesty, but also fair and non-partisan representation—fully aligned with Islam Berkemajuan's vision of social justice and democratic civility.

Leadership Narratives and Digital Ethical Pedagogy in Muhammadiyah

Beyond formal institutional codification, Muhammadiyah's digital ethics are dynamically articulated, interpreted, and operationalized through an integrated ecosystem of leadership narratives disseminated via mainstream online news portals, official organizational websites, sermons, webinars, and digital discussion forums. Rather than functioning as separate or merely supplementary domains, this leadership discourse constitutes a continuous ethical resonance, through which normative principles are translated into accessible moral reasoning, pedagogically transmitted, and contextualized in response to the evolving dynamics of Indonesia's digital public sphere.

An analysis of Muhammadiyah leaders' statements between 2017 and 2025 reveals a consistent construction of digital ethics as a normative synthesis of Islamic virtues and civic responsibility within an online environment marked by post-truth conditions and high polarization. Muhammadiyah leaders repeatedly emphasize *tabayyun* (verification), *ṣidq* (truthfulness), *akhlāq al-karīmah* (noble moral character), social harmony (*ukhuwah* and public civility), and moderation (*wasatiyyah*), while issuing firm warnings against hoaxes, hate speech, labeling, provocation, and excessive partisanship in digital political communication. Within this narrative framework, digital platforms are positioned not merely as technological infrastructures but as moral arenas in which ethical agency is continuously tested and enacted.

A key finding indicates that Muhammadiyah leaders frame digital ethics through a layered normative structure encompassing individual, societal, and institutional dimensions. At the individual level, digital actions—such as posting, commenting, and sharing information—are portrayed as morally accountable deeds (*amal*) with consequences extending beyond immediate social effects into the eschatological realm. Leadership narratives frequently employ religious metaphors—such as bodily testimony on the Day of Judgment or the nullification of religious rewards due to unethical online behavior—to underscore that digital speech is never morally neutral.

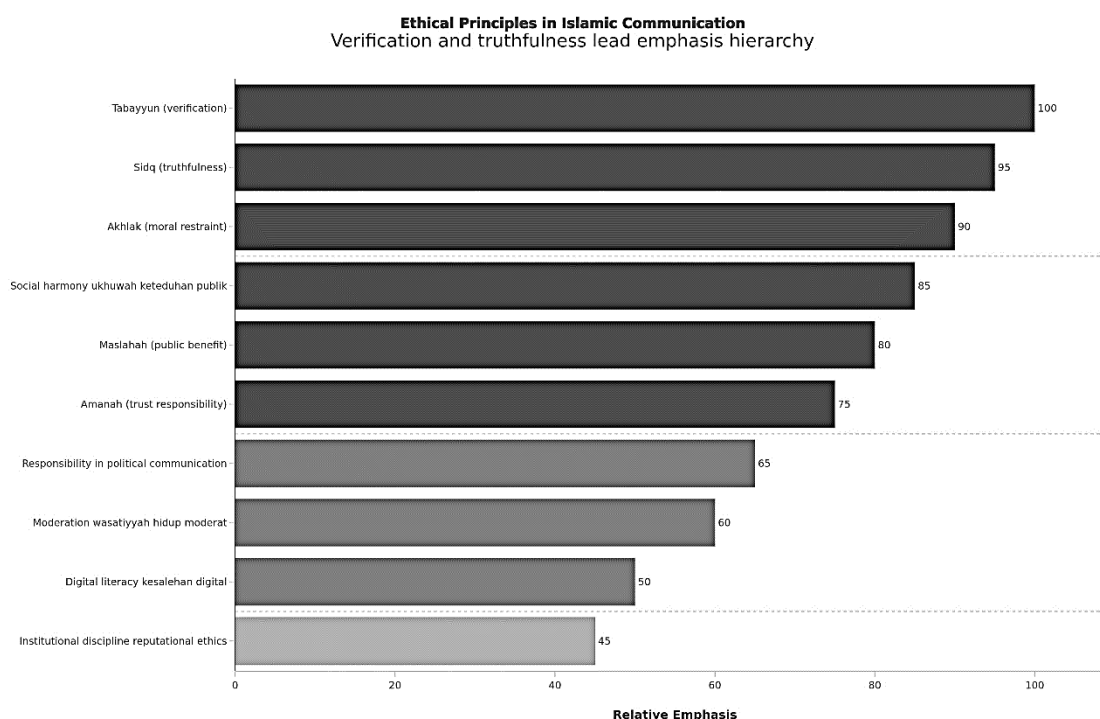


Figure 2 visualizes the ranking of ethical principles emerging from Muhammadiyah's leadership discourse between 2017 and 2025, based on thematic analysis and qualitative frequency across digital platforms. This ranking reflects relative prominence and normative centrality rather than quantitative measurement, and it highlights convergence around a stable set of core ethical imperatives.

Source: Author's synthesis based on Muhammadiyah official websites, leadership statements, and media reports (2017–2025).

At the societal level, digital conduct is positioned as an integral component of democratic social practice. Hoaxes, hate speech, sensationalism, and provocative political rhetoric are criticized not only as violations of Islamic ethics but also as threats to social trust, media credibility, and national cohesion. Within this framework, ethical self-restraint in online political communication is presented as a democratic virtue essential to sustaining pluralism and the quality of public deliberation.

At the institutional level, Muhammadiyah leaders emphasize collective ethical obligations that extend beyond individual responsibility. Media organizations, Muhammadiyah structural bodies, and cadre training programs are consistently encouraged to institutionalize ethical standards through content guidelines, visual identity discipline, reputation management, and the standardization of social media operating procedures. Consequently, ethical digital conduct is conceptualized as an amanah (trust) accountable not only to society but ultimately to God.

The ethical framing embedded in these leadership narratives derives normative legitimacy from diverse interpretive sources. Qur'anic injunctions concerning verification, slander, labeling, and social

ethics—particularly QS al-Ḥujurāt (1–13) and QS al-Nūr (11–20)—are frequently cited, alongside Prophetic traditions emphasizing self-restraint and moral accountability. These scriptural references are integrated with Muhammadiyah's discourse of *Islam Berkemajuan*, which functions as a meta-ethical framework synthesizing revelation, rational reasoning (*bayānī–burhānī–‘irfānī*), digital literacy, and national responsibility. Simultaneously, leadership narratives affirm Indonesian civic values such as unity, democracy, and respect for religious authority, further underscoring the compatibility between Islamic ethics and democratic norms.

Over time, analysis of multiple mainstream news outlets and Muhammadiyah's official digital platforms reveals strong convergence around several core ethical principles, particularly verification, truthfulness, moral character, social harmony, and non-provocative political communication. These principles recur consistently across sermons, news reports, webinars, and training modules, indicating the emergence of a shared ethical grammar across leadership levels and media formats. Supporting norms—such as branding discipline, visual guidelines, and specific social media standard operating procedures—become more pronounced in later phases, as Muhammadiyah translates ethical discourse into operational governance mechanisms for its digital presence.

Contextually, many leadership statements respond to specific crises, including electoral polarization, waves of misinformation, media controversies, and broader post-truth conditions. Nevertheless, these narratives consistently avoid endorsing particular political candidates or parties. Emphasis is placed on ethical self-restraint rather than partisan mobilization, reinforcing Muhammadiyah's non-partisan identity and its role as a moderating moral actor within digital democracy. Digital speech is persistently framed as morally consequential action, wherein labeling, sarcasm, and careless information sharing may constitute serious ethical violations with both social and spiritual repercussions.

Overall, the dominant tone of Muhammadiyah's leadership narratives is advisory and cautionary, yet dialogical. Youths, cadres, and digital citizens are encouraged to participate actively and confidently in digital *da'wah* and civic discourse, provided ethical boundaries are respected. Target audiences range from the general Muslim public to Muhammadiyah cadres, youth activists, and media practitioners, with language and emphasis tailored accordingly—from spiritual exhortation in religious lectures to technical guidance in media and branding training.

Taken together, these findings demonstrate that Muhammadiyah's leadership narratives function as a form of applied moral pedagogy, translating the organization's institutional digital ethics framework into living ethical reasoning embedded in everyday digital practices. Rather than merely reiterating doctrinal norms, this leadership discourse actively mediates between Islamic ethical tradition and the contingencies of platform-based political communication, while affirming Muhammadiyah's role as a norm entrepreneur and ethical stabilizer within Indonesia's fragmented digital public sphere.

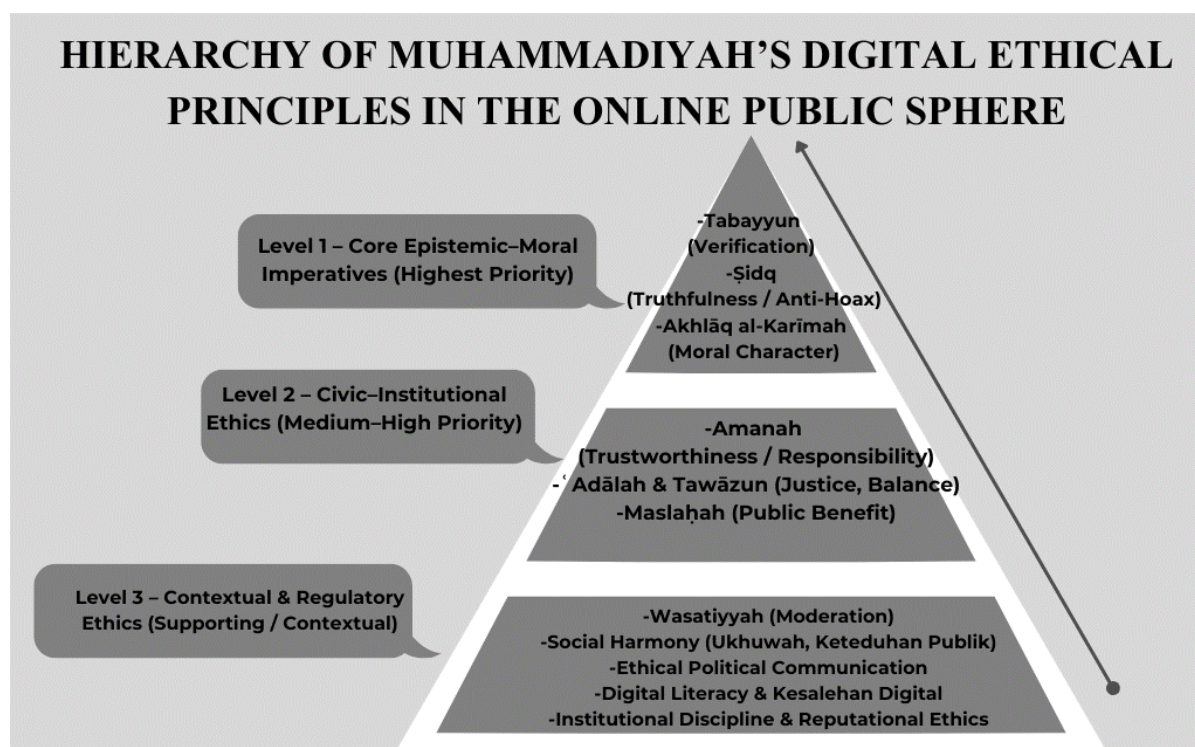


Figure 3 Hierarchy of Muhammadiyah's Digital Ethical

The hierarchical structure of Muhammadiyah's digital ethical principles demonstrates a normative convergence with the broader framework of Digital Ethics. By prioritizing *tabayyun*, *şidq*, and *akhlāq al-karīmah*, Muhammadiyah places epistemic integrity and moral self-restraint at the core of political communication in digital environments. This emphasis resonates with Digital Ethics's central concern regarding human dignity, responsibility, social well-being, and ethical governance in digitally mediated environments ²⁸.

Importantly, Muhammadiyah's framework advances Digital Ethics beyond procedural or regulatory approaches by embedding digital political ethics within religious moral agency. Digital speech is consistently framed as *amal*—a morally accountable action—rather than merely a political right or technical act. This positions Muhammadiyah as a civil society actor that contributes to democratic resilience not through partisan mobilization, but through ethical stabilization of online political discourse.

The integration of *maslahah*, *amanah*, and moderation (*wasatiyyah*) further aligns Muhammadiyah's ethics with Digital Ethics's emphasis on preventing polarization, misinformation, and democratic fatigue (Pimpinan Pusat Muhammadiyah, 2025). Rather than endorsing unrestricted

²⁸ Richmond, "Western Philosophy in the Digital Age: Navigating the Ethical Landscape," *Planksip*®, June 7, 2023, <https://www.planksip.org/western-philosophy-in-the-digital-age-navigating-the-ethical-landscape/>.

expressive freedom, Muhammadiyah articulates a model of ethically bounded digital participation, where freedom of expression is inseparable from responsibility, verification, and public benefit.

From a comparative perspective, Muhammadiyah's digital ethics offer a non-Western, faith-based articulation of Digital Ethics, demonstrating how Islamic reformist ethics can function as a normative resource for democratic governance in digitally saturated societies. This contribution is particularly significant for Global South democracies, where institutional regulation of digital platforms remains weak and ethical guidance increasingly relies on civil society and moral authority.

The findings suggest that Digital Ethics in plural societies cannot rely solely on state regulation or platform governance. Faith-based civil society organizations such as Muhammadiyah play a crucial role as norm brokers, translating moral traditions into actionable ethical guidance for digital citizens. This underscores the need to incorporate religious ethical frameworks into comparative Digital Ethics scholarship.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined how Muhammadiyah articulates, prioritizes, and institutionalizes Islamic ethical values in response to the challenges of digital democracy in Indonesia. Drawing on qualitative analysis of authoritative organizational documents and leadership narratives from 2017 to 2025, the article demonstrates that Muhammadiyah has developed a coherent and evolving framework of digital ethics rooted in *Islam Berkemajuan*. Rather than approaching digital politics through regulatory, coercive, or partisan lenses, Muhammadiyah advances a normative ethical response that foregrounds moral agency, epistemic responsibility, and civic restraint in platform-mediated public life.

The findings reveal a clear hierarchy of digital ethical principles within Muhammadiyah's discourse. *Tabayyun* (verification) emerges as the highest-ranked imperative, positioned as a non-negotiable religious obligation and the primary defense against misinformation, hoaxes, and epistemic degradation in digital democracy. Closely following are *akhlāq al-karīmah* (noble moral character) and *ṣidq* (truthfulness), which together constitute the moral core of Muhammadiyah's digital ethics by linking personal piety with public responsibility. Supporting principles—such as *amanah* (trustworthiness), *ʿadālah* (justice and balance), *maṣlaḥah* (public benefit), moderation (*wasatiyyah*), social harmony, and ethical political communication—function as civic and institutional bridges that translate individual virtues into norms of democratic coexistence.

Importantly, the study shows that Muhammadiyah's digital ethics are not static doctrinal prescriptions, but adaptive moral narratives articulated through leadership pedagogy. Through sermons, news statements, webinars, and institutional guidelines, ethical principles are translated into practical reasoning for everyday digital dilemmas, including political provocation, algorithmic amplification, and polarized online debate. This dual structure—formal institutional codification and dynamic leadership

discourse—enables Muhammadiyah to function as a norm entrepreneur that stabilizes ethical expectations in an otherwise fragmented and weakly governed digital public sphere.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the growing field of Digital Ethics by offering a non-Western, faith-based framework grounded in Islamic reformist thought. Muhammadiyah's approach extends Digital Ethics beyond procedural regulation and platform governance by embedding ethical responsibility within moral agency and virtue ethics. The findings demonstrate that religious ethical traditions—when articulated through reformist and civic-oriented frameworks such as *Islam Berkemajuan*—can complement democratic norms of accountability, pluralism, and deliberation rather than undermine them. This challenges secular-centric assumptions in digital democracy scholarship and underscores the importance of incorporating faith-based civil society actors into comparative ethical governance studies, particularly in the Global South.

Practically, the study offers actionable insights for civic education, digital literacy programs, and organizational governance. Muhammadiyah's ethical hierarchy provides value-based indicators that can inform cadre training, media guidelines, and digital citizenship education—not only within Muhammadiyah, but also among other religious and civil society organizations confronting similar ethical challenges. By emphasizing verification, restraint, and public benefit, this framework offers an alternative to reactive censorship and purely technical solutions, promoting ethical self-regulation as a sustainable strategy for improving the quality of online political participation.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study has several limitations that open avenues for further inquiry. First, it focuses on normative discourse and institutional articulation rather than measuring actual digital behavior among Muhammadiyah members or followers. Future research could complement this approach with empirical studies on how these ethical principles are received, negotiated, or contested at the grassroots level across different demographic groups and digital platforms. Second, the analysis centers on Muhammadiyah as a single organizational case. Comparative studies involving other Islamic organizations, religious movements, or faith-based civil society actors—both within and beyond Indonesia—would enrich understanding of how diverse moral traditions engage with digital political ethics. Third, while this research addresses the ethical dimensions of digital communication, it does not directly examine platform governance, algorithmic design, or state regulation. Integrating these structural dimensions with normative ethical analysis would provide a more holistic account of digital democratic governance.

Contribution to Wider Scholarship

Overall, this article contributes to broader scholarly debates on digital democracy, political ethics, and religion in public life by demonstrating how a large Islamic civil society organization translates moral tradition into operational ethical guidance for the digital age. Muhammadiyah's experience illustrates that ethical governance in digital democracy cannot rely solely on state regulation or platform accountability, especially in contexts marked by high connectivity and weak institutional control. Faith-based organizations with strong moral legitimacy and organizational capacity can play a constructive role as ethical stabilizers, embedding responsibility, verification, and restraint into everyday digital practices.

By integrating Islamic ethics, democratic norms, and empirical analysis of digital discourse, this study advances a model of ethically grounded digital citizenship that is both contextually rooted and theoretically relevant. It invites further engagement with religious ethics as a vital resource for addressing the normative crises of contemporary digital democracy, not only in Indonesia but across diverse plural societies navigating the tensions of platform-mediated political life.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The Author(s) declare no potential conflict of interest

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