



Digital Democracy and Youth Political Communication from the Perspective of Islamic Political Education

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Abstract

Digital technological advancements have brought significant transformations to political communication patterns among the youth. Social media has emerged as a sphere for political opinion formation, information dissemination, and an arena for ideological and interest conflicts. Utilizing a literature review method, this study aims to delineate political communication strategies within Islamic political education as an effort to build a more ethical and inclusive future for Indonesian democracy. The findings reveal that youth social media engagement is not yet fully accompanied by adequate political literacy and communication ethics. Consequently, Islamic political education needs to be operationalized through a humanistic and religious political communication approach, embedding values such as dialogue, tolerance, *tabayyun* (factchecking/verification), *musyawarah* (deliberation), and respect for diverse opinions. These strategies can be implemented through digital democracy literacy, dialogic learning, democracy simulations, and the strategic utilization of social media as a healthy space for political education.

Keywords: *Digital Democracy; Youth Communication; Islamic Political Education.*

Abstrak: Perkembangan teknologi digital telah membawa perubahan besar terhadap pola komunikasi politik di kalangan generasi muda. Media sosial menjadi ruang pembentukan opini politik, penyebaran informasi, hingga arena pertarungan ideologi dan kepentingan. Dengan menggunakan studi pustaka, penelitian ini penting untuk menguraikan strategi komunikasi politik dalam pendidikan politik Islam sebagai upaya membangun masa depan demokrasi Indonesia yang lebih beretika dan inklusif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa generasi muda dalam penggunaan media sosial belum sepenuhnya diiringi dengan literasi politik dan etika komunikasi yang baik. Oleh karena itu, pendidikan politik Islam perlu diwujudkan melalui pendekatan komunikasi politik yang humanis dan religius dengan menanamkan nilai dialog, toleransi, *tabayyun*, *musyawarah*, serta penghormatan terhadap perbedaan pendapat. Strategi tersebut dapat diterapkan melalui literasi demokrasi digital, pembelajaran dialogis, simulasi demokrasi, dan pemanfaatan media sosial sebagai ruang edukasi politik yang sehat.

Kata Kunci: *Demokrasi Digital; Komunikasi Anak Muda; Pendidikan Politik Islam*

INTRODUCTION

The presence of the internet and social media has not only transformed how society accesses information but has also reshaped political communication patterns, public participation, and the way the younger generation perceives democracy. Digital spaces have now become a new arena for the exchange of ideas, opinion formation, political campaigning, and even social conflicts arising from differing political views. Under these conditions, the youth occupy a crucial position as they are the most active digital media users and key determinants of the future direction of Indonesian democracy (Castells, 2015).

On the one hand, the development of digital democracy offers broad opportunities for the younger generation to engage in political life more openly and participatorily. Social media enables the public to express criticism, aspirations, and political views without space and time constraints. This phenomenon indicates that democracy no longer occurs solely within formal spaces like parliaments or political forums but also thrives through digital platforms utilized by the public daily (Lim, 2017).

These conditions demonstrate that digital democracy cannot be sustained merely through freedom of expression; it also requires moral awareness, communication ethics, and social responsibility. In this context, political communication plays a vital role in determining the quality of a nation's democracy. Political communication that is provocative, manipulative, and filled with hate speech can exacerbate societal fragmentation and weaken social cohesion. Conversely, humanistic political communication can foster a healthy space for dialogue, respect differences, and encourage society to think critically and rationally (Habermas, 1989).

In addition to a humanistic approach, religious values hold strong relevance in constructing healthy political communication. Within Indonesia's pluralistic and religious society, religious values can serve as a moral foundation for shaping a more ethical democratic culture.

Research on digital democracy, political communication, and youth participation has been widely conducted. Digital communication has expanded youth political participation in the digital public sphere (Fawaidi, 2025; Lim, 2017). Furthermore, Nasrullah (2017) examined social media from the perspective of digital communication and culture, emphasizing that shifts in societal communication patterns must be counterbalanced by adequate digital literacy skills. In contrast to these previous studies, this research proposes integrating humanistic and religious political communication into Islamic political education as a strategic framework for ethical digital democracy communication among Indonesian youth.

Based on this background, this study is essential to examine how humanistic and religious political communication strategies can be implemented within Islamic political education to build a more ethical,

inclusive, and civilized future for Indonesian democracy. This study also seeks to demonstrate that the younger generation serves not merely as digital media consumers, but as agents of change entrusted with the responsibility of safeguarding the quality of democracy in Indonesia.

METHOD

This study employs a library research method, conducted by synthesizing and analyzing relevant literature pertinent to the research topic. Data sources were derived from books, scholarly journals, academic articles, research reports, official documents, and digital materials related to democracy, political communication, Islamic political education, youth dynamics, and social media developments in Indonesia. Additionally, secondary data from mass media and digital platforms were utilized to observe emerging political communication phenomena within the digital public sphere.

Data collection was carried out through a comprehensive literature study. The researcher identified, reviewed, and examined relevant references to extract critical insights for further analysis. Throughout this process, various perspectives and empirical findings from prior research were juxtaposed to obtain a more objective understanding of humanistic and religious political communication strategies within Islamic political education.

Data analysis was conducted in three sequential stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. During data reduction, relevant information directly addressing the research questions was selected and categorized. Subsequently, the data were systematically structured to facilitate deep analysis. The final stage involved drawing conclusions based on the interpretation of the synthesized material. A descriptive-critical analysis was applied, emphasizing the interplay between the evolution of digital democracy, youth political communication patterns, and the imperative of integrating humanistic and religious values into Islamic political education.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Youth and Indonesian Democracy

The trajectory of Indonesian democracy over the past few decades exhibits highly dynamic shifts. The 1998 Reformasi marked a pivotal turning point, opening democratic space and granting freedom of expression to the public. Subsequently, Indonesian democracy expanded beyond formal political realms—such as parliaments, political parties, and governmental forums—into a broader, borderless digital sphere. This transition spawned new patterns of political participation, particularly among the youth, who represent the most dominant demographic in information technology and social media adoption.

Today's youth have come of age in a digital environment that shapes their cognition, interpersonal interactions, and political views. They absorb political information not only from television or print media, but primarily from Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, X (formerly Twitter), and various other digital platforms. Consequently, the younger generation has emerged as a crucial catalyst in the transformation of Indonesian democracy. Indeed, during numerous national political moments, youth voices and opinions on social media frequently steer public discourse.

This technology-driven democratic transformation inherently presents a dual dynamic. On the one hand, social media expands democratic political participation. The youth can voice grievances regarding government policies, highlight pressing social issues, and mobilize public solidarity campaigns with unprecedented speed. This phenomenon demonstrates that digital democracy can strengthen public engagement in civic affairs. Furthermore, young actors in digital spaces frequently serve as primary drivers for critical causes such as environmental sustainability, education, human rights, and social justice.

On the other hand, the evolution of digital democracy presents substantial challenges. Information freedom, when uncounterbalanced by digital literacy, often triggers political hoaxes, hate speech, propaganda, and social polarization. Young individuals—who ought to serve as agents of change—can instead fall prey to hyper-partisanship and digital fanatical activism. Political debates on social media frequently devolve into personal attacks rather than meaningful exchanges of ideas. Under such circumstances, democracy forfeits its dialogic core and transforms into an unmediated arena of ethical conflict (Nasrullah, 2017).

These dynamics suggest that Indonesia's democratic transformation cannot be understood merely as a technological evolution in politics, but rather as a fundamental shift in communicative culture. A healthy democracy requires a citizenry capable of critical thinking, respecting diversity, and upholding communicative ethics. Absent these elements, democratic freedom risks triggering social disintegration and a systemic crisis of public trust.

Within this context, the younger generation occupies a highly strategic position. They are not merely successors to democracy, but architects of the nation's future political culture. Their attitudes, cognitive frameworks, and communication patterns will heavily dictate the quality of Indonesian democracy in the coming years. Thus, young people must recognize that democracy extends beyond freedom of speech to encompass a moral responsibility to preserve social unity and human dignity. The Qur'an itself outlines essential principles governing social interaction. Allah SWT states in QS. Al-Hujurat verse 13: This verse affirms that diversity should not be a catalyst for mutual animosity, but rather a mechanism for building harmonious social relations. In a democratic context, this principle aligns

closely with the core values of mutual respect for diverse opinions and societal pluralism.

Indonesia's democratic transformation also demonstrates that the younger generation exhibits a higher propensity for digital-based social movements compared to previous generations. This trend is evident in increased youth political participation across social campaigns, public forums, and online solidarity movements. According to a survey by the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, Indonesian youth exhibit exceptionally high levels of social media engagement when following political issues and public policy (CSIS, 2022). This underscores that digital media has become an indispensable political arena for youth.

However, high digital participation does not inherently translate to robust political literacy. While many young individuals actively comment on political issues, many lack a nuanced understanding of democratic substance. Consequently, digital spaces are frequently overwhelmed by emotionally charged debate, group tribalism, and data-barren opinions. Therefore, Islamic political education bears a profound responsibility to cultivate a youth demographic that is not only digitally active, but also intellectually mature and ethically grounded.

Ultimately, the trajectory of Indonesian democracy hinges on how the younger generation leverages technology and political freedom. If social media is harnessed to foster healthy dialogue, disseminate political education, and reinforce social cohesion, Indonesian democracy stands a strong chance of maturing into an inclusive framework. Conversely, if digital spaces remain saturated with hate speech, propaganda, and polarization, democracy will inevitably lose its humanistic essence.

Political Communication Crisis in the Social Media Era

The rise of social media has rapidly transformed the landscape of political communication in Indonesia. Whereas political discourse previously unfolded primarily through television, print newspapers, or formal forums, contemporary political dialogue moves almost limitlessly across the digital sphere. Social media empowers every individual to act as an information provider, an opinion leader, or even a mass mobilizer through a single post. Consequently, digital democracy has spawned a new public sphere that is open, rapid, and highly dynamic. Behind this convenience, however, a critical issue has emerged that gradually degrades the quality of public political communication.

Social media, which ought to serve as a medium for democratic dialogue, frequently devolves into an arena of conflict and emotionally charged opinion battles. Political debate in digital spaces is no longer dominated by healthy argumentation; instead, it is increasingly saturated with hate speech, propaganda, group tribalism, and false information. Under these conditions,

citizens are often more inclined to accept information that aligns with their group interests rather than seeking objective truth (Setiawati et al., 2023).

This phenomenon points to a profound crisis of political communication in the social media era. This crisis involves not merely the prevalence of conflict in digital spaces, but also a decline in ethics, rationality, and mutual respect within democratic life. Freedom of speech—a defining hallmark of democracy—is frequently misconstrued as absolute, uncounterbalanced by moral responsibility. Consequently, social media has transformed into a space filled with hostility, personal attacks, and sharpening social polarization.

In this context, the Qur'an emphasizes the necessity of maintaining a critical stance when receiving information, as reflected in QS. Al-Hujurat verse 6. This verse holds immense relevance to the present state of digital democracy, particularly in combating the spread of political hoaxes and disinformation on social media. The younger generation is urged not to succumb easily to provocative information circulating without clear verification. Adopting the principle of *tabayyun* (factchecking/verification) is essential to safeguarding a healthy and civilized democracy.

One of the greatest challenges in digital political communication is the rampant dissemination of political hoaxes. Unverified information can spread exponentially, reaching thousands of users within minutes. Furthermore, many individuals instinctively share content without prior verification. This condition is compounded by a "viral-first" culture, wherein users prioritize sensationalism over informational veracity (B.U., 2021).

In political contexts, hoaxes are not merely false information; they serve as propaganda instruments designed to manipulate public opinion. The weaponization of SARA (ethnic, religious, racial, and inter-group) issues, news manipulation, and political defamation are frequently deployed to discredit opponents and project specific images to the public. This reveals that social media functions not only as a communication tool, but as an intense battlefield for political influence.

Beyond hoaxes, the communication crisis is manifested in the escalation of online hate speech. Differences in political preference frequently mutate into personal animosities, fracturing social cohesion. Numerous social media users readily insult, demean, and attack others solely due to opposing political views, even though democracy fundamentally relies on respect for ideological diversity (Gunawan & Ratmono, 2021).

Political polarization likewise poses a severe threat to Indonesia's digital democracy. Social media platforms inadvertently foster political echo chambers that reinforce internal group views while rejecting external perspectives. Social media algorithms tend to feed users content aligned with their pre-existing beliefs, progressively narrowing the space for cross-ideological dialogue. As a result, citizens no longer engage in discussion to find

collective solutions; instead, they remain preoccupied with defending their group identity.

Under these circumstances, political communication loses its educational efficacy. Politics is no longer understood as a means to foster societal welfare, but as a mere tool to secure influence and dominate public opinion. Yet, the primary purpose of political communication should be to cultivate public awareness, enhance civic participation, and foster a healthy democratic public sphere (Ahmad, 2022). The Qur'an provides foundational principles regarding the ethics of receiving and transmitting information. Allah SWT states in QS. Al-Hujurat verse 6, emphasizing the critical importance of *tabayyun* prior to disseminating information. In today's social media landscape, *tabayyun* is vital because information flows rapidly with ambiguous credibility. Today's communication crisis stems in large part from a low public commitment to information verification.

Furthermore, Islamic teachings advocate for benevolent speech and the avoidance of hostility. Allah SWT states in QS. Al-Isra verse 53 that constructive communication plays a vital role in maintaining social harmony. Within a democratic framework, differing opinions are natural; however, such differences should not breed hatred or enmity. Therefore, political communication must be anchored in ethical integrity, mutual respect, and social responsibility.

The political communication crisis in the social media era is also intertwined with the emergence of a culture of instant political consumption. Many citizens, particularly among the youth, prefer concise, provocative, and sensational political content over substantive debate. Consequently, politics is treated as digital entertainment measured by likes, views, and virality rather than the quality of ideas presented. In this climate, the digital public sphere becomes vulnerable to opinion manipulation and emotional exploitation (Fahmi, 2022).

Nevertheless, social media retains immense potential to foster a healthy democracy if utilized judiciously. It can serve as a platform for political education, public deliberation, and youth civic engagement. However, realizing this potential requires digital literacy, communication ethics, and moral awareness among users.

Ultimately, the political communication crisis in the social media era is not merely a technological problem, but a crisis of human character in deploying technology. Technology remains a tool, while its direction is dictated by human values and awareness. Humanity has created social media capable of circulating information in seconds yet frequently forgets that an unethically written sentence can destroy social unity just as swiftly.

Islamic-Based Political Communication

Amid the expansion of digital democracy, political communication serves as a pivotal determinant of national governance and civic life. Politics is inherently inseparable from communication, as political processes intrinsically involve articulating ideas, exerting influence, practicing persuasion, and shaping public opinion. However, in contemporary social media reality, political communication frequently forfeits its moral compass. Political debate is no longer structured around dialogue and solution-seeking, but is instead dominated by hostility, provocation, and character assassination. This environment creates an urgent demand for a political communication model that is not only politically effective, but also humanely and ethically dignified. Hence, the framework of humanistic and religious political communication becomes highly relevant to contemporary Indonesian democracy.

Humanistic political communication fundamentally positions the human being at the center of the political process. Communication is deployed not to manipulate, provoke, or incite hostility, but to build awareness, dialogue, and mutual respect. A humanistic approach emphasizes that political differences should not compromise social cohesion or human dignity. In a democracy, divergent perspectives are natural and essential for healthy political life. However, these differences must be articulated politely, rationally, and ethically (Yurni et al., 2025).

Humanism in political communication also demands respect for every individual's right to express opinions without intimidation or hatred. A healthy democracy is not built upon group domination, but through inclusive public spheres that allow citizens to speak freely and responsibly. Jürgen Habermas defined the public sphere as an arena for public discourse that should be driven by rational, argument-based communication rather than manipulation or emotional coercion (Fawaidi, 2025). In the context of present-day social media, this concept is crucial, as digital spaces are frequently overwhelmed by conflicts prioritizing emotion over intellectual substance.

Alongside humanism, religious values hold a critical position in constructing healthy political communication. Within Indonesia's religious and pluralistic society, faith can serve as a moral compass that elevates democratic quality. Integrating religious values into political communication does not mean weaponizing religion for political propaganda; rather, it means using religious teachings as an ethical foundation for dialogue, speech, and interpersonal conduct. Politics devoid of moral values risks devolving into hatred, slander, and social injustice. Therefore, political communication requires a religious foundation to ensure democratic freedom operates within ethical and humanistic boundaries (Azra, 2020). The Qur'an offers numerous principles regarding constructive communication, such as in QS. An-Nahl verse 125.

This verse demonstrates that communication must be built upon wisdom, gentleness, and sound argumentation. Even in the face of differing views, Islam prescribes courteous dialogue that refrains from demeaning others. This principle is exceptionally relevant to modern democracy, where citizens frequently fall into debate cultures characterized by insult and hostility on social media.

Furthermore, humanistic and religious political communication underscores the imperative of honesty and responsibility in information sharing. In today's digital political landscape, information is frequently exploited to construct images, manipulate public opinion, or discredit opponents through hoaxes and propaganda. Conversely, healthy communication must be built upon honesty and moral integrity. Allah SWT states in QS. Al-Ahzab verse 70, affirming that truthful speech is a fundamental moral responsibility. Applied to political communication, this principle dictates that freedom of speech must never be decoupled from honesty and social ethics.

The framework of humanistic and religious political communication also places empathy as an indispensable element of democratic life. Empathy enables individuals to understand opposing viewpoints without forfeiting their own identity or beliefs. A primary cause of the current political communication crisis is the erosion of empathy in the digital public sphere. Many users judge rather than comprehend, and attack rather than listen. Consequently, the democratic arena mutates into a socially and psychologically exhausting battlefield (Hindarto, 2022).

From an Islamic perspective, effective communication is intimately tied to preserving brotherhood and social unity. Allah SWT states in QS. Al-Hujurat verse 10, conveying the message that communication should foster peace and reinforce social ties rather than amplify hostility and division. In political life, differing choices and views must not dismantle the sense of brotherhood shared among citizens.

In the social media age, humanistic and religious political communication becomes paramount as society navigates high-speed information flows. Many individuals post comments impulsively, disseminate unverified information, or attack others over political differences. Yet, every written or spoken word carries significant social consequences. A single provocative sentence can trigger widespread conflict, whereas a thoughtful sentence can restore public calm.

Ultimately, the metric of democratic progress lies not merely in how freely a society speaks, but in how well it maintains civil discourse while doing so. Truly educated individuals are not those with the loudest voices on social media, but those who preserve rational thinking, ethics, and mutual respect amid political diversity.

Communication Strategies Through Islamic Political Education

The evolution of digital democracy presents novel challenges for Indonesian society, particularly for the youth. Rapid information flows have opened the public sphere while simultaneously generating issues such as political hoaxes, hate speech, social polarization, and declining communication ethics on social media. These conditions indicate that education can no longer rely solely on teaching theoretical knowledge about democracy and citizenship; it must actively shape character, communication ethics, and social consciousness to prepare youth for digital political life. Consequently, Islamic political education bears a critical responsibility to foster a humanistic and religious democratic culture.

Historically, Islamic political education has often been narrowly understood as a subject covering constitutional frameworks, civic rights and duties, and governmental structures. However, its true essence extends far beyond rote memorization. Islamic political education should serve as a mechanism for cultivating democratic character—producing citizens who are critical, wise, tolerant, and responsible in both social and digital environments (B.U., 2021). Within this framework, implementing humanistic and religious political communication strategies becomes essential.

One key strategy is enhancing digital democracy literacy within educational curricula. Today's youth operate in an environment dominated by social media, which heavily influences their political mindsets and behaviors. However, high digital adoption is rarely accompanied by critical media comprehension. Many students are easily influenced by provocative news, political propaganda, and viral opinions without prior verification. Therefore, Islamic political education must teach digital literacy skills that extend beyond technical competency to encompass ethics and social responsibility on digital platforms (B.U., 2021).

Digital democracy literacy can be fostered by teaching students how to verify information, identify political hoaxes, understand public communication ethics, and build healthy digital discussion habits. As a result, students evolve from passive media consumers into active digital citizens equipped with moral consciousness and social responsibility. The Qur'an outlines this critical approach to information processing in QS. Al-Hujurat verse 6, demonstrating that information verification (*tabayyun*) is vital to maintaining social health. In digital democracy, *tabayyun* empowers the youth to resist political provocation and false information on social media.

Another vital strategy is implementing dialogic learning models within Islamic political education. Dialogic learning positions students as active participants in discourse and knowledge exchange. Through this model, students are trained to express opinions respectfully, appreciate alternative viewpoints, and resolve differences through rational argumentation (Fawaidi, 2025). This approach addresses a central crisis in modern democracy: the

decay of conversational culture. Many individuals prefer attacking over listening and judging over understanding.

Islamic political education must function as a laboratory for healthy democracy. Classroom discussions should not merely focus on binary right-or-wrong answers; they must teach students how to articulate opinions ethically and respectfully. Thus, students learn that democracy is not simply the freedom to speak, but the capacity to maintain civility while doing so.

In addition to a humanistic focus, Islamic political education must integrate religious values as a moral foundation for democratic engagement. Integrating religious values does not mean turning political education into religious political indoctrination; rather, it means utilizing religious teachings as a source of social and humanistic ethics. Values such as honesty, justice, tolerance, responsibility, and mutual consultation (*musyawarah*) are essential to forming a democratic youth demographic (Azra, 2020). Allah SWT states in QS. Asy-Syura verse 38 that mutual consultation is a fundamental principle of collective life. Modern democracy similarly rests upon dialogue and public participation in decision-making. Therefore, Islamic political education must instill a culture of *musyawarah* and respect for diverse opinions as core components of civic education.

An additional strategy involves leveraging social media as a platform for positive political education. While social media is often dominated by provocative content, emotional debate, and toxic opinion wars, it can be repurposed as a creative educational tool for democracy. Educators and academic institutions can encourage students to produce content focused on democratic literacy, tolerance, anti-hoax awareness, and courteous political communication (Yurni et al., 2025).

This strategy aligns with youth media habits, as young people engage more readily with visual and digital media than with conventional instruction methods. By positively harnessing social media, Islamic political education can bridge classroom learning with the daily digital realities of youth.

Finally, digital democracy simulations offer an effective strategy for building youth political awareness. Activities such as public debates, deliberative sessions, political news analysis, and mock elections enable students to practice critical thinking, articulate arguments, and respect democratic processes. Through hands-on experience, students understand democracy not merely as a theoretical concept, but as a living practice governed by ethics and responsibility.

Ultimately, strategies for implementing humanistic and religious political communication within Islamic political education aim to cultivate a youth demographic that is intellectually capable, morally mature, and socially responsible. Technological progress without ethics generates a public sphere marked by conflict and hostility. Conversely, technology guided by moral

consciousness serves as a powerful catalyst for national unity and democratic integrity.

CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrates that reinforcing humanistic and religious political communication serves as a highly relevant strategy for cultivating youth political awareness in the era of digital democracy. Humanistic values—such as dialogue, tolerance, and respect for diversity—when synthesized with religious principles like honesty, *tabayyun* (information verification), *musyawarah* (deliberatoriness), and social responsibility, can establish a robust ethical foundation to address the challenges of digital democracy, including the proliferation of hoaxes, hate speech, and social polarization. Within this framework, Islamic political education occupies a strategic position to integrate digital democracy literacy with character building. Consequently, it can nurture a youth demographic that is not only actively engaged in the digital public sphere, but also responsible, ethically grounded, and deeply committed to advancing an inclusive, civilized, and public welfare-oriented Indonesian democracy.

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