

Re-engineering the Neo-Modernist Hermeneutics for the Post-Truth Digital Sphere

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Abstract: The intellectual legacy of Islamic Neo-Modernism, grounded in the hermeneutics of Fazlur Rahman and operationalized by Nurcholish Madjid and Abdurrahman Wahid, successfully transitioned Indonesia from authoritarianism to democracy by reconciling Islamic authenticity with pluralism. However, the efficacy of this "analog" framework in the digital era remains critically underexamined. This study investigates the structural compatibility between Neo-Modernist epistemology—characterized by "high-context" reasoning and historical regression—and the "low-context" architecture of contemporary social media platforms. It specifically interrogates why the proliferation of moderate (*Wasatiyyah*) content has failed to counteract the rise of digital radicalism. Adopting a "Techno-Hermeneutic" framework that synthesizes Rahman's "Double Movement" theory with Media Ecology, this research employs a Critical Conceptual Synthesis design to scrutinize high-impact empirical data from 2018–2024. The analysis reveals a "Hermeneutic Short-Circuit": digital platforms structurally amputate the "First Movement" (historical regression) required by Neo-Modernist thought, rendering it incompatible with the "infinite scroll." Furthermore, findings indicate that algorithmic metrics actively penalize Madjid's "psychological skepticism," transforming Civility into performative identity conflict. At the same time, the "globally legible" aesthetics of the algorithm displace Wahid's Indigenization, creating a vacuum of rooted authority. The study concludes that the digital medium inherently erodes Neo-Modernist authority by favoring "burstiness" over "psychological skepticism." Consequently, simply increasing the volume of moderate content is futile. The survival of Civil Islam requires a radical re-engineering of hermeneutic methods toward "Indigenous Data Sovereignty" and algorithmic transparency, shifting the battleground from content production to infrastructure governance.

Keywords: *Islamic Neo-Modernism; Digital Hermeneutics; Algorithmic Radicalization; Double Movement; Pribumisasi*

INTRODUCTION

The intellectual intervention of Islamic Neo-Modernism fundamentally restructured the trajectory of Indonesian Islam in the late twentieth century. This philosophical movement successfully reconciled the imperatives of the nation-state, democracy, and pluralism with the authenticity of Islamic tradition. Grounded in the rigorous hermeneutics of Fazlur Rahman and socially operationalized by Indonesian intellectuals such as Nurcholish Madjid (Cak Nur) and Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur), this movement dismantled the rigid binaries of classical modernism and defensive traditionalism (Barton et al., 2021). By articulating concepts such as *Pribumisasi Islam* (Indigenization of Islam) and *Islam Madani* (Civil Islam), these figures engineered a "substantive" rather than "formalist" Islamic polity, effectively insulating Indonesia's democratization process from the theological rigidity that fractured other Muslim-majority societies (Wisdom, 2022). The historical success of this movement in the analog era is well-documented, positioning it as the bedrock of Indonesia's civil society and religious tolerance (Ubaedillah, 2023).

However, a critical epistemological fissure has emerged in the transition from this analog success to the digital present. While the existing corpus of literature extensively analyzes the theological and political efficacy of Neo-Modernist frameworks in face-to-face social cohesion and state policy (Fuadi et al., 2024; Ridwan et al., 2022), there is a profound analytical silence regarding their viability within the algorithmic architecture of the digital sphere. Current scholarship continues to treat the legacies of Rahman, Madjid, and Wahid as static historical artifacts or methodological tools for institutional reform, neglecting to interrogate whether their "high-context" hermeneutics are structurally compatible with the "low-context," speed-driven epistemology of digital platforms. This constitutes a significant knowledge gap: the literature assumes that the digitalization of Neo-Modernist content—transforming *Wasatiyyah* (moderation) into social media narratives—is merely a technical challenge of dissemination, rather than an existential crisis of epistemology. Furthermore, this assumption ignores a critical sociological reality. Classical Neo-Modernism historically functioned as an elite discourse relying on the textual literacy of the urban middle class. The algorithmic colonization of religious authority today disproportionately targets and affects lower-class and rural demographics who possess lower digital literacy, making the algorithmic barrier even more destructive to the movement's survival.

This manuscript addresses this critical lacuna by arguing that Islamic Neo-Modernism, in its current analog configuration, is epistemologically ill-equipped to survive the "Digital Epistemic Void." The sophisticated *Ijtihād* (independent reasoning) demanded by Rahman's "Double Movement" and the nuanced *Keadaban* (civility) championed by Madjid rely on temporality, historical regression, and deep contextualization—elements that are systematically stripped by the engagement algorithms of platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter). Consequently, the prevailing academic focus on the quantity of moderate content online (Hamdi, 2021; Rusydiyah, 2020). Obscures the deeper structural reality: the digital medium itself actively dismantles the hermeneutic machinery necessary for Neo-Modernist thought to function. Without a radical "Digital Hermeneutic" re-engineering, the movement risks devolution into a hollow aesthetic of moderation that mimics inclusivity while lacking the intellectual rigor to withstand the binary logic of algorithmic polarization.

The dominance of the analog paradigm in current scholarship is evident in the treatment of Fazlur Rahman's hermeneutics. Dominant research trends focus heavily on the theological and legalistic applications of Rahman's "Double Movement" theory, particularly in the reform

of Islamic family law and educational pedagogy (Arman, 2024; Hamim, 2021). These studies reaffirm the utility of Rahman's method—regressing from the specific ruling to the *ratio legis* of the Quranic context, and then projecting general principles forward to the present—as a tool for statutory and institutional evolution. However, this literature operates on the premise of a deliberative public sphere where time and context are available resources. There is a marked absence of literature applying Rahman's distinction between "Normative Islam" and "Historical Islam" to the decontextualized dissemination of religious snippets on social media. In the digital ecosystem, the "First Movement" (historical regression) is amputated by the imperative of brevity, leaving only a truncated "Second Movement" that often manifests as decontextualized legalism (A. Akbar & Saeed, 2018). The current scholarly silence on this "hermeneutic short-circuit" suggests a failure to recognize that the digital sphere is not a neutral vessel for Neo-Modernist ideas but a hostile environment that fundamentally alters their transmission.

Furthermore, the sociological operationalization of Neo-Modernism by Nurcholish Madjid and Abdurrahman Wahid, while celebrated in the context of democratization, faces similar scrutiny when mapped onto the digital landscape. Hudson (2003) and Barton et al. (2021) rightly credit these figures with constructing Indonesia's vibrant civil society, arguing that their embrace of pluralism prevented the polarization seen elsewhere. Fuadi et al. (2024) and Mundakir and Hidayat (2020) extend this lineage to the contemporary state policy of *Moderasi Beragama* (Religious Moderation), framing Wahid's *Pribumisasi Islam* as a theological shield against transnational radicalism. Yet, these studies largely ignore the incompatibility of *Pribumisasi*—which relies on local wisdom ('urf) and cultural embeddedness—with the de-territorialized, homogenized "Global Islam" promoted by search engine algorithms. The literature by Addzaky et al. (2025) highlights Wahid's "Liberation Theology" as a precursor to human rights advocacy, but fails to account for how this advocacy is undermined by the "Attention Economy," in which algorithmic amplification of majoritarian outrage frequently drowns out nuanced defenses of minority rights. The optimistic narrative of *Wasatiyyah* digitization, as found in studies by Hamdi (2021) and Rusydiyah (2020), often conflates the presence of moderate hashtags with the penetration of moderate epistemology, overlooking that digital metrics reward the very polarization that Neo-Modernism seeks to dissolve.

The erosion of traditional religious authority, a central concern of Neo-Modernism, further elucidates the disconnect between existing scholarship and digital reality. Neo-Modernism relied heavily on the intellectual authority of the 'Ulamā'-cum-intellectual—figures who combined classical mastery with modern academic rigor (Basid et al., 2024). The digital age has flattened this hierarchy, allowing "Instant Scholars" and influencers with minimal theological literacy to challenge established frameworks through performative piety and algorithmic savvy (Barton et al., 2021). While Basid et al. (2024) acknowledge this shift, the analysis remains descriptive, attributing the decline of traditional authority to a lack of digital literacy among the 'Ulamā'. This diagnosis is insufficient. It fails to engage with the structural argument that the "Instant Scholar" is the native species of the digital ecosystem, evolving to fit its environmental constraints. In contrast, the Neo-Modernist intellectual is an invasive species struggling to adapt. The crisis is not merely one of "skills" or "branding" but of the fundamental legitimacy of the textual and rational authority that Rahman and Madjid championed in an era of visual and emotional verification.

Moreover, a subset of the literature critically re-evaluates the political compromises made by Neo-Modernists, suggesting that their fear of the "tyranny of the majority" led them to form alliances with authoritarian regimes (Abbas, 2023; Peterson, 2023). Hudson (2003)

touch upon the limitations of civil society in the face of state power. However, this internal critique has not yet been extended to the domain of "Digital Authoritarianism." The literature has scarcely begun to explore how the Neo-Modernist emphasis on state-sponsored moderation (via the Ministry of Religious Affairs) might inadvertently align with regimes of digital surveillance and control, potentially delegitimizing the movement in the eyes of a skeptical, digitally native youth. By focusing on the historical pragmatism of Wahid and Madjid, scholars have missed the contemporary danger: that *Wasatiyyah* on social media is increasingly perceived not as a theology of liberation, but as a mechanism of state disciplining, packaged in the aesthetics of "harmony" but deployed to silence dissent.

Consequently, the commodification of *Wasatiyyah* into palatable digital content represents a significant departure from the intricate epistemological foundations of Neo-Modernism. Fuadi et al. (2024) and Ridwan et al. (2022) discuss the integration of religion and local culture. However, they do not critically assess how the digitalization of these concepts often results in their "museumification"—turning living traditions into static images for consumption rather than dynamic frameworks for ethical reasoning. The "Digital Epistemic Void" is thus characterized by a surplus of moderate *images* and a deficit of moderate *thought*. The intricate synthesis of *Fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and modern ethics proposed by Rahman is flattened into binary memes of "Halal vs. Haram" or "Tolerance vs. Intolerance," bypassing the very dialectical process that defines Neo-Modernist thought (Zaprul Khan et al., 2025).

This disconnect poses an existential threat to the viability of Indonesian Civil Islam. If Neo-Modernism fails to engineer a "Digital Hermeneutic," the projected consequences include the further fragmentation of communal beliefs and the marginalization of rational religious discourse (Barton et al., 2021; Basid et al., 2024). The current literature's optimism regarding the potential of digital *Da'wah* (preaching) obscures the reality that the medium is actively reshaping the message, favoring a literalist and emotive Islam that is fundamentally at odds with the Neo-Modernist project. Therefore, this study departs from the descriptive and celebratory tendencies of the status quo. It posits that the challenge for contemporary Islamic thought is not simply to "occupy" the digital space with moderate content, but to fundamentally interrogate and reshape its epistemic architecture. By re-evaluating the hermeneutics of Rahman, Madjid, and Wahid through the lens of media ecology and algorithmic theory, this manuscript aims to construct a theoretical framework capable of navigating the post-truth digital sphere, ensuring that the legacy of Indonesian Neo-Modernism survives the algorithmic erosion of authority.

METHOD

This study adopts an Integrative Theoretical Critique design, a methodological choice driven by a specific diagnostic gap in the current literature. While existing empirical scholarship on Indonesian Islam extensively documents the symptoms of digital radicalism—such as the dominance of conservative narratives and the erosion of traditional authority—it largely fails to isolate the mechanisms within platform architecture that drive these trends. A standard synthesis of Indonesian studies alone would be insufficient to address this, as most local studies are sociologically descriptive rather than technically diagnostic. Therefore, this research utilizes Abductive Analysis, a mode of reasoning that seeks the best theoretical explanation for observed empirical puzzles, to bridge the gap between local sociological data and global algorithmic theory through the lens of Neo-Modernist hermeneutics.

To construct this argument without direct algorithmic auditing, the study curates and triangulates three distinct layers of data. The first layer, serving as the Normative Baseline, comprises the foundational texts of Fazlur Rahman, Nurcholish Madjid, and Abdurrahman Wahid. These texts provide the "control variables" for authentic Neo-Modernist thought, establishing the high-context requirements of methods such as the Double Movement, Civility (*Keadaban*), and Indigenization (*Pribumisasi*).

The second layer functions as the Local Empirical Proxy, representing the symptoms of the digital shift. This dataset consists of a systematic selection of high-impact Scopus-indexed studies published between 2018 and 2024 that focus on "Digital Islam in Indonesia." Key studies include Hamdi (2021) on narrative dominance, Basid et al. (2024) on authority shifts, and Rusydiyah (2020) on digital activism. These texts provide robust evidence of what is currently happening in Indonesia's digital sphere, documenting the marginalization of moderate voices.

Because local religious studies often lack technical algorithmic analysis, the study integrates a third layer: the Comparative Algorithmic Dataset. This layer incorporates global research on platform mechanics and behavioral psychology, such as Rathje et al. (2021) on out-group virality and Cheong (2020) on algorithmic authority. These studies provide the explanatory mechanisms—the how and why—behind the local symptoms observed in the second layer.

The analysis proceeds through a dialectical confrontation of these three layers. First, we map the "failures" reported in the local empirical proxy (e.g., the lower engagement of moderate posts). Second, we correlate these failures with the algorithmic incentives identified in the global mechanism dataset (e.g., correlating low engagement with the algorithm's bias toward high-arousal content). We apply the normative baseline to diagnose the result. If the algorithm enforces immediacy while Rahman's theory requires historical regression, we conclude that a "Hermeneutic Short-Circuit" exists. This abductive process validates the study's core argument: that the incompatibility between Neo-Modernism and the digital sphere is structural rather than merely a failure of content production.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Rahman's Double Movement vs. The Infinite Scroll

The central epistemic crisis of "Digital Islam" is not merely the proliferation of conservative narratives, but the structural annihilation of the temporal space required for complex theological reasoning. Fazlur Rahman's "Double Movement" (*al-harakah al-muzdawijah*) is fundamentally a methodology of time. It demands a rigorous "First Movement"—a regression from the present textual moment back to the specific historical context of the Quranic revelation to distill the *ratio legis* (underlying legal reason)—followed by a "Second Movement" that projects these general principles forward into the contemporary socio-moral context (T. Akbar, 2021; Rahman, 1982). This intellectual oscillation requires patience, historical literacy, and cognitive duration. However, the synthesis of local empirical data and global media theory reveals that the architecture of the digital sphere creates a "Hermeneutic Short-Circuit," rendering the First Movement structurally impossible.

We must analyze how specific platforms mechanically execute this amputation rather than treating social media as a monolithic entity. TikTok actively destroys historical context through rapid, visually dominant infinite scrolling that penalizes cognitive duration.

Conversely, X (formerly Twitter) dismantles civil deliberation through text-based, quote-retweet outrage loops optimized for immediate tribal reaction. The synthesized data from recent Indonesian empirical studies delineate a stark asymmetry in the digital religious landscape. Hamdi (2021) provides critical quantitative evidence of this imbalance, reporting a pervasive "vacuum" of substantive moderation content on Indonesian social media platforms, which are instead saturated with conservative and scripturalist narratives. This finding is corroborated by Basid et al. (2024), who document the erosion of traditional Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) authority at the hands of "Instant Scholars" (*dā'ī* or influencers) who leverage algorithmic amplification to bypass traditional chains of transmission (*sanad*). These "Instant Scholars" typically produce short-form content (TikToks, Instagram Reels, tweets) that deliver immediate legal verdicts (*fatwā*) or binary ethical judgments without the preamble of historical derivation. Furthermore, Rusydiyah (2020) notes that even progressive actors, such as Wahid's daughters, often operate on "cognitive levels" of advocacy rather than hermeneutic exposition, implicitly acknowledging the platform's constraints.

The empirical reality in Indonesia mirrors a global phenomenon of "hermeneutic truncation." As Ortiz et al. (2024) articulate, the structural constraints inherent in short-form content necessitate the amputation of critical contextualization, effectively reducing nuanced ethical discussions to binary, decontextualized legalism. The digital ecosystem operates on principles of immediacy and emotional resonance (Cheong, 2020), which actively penalizes the "First Movement" of Rahman's methodology because historical regression is inherently "low-arousal." Consequently, the "vacuum" identified by Hamdi (2021) is a structural inevitability on the demand side. The "Infinite Scroll" favors sensational narratives that capture attention instantly (Cheong, 2020), forcing a reduction of complex narratives into bite-sized formats (Diether et al., 2024; Tandoc et al., 2022). In this environment, the nuanced ethical derivations required by Neo-Modernism are sacrificed for simplistic portrayals. The "Instant Scholar" succeeds not because of superior theology, but because their scripturalist epistemology—which skips the historical context to deliver immediate answers—is native to the medium. This represents a fundamental "short-circuit" where the wire connecting the Quranic ethical ideal to the modern user is bypassed, delivering a jolt of raw legalism stripped of its ethical soul.

This analysis challenges the status quo by asserting that simply "digitizing" Neo-Modernism is insufficient. The current literature appears insufficiently equipped to conceptualize the necessity of radical re-engineering (Kardaş, 2023). If the digital ecosystem renders traditional interpretive methods obsolete, the solution lies in adopting a Media Ecology framework, as Latif (2020) describes. This approach shifts the focus from analyzing content to analyzing the medium itself, revealing how technological affordances shape ethical interpretations.

To survive the "Attention Economy," Neo-Modernism must move beyond text-based historical regression. A "Digital Double Movement" requires Contextual Adaptation—creating new methods for historical contextualization that engage users without sacrificing depth, perhaps through interactive storytelling or multimedia resources (Behera et al., 2022). Furthermore, this must be paired with Community Engagement initiatives focused on digital literacy, empowering communities to discern between well-rounded interpretations and reductive readings (Traversa et al., 2023).

Failure to execute this re-engineering carries profound risks for Indonesian Civil Islam. As Wood et al. (2018) warn, a landscape dominated by binary understandings engenders greater sectarian fragmentation. The allure of virality inadvertently amplifies extremist

narratives (Roth-Cohen & Rashi, 2023), diluting the moderate Islamic thought pivotal to Indonesia's democracy (Latif, 2020). Thus, the "Digital Epistemic Void" is not a temporary gap but an existential threat: without a techno-hermeneutic intervention, the polarized digital ecosystem will continue to erode the intellectual foundations of tolerance.

Madjid's *Keadaban* vs. The Outrage Economy

If Fazlur Rahman's challenge in the digital sphere is one of time (the loss of historical regression), Nurcholish Madjid's challenge is one of temperament. Madjid's sociotheological framework rests on the concept of *Keadaban* (civility), which he defines not merely as politeness, but as a "psychological skepticism"—a deliberate restraint of fanaticism and an acknowledgment of the limitations of human truth claims before the absoluteness of *Tawhīd* (Divine Unity) (Madjid, 1995b). For Madjid, a civilized public sphere requires "active engagement" in diversity, grounded in the search for *Kalimah Sawā'* (common ground). However, the synthesis of global behavioral data and local empirical studies reveals that the "Outrage Economy" of digital platforms is structurally designed to dismantle this specific psychological disposition.

The architecture of social media does not merely host discourse; it incentivizes specific emotional registers. Global quantitative data provides a stark indictment of these incentives. Rathje et al. (2021) demonstrate that on major platforms, out-group attacks—content that explicitly vilifies a perceived enemy—are systematically rewarded. Specifically, their data indicate that each reference to an out-group increases the odds of a post being shared by 67%, an effect magnitude several times stronger than that of general negative or moral-emotional language. This "out-group boost" creates a selection pressure favoring hostility.

In the Indonesian context, this dynamic is corroborated by Prabowo et al. (2025), who found that digital threads on neutral public issues often escalate into SARA (*Suku, Agama, Ras, dan Antargolongan*—ethnicity, religion, race, and intergroup) conflicts. Their network analysis reveals that as discussions lengthen, sentiment does not converge toward consensus but instead diverges toward greater negativity, with algorithms amplifying divisive content through echo chambers. Furthermore, Etta et al. (2022) identify that topics exhibiting early "burstiness" (rapid engagement) attract significantly more negative reactions than those with slow growth. The "Instant Scholars" identified by Solahudin and Fakhruroji (2019) and Lestari et al. (2025) exploit this mechanism, utilizing short, high-arousal content focused on "Hijrah" (piety migration) and moral outrage to construct "affective publics" mobilized by identity defense rather than theological inquiry.

From a Techno-Hermeneutic perspective, these metrics reveal that the algorithm functions as an "Anti-*Keadaban* Engine." Madjid's concept of "psychological skepticism" requires a slowing down of cognition—a hesitation to claim absolute truth. The algorithm, conversely, demands "burstiness" and certainty. The 67% virality premium for out-group attacks means that a Neo-Modernist post emphasizing nuance ("Let us consider the historical context...") is structurally disadvantaged compared to a scripturalist post emphasizing exclusion ("This group is deviant!").

The "Outrage Economy" monetizes the very fanaticism that Madjid sought to "keep at bay" (Madjid, 1992). When Prabowo et al. (2025) observe that neutral threads devolve into SARA conflicts, this is not a failure of Indonesian culture, but a successful execution of platform design. The platform extracts value from high-arousal states; since *Keadaban* is inherently low-arousal (calm, reflective, deliberative), it is algorithmically suppressed. The

"performative identity conflict" noted by Ortiz et al. (2024) replaces Madjid's vision of dialogue. In this ecosystem, religion ceases to be a path to Keadaban and becomes a tool for "identity signaling." The user engages not to understand the Other (as Madjid's "active engagement" requires), but to signal loyalty to the Self and to trigger the dopamine feedback loop of likes and shares provided by the algorithmic confirmation of bias. Thus, the digital medium effectively strips Islam of its civilizational ethical imperatives (Madjid, 1997), reducing it to a tribal marker.

This analysis forces a confrontation with the "Content Solution" advocated by the status quo literature. Scholars like Hamdi (2021) and policymakers often argue that the remedy for online radicalism is to increase the production of moderate (*Wasatiyyah*) content. This reflects a misunderstanding of the battlefield. The issue is not a deficit of moderate voices, but a deficit of amplification for those voices.

If *Keadaban* is boring to the algorithm, then "flooding" the zone with moderate content is futile because that content will not travel. Traversa et al. (2023) and Shabahang et al. (2022) argue that without changing the *engagement metrics* themselves, moderate narratives will always be drowned out by the "burstiness" of polarization. Madjid's assertion that "pluralism is God's will" (Madjid, 1995a; Nurkhalis, 2010) Is a theological truth, but on Twitter/X, polarization is the platform's will.

Therefore, we must reject the naive assumption that "better content" will yield "better discourse." Instead, we must extend Madjid's theory into the realm of Digital Civics. The solution lies in what Wood et al. (2018) describe as "Interactive and Critical Digital Spaces"—platforms or protocols designed to disrupt the viral feedback loop. This aligns with Li and Ng's (2024) call for "Digital Literacy" that goes beyond fact-checking to include emotional regulation—teaching users to recognize when they are being manipulated by high-arousal content. To actualize Madjid's Keadaban in the digital age, Neo-Modernists must stop playing the algorithm's game (seeking virality) and start building "Holistic Engagement Models" that reward reflection over reaction. Without this structural shift, the "content production" strategy is merely performative—a digital facade of civility masking a crumbling epistemic foundation.

Wahid's *Pribumisasi* vs. Global Homogenization

The third structural failure of the analog Neo-Modernist framework lies in the domain of cultural authority. Abdurrahman Wahid's (Gus Dur) concept of *Pribumisasi Islam* (Indigenization of Islam) was architected to defend the legitimacy of local custom (*'ādah* or *'urf*) against the homogenizing wave of transnational "Arabization" (Fuadi et al., 2024; Ridwan et al., 2022). Wahid argued that Islam must be rooted in regional histories—manifested in local dress (e.g., *sarong*, *kebaya*), language, and rituals—to avoid becoming an abstract, placeless ideology (Wahid, 2000, 2006). However, the synthesis of empirical data and critical data studies reveals that the algorithmic architecture of digital platforms functions as a "Transnationalizing Machine," effectively reversing *Pribumisasi* by enforcing a standardized, globalized visual code of piety.

Empirical findings from the secondary dataset indicate a decisive shift in the visual representation of religious authority online. Solahudin and Fakhruroji (2019) and Febrian (2024) provide evidence that social media platforms reward specific visual markers—such as the *abaya*, "Saudi-style" *hijāb*, and Arabized calligraphy—over local Indonesian aesthetics. These markers function as "algorithmic signals" of authoritative piety; content featuring these globalized symbols generates significantly higher engagement metrics than content featuring

local cultural forms, which are increasingly marginalized or condemned as *bid'ah* (innovation) in comment sections (Nuraemi et al., 2025; Truna, 2021). Furthermore, Raya (2024) and Baulch and Pramianti (2018) document the rise of "Hijrah Lifestyles" as portable, consumable templates of orthodoxy. Influencers with weak ties to traditional *Pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) or organizations like Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) construct authority through "image management" and branding rather than rooted communal histories. In contrast, local rituals described by Adisaputri et al. (2022), such as *Sérén Taun*, remain confined to "ethnographic" or "cultural" niches online, stripped of their theological legitimacy and reframed merely as heritage rather than living religious practice.

From a Techno-Hermeneutic perspective, these findings expose a fundamental conflict between Wahid's epistemology and platform logic. *Pribumisasi* relies on "high-context" locality—the idea that the meaning of a ritual is tied to its specific geographic and communal history. The algorithm, however, favors "low-context" universality. A visual symbol like the *niqāb* or *thawb* is "globally legible"—it is instantly recognized by the algorithm's image recognition software and by a global audience as "Islamic Content," facilitating rapid categorization and cross-border virality. Conversely, local symbols (e.g., a Kyai wearing a *blangkon* or a *sarong*) are "high-friction" signals; they require specific cultural knowledge to decode and are therefore less likely to be amplified by an algorithm optimized for global scale (Ricaurte, 2019). This creates a feedback loop of "Algorithmic Colonization": the platform systematically invisibilizes local nuance in favor of a homogenized, transnational aesthetic. The "Digital Islam" that emerges is not a reflection of Indonesian reality, but a "Data Assemblage" (Couldry & Mejías, 2018) constructed by the platform to maximize engagement. In this ecosystem, Wahid's defense of the "Indigenous" is rendered obsolete not by theological argument, but by the aesthetic hierarchy of the interface. The "Cyber-Imam" identified by Ibrahim (2024) is successful precisely because they are de-territorialized—they belong to the platform, not the land.

This structural critique necessitates a radical pivot in Neo-Modernist strategy. Current efforts to defend *Pribumisasi* often focus on cultural preservation or "counter-narratives" (producing more content about local wisdom). However, Raya (2024) and Salam-Salmaoui et al. (2025) demonstrate that in a borderless digital sphere, "content" is always subordinate to "infrastructure." As long as the infrastructure favors global homogenization, cultural content will be marginalized. Therefore, Wahid's legacy must be re-engineered through the framework of Indigenous Data Sovereignty (IDS). Drawing on Walter et al. (2020) and Kukutai (2023), *Pribumisasi* in the digital age should be reinterpreted not just as the right to wear a sarong, but as the right of local communities to govern the data about their religious lives. This aligns with the "Data Sovereignty" movement's insistence that communities must control how their knowledge is produced, stored, and circulated (Carroll et al., 2019).

Instead of merely fighting a losing battle of aesthetics on Instagram, a Neo-Modernist approach would advocate for Algorithmic Transparency and the development of Community-Governed Infrastructures. If, as Basid et al. (2024) note, traditional *Ulamā'* are losing authority to "business-oriented" influencers, the solution is not for *Ulamā'* to become influencers, but to establish "Digital Sanad"—authenticated chains of transmission that are encoded into the metadata of religious content, distinguishing rooted authority from the "information anarchy" warned of by Whyte (2022). Islamic institutions must implement this in practice by developing cryptographic authentication systems. They must embed verifiable digital signatures in the metadata of their fatwas, videos, and texts, enabling users to verify the institutional and theological roots of the information they consume. By reframing *Pribumisasi* as resistance

against "Data Colonialism" (Couldry & Mejías, 2018), Neo-Modernism can move beyond nostalgia. It can position itself as the vanguard of a new "Digital Fiqh" that defends the spiritual autonomy of the local community against the extractive logic of the global platform. Without this shift from "Culture" to "Data Governance," *Pribumisasi* will remain a celebrated artifact in academic journals. At the same time, the transnational code of the algorithm quietly overwrites the lived religion of Indonesian youth.

CONCLUSION

This study fundamentally re-theorizes the "Digital Epistemic Void" in Indonesian Islamic studies. By moving beyond the prevailing descriptive analyses of "online moderation," it establishes a novel Techno-Hermeneutic Framework. This framework reveals that the failure of Neo-Modernism online is not a deficiency of *content* but a structural incompatibility between the "Epistemology of Process" (Rahman's historical regression) and the "Epistemology of Viralitas" (the algorithm's demand for immediacy). It extends Nurcholish Madjid's concept of *Keadaban* by identifying the "Anti-Civility Engine" in platform metrics and reinterpreting Abdurrahman Wahid's *Pribumisasi* not as cultural nostalgia but as a prescient call for Data Sovereignty against algorithmic colonization.

For policymakers and organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama and the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the findings call for a strategic pivot. The current "Content Solution"—flooding social media with moderate narratives—is diagnostically flawed because it plays a game rigged by the platform's bias toward polarization. A viable path forward involves investing in Algorithmic Literacy (teaching users to decode manipulation) and developing Community-Governed Infrastructures that allow for "Digital Sanad" (authenticated chains of authority). Institutions must materialize this recommendation by building verifiable digital infrastructure that uses metadata tracking and cryptographic validation to map the provenance of religious claims, rather than treating "Sanad" merely as a philosophical metaphor. Instead of chasing influencers, religious institutions must advocate for algorithmic transparency and build "slow-media" spaces that prioritize deliberation over engagement.

This study is limited by its reliance on secondary empirical data rather than direct algorithmic auditing or longitudinal user tracking. Future research should empirically test the "Digital Double Movement" by developing and deploying experimental content prototypes designed to disrupt the "infinite scroll," measuring whether "high-friction" historical narratives can effectively compete in an attention economy without sacrificing theological depth.

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