

## Muslim Women in the Digital Age: Between Representation and Reality in the Islamic Digital Media Landscape

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**ABSTRACT:** Women in Islam have an important position and clear rights since the beginning of this religion, but in practice these values are often distorted by patriarchal culture. In the digital era, Muslim women are not only consumers but also content creators in Islamic media, although their representation is still often limited to narrow and normative images. Digital media offers a new space for women to express themselves and play an active role in da'wah, but also faces pressure from social norms and algorithms that prioritize popular content. Therefore, it is important to view Islamic digital media critically as a space influenced by various interests, so that the roles and representations of Muslim women can be more diverse and authentic. The method in this study is: qualitative. The results of this study are that Muslim women in Islamic digital media are now increasingly diverse in the way they appear and play their roles. They are not only objects in content, but also actively shape and spread Islamic values in a more modern and authentic way. Although still facing challenges such as stereotypes and social pressure, women have succeeded in balancing traditional roles with new opportunities in the digital world, including in the fields of da'wah, education, and economy. Digital media is also an important space for women to voice their rights and fight discrimination, so they can build inclusive communities and fight for better social change.

**KEYWORDS:** Muslim Women; Representation; Reality; Digital Media

### I. INTRODUCTION

Women in Islam occupy a very honorable position and have a vital role in the spiritual, social, and cultural life of Muslims (Anggraeni, 2019). Since the beginning of the revelation, Islam has been present with major reforms to the position of women who previously experienced structural injustice (Ulya, 2020). Through the Qur'an and the example of the Prophet Muhammad SAW, women are given the right to seek knowledge, own property, and participate in public life (Kholqiana et al., 2020). Figures such as Khadijah, Aisyah, and Umm Salamah are proof that women are not just accessories, but the main drivers in the early history of Islam. These values should be the foundation for viewing Muslim women today, including in the very dynamic digital era.

Although Islam provides ample space for women, in its social and historical practices, these values are often distorted due to deep-rooted patriarchal cultural interpretations. Many Muslim communities still limit women's freedom of movement in the name of religion, when in fact what is happening is a gender-biased reading of Islam. This has an impact on women's positions in various fields, including access to media and information. In the digital age like today, it is important to review how Islamic values about women are implemented and whether Muslim women really get fair space in Islamic digital media (Mufida & Mustolehudin, 2020).

The digital era has brought about major changes in the way humans communicate, share information, and shape identities. Digital media is not only a means of entertainment, but also a medium for preaching and spreading Islamic values. In this context, Muslim women are an important part of this ecosystem. They are not only consumers, but also producers of Islamic content (Julianti et al., 2022). However, the representation of Muslim women in Islamic digital media does not always reflect the complex realities they face. There are still many narratives that frame women in a narrow perspective, such as attachment to domestic roles, emphasis on sharia appearance alone, or glorification of obedience without critical space.

One of the main challenges is how Islamic digital media constructs the ideal image of Muslim women. In much content, women are presented in a very homogeneous form: wearing a perfect hijab, gentle, and subject to certain norms popularized through narrow religious interpretations. This representation is not absolutely wrong, but it becomes problematic when it is considered the only ideal form of Muslim women (Kholqiana et al., 2020). The reality on the ground shows great diversity in the way Muslim women live their religious lives. Some are active in the public sphere, academics, social activists, and even

## Muslim Women in the Digital Age: Between Representation and Reality in the Islamic Digital Media Landscape

community leaders. If digital media does not accommodate this diversity, then what happens is the erasure of the identity and real role of Muslim women in society.

Social media such as Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok have become the main stage for the expression of Islam for the younger generation, including Muslim women. Many of them have become da'wah influencers, sharing content that contains Islamic values with a contemporary approach (Irfan, 2017). This phenomenon shows that women have the ability to manage their identity and religious messages independently. However, behind the rise of women's digital da'wah, there is algorithmic pressure that pushes certain content to be superior to others. Content that is aesthetic, normative, and in accordance with market tastes tends to be more popular, while reflective or critical content towards patriarchal structures in religion often sinks.

On the one hand, the presence of women in the digital Islamic space provides hope for the realization of an inclusive da'wah space. However, on the other hand, it has the potential to simplify the complex reality of Muslim women (Julianti et al., 2022). They are often framed in narratives that focus on compliance with certain visual standards, such as the length of the hijab, the way they speak, or the way they sit. This representation rarely touches on the intellectual dimension, activism, or social struggles of women in living out Islamic values contextually.

The issue of representation becomes more complex when Muslim women become the target of a double gaze. On the one hand, they must meet the expectations of being an ideal Muslim woman in the eyes of the Muslim public, and on the other hand, they must also be able to compete in the logic of digital media that prioritizes performativity, aesthetics, and popularity (Mufida & Mustolehudin, 2020). This pressure creates ambivalence in the Islamic narratives they construct. Not a few Muslim women are forced to adjust their content to suit digital market standards, even though they have to sacrifice the complexity of their thoughts or experiences.

This reality shows that Islamic digital media is not free from power structures. The representation of women in it is shaped by various interests, ranging from religious ideology, commercialization, to identity politics. This requires us to read digital media not only as a neutral technology, but as an ideological field that shapes society's perspective on Muslim women. Therefore, a critical approach is needed that not only observes the content, but also the structure of production, distribution, and consumption of digital Islamic content.

In addition to the issue of representation, Muslim women also face major challenges in content production. Not all women have equal access to technology, media training, or distribution networks. This inequality makes the narrative of women's Islam tend to be dominated by those in the upper middle class, who have sufficient facilities and connections to appear in the digital space. The voices of Muslim women from marginalized groups such as laborers, rural women, or survivors of sexual violence are often not heard in the digital Islamic discourse.

Moreover, Muslim women who choose to speak critically about religious or gender issues often face backlash, whether in the form of hate speech, being labeled as heretics, or being excluded from online communities (Tandian, 2021). These attacks come not only from men, but also from fellow women who have internalized a religious patriarchal system. This reflects how strong the social pressure is on women who want to negotiate their Islamic identity more freely and contextually.

Islamic digital media is often not a completely safe space for Muslim women. When they appear in public with a message of da'wah, identity, or even personal expression, they face the risk of judgment, social censorship, and even online harassment. The absence of a strong protection system on digital platforms often makes women victims of gender-based violence online, which in turn limits their participation in the digital Islamic public discourse.

Meanwhile, in the dominant discourse, Muslim women are often reduced to symbols of morality or representations of Islamic identity itself. Women's bodies become symbolic fields in the contestation of the meaning of Islam. As a result, women must always appear "correct" according to socio-religious standards, even though these standards often change and are not uniform. Representations like this not only burden women, but also narrow the horizon of our understanding of the diversity of ways to be a Muslim woman in the modern era.

In the context of digital da'wah, Muslim women play a role that cannot be underestimated. They are present as speakers, writers, content creators, and even online community leaders who bring Islamic values in a more familiar and contextual language to the younger generation (Muttaqin, 2022). However, this role is often limited by social expectations of the "ideal" woman. When Muslim women raise structural issues such as gender inequality, domestic violence, or criticism of patriarchal culture, their content is often met with resistance and even criticism from some audiences who think that the role of women in Islam should not be "that far".

This kind of dynamic creates a contradiction in the Islamic digital narrative. On the one hand, women are given space to speak and express themselves. But on the other hand, this space is monitored by social norms that do not always support women's freedom of expression. Control over women in digital media often comes in the form of comments, reporting, or symbolic silencing that demands they return to traditional roles. In fact, modern Muslim women live in a complex reality that demands a more contextual approach to Islamic teachings.

In reality, there are quite a few Muslim women who dare to use digital media to break down these boundaries. They voice their concerns about various social issues such as child marriage, polygamy, sexual violence, and educational disparities from a more

## Muslim Women in the Digital Age: Between Representation and Reality in the Islamic Digital Media Landscape

progressive Islamic perspective. Through media such as podcasts, educational videos, and blog posts, they invite people to think critically and return to the spirit of Islam which is rahmatan lil 'alamin. Despite the great challenges ahead, their courage marks a new chapter in preaching that is more inclusive and has a gender justice perspective.

The phenomenon of Muslim women actively preaching digitally indicates a transformation in their roles from being mere objects of preaching to becoming subjects of preaching. This is an important development, considering that for centuries public Islamic discourse has been largely monopolized by male voices. The involvement of women in the production of digital Islamic narratives opens up the possibility of a more just, humanistic, and contextual reading of religious texts (Muttaqin, 2022). However, this can only happen if the available digital space truly supports freedom of thought and diversity of voices, not just displaying a variety of women's faces within a narrow frame.

In research on media and gender, representation has a direct impact on identity formation. What is seen and often shown will influence society's perception of the appropriate role for women (Rochman & Budiantoro, 2022)<sup>v</sup>. If Islamic digital media only presents women in a symbolic or moralistic capacity, then society will continue to internalize that Muslim women should only play a role in certain areas. As a result, the great potential that Muslim women have in the fields of science, leadership, and social transformation will never develop optimally.

In addition, we must also question who controls the Islamic narrative in digital media. Do women really have autonomy in determining how they want to be represented? Or are their narratives still curated, edited, and even determined by masculine power structures? In many cases, digital Islamic media platforms are managed by institutions or figures who structurally still hold conservative values, thus providing very limited space for ideas that are contrary to the dominant interpretation.

This condition shows that the presence of Muslim women in Islamic digital media is still very problematic. Although the quantity of their presence has increased, the quality of representation and partisanship towards women's issues is still minimal. This is ironic amidst the spirit of Islam which highly upholds justice, equality, and respect for human dignity. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct a critical evaluation of how Islamic digital media produces, represents, and disseminates content concerning the lives of Muslim women.

It is also important to examine how female audiences respond to these representations. Do they feel represented in the narratives presented? Or do they feel marginalized because they do not correspond to their real lives? The answers to these questions can help us understand how big the gap is between representation and reality, between the ideal image promoted and the daily lives of Muslim women across social strata.

Furthermore, this study is relevant because it touches on aspects of identity, power, and social change that are very crucial in the digital era. Muslim women are not only part of a passive audience, but important actors in the dynamics of Islamic discourse that continues to develop (Simbolon & Simbolon, 2021). By understanding how they are represented in Islamic digital media, we can open up a more honest and fair dialogue space regarding the future of Islamic preaching that is more humane and gender-just.

Islamic digital content is also inseparable from the influence of digital capitalism that makes preaching a commodity. Islamic branding becomes something that sells, and women are often used as the face of sharia products that are thrown into the market. Their Islamic identity is packaged in the form of attractive visuals, easy-to-digest slogans, and a lifestyle that seems ideal (Suryaningsih & Sanjaya, 2024). In fact, spirituality is something that is very personal and cannot always be commercialized. When religion is commodified, what happens is not preaching, but marketing.

In this climate, Muslim women must face pressure to always appear religious visually—dressing in accordance with Islamic law, wearing the hijab in a certain way, speaking in a style that is considered Islamic, and even choosing certain clothing colors. This kind of representation can be a burden, especially for women who do not fit these ideal standards (Wahyudi & Kurniasih, 2021). Rather than being an inclusive space, digital media can actually be a tool of exclusion against the diversity of women's Islamic expressions.

But not all hope is lost. Many Muslim women have successfully used digital media as a tool to build critical awareness, form learning communities, and strengthen women's solidarity. They use media not only to appear, but also to voice life experiences that are often not represented in mainstream media. The narratives they raise are not always grandiose; they often start from everyday issues, such as being a single mother, the challenges of working while remaining religious, or anxiety about social pressures.

Such initiatives show that Islamic digital media does not only contain one-way lectures or uniform Islamic aesthetics. It can also be a space for dialogue, a space for learning, and a space for resistance to the inequalities that still occur in Muslim society (Veranita, 2023). As long as there is critical awareness and the courage to continue building alternative discourses, Muslim women can still be important actors in social transformation through digital media.

Therefore, research on the role and representation of Muslim women in Islamic digital media is very important to do. It is not only about who appears, but also how and for what purpose. By understanding how digital media frames women, we can assess how far this media contributes to liberation or perpetuates old stereotypes in a new package.

## II. RESEARCH METHODS

The research method used in this study is a qualitative method with a library research approach. This approach was chosen because the focus of the research lies in the analysis of discourse, representation, and social construction reflected in Islamic digital media, especially in terms of how Muslim women are presented and positioned. Library research allows researchers to explore various theoretical perspectives, critical analysis, and relevant secondary data to understand the phenomenon in depth without collecting field data directly.

Through this method, it is expected that the research can produce a comprehensive and reflective understanding of the role of Muslim women in the Islamic digital media landscape. Literature studies are not only useful for collecting theoretical data, but also provide a sharp analytical framework in dissecting the power relations and ideology behind digital content. Thus, this research seeks to present a scientific contribution that can enrich the discourse on gender, media, and Islam in the digital era.

## III. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

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### A. Representation of Muslim Women in Islamic Digital Media Content

The representation of Muslim women in Islamic digital media content is a complex arena full of tug-of-war between religious interpretations, cultural constructions, and digital market logic. In this space, Muslim women are often presented not as multidimensional figures, but as symbols of piety, morality, or even Islamic identity itself (Kholqiana et al., 2020). This kind of representation, although seemingly positive on the surface, contains a significant reduction to women's real experiences in practicing their religion.

One of the hallmarks of Islamic digital content is the emphasis on visuality. Muslim women are often depicted in a distinctive aesthetic: long dresses, wide hijabs, and faces with minimal expression. These symbols serve as a kind of “visual code” that is widely accepted as a sign of piety. However, focusing too much on this aspect can overlook the intellectual, spiritual, and social dimensions of Muslim women’s identity. Women are reduced to bodies that must appear Islamic, rather than thinking individuals who actively contribute to religious discourse.

Content such as digital sermons, influencer preaching, or Islamic podcasts show similar tendencies. Muslim women are often presented in narratives that depict conventional roles: obedient wives, patient housewives, or women who diligently worship. While there is nothing wrong with these narratives, the problem arises when only such narratives are given space. A single representation creates social pressure on women who do not or do not yet fit the “template.”

Islamic digital media also forms an ideal image of Muslim women that is static and universal. In fact, reality shows that Muslim women come from very diverse backgrounds, understandings, and experiences. Muslim women in rural areas, migrant workers, activists, students, or even women who have survived violence have different spiritual paths (Wardani, 2018). When digital media ignores this diversity, it indirectly narrows the way people understand who Muslim women are and how they practice their Islam.

The presence of Muslim women in digital da'wah content is often only symbolic. They appear to recite verses, give testimonies, or strengthen men's narratives in sermons. In this position, women have not fully become the subject of discourse, but rather complements that beautify the presentation of da'wah. This reproduces patriarchal power relations in a new form, where women are given space to appear but are not completely free to determine the content of the narrative delivered.

The phenomenon of sharia celebrities or social media ustazahs has become a striking new phenomenon. Many of them have millions of followers and great influence in shaping the way people view Muslim women. However, their existence is often packaged in branding logic: hijab as a fashion statement, soft speaking style, and religious messages that are packaged lightly and entertainingly. This approach is indeed algorithmically effective, but leaves a theological and analytical void. Critical questions and contextual readings of Islam are rarely found.

In addition, many Islamic contents raise the theme of “ideal women according to Islam” with a normative and single narrative. Women are constructed as figures who should not talk too much in public spaces, must always maintain their modesty, and be the managers of household affairs. Meanwhile, Islamic values that provide space for women's leadership, social participation, and the courage to voice justice are rarely raised in the dominant narrative of Islamic digital media.



## Muslim Women in the Digital Age: Between Representation and Reality in the Islamic Digital Media Landscape

Islamic content produced by men also plays a role in shaping how women are viewed. In many online sermons, women are often used as objects of advice, moral advice, and even warnings about slander. This kind of representation indirectly positions women as potential disturbances, not as the main actors in the journey of Islam for the people (Suhadi & Muslim, 2021). When women are continuously placed in passive and problematic positions, the Islamic narrative becomes lopsided and does not reflect the social reality of Muslims.

Furthermore, some Islamic media content openly rejects the idea of gender equality in the name of the purity of Islam. In such content, feminism and the women's movement are labeled as Western movements that are contrary to Islamic values. This kind of narrative not only simplifies gender discourse, but also closes off the possibility for Muslim women to negotiate their identities critically and independently. In fact, many Muslim women use Islamic values as the basis for their struggle for social and gender justice.

Islamic digital media also shows a gap in representation between Muslim women from different social classes. Islamic influencers from the upper middle class tend to appear more dominant, with an “instagrammable” lifestyle, higher education background, and access to the latest technology (Werthi & Perwira, 2024). Meanwhile, women from the working class, rural areas, or minority communities barely get any space. This representation not only creates new, exclusive standards but also reinforces the social hierarchy in the digital Islamic realm.

In such conditions, Muslim women who do not conform to the dominant image tend to feel marginalized. Those who choose the path of critical preaching, which raises issues of poverty, domestic violence, or social inequality, often do not get equal exposure. Narratives that are not “beautiful,” unpopular, or too political are considered unmarketable. In fact, from an Islamic perspective, justice and siding with the oppressed are the main principles that should be upheld in every form of preaching.

Islamic digital media often positions Muslim women as guardians of community morality. In this position, they are considered responsible for maintaining the honor of the family and religion through their dress, behavior, and domestic roles. This emphasis reinforces the stereotype that women are “social watchdogs” who must be role models in religion. However, this model of representation often closes off the possibility for women to actualize other roles such as intellectuals, activists, or leaders in the public sphere.

In addition, the use of technology in Islamic digital media brings new challenges related to the representation of women. Social media platform algorithms tend to highlight viral and easily accepted content, so that critical and complex content about women is often marginalized. This reinforces the homogenization of narratives and makes the representation of women increasingly uniform and clichéd. In the end, the narratives that emerge are those that are easily consumed and in accordance with market expectations, not those that truly depict the diversity of Muslim women's experiences.

There is also a phenomenon where Muslim women in digital media become icons for certain segments, for example young hijabers who are identical with a modern but still Islamic lifestyle. This representation is often packaged in the form of a lifestyle, which combines religious values with fashion and lifestyle trends. Although this phenomenon opens up a wider space for expression, it often also raises criticism that it reduces Islam to a shallow and purely appearance-oriented consumer product.

The influence of popular culture and digital capitalism is also very evident in the representation of Muslim women. Content that features women with an emphasis on visuals and aesthetics tends to get more attention and engagement. As a result, content based on spiritual values and religious substance is less popular and gets less space (Muttaqin, 2022). Women who appear more focused on physical appearance and a sharia lifestyle often get wider recognition, which creates social pressure to conform to this model of representation.

The gender inequality that occurs in Islamic digital media also reflects broader inequalities in society. Although women are very active as users and content creators, they often face challenges in the form of negative comments, harassment, or even weakening of authority. Content that is critical of patriarchal norms can be socially censored, either through reporting by other users or biased platform moderation. This shows that women's representation cannot be separated from the socio-political context that regulates it.

In some cases, Muslim women who dare to raise controversial issues such as criticism of polygamy, inheritance rights, or domestic violence, face great pressure from their digital communities. They are often considered to be “against tradition” or “disrespectful of religion.” In fact, their struggle is part of an effort to uphold justice and restore the spirit of Islam as rahmatan lil ‘alamin. Narratives like this open up important discussion spaces regarding how Islamic digital media can be a means to fight for social change.

Meanwhile, digital media also allows Muslim women to collaborate and build solid communities. In online communities such as Facebook groups, YouTube channels, or discussion forums, women can exchange experiences, share knowledge, and support each other (Simbolon & Simbolon, 2021). This community is a safe space for women to express themselves freely and enrich inclusive religious understanding. The representation built in this community tends to be more diverse and accommodates various points of view.

Muslim women in digital media also use the platform to deconstruct stereotypes that have been attached to them. They highlight less than ideal life stories, such as struggles with mental illness, social pressures, and identity conflicts. These narratives

## Muslim Women in the Digital Age: Between Representation and Reality in the Islamic Digital Media Landscape

provide a more human and real picture of the lives of Muslim women, thereby breaking down stigma and inviting the public to be more empathetic and open.

Equally important, the representation of Muslim women in Islamic digital media must also be viewed from an intersectional perspective. Factors such as social class, ethnicity, and geography influence how women are positioned and appear in digital spaces. Digital media tends to be dominated by urban and middle-class groups, while women from minority or lower-class groups often have their voices unheard (Dwityas et al., 2024). This creates a representation gap that needs to be considered in efforts to create an inclusive digital space.

As a form of criticism, some circles consider Islamic digital media to be too trapped in conventional forms of preaching and less innovative in representing women. They consider that the existing content still repeats old narratives without touching on contemporary problems experienced by Muslim women. As a result, Islamic digital media has not become a dynamic and responsive space for transformation to current social and cultural changes.

In some positive examples, there are digital Muslim women figures who try to present new and critical narratives. They use easy-to-understand language, raise social issues, and invite the audience to think critically about the dominant religious interpretations. These efforts show that digital media can be a tool for liberation from stereotypes and the dominance of patriarchal narratives, as long as there is enough courage and space to create and discuss.

However, it is not uncommon for digital Muslim women to face a dilemma between religious demands and social pressures. They must balance between maintaining a religious image accepted by the community and the desire to express themselves authentically and critically. This pressure makes the representation of Muslim women in digital media very vulnerable to polarization and internal conflict, which can hinder the potential for inclusive and humanist da'wah.

The emergence of new platforms such as TikTok has also opened up new ways of representing Muslim women. The short and dynamic video format allows women to experiment with lighter yet meaningful delivery styles and content (Werthi & Perwira, 2024). However, this format also carries the risk of message simplification and identity commodification that must be watched out for so that women's representation does not become just shallow entertainment content.

Muslim digital women also have to face challenges of censorship and restrictions from authorities or conservative communities. Content that is considered controversial or violates social norms is often blocked or removed. This limits freedom of expression and strengthens control over the Islamic narrative that is allowed to develop in the digital space. As a result, women who want to voice different perspectives often have to struggle in a very narrow and risky space.

Representations of Muslim women are also heavily influenced by global narratives about Islam and women. Islamic digital media often attempts to address negative stereotypes from outside by presenting images of women as obedient and modest. However, this effort can backfire and become a trap that locks women into an unrealistic image of the "ideal Muslim woman." Instead, more honest and complex representations are needed to build a healthier understanding of Islam and women.

In the context of digital da'wah, Muslim women must be able to become agents of change who do not only reproduce old values, but also build critical and progressive narratives. The representations presented must reflect the diversity of women's experiences and aspirations, and raise relevant social issues such as education, health, and women's rights. Thus, digital media can function as an effective empowerment space.

It is also important to understand that representation in Islamic digital media does not stand alone, but is interconnected with representation in conventional media and other public spaces. Muslim women who appear on television, radio, or print media also contribute to shaping the image of Muslim women in general. Therefore, the analysis of representation must take into account the interaction between various media spaces in order to get a complete picture.

When Muslim women in digital media are given the opportunity to become key speakers and writers, this opens up opportunities for the emergence of more inclusive and contextual interpretations of Islam (Veranita, 2023). However, for this to happen, there needs to be institutional and social support that encourages women to continue to develop their capacities and expand their networks. Without such support, it will be difficult for Muslim women to escape their marginalized positions in digital Islamic discourse.

In many cases, Muslim women who are active in digital media build narratives that combine spirituality and socio-politics. They do not only talk about rituals and morals, but also raise issues such as poverty, justice, and social change. This kind of narrative shows that Muslim women are able to fill the digital space with content that is not only religious, but also relevant to the issues of the times.

On the other hand, the biggest challenge in the representation of Muslim women in digital media is the polarization and conflict between groups with different views. Differences in interpretation of religion, ideology, and preaching style can cause fragmentation of the digital community. This polarization has the potential to close off space for dialogue and reinforce negative stereotypes against women with different views.

Islamic digital media is also a battleground for values between conservatism and progressivism. The representation of women is an important indicator of this dynamic. Are women positioned as objects of surveillance and control or as subjects who have

## **Muslim Women in the Digital Age: Between Representation and Reality in the Islamic Digital Media Landscape**

their own voices and choices? This question is crucial to assessing the extent to which digital media is able to drive progress and renewal in Muslim society.

Awareness of the importance of fair and diverse representation is growing among digital Muslim women. They are beginning to demand greater space to present themselves authentically, raise relevant issues, and reject limiting stereotypes (Abidin, 2017). This movement opens up new hope for the advancement of women's representation in more democratic Islamic media.

Representation of Muslim women in Islamic digital media also has the potential to change public perception of women and Islam in general. If the representation that emerges is inclusive, critical, and insightful, then the wider community will more easily accept the role of women in social, political, and religious life. Conversely, narrow and normative representation will only strengthen stigma and discrimination.

The challenge for the future is how to expand the digital space for Muslim women from various backgrounds to be able to appear and have a voice. Inclusive digital media must be able to reach women from various regions, social classes, and education levels. Thus, the representation of Muslim women in digital media will be richer, more complex, and able to reflect the actual social reality.

### ***B. The Reality of the Role of Muslim Women in the Digital Era***

The reality of the role of Muslim women in the digital era is very dynamic and full of challenges and opportunities. Women are now not only objects in religious narratives, but also subjects who actively use digital media to voice their identities, views, and struggles. However, women's involvement in the digital realm is still influenced by social, cultural, and religious factors that shape the boundaries of how they can appear and play a role.

In the digital world, Muslim women face double pressures: the demand to appear in accordance with Islamic norms that are often conservative, as well as the expectation to keep up with technological developments and modern lifestyles (Veranita, 2023). This role requires them to balance between maintaining a religious image and adapting to a digital culture that is often secular and full of freedom of expression. The tension between these two worlds becomes a dialectical space that determines how Muslim women can actualize themselves.

Some Muslim women act as content creators of Islamic preaching, online teachers, and religious influencers who use technology to spread religious messages. They are pioneers in changing the face of Islamic preaching which has been dominated by men. However, their success is not without challenges, including having to face criticism and discrimination from groups who still view women's involvement in the public sphere as something controversial.

On the other hand, the reality of the role of Muslim women is also reflected in the domestic role that remains attached, even though technology opens up new opportunities. Many women use digital media to support their traditional roles, such as sharing Islamic parenting tips, halal food recipes, or household advice that is considered in accordance with Islamic values (Akhyadi & Mulyono, 2018). This role shows how women use digital media as an extension of their family and community responsibilities.

Limited access to technology is also a factor that limits the role of Muslim women in the digital era. Not all women have the same opportunity to access digital devices or fast internet, especially in rural areas and low-income groups. This creates a digital divide that leads to inequality in playing a role and participating in Islamic digital content and communities.

In addition, social media, which is the main platform for Muslim women to carry out their activities, often becomes a fierce battleground for opinion. They have to face various forms of attacks, such as negative comments, online harassment, and social pressure that can make them withdraw or reduce their activities (Sobari & Khamilawati, 2021). This reality shows that freedom to play a role in the digital world does not always mean being free from obstacles and risks.

Muslim women must also navigate the role of digital educators in their families. They are often the primary link between traditional values and the demands of modernity for their children and family members. In this context, women's role is not only as users of technology, but also as agents of socialization of Islamic values and culture that adapt to the times.

The reality of the role of Muslim women is also inseparable from their role as digital economic actors. Many women use social media to do business, from Islamic fashion products to spiritual consultation services. This activity shows that digital media opens up new space for women's economic empowerment, although it also demands that they are able to balance business activities with religious and social demands.

In addition to economic and preaching spaces, Muslim women in the digital era have also begun to take part in socio-political activities. They are active in campaigns for equality, women's rights, and humanitarian issues through digital platforms (Suryaningsih & Sanjaya, 2024). This participation shows that women are increasingly aware of the potential of digital media as a tool for social change, not just as a place to present themselves or preach.

However, this reality remains within a framework full of limitations. Many women have to face internal and external conflicts related to religious and social restrictions. They have to consider how the content or opinions they convey will be received by the community or family, so that there is often self-restraint in expressing themselves so as not to cause controversy.

Meanwhile, digital media provides a new space for Muslim women to form a more flexible and diverse identity. They can show various sides of themselves that were previously difficult to access in conventional public spaces, such as becoming activists,

## Muslim Women in the Digital Age: Between Representation and Reality in the Islamic Digital Media Landscape

academics, or even artists with Islamic values. This digital role enriches the narrative about Muslim women who have often been belittled.

The reality of women's roles also shows a shift in values from local to global. In the digital space, Muslim women interact not only with local communities but also with global networks that offer new perspectives and open up dialogue between Islamic cultures (Saharani et al., 2023). This enriches insight and broadens the horizon of women's roles in the Islamic world.

However, this global interaction also brings new challenges, such as the emergence of pressure to follow global standards that sometimes conflict with local or traditional values. Muslim women in digital media must be able to sort and reformulate their identities to remain authentic and relevant in different cultural contexts.

In addition, the reality of the role of Muslim women in the digital era is also related to the learning and education process. Many women use digital media to access religious knowledge, skills training, and religious discussions. This opens up wider access to education, especially for those who previously had difficulty accessing formal religious education spaces.

On the other hand, Muslim women in the digital era also face the reality of pressure from conservative communities that restrict their roles. Strict monitoring of the content they create and share often limits women's freedom to create and express ideas. In some cases, this social pressure leads to self-limitation or even termination of their digital activities.

Muslim women who are active in digital media also often have to deal with negative stereotypes from the wider community and internal communities. They are considered too modern, less devout, or even deviant from religious teachings because of their involvement in the open digital world. This reality shows that the stigma against active women remains a barrier to realizing their roles fully.

Furthermore, the role of Muslim women in the digital era reflects how media can be a tool for social engineering. The narratives they construct and spread contribute to shaping society's perception of the role of women in general and specifically in Islam (Sobari & Khamilawati, 2021). Therefore, women who utilize digital media must have a critical awareness of the impact of the representations and messages they spread.

Muslim women also play an important role as guardians and preservers of Islamic traditions in the digital realm. Through the content they create, they help keep religious values alive and relevant amidst modernity. However, they also have to face the challenge of how to adapt these values so as not to get trapped in rigidity and dogmatism.

One important reality is how Muslim women fill the digital space with content that addresses everyday issues that are often overlooked, such as mental health, the experience of being a minority, and gender-based violence. In doing so, they expand the definition of the role of Muslim women, which is not only about rituals, but also about empowerment and humanity.

This reality shows that digital media is a space where Muslim women can renegotiate the meaning and boundaries of their roles. However, this process is not easy and requires community support and policies that accommodate the diversity of these roles.

In this context, there is also a form of digital solidarity among Muslim women that strengthens their position in society. This solidarity helps overcome social isolation and provides moral and intellectual support to face the various pressures of carrying out roles in the digital era.

Digital technology also expands the reach of Muslim women's roles, allowing them to interact with wider audiences and across national borders. This opens up opportunities for collaboration and exchange of ideas that enrich their perspectives and methods of da'wah or social activities.

However, the reality of Muslim women's roles in the digital age remains tinged with uncertainty. Rapid changes in technology and social media require women to constantly adapt and learn in order to remain relevant and effective in their roles.

In many cases, Muslim women also have to navigate the dilemma of public exposure that can impact their privacy and personal security. They need to balance openness with self-protection so that their digital activities do not pose social or psychological risks.

The reality of Muslim women's roles in the digital age is an evolving journey. Despite its challenges, digital media provides a new and potentially powerful space for women to actualize themselves, fight for their rights, and build inclusive and progressive communities.

### ***C. Islamic Digital Media as a Space of Power and Resistance***

Islamic digital media is currently a field of struggle as well as a strategic space of power for Muslim women. On the one hand, this media functions as a forum for strengthening religious narratives that are often regulated by dominant groups (Peyman et al., 2018). On the other hand, digital media also opens up space for women to resist patriarchal narratives that have limited their roles and voices in religious communities. This duality reflects the complexity of digital space as a new social and political arena full of dynamics.

Digital media control allows certain groups to control how women's religion and identity are perceived (Galhotra & Puniya, 2020). Therefore, digital Islamic media is not only a channel for preaching, but also a tool for legitimizing power that shapes the



## Muslim Women in the Digital Age: Between Representation and Reality in the Islamic Digital Media Landscape

boundaries of social and religious norms. Muslim women who want to express themselves critically often face challenges in countering dominant narratives that tend to be conservative and patriarchal.

However, there are many Muslim women who use digital media as a space of resistance to dismantle gender stereotypes and discrimination. They use digital platforms to raise issues of marginalization, equality, and women's rights from an Islamic perspective. Through creative and communicative content, they have succeeded in breaking through traditional boundaries and expanding the discourse on the role of women in Muslim society.

Islamic digital media also serves as an arena where women can build solid and supportive alternative communities. These communities serve as safe spaces to share experiences, strengthen solidarity, and organize resistance to oppressive practices. Thus, digital media serves as a means of social empowerment that strengthens women's position in the public and religious spheres.

In the context of power, it is important to look at how algorithms and digital platform policies affect the representation of Muslim women. Algorithms that prioritize certain content can reinforce dominant narratives while excluding alternative, critical voices. Women who try to use digital media as a tool of resistance must be able to manage strategies so that their content remains accessible and accepted by a wide audience.

Women's resistance in digital media can also be seen from how they deconstruct religious norms that have been considered rigid and patriarchal (Weathers et al., 2019). They present a more inclusive and progressive interpretation, which fights for gender equality without abandoning religious values. This approach triggers more open discussions and challenges the dominance of traditional interpretations.

However, the space for resistance in Islamic digital media is not always free from conflict and repression. Many women face digital attacks, whether in the form of sharp criticism, verbal abuse, or intimidation that threatens their safety. This reality shows that power is also present in the form of social control that can limit freedom of expression in cyberspace.

Muslim women who are active in digital media often have to fight against stigma and negative labels thrown by conservative groups. Accusations of deviance or not in accordance with teachings are often directed at those who voice change and resistance. Therefore, digital media becomes a symbolic battleground that demands courage and determination.

Islamic digital media is also a space where women can reformulate the concept of women's leadership in Islam. Through the content they produce, women are not only objects of preaching, but become subjects who are able to lead and inspire communities. This is a form of resistance that shifts the old paradigm and opens up new space for women's participation in religious and social structures.

Resistance in digital media is not only limited to religious narratives, but also touches on broader social and political issues. Muslim women use digital media to advocate for civil rights, education, and equality in various fields. This cross-issue approach enriches the discourse of progressive Islam and shows the potential of digital media as a space for social transformation.

In addition, Islamic digital media provides an opportunity for Muslim women to raise voices that have been marginalized, such as women survivors of violence, women with disabilities, and minority groups. Their representation and advocacy through digital media expands the scope of inclusivity and social justice in the digital Islamic community.

The use of digital media also allows women to resist through art and culture (Ye, 2020). Through Islamic-themed videos, music, literature, and visuals, women can express social criticism and build strong and moving alternative narratives. This digital art is an effective medium for spreading messages of resistance in a more subtle but impactful way.

Resistance in Islamic digital media also requires a strong digital literacy strategy. Women must be able to understand the working mechanisms of platforms, deal with hoaxes, and manage their online reputations so that their struggles are not easily discredited. This literacy is an important foundation for digital media to truly become a space of power that benefits women.

In many cases, collaboration between Muslim women from different regions and backgrounds in digital media has resulted in a stronger and broader network of resistance. This network strengthens solidarity and increases the influence of women's movements in the religious and socio-political spheres. Thus, digital media functions as a tool for consolidating collective power.

Islamic digital media also showcases the resistance of a younger generation of Muslim women who are more progressive and critical. This generation uses innovative language and formats to convey their messages, thus reaching a wider and more diverse audience. Their resistance marks a shift in the religious paradigm to be more inclusive and dynamic.

In the realm of power, it is important to examine how the economic structure of digital media affects the representation of women. Women who have access to financial and technological resources tend to be better able to control digital narratives. This suggests that resistance is also closely related to economic access and opportunities available in the digital world.

In addition, Islamic digital media is an open space for debate that allows for the emergence of a plurality of voices. Muslim women can express various perspectives and interpretations, which is a form of resistance to the homogeneity of religious narratives. This plurality enriches the treasury of Islamic thought and opens up opportunities for constructive dialogue.

Digital media also plays a role in recording and disseminating the often forgotten history of Muslim women's resistance. Through digital archives, stories of women's struggles in various eras can be widely accessed, providing inspiration and understanding for the current generation. This is a very important form of cultural resistance.

## Muslim Women in the Digital Age: Between Representation and Reality in the Islamic Digital Media Landscape

The role of digital media in Muslim women's resistance is also reflected in efforts to change discriminatory social and legal policies (Kholqiana et al., 2020). Digital activism that campaigns for regulatory changes related to women's rights shows that digital media is not only a symbolic space, but also a concrete political arena.

However, resistance in digital media is not free from the risk of fragmentation and polarization. Different views in digital communities can trigger divisions that weaken collective strength. Therefore, effective resistance must be accompanied by efforts to build dialogue and understanding between diverse groups.

Muslim women in digital media also continue to try to balance tradition and modernity in their resistance (Kholqiana et al., 2020). They try to blend religious values with the challenges of the times without sacrificing the essence of faith. This shows maturity and flexibility in using digital media as a tool of struggle.

Islamic digital media as a space of power and resistance eventually become a mirror of the struggle of Muslim women in upholding their rights and dignity. Women are not just passive subjects, but as agents of change capable of moving social and religious transformation significantly.

## CONCLUSIONS

The representation of Muslim women in Islamic digital media content shows a growing diversity. Although still facing many stereotypes and conservative narratives, women have succeeded in utilizing digital media to build a more complex and authentic image. This representation is not only as an object, but also as an active subject that contributes to the spread of Islamic and cultural values through various digital platforms.

The reality of the role of Muslim women in the digital era shows the dynamics between the demands of tradition and the opportunities of modernity. Women now play a role not only in the domestic sphere, but also in the fields of preaching, education, economy, and socio-politics that utilize digital technology. Despite facing various challenges, such as limited access and social pressure, women continue to strive to balance religious identity and self-expression in cyberspace.

Islamic digital media as a space of power and resistance becomes an important arena for Muslim women to articulate their voices and fight for their rights. This media is not only a tool to maintain dominant narratives, but also a field of resistance against discrimination and patriarchy. With creativity and solidarity, women use digital media to build inclusive communities, advocate for social change, and expand more progressive religious discourse.

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