Inclusive Islamic Representation on the Surabaya Youth Mosque Instagram Social Media Account

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the representation of inclusive Islam on the Instagram account of @masjidpemuda.ind in Surabaya, focusing on how visual content, text, and online interaction reflect the values of tolerance, social solidarity, concern for others, and religious education. The practice of digital da'wa has changed significantly thanks to the development of social media, which allows religious messages to be conveyed quickly, broadly, and interactively to diverse audiences. As a religious institution, mosques today use online *platforms*, especially Instagram, to spread religious values in an innovative and inclusive way while creating a good image in society. The approach used is qualitative with a *content analysis* method on posts in the form of photos, videos, captions, and follower interaction through comments, *likes*, and audience responses. The results show that these accounts consistently display inclusive Islam through various forms of content, such as videos showing the Youth Mosque providing accommodation facilities for anyone, including travelers, and providing free food for everyone regardless of class, background, or religion. In addition, educational and social content emphasizes openness, social concern, and collaboration between people, so that the message of

da'wa is more relevant and accepted by modern society. These findings confirm that social media is not only a means of disseminating information, but also a strategic instrument to build an inclusive perception of Islam, strengthen social relationships, and support adaptive and humanist da'wa practices. The practice of digital da'wa through the @masjidpemuda.ind Instagram account is a real example of how inclusive Islamic values can be represented effectively and have a positive impact on the public.

Keywords: Inclusive Islam, Social Media, Digital Da'wa, Representation, Instagram.

INTRODUCTION

The development of social media has changed the way religious institutions convey da'wa messages and build relationships with the public. This transformation is strongly felt in the realm of digital da'wa, where religious values are produced, represented, and negotiated through visual mediums and online interactions. The practice of digital-based religious communication is emerging with new challenges amid moderate Islamic discourse and the demands of social openness. One of them is how mosques as socio-religious institutions present Islam that is inclusive, humanist, and relevant to an increasingly diverse society. In this context, research on inclusive Islamic representation on mosque social media accounts is crucial to understand the dynamics of contemporary da'wa, especially how the content presented is able to encourage digital empathy and change people's mindset towards religious issues (Denilza & Muzakir, 2025).

The case that appeared on the @masjidpemuda.ind Instagram account in Surabaya shows an interesting and problematic religious communication practice to be researched. The account consistently produces content that portrays mosques as a social space open to everyone, including providing accommodation facilities for travelers and a rest room for anyone regardless of background, as well as distributing free meals given to people across faiths and groups. This kind of representation proposes a picture of inclusive Islam that is different from the narrative of religious exclusivism that is still often found on social media. So, this study focuses on how the @masjidpemuda.ind account utilizes digital platforms to communicate inclusive Islamic messages, thereby forming a positive perception among its followers and the wider community (Virga et al., 2025).

Previous research has more discussed digital da'wa in general, such as mosque communication strategies in the digital era (Johari Muis, 2025), the use of Instagram for

religious branding(Fuhaid, n.d.; Hani' et al., 2025), or the representation of moderate Islam in online da'wa content(Shafa Tasya Kamilah et al., 2023). However, studies of inclusive Islamic representations practiced by mosques through cross-identity open social service activities and visually displayed on social media, are still very limited. This *Research gap* What this article wants to bridge is how mosques as non-personal institutions practice and represent Islamic inclusivity through digitally documented social actions, not just through lectures or normative messages.

This article positions itself as a development of the study of digital religious representation, emphasizing the visual aspects, social practices, and dynamics of audience interaction. Thus, its main contribution lies in understanding how mosques build an inclusive image of Islam through documentation of social actions that are real and verifiable, not just through discursive narratives. This has become even more relevant considering that Instagram has proven to be effective in disseminating religious information in an interesting and modern way, even in the context of inclusive education for various audience groups (Dhuha & Astutik, 2025).

The inclusive representation of Islam constructed on the @masjidpemuda.ind Instagram account through visual content, captions, and follower interaction is interesting to study. Argumentatively, this article departs from the assumption that religious representation on social media is not only a reflection of certain values, but also a communication strategy that shapes public perception of religious identity. At this level, inclusivity is not only a moral message, but a social practice that is shown through visual experiences and digital participation. Mosques as public institutions have great potential to articulate a more open and inclusive Islamic narrative, especially when their activities are documented and circulated on interactive social media. Furthermore, mosque social media accounts have a crucial role in disseminating da'wa content, shaping Islamic representations, and even countering radical narratives (Fahmi et al., 2023)

This research uses three conceptual umbrellas, first, representation theory (Hall, 2020) who view the media as an arena for the production of meaning through symbolic construction. Second, the concept of inclusive Islam that emphasizes openness, equality, and respect for diversity in socio-religious practices (Mallo, 2025) Third, the theory of digital da'wa that highlights the transformation of religious communication in a participatory social media

ecosystem (Hasibuan & Jaya, 2025). These three concepts are used to explain how visual content, text narratives, and audience responses shape inclusive Islamic representations in the digital space. The integration of these concepts allows for an in-depth analysis of the dynamics of religious discourse contestation on social media, where inclusive narratives interact with various religious interpretations and public responses (Afifah et al., 2025).

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a type of qualitative research to understand how inclusive Islamic representation is constructed through social media content. The selection of the @masjidpemuda.ind Instagram account was carried out purposively because this mosque has prominent social practice characteristics by providing accommodation facilities for travelers, opening free meal services for anyone regardless of religion or background, and documenting these activities consistently in the form of photos, videos, and digital narratives. This characteristic makes the account relevant as an object of research on inclusive and humanist religious representation.

This research approach uses content *analysis*, which allows researchers to systematically parse the meaning, message, and construction of representations in text and visuals. Primary data was obtained from the uploads of the @masjidpemuda.ind Instagram account, including photos, videos, captions, and comments from netizens that appeared on related uploads. The content observed included social activities such as free meal services, traveler stay programs, educational activities, and cross-group interactions. Audience comments are used as indicators of public acceptance, perceptions of inclusive values, and spontaneous emotional responses in digital spaces.

Secondary data came from books, journal articles, and previous research on media representation (Hall, 1997), digital da'wa (Campbell, 2013), as well as literature on inclusive Islam in Indonesia (Azra, 2006; Hasan, 2019). These secondary sources are used to build theoretical foundations and compare field findings with previous research trends. Data collection was carried out through digital documentation and archiving of all relevant uploads during the research period.

Data analysis was carried out using thematic coding techniques (*Thematic Coding*), which includes the process of data reduction, thematic categorization, interpretation, and meaning extraction. This technique is in line with the qualitative content analysis approach developed

by (Schreier, 2012). The unit of analysis includes visual, text, and user interaction elements. Stuart Hall's representational analysis framework is used to identify the construction of meaning in content, while the concept of digital da'wa is used to interpret how religious messages work in the social media ecosystem. Through this analysis strategy, the research was able to map the patterns of inclusive Islamic representation that appear consistently and explain how audiences play a role in shaping meaning through digital interactions.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Empirical Evidence of Inclusive Representation

The representation of inclusive Islam on the @masjidpemuda.ind Instagram account can also be understood as a form of social and communicative practice that connects religious values with everyday humanitarian actions. This phenomenon reflects how mosques as religious institutions adapt to the digital media landscape to convey messages of religious moderation to a wide audience, especially generation Z (Choirin et al., 2024). Inclusivity in this context is not articulated primarily through theological discourse, but through concrete services that respond to social needs, such as providing free meals and accommodation for travelers. This finding indicates that Islamic values are communicated through practice-based representation, where actions function as the main vehicle for meaning-making. As a result, the mosque's Instagram account does not merely display religious messages, but documents lived experiences of Islam as a social ethic.

Based on data obtained from uploads of photos, videos, and comments from netizens, there is a consistent pattern that shows that the Surabaya Youth Mosque does not present itself as an exclusive religious institution, but as a religious space that is open to anyone without questioning social background, religion, or personal identity. This pattern is relevant to theoretical assumptions in the study of representations (Hall, 2020), which emphasizes that social meaning is formed through the processes of production, circulation, and consumption of signs. In this context, Instagram uploads serve as an arena for the production of meaning where inclusive Islamic values are embodied in real, visually documented practices. Analysis of visual and textual content shows that this mosque consistently communicates Islamic values that are in line with the idea of inclusivity, in contrast to the representations of other religious ideologies such as radical or transnational Islam that are also found on social media platforms. These efforts are crucial to mitigate potential conflicts and build a cohesive social environment,

where individuals can coexist peacefully without sacrificing their respective religious identities (Oktarini & Ayu, 2025).

Key findings are highlighted by content regarding free meals, accommodation facilities for travellers or anyone in need, as well as Pasar Bahagia's community programme. In one of the uploads, for example, a video of food distribution can be seen with the caption: "At the Youth Mosque, free food does not have to be only for the underprivileged, the important thing is to be hungry. Everyone can eat." The use of the diction "everything is edible" affirms the altruistic construction of universal value.
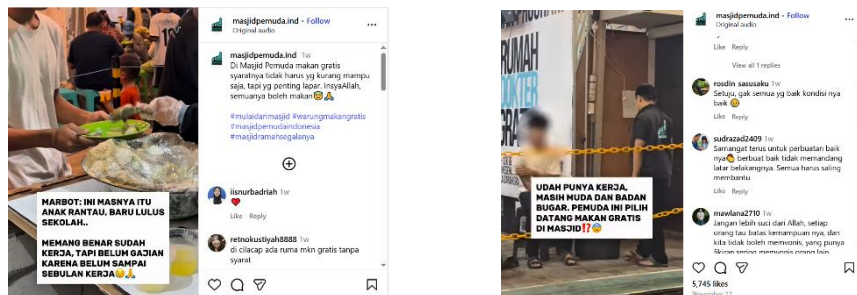
Figures 1 and 2 . Free dining facilities

Note: Screenshot of a reel upload from the @masjidpemuda.ind Instagram account which shows mattresses and pillows as rest facilities. Retrieved November 24, 2025. Source: Instagram, https://www.instagram.com/masjidpemuda.ind/

Other content features accommodation facilities with visuals of mattresses, pillows, and lounges, accompanied by an explanation narrative that the service can be used by anyone who needs a place to stay. The Happy Market program shows a wider range of social interactions. From the photo and video documentation, it can be seen that the participants of the activity consisted of various age and social groups. Some of the public interactions in the comments show appreciative responses, for example: "Masya Allah, may it be an example for other mosques." or practical questions such as "What are the requirements for staying overnight?" which suggests that inclusive representation triggers real public engagement. This data shows that the public sees content not only as a symbolic narrative, but also as practical information.
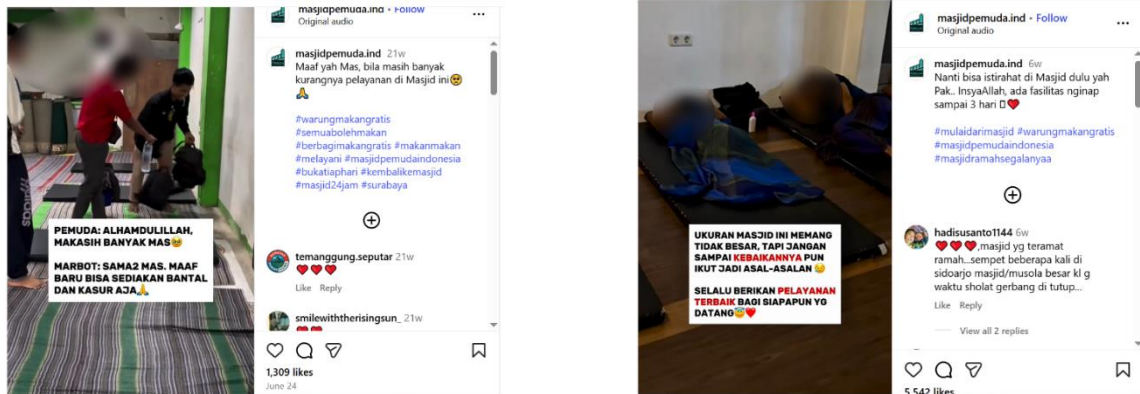
Figures 3 and 4 . Rest facilities for travelers at the Surabaya Youth Mosque.

Note: Screenshot of a reel upload from the @masjidpemuda.ind Instagram account which shows mattresses and pillows as rest

facilities. Retrieved November 24, 2025. Source: Instagram, https://www.instagram.com/masjidpemuda.ind/

Visual Patterns and Inclusive Framing

The visual dimension further strengthens this construction of meaning. The use of close-up images, informal settings, and the absence of rigid institutional symbols contributes to a representation of the mosque as a friendly and accessible space. Such visual choices reduce social distance between the institution and the audience, positioning the mosque as part of everyday urban life. This visual strategy aligns with the logic of social media platforms, particularly Instagram, which prioritizes emotional resonance and immediacy over formal communication. Consequently, inclusive Islamic values are conveyed in a manner that is easily understood and emotionally relatable to a diverse audience.

Audience interaction also plays a significant role in reinforcing inclusive representation. Comments expressing appreciation, curiosity, or willingness to participate indicate that audiences do not only consume content passively, but actively engage with it. This interaction creates a dialogical space where meanings are negotiated and affirmed collectively. Digital legitimacy is built through repeated interaction, suggesting that public engagement contributes to the symbolic authority of religious institutions in online spaces. In this case, the audience's responses help legitimize the mosque's inclusive identity and extend its reach beyond its immediate community.

Another important finding is the minimal use of explicit doctrinal language in communicating inclusivity. Rather than relying on theological arguments, the @masjidpemuda.ind account emphasizes universal human experiences such as hunger, rest,

and care. This approach allows inclusive Islamic values to resonate across religious and social boundaries without negating Islamic identity. By foregrounding shared human needs, the mosque constructs a moral narrative that is both religiously grounded and socially inclusive. This strategy is particularly effective in plural social contexts, where humanitarian actions tend to generate broader acceptance than normative religious claims.

Within the broader context of digital da'wa in Indonesia, this case offers an alternative communicative model. Many studies on digital da'wa focus on preaching content, religious authority, or identity affirmation. In contrast, the Surabaya Youth Mosque emphasizes social action as the core of its digital communication. This suggests that inclusivity can function not only as a moral value but also as a strategic form of religious communication that enhances public trust and institutional credibility. By consistently displaying socially beneficial practices, the mosque positions itself as a relevant and responsive actor in contemporary society.

The findings also have broader implications for understanding religious moderation in digital spaces. Although the content does not explicitly address ideological debates or counter radical narratives directly, the consistent portrayal of inclusive practices implicitly challenges exclusive interpretations of Islam. Through everyday social actions, the mosque contributes to a broader discourse of moderation by demonstrating that Islamic values can coexist with openness and diversity. This indicates that grassroots religious institutions have the potential to influence public perceptions of Islam through sustained, practice-oriented digital representation.

Visually, @masjidpemuda.ind accounts avoid the style of formal documentation that is spaced. Social activities are displayed with close shooting angles, highlighting the beneficiaries' expressions, relaxed atmosphere, and warm interpersonal interactions. This is in line with the findings (Campbell, 2013) that human-centered practices of digital religion can strengthen the emotional closeness between religious institutions and digital audiences.

Captions reinforce the visual narrative through diction choices that emphasize the human aspect rather than ritual. For example, phrases like "what's important is hunger," "for anyone," or "open to the public" reflect a framing of humanity different from exclusive framing that typically emphasizes membership requirements, group identity, or religious boundaries. This framing strategy is in line with the theory (Entman, 1993) that framing is effective when

it highlights problems, diagnoses, and offers solutions in the form of messages that are easy for the public to understand.

There are a few key findings: first, inclusivity is presented as an action, not a slogan. This is important because many religious institutions simply declare openness without indicating concrete practices. The Youth Mosque features actions that can be visually and narratively verified. Second, inclusive practices are represented as routines, not as symbolic events. The content of free meals, traveler lodging, and assistance with broken motorcycle services appears repeatedly. This pattern strengthens the image of the mosque as a lively and responsive socio-religious space to the needs of the residents. Third, audiences reinforce representation through interaction. Appreciative comments and practical questions form a kind of discursive space where the public helps to affirm the image of the mosque. According to (Couldry, 2012), digital legitimacy emerges through repetitive interactions; This means that public engagement plays a role in building the symbolic status of the institution.

The findings on the Youth Mosque show a new pattern in the representation of Islam on Indonesian social media, namely representations based on concrete social work that are inclusive and cross-identity. Previous studies have often highlighted normative, ritualistic, or exclusive representations of Islam in the context of identity politics. Studies of mosques in digital media generally focus on the production of da'wa content or religious authority, not their inclusive social function.

Thus, this article fills a research gap related to how mosques at the community level produce and nurture inclusive representations of Islam through documented social practices in the digital space. So far, studies on digital religiosity have more often highlighted the role of large religious institutions, public figures, or organized da'wa campaigns. The daily context of the local Muslim community, especially mosques run independently by young people, is still rarely the focus of in-depth study. By raising the case of the Surabaya Youth Mosque, this study adds a grassroots perspective on how religious values are practiced and negotiated through visual content, public participation, and interaction built on social media.

Overall, the analysis shows that inclusive Islamic representation on the @masjidpemuda.ind Instagram account operates at the intersection of social practice, visual communication, and audience participation. Inclusivity is constructed not as an abstract concept, but as a lived reality that is documented, circulated, and affirmed in digital space. This

reinforces the argument that digital da'wa should be understood as a dynamic process of meaning production, where religious values are continuously embodied and negotiated through everyday social practices mediated by technology.

CONCLUSION

This study found that the representation of inclusive Islam on the @masjidpemuda.ind Instagram account does not only appear as an image strategy or moral campaign, but is actually rooted in concrete social practices that take place regularly. The most surprising finding that was only identified after the research was carried out was that this form of mosque inclusivity was not built through normative religious rhetoric, but rather through simple actions that were very pragmatic, free meals for anyone who was hungry, a place to stay for foreigners or travelers without identity verification, as well as open social activities that did not display symbolic boundaries between religions. Inclusive representation is not the result of media design, but the result of spontaneous documentation that is then reinforced by public response. Based on the epistemic side, this research makes an important contribution to the study of digital da'wa and religious representation. These findings confirm some of the ideas in the literature about digital religion, particularly regarding the role of social media in expanding the space for humanist and experience-based da'wa. However, this study also challenges the tendency of previous studies that consider that Islamic representation on social media tends to strengthen group identity, exclusivity, or politicization of religious symbols. In the case of the Youth Mosque, representation moves in the opposite direction: inclusive values are reinforced not by formal authority or theological discourse, but by small social works recorded and disseminated digitally. It is at this point that this research offers a new perspective that grassroots mosques can be producers of influential alternative religious discourses through visually distributed social practices.

The methodological contribution of this research lies in the use of visual-text interaction analysis, namely reading the relationship between images, captions, and comments of netizens in a unit of representational narrative. This approach can be an additional method for digital communication studies based on visual platforms such as Instagram or TikTok. However, this study has a number of limitations. The data sample is still limited to a certain time span and to one Instagram account only, so the variation in representation cannot be

compared with other mosques that have different social or geographical characteristics. In addition, because the research relies on published content, undocumented or unuploaded practices cannot be analyzed. Audience interaction is only analyzed through comments, so it does not capture the public reception that is passive or lurking. Further research needs to expand the scope by comparing several mosques that implement different digital da'wa models, involving interviews with account managers and worshippers, and incorporating quantitative analysis of interactions to capture richer reception dynamics. This kind of research will go a long way in clarifying the extent to which inclusive representation in the digital space can influence religious practices, social relations, and the construction of Islamic imagery in the broader society.

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