

Exploring the Digital Discourse: Representations and Perceptions of Islam Nusantara in Online Resources

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Abstract

Purpose: This study investigates how Islam Nusantara is represented, contested, and legitimized across digital platforms, focusing on its role as both a cultural-religious discourse and a site of ideological negotiation.

Methodology/approach: A mixed-method triangulation was employed, combining quantitative content analysis, qualitative framing analysis, and philological examination of digitized manuscripts. Validity and reliability were maintained through systematic coding, intercoder agreement, peer debriefing, re-coding cycles, and cross-referencing of manuscript variants.

Results/findings: The quantitative findings reveal that Islam Nusantara discourse appeared in 2,354 posts across three major platforms, with 62% inclusivist frames, 28% nationalist frames, and 10% critical frames. Frequently recurring terms such as religious moderation, Islam *rahmatan lil-‘alamin*, and local culture confirm its online resonance. Framing analysis uncovers inclusivist, nationalist, and critical lenses shaping the discourse, while philological analysis demonstrates continuity with historical traditions of Islam–local culture synthesis.

Conclusions: Islam Nusantara’s digital representation is multi-dimensional, shaped by both contemporary ideological contestation and deep-rooted textual legitimacy. The integration of quantitative, qualitative, and philological evidence provides a comprehensive framework for understanding religious discourse in the digital age.

Limitations: The data are time-bound (up to June 2023) and limited to selected digital platforms, which may not fully capture the broader scope of Islam Nusantara debates.

Contribution: The study theoretically introduces a triangulated methodological model (content, framing, philological) in digital religion research. Practically, it highlights Islam Nusantara’s potential to strengthen moderate Islamic discourse and support digital religious policies that foster inclusivity and cultural integration.

Keywords: *Product Use, Promotion, Rahn, Ujrah, Value Assessment.*

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1. Introduction

Since the 2010s, Islam Nusantara has emerged as a prominent discourse in Indonesia. It received support and responses from various figures, institutions, and national and international scientists and scholars. A number of supports seek to strengthen the existence of Islam Nusantara, while a number of responses show variations in different forms. This discourse on Islam Nusantara becomes even more important when historical-anthropological issues and material resources are considered as a reference for the formation of Indonesian Islamic identity. In this context, there is a tendency to interpret Islamic teachings according to the Indonesian context, and even the global context (Ekawati & Yanti, 2022).

There are various perspectives on Islam Nusantara, including confirmative, problematic, controversial, and ideal-claim perspectives. Islam Nusantara is a social movement that has the potential as an important field of study for the academic world in the map of Islamic studies. (Nanji, 1997) This potential can be observed in two issues. First, as a movement, Islam Nusantara was primarily sourced from the “33rd Congress of Nahdlatul Ulama,” August 1-5, 2015, in Jombang, East Java, with the theme “Strengthening Islam Nusantara for Indonesian and World Civilizations” (Suriyanto, 2015). The term Islam Nusantara in this theme can also be traced to the ideas of the 33rd NU pre-congress discussion in Makassar, South Sulawesi, on Wednesday, April 22, 2015. The theme was “Islam Nusantara as a Civil Society (*Mutamaddun*) of Islam Becomes the Ideal Type of the Islamic World.”

Second, Islam Nusantara experiences significant dynamics. This dynamic flow involves contributions from Indonesian and foreign researchers in Indonesia. When foreign researchers made serious contributions, Islam Nusantara Studies was ranked as an important and solid core subject on the science board. For example, Michel Laffan’s (professor of history at Princeton University) study, *The Origin of Islam of Nusantara*, has contributed to the level of epistemology. In addition, Laffan’s study ranks among other studies that have material and methodological substance (Istikhari, 2016; Laffan, 2015).

Within Laffan’s view, the narrative of Islam that stretches for hundreds of years on the archipelago must be positioned as a precipitate of various frenzied elements or also called anomalies in the paradigmatic expression of Thomas S. Kuhn (1970, p. 2). Islam that can be seen now is the result of perfect cloning of hybrid culture from a heterogeneous cultural landscape. Therefore, when the ‘Islam Nusantara’ discourse emerged in this decade, which was popularized as a form of identity capture in a socio-anthropological context, ambitious and impromptu rejection arguments needed to be responded to academically immediately (Fatchurrohman & Saputri, 2023).

The narrative above provides a problematic insight into the existence of two adjoining expressions, namely ‘Islam Nusantara’ and ‘Islam in the Nusantara.’ The first expression is the substance of the identity and reality of Indonesian Islam, while the second is the substance of the reality of Islam in Indonesia. Over the past two decades, particularly from 2004 to 2019, ‘Islam Nusantara’ emerged as a significant response to revivalist movements, aiming to assert Indonesian Islamic identity and protect the unity of the nation (NKRI) (Riswan, Rustam, Razak, & Muchran, 2023).

Several studies use the terms Islam Nusantara and Islam in the Nusantara, in addition to the sources mentioned above. Several studies that use the term ‘Islam Nusantara’ or Indonesian Islam are those by Azra et al. (2020), Baso (2015), Bizawie (2016), Syaban (2017), Maftuhin (2018), Syam (2018), Zannuba (2008), Azra (2002, 2004), Yusuf and Haris, Burhanudin and Dijk (2013), and Tjandrasasminta (Tjandrasasminta & Tjandrasasminta, 2009). In his other work, Laffan uses the term Indonesian Islam. Several of these studies are in the form of books (Laffan, 2011). Several other studies in the form of journal articles are studies by Mujamil Qomar (2015, pp. 198–217), Khabibi Muhammad Luthfi (2016, pp. 1–12), Taufik Bilfagih (Bilfagih, 2016), Luqman Nurhisam, and Mualimul Huda (2016).

Based on our analysis of the written works above, there are eight emerging fields of discourse ; (1) epistemology (the studies of Laffan, Mustofa, and Baso), (2) methodology (the studies of Ghazali and Bazdawie), (3) archeology (the study of Tjandrasasminta), (4) normative (the study of Haidar), (5) socio-cultural (the studies of Hariyadi, Lutfi, Bilfagih, Zannuba, Yusuf and Haris, Pringle, Harnish and Rasmussen, Racha, Weintraub, and Geertz), (6) politics (the studies of Künkler and Stepan, Menchik, Robinson, and

Personal), (7) movement and work style (the studies of Syam, Azra, Syaban, Qomar, Nurhisam, and Huda), and (8) critical studies (the studies of Burhanudin and Dijk, and Kersten). These studies provide deliberation on the epistemological and methodological levels, in addition to the critical study and material levels.

As far as the authors' tracking, the term Islam Nusantara was immediately enlivened by a number of the official sites of material resources (n.d.) and social media accounts, especially Facebook (*Dakwah Islam Nusantara*, n.d.; *Islam Nusantara: Situs Web Berita & Media*, n.d.; *Islam Nusantara Aswaja*, n.d.; *Islam Nusantara Channel*, n.d.; *Komunitas Islam Nusantara*, n.d.; *PIN, Pejuang Islam Nusantara*, n.d.; Fajri & MetroTV, 2018). Thus, Nusantara Islam, as a social movement, has the background of empirical reality, historical roots, and contemporary social media. All of these backgrounds have the potential to be studied, especially in Islamic studies, with various approaches and perspectives.

The flows of Islam Nusantara Studies can be observed from various perspectives, study materials, and core subject dialectics. However, previous research has largely emphasized its theological and historical foundations or its sociological dimensions in relation to the Indonesian Muslim identity. While valuable, these studies provide limited attention to the digital representation of Islam Nusantara and its philological continuity with classical traditions in Indonesia. This study offers a novel contribution by examining Islam Nusantara through a triangulated digital approach that combines quantitative content analysis, qualitative framing, and philological evidence. This approach not only maps discourse on online platforms but also situates it within Indonesia's intellectual heritage, addressing a gap in earlier studies. In doing so, this study explores the prospects of Islam Nusantara as an Islamic model with relevance at both the national and international levels (Sarkawi, Qadariyah, & Karim, 2024; Trilaksono, Komalasari, Tubarad, & Yuliansyah, 2021).

2. Literature Review

This study draws on four theoretical lenses to explore its epistemological foundation, methodological distinctiveness, sociocultural expression, and critical reception. This section presents key academic contributions grouped according to these frameworks, providing context for understanding how Islam Nusantara is represented and debated across scholarly and digital platforms.

2.1 Epistemological Foundations: Islam as Cultural Hybridization

Michel Laffan offers one of the most comprehensive historical-theoretical analyses of Islam Nusantara. He situates the phenomenon within a *longue durée* perspective, asserting that Islam observed in the Indonesian archipelago is the result of complex cultural and religious hybridization processes. Laffan draws on Thomas Kuhn's notion of "anomaly" to argue that the evolution of Islam in Nusantara reflects adaptive paradigms that have historically absorbed local customs and socio-political realities (Laffan, 2011, p. 112). His other work, *The Origin of Islam of Nusantara*, reinforces this by stating that Islam Nusantara is not a deviant sect but a continuation of Indonesia's historical Islamic development, deeply rooted in local Sufi networks and indigenous traditions (Laffan 2015, 27–29).

2.2 Methodological Discourse: Contextual Ijtihad and Legal Pluralism

Abdul Moqsiith Ghazali outlines the methodological underpinnings of Islam Nusantara by distinguishing two forms of *ijtihad*: *takhrīj al-manāṭ* (analytical contextualization) and *tahqīq al-manāṭ* (practical contextualization). These methods are based on classical Islamic jurisprudence but have been reinterpreted to align with the Indonesian sociocultural setting. Ghazali highlights the use of *maṣlaḥah mursalah*, *istiḥsān*, and *urf*—principles which allow customary practices to be recognized as valid sources of law (Ghazali in Baso, 2015, pp. 27–29).

Wael B. Hallaq, in his seminal work *Was the Gate of Ijtihad Closed?* provides a foundational legal-historical argument supporting the continuity and necessity of *Ijtihad* in modern Islamic thought. He rejects the notion that creative Islamic jurisprudence ended in the classical era and affirms the adaptability of *ijtihad* in diverse contexts, including postcolonial societies such as Indonesia (Hallaq, 1984, pp. 3–4).

2.3 Socio-Anthropological Identity: Islam, Pluralism, and Locality

Azra argues that Indonesian Islam, often identified with Islam Nusantara, is marked by moderation, pluralism, and accommodation of local culture. He emphasizes that this form of Islam emerged through dynamic interaction between global Islamic traditions and local sociocultural norms, producing a “smiling Islam” that embraces democracy and tolerance (van Dijk and Burhani, 2013, pp. 63–74). Similarly, Yenny Wahid et al., cited in Zainul Milal Bizawie, *Masterpiece Islam Nusantara*, support this socio-anthropological framing by documenting how Islam Nusantara provides a culturally resonant model of religiosity that bridges traditional pesantren values and contemporary civil society (Bizawie, 2016).

Ngatawi Al-Zastrouw contributes a sociological explanation, arguing that the Qur’an and Hadith provide only universal principles that must be translated into culturally specific terms to be operational. Hence, Islam Nusantara reflects the vernacularization of Islam that suits Indonesia’s linguistic and cultural diversity (Al-Zastrouw 2017, 4–5).

2.4. Critical Perspectives and Digital Contestation

Several scholars approach Islam Nusantara from a critical standpoint, including Carool Kersten, who interprets the phenomenon as part of a broader ideological contest within Indonesian Islam between reformists, traditionalists, and modernist interpretations (Kersten, 2015, pp. 109–128).

Further digital discourse analysis by A.I. Abdurahman (2018) reveals online polarization concerning Islam Nusantara. While supportive narratives highlight its pluralist orientation, oppositional discourses portray it as a deviation from “pure Islam,” reflecting broader ideological tensions in the post-Reformasi Islamic public sphere (A. I. Abdurahman, 2018, pp. 191–204).

3. Methodology

This study was conducted using specific approaches and materials aligned with its focus. It uses a multidisciplinary approach with three analytical methods: content analysis, framing analysis, and philological analysis. These diverse analyses systematically depict the trajectory of studies on Islam Nusantara and the evolving perspectives within this field. These insights were drawn from textual sources, field data, and information sourced from contemporary media.

Philological analysis is used to trace the variants and contents of the Nusantara ulema works as an important material in laying the foundations of Islam Nusantara teachings. Framing analysis is used to understand and interpret reality by framing public responses and the dynamics of Islam Nusantara research. Therefore, this study prioritizes the framing analysis model by Murray Edelman, one of the four framing analysis models. Content analysis was used for categorization, with the meaning of all studies data collected from various sources. A quantitative content analysis was used. The authors intend to describe the flow of studies on Islam Nusantara from the following years and from decade to decade. The sampling of this study consists of four categories of sources: (i) books, (ii) journal and proceeding articles, (iii) web-based articles, and (iv) the works of Nusantara ulema from six academic fields of study. The last category is the result of philological analysis. The six categories of academic fields are (i) ontology and basic concepts, (ii) epistemology, (iii) axiology, (iv) methodology, (v) materials (norms, works, and movements), and (vi) critical studies and discourse.

To ensure the validity and reliability of the findings, this study employed a triangulated verification strategy across content, framing, and philological analyses. In content analysis, validity is maintained by applying systematic coding procedures based on predefined categories derived from theoretical frameworks, while intercoder agreement is tested to ensure reliability. For the framing analysis, data credibility was enhanced through iterative comparisons between manifest textual patterns and latent ideological structures, verified by peer debriefing and recoding cycles to reduce researcher bias. In philological analysis, textual authenticity and consistency were validated by cross-referencing multiple manuscript versions and applying established critical apparatuses. The integration of these three approaches forms a multi-layered analytical framework (see Figure 1), where reliability is strengthened through cross-method corroboration, and validity is enhanced by converging evidence from different analytical lenses.

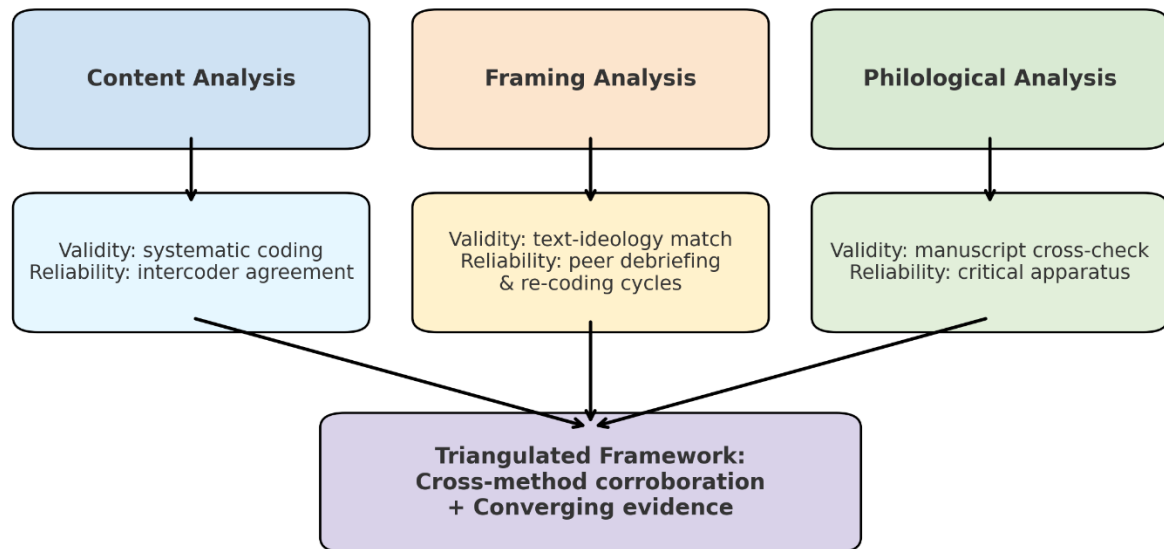


Figure 1: Framework of Validity and Reliability in Content, Framing, and Philological Analysis

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Concept of Islam Nusantara and Its Ijtihad Formulation

This section describes the concept of Islam Nusantara and its formulation of *ijtihad* from various references, views, and developing discourse dynamics. The authors attempt to begin discussing the concept of Islam Nusantara from the initiator of Islam Nusantara as a movement since the NU 33rd Congress in Jombang, East Java, in 2015. The main initiator was KH Ahmad Ishomudin (Lampung), Chairman of the PBNU Syuriah (Legislative) led by KH Sahal Mahfudz. He stated, “It was me and my friends at PBNU who initiated the concept of Islam Nusantara ahead of the 33rd NU Congress 1-5 August 2015 in Jombang, East Java. The idea has been discussed in the joint meeting of the PBNU Syuriah (Legislative) and Tanfidziyah (Executive), reviewed many times in the *Bahth al-Masail* (Problems Discussion) and repeatedly held seminars, and even became the big theme of the NU Congress so that it became the consensus of the congress participants.” After the congress, Islam Nusantara was propagated by PBNU through the International Summit of the Moderate Islamic Leaders (ISOMIL) on 9-11 May 2016 at the Jakarta Convention Center, which was attended by prominent scholars from 23 countries and received extraordinary appreciation and acceptance (“Inilah Penggagas Islam Nusantara Hingga Jadi Tema Mukhtamar NU Ke-33,” 2018).

According to KH Ahmad Ishomudin, Islam Nusantara does not seek to supplant Islam revealed in Arab countries. Instead, it is dedicated to promoting moderate Islamic teachings that respect diversity, reflecting the distinctive characteristics of the Indonesian culture. Islam Nusantara, which is famous for its moderate Indonesian Muslim face, has become a topic of discussion among religious leaders, observers, and diplomats at the UN headquarters in New York some time ago. Thus, Islam Nusantara received a positive response from other countries because it was proven to show diversity, tolerance, and democracy (Muhammad & Fathoni, 2015). Ishomudin’s perspective serves as a foundational concept for other viewpoints on Islam Nusantara. For example, Mahbib expressed the following view: He explained that Islam Nusantara was drawn from historical and socio-anthropological roots, dialogued, and carried into the future. Islam Nusantara, as a model of Indonesian Islam, is an empirical form of Islam in the Archipelago (*Nusantara*) since the 16th century, as a result of interaction, contextualization, indigenization, interpretation, and vernacularizing of universal Islamic teachings and values, which follow Indonesia’s socio-cultural reality (Mahbib, 2015).

There are two important issues to note in Laffan’s study. *First*, the Sufi order’s important contribution to the successful spread of Islam in Nusantara was to form a solid Islamic foundation. *Second*, the serious challenges of Islam Nusantara from the internal groups of revivalism movements (Wahhabism and Pan-Islamism) and external factors (the split politics of colonialism and Christianization). These

challenges have led to a serious polarity of Islam that undermines the body of Islam itself, as well as a dramatic portrait of the feud and struggle for the political stage. This condition indeed represents the ever-changing face of Islam in Nusantara, but Islam Nusantara is the face of Islam that is uniquely Indonesian. Islam Nusantara is a unique Indonesian religiosity identity and character. Islamic culture can be understood as the identity of the Indonesian people (Hariyadi 2010). The terms that become the spirit are Islam, the Nusantara, and the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (called NKRI) (Baso 2015).

The basic concept of Islam Nusantara was demonstrated in more detail in a work by the JNM (Jamaah Nahdliyin Mataram) writing team published in August 2015 in collaboration with the 33rd NU Congress Committee. In 13 sections, there are five sub-discussions showing the basic concepts of Nusantara Islam, namely (1) Islam Nusantara, One Islam with Various Traditions, (2) Islam Nusantara and Art Creativity, Indigenizing Islamic Spirituality, (3) Cultural Strategy, about Walisongo's Role in Establishing Islam Nusantara, (4) Islam Nusantara and Politics, National Anchor for a Civilized World, and (5) Islam Nusantara, the Way of Salvation of Indonesian People (N. K. Ridwan et al., 2015). The last sub-discussion presents a romantic portrait of Islam Nusantara.

Issues on Islam Nusantara have become sophisticated in the dynamics of discourse and studies developed after the NU's 33rd Congress. These issues were highlighted in several studies at the 2018 International Conference on Islam Nusantara, organized by the Islamic University of Malang (UNISMA). This conference is to be carried out in order: (1) to have a better understanding of the concept of Indonesian Islam (Islam Nusantara), (2) to hear the voices of the national and international academics and observers on the role of Islam Nusantara in promoting and sustaining national integrity as well as world peace, and (3) to promote Islamic, national, and international brotherhood to promote and sustain world peace. The conference set the theme 'Indonesian Islam, National Integrity, and World Peace.' This theme contains five sub-themes, namely Islam Nusantara and pluralism, Islam Nusantara and anti-radicalism, Islam Nusantara and democracy, Islam Nusantara and national integrity, and Islam Nusantara and World Peace (Maskuri et al., 2018a). This shows the substance of the conference on the existence of Indonesian Islam, which is not limited to the context of national integrity but also world peace.

The second is *taḥqīq al-manāṭ*, which anchors Islam in the context of diverse cultures. This method applies *maṣlaḥah mursalah*, *istiḥsān*, and *ʿurf*. For example, with the argument "what is considered good by most people, it is also good according to Allah" (*ma ra'āhu al-muslimun ḥasan fahuwa 'inda Allāh ḥasan*), Maliki scholars do not hesitate to make *istiḥsān* as a legal argument. One form of *istiḥsān* is to leave the general law (*ḥukm kullī*) and take the exception (*ḥukm juzʿī*). If *istiḥsān* makes many exceptions, *ʿurf* often accommodates local culture. A rule states *that al-thābit bi al-ʿurf is ka al-thābit bi al-naṣṣ* (something that is determined based on tradition has the same position as something that is determined based on the Qur'an and Hadith). Another rule states *al-ʿādah muḥakkamah* (customs can be used as a source of law) (Moqsith, 2016, pp. 28–29).

With any methodology, the *ijtihād* of Islam Nusantara can be critically studied through Wael B. Hallaq's study, *Was the Gate of Ijtihad Closed?* Hallaq stated that *ijtihād* is indispensable as the only way for Muslims to determine the extent to which their actions are acceptable to Allah. Every *mujtahid* who exerts himself to perform *ijtihād* is entitled to a heavenly reward, regardless of whether the result of his *ijtihād* is right or wrong. In the history of Islamic law, the idea of closing the door to *ijtihād* or the extinction of the *mujtahids* did not emerge during the first five centuries of Islam, and in a primitive form, it began in the early sixth/twelfth century. Over the following centuries, jurists' differences were fueled by ambiguities in legal terminology. The continuity of *ijtihād* throughout Islamic history shows that positive law, legal theory, and justice have indeed developed. Only through a chronological study of the writings of the jurists can these developments be traced and a more accurate picture of the history of Islamic law be reconstructed. *Ijtiḥād* and *mujtahid* are used in the legal domain and are needed at higher levels of government. *Ijtiḥād*, the backbone of Sunni legal doctrine, is manifested in the exclusion of all groups that reject this legal principle (Hallaq, 1984, pp. 33–34).

4.2 Islam Nusantara in Online Resources

This analysis illustrates the varying levels of contribution from each decade and the growth in contributions across decades. Among these four decades, the 2010s witnessed the highest level of contribution in the form of books on Islam Nusantara, with 46 books (69%). The increase in contribution from the 1990s to the 2000s was 17%, and from the 2000s to the 2010s, it surged by 48%.

4.2.1 The First Group of Resource

The first group of resources or studies comes from books or e-books. There are no less than 67 books that the authors have written about Islam Nusantara. Several of these books are in Indonesian and English languages. The first book that can be found, based on the year of publication, was the work of Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* (1971), which contains a comparison between religious realities in Morocco and Indonesia. These two countries are known for their strong spiritual base as the foundation of their daily religious practices. The book is one of two books published in the 1990s. Another book is the work of M. Ali Haidar, *Nahdatul Ulama dan Islam di Indonesia: Pendekatan Fikih dalam Politik* (1994). This book uses a normative approach to *fiqh* in politics, related to the relationship between NU and Islam in Indonesia.

Other studies that used the term 'Islam Nusantara' or Indonesian Islam in the form of books or e-books were those by Nur Kholik Ridwan et al. (2015), Anis Masykhur et al. (2018), Azyumardi Azra et al. (2020), Ahmad Baso (2015), Zainul Milal Bizawie (2016), A. Ginanjar Syaban (2017), Adhi Maftuhin (2018), Nur Syam (2018), Yenny Zannuba (2008), Azyumardi Azra (2002, 2004), Choirul Fuad Yusuf and Tawalinuddin Haris (2014), Jajat Burhanudin and Kees van Dijk (2013), and Uka Tjandrasasminta (Tjandrasasminta & Tjandrasasminta, 2009). Also the studies with the same form are works of M. Ali Haidar (1994), Carool Kersten (2015), Robert Pringle (2010), Inaya Rakhmani (2017), David D. Harnish and Anne K. Rasmussen (2011), Mirjam Künkler and Alfred C. Stepan (2013), Jeremy Menchik (2016), Kathryn May Robinson (2008), Yanwar Pribadi (2018), Andrew N. Weintraub (2011) and Laffan in another study (2011). Several of these studies are presented in the form of books. Other examples of research are journal articles uploaded on online websites. There are the research of Mujamil Qomar (2015), Khabibi Muhammad Luthfi (2016), Luqman Nurhisam and Mualimul Huda (2016), Dudung Abdurahman (2018), and Saiful Mustofa (2015).

The studies above illustrate the spirit of the work in the form of books on Islam Nusantara and Islam in Indonesia. The most interesting aspect of these works is the attention given to the studies of Islam Nusantara and Islam in Indonesia. The authors were not only dominated by NU people but also from outside NU, such as books written by Hamka, *Sejarah Umat Islam Pra-Kenabian hingga Islam di Nusantara* (2016) and *Dari Perbendaharaan Lama Menyingkap Sejarah Islam di Nusantara* (2017).

4.2.2 The Second Group of Resource

The second group of resources comes in the form of journal articles and proceedings (Maskuri et al., 2018b). The major studies of 236 journal articles and proceedings occurred in 2018, with 49 articles (22%). The second rank occurred in 2017 with 46 articles (20%). The last ranking occurred in 2007, 2008, and 2009, each containing one article. These articles were distributed across 149 journals and 11 proceedings. This distribution shows the rapid dynamics of the scientific world's attention to the subject of "Islam Nusantara."

The 149 scientific journals are rated Sinta 1 accreditation (indexed by Scopus), Sinta 2-5, and non-ranked accreditation, and indexed by the Web of Science. There are three Sinta 1 journals and three conference proceedings that focus on the study of Islam Nusantara. The three journals are the QIJS, IJIMS, and Studia Islamika. QIJS presents two problematic and formulating articles "Islam Nusantara: A Middle Way?" (Nurhisam & Huda, 2016) and "Reconstruction of Fiqh Nusantara: Developing the Ijtihad Methodology in Formulating Fiqh from Indonesian Perspective." (Kasdi, 2019) IJIMS presents a critical article "Islam Nusantara, ulemas, and social media: understanding the pros and cons of Islam Nusantara among ulemas of West Sumatera" (B. Ridwan et al., 2019). Studia Islamika presents two contextual articles "A Textual Approach to Understanding Nusantara Muslims" (Fathurahman, 2013) and "*Islāmwa Fiqh Nusantara: al-Tanāfus 'alā al-Huwīyah wa 'Alāqat al-Sultahwa al-Ramz al-Dīnī li*

Jam'iyah Nahdlatul Ulama" (2017). Furthermore, three of the 11 proceedings contributed dialectical articles and theme "Islam Nusantara: Religion Dialectic and Cultural for Pluralism-Democratic Society" (Murfi & Fitriyani, 2018), "Rethinking Indonesia's 'Islam Nusantara': From Local Relevance to Global Significance" (Afandi, 2017), and "*Islam Nusantara: Meneguhkan Moderatisme dan Mengikis Ekstrimisme dalam Kehidupan Beragama*" (2016).

As far as data searching, the flow of studies in the form of articles moves dynamically toward publishing scientific journals that focus on the studies of "Islam Nusantara" and "Indonesian Islam". In this case, there are three journals: *International Journal of Nusantara Islam* (n.d.), *Jurnal Islam Nusantara* (JIN, n.d.), and *Journal of Indonesian Islam* (n.d.). Even this last journal in April 2020 has reached the Sinta I ranking (Science and Technology Index, 2020) and Scopus Q1 index ranking on SJR (Scimago Journal & Country Rank, 2020). This achievement shows that studies on Islam Nusantara and Indonesian Islam have made significant progress in terms of their scientific quality.

4.2.3 The Third Group of Resource

The third group of resources comes from works in the form of web-based articles. Along with the acceleration of web-based information, articles and opinions have also experienced rapid development. For this study, the articles were explored as far as possible on a real-time basis. This search yielded 127 articles. The major study of web-based articles on Islam Nusantara was conducted in 2015, with 33 articles (26%). This number also illustrates the spirit of the study. The second highest number was in 2018, with 36 articles (28,3%). The third rank was in 2020 with 19 articles (15%). The fourth highest number was in 2019, with 18 articles (14,2%). The fifth rank was in 2016, with eight articles (6,3%). The seventh rank was in 2017, with seven articles (5,5%). The lowest rank was in 2023, with six articles (4,7%).

The study fields described in various studies are presented in different formats, including physical books, e-books, journal articles, e-journal articles, conference papers, e-proceedings, and web-based articles. The field of materials is the most prominent, contributing to 33% of the total with 21 books. Following closely, critical studies and discourses accounted for 23% with 15 books. In contrast, axiology holds the lowest rank, represented by only three books (5%). The other major fields are distributed as follows: epistemology (22%), represented by 14 books; ontology and basic concepts (9%), contributed by six books; and methodology (8%), accounted for by five books.

In this study, in addition to descriptive articles, the authors also accommodate several problematic, controversial, and informative articles. This is intended by the authors so that the struggle of ideas and reality of Islam Nusantara is comprehensively seen from various sides as material for scientific studies and historical testing ground. A problematic article, for example, was given by Erton Arsy Vialy, "*Kontroversi Islam Nusantara (Reportase Majelis Kemisan)*" (2015).(Vialy, 2015) The article on discourse was provided by Danu Damarjati, "*Heboh Islam Nusantara*" (2018).(Damarjati, 2018b) The Controversial articles werewritten by Mahmud Budi Setiawan, "*5 Kejanggalaan Gagasan Islam Nusantara*" (Setiawan, 2015) and Dinda Audriene Muthmainah, "*Khotbah, Ketua MUI Sumbar 'Harga Mati' Tolak Islam Nusantara*" (Muthmainah, 2018). The informative articles were given by Rijal Mumazziq, "*Puluhan Bukutentang Islam Nusantara Berbahasa Indonesia, Arab dan Daerah telah Diterbitkan*" (2018) and "*Telah Terbit Ensiklopedia Ulama Penulis Kitab Karya Gus Nana*" (2020).(2020).

4.3 Works of Nusantara Ulema

In addition, some studies have explored online data to obtain information about the works of Nusantara Ulema. The authors present data based on 14 scientific fields with a library index number, as described in the following table.

Table 1. Number of Nusantara Ulema Works Based on Scientific Disciplines

No.	Scientific Fields	Number of Works	Percentage
1	(297.0) Islam	24	4,62%
2	(297.04) Islam dan Bahasa	6	1,15%
3	(297.1) Al-Qur'an dan ilmu yang berkaitan	53	10,19%
4	(297.2) Hadis dan ilmu yang berkaitan	63	12,12%
5	(297.3) Aqaid dan Ilmu Kalam	42	8,08%
6	(297.4) Fikih	125	24,04%
7	(297.5) Akhlak dan Tasawuf	127	24,42%
8	(297.54) Doa-Zikir	2	0,38%
9	(297.6) Sosial dan Budaya	20	3,85%
10	(297.7) Perkembangan	4	0,77%
11	(297.71) Psikologi Islam	1	0,19%
12	(297.73) Pendidikan	8	1,54%
13	(297.8) Aliran dan Sekte	11	2,12%
14	(297.9) Sejarah Islam dan Biografi	34	6,54%
	Total Number of Works	520	100%

Source: The table was created by Sokhi Huda et al., 2023, following the materials from “Karya Ulama Indonesia, Gerbang Kearifan”(Puslitbang Lektur dan Khazanah Keagamaan Kemenag, n.d.).

The data in the table are the results of online exploration. This method is also enriched by the offline method to the academic colleague sources, the author's family, the management officers of the author's institution, and gifts from the Scientific Studies Committee. Online exploration was conducted by the authors of the following sources:

1. provider site of information listing indexed works, namely the official site of the Indonesian Ministry of Religion with the information title “*Karya Ulama Indonesia, Gerbang Kearifan*” (Puslitbang Lektur dan Khazanah Keagamaan Kemenag, n.d.);
2. provider site of free soft copy data (pdf), with the information title “*Download 150 Karya Nusantara Ulema*” (Fauz, 2019).
3. two web articles about the works of Nusantara clerics, namely:
 - a. “Jejak Kitab-Kitab Karya Ulama Indonesia di Jazirah Arab” (Ashaqi, 2016)
 - b. “Hebat, Ini Karya-karya Nusantara Ulema Yang Mendunia” (Oim, 2018).

This study prioritizes the two sources of information above to compile a list of the works of the Indonesian Ulema as attached and to describe them systematically. Furthermore, the study utilized sources to inform the enrichment and review processes. The study was carried out using other sources in the form of news media and commercial advertisements on online stores and social media as follows:

1. republika.co.id, “Menengok Karya Ulama Terdahulu” (Muftisany, 2015);
2. khazanah.republika.co.id, “Terungkap, Manuskrip Langka Ulama India Akui Kepakaran Syekh Nawawi” (Nasrullah, 2017);
3. tokopedia.com, “200 Kitab Karya Nusantara Ulema” (Store, n.d.);

4. Social media of Facebook, “Dapatkan DVD Berisi Ratusan Kitab Nusantara Ulema!” (Nusantara, 2019).

From the priorities of the resources of information above, the study seeks to describe the data in the forms of (a) a list of multilingual works of Nusantara scholars with classifications and library index numbers that provide cover information, published information, and abstracts of the work concerned when the title of the work is clicked to go to the address of the information, and (b) a list of Nusantara Ulema’s works in Arabic that provides 150 titles written in Arabic letters, and provides a download link that points to the website address of the manuscript provider.

The studies of Islam Nusantara were obtained from several widely published books, journals and proceeding articles, and web-based articles, considering the qualifications and relevance of the study. As far as exploration carried out by the authors until June 2023, there are 68 books, 257 journal articles and proceedings, and 134 web-based articles. These studies were obtained based on the clarity of the sources and completeness of the information published, as well as showing the study stream based on the year of publication and fields of study. Along with the acceleration of information media, that number will change at a later time.

A brief description of the studies of Islam Nusantara is presented in the table below.

Table 2. The Studies on Islam Nusantara

No.	Study Forms	Studies Quantit y	Major Studies				Minor Studies			
			Year	in Year/ Decade	Quantity	%	Year (s)	in Year/ Decade	Quantity	%
1	Book	68	2018	2010s	12	17,6 %	2019	2010s	-	-
2	Journal Article	257	2018	2010s	49	20,8 %	2007 , 2008 , 2009	2010s	1	0,4 %
3	Web-based Article	134	2018	2010s	39	29,1 %	2023	2020s	6	4,7 %
4	Nusantara Ulema’s Works	520								
	Amount	979	-	-	-	-	-			-

Source: the table was created by Sokhi Huda et al., 2023

The major written language of the multilingual works is Arabic, with 377 works (72.50%). The second highest number of works was in Indonesian (129 works, 24.81%). The third rank is the local language, with five works (0.96%). Furthermore, the number of translated works is nine (1.73%). Almost all of this work is material; therefore, the author positions it as material for Islam Nusantara Studies.

4.4 Islam Nusantara in Online Discourses

Studies on Islam Nusantara in online discourse can be classified into various perspectives. There were confirmative, problematic, controversial, and ideal-claim perspectives. These various viewpoints on significant matters must be elucidated and deliberated upon, especially at the preliminary stage, through well-researched studies and comprehensive concepts that exhibit strong academic merit, perhaps even considerable academic influence.

Several analysis tools are used to determine Islam Nusantara in online discourse. There are philological, framing, and content analyses. Philological analysis is used to trace the variants and contents of the Nusantara ulema works as an important material in laying the foundations of Islam Nusantara teachings. Framing analysis is used to understand and interpret reality by framing public responses and the dynamics of Islam Nusantara research. Therefore, this study prioritizes the framing analysis model by Murray Edelman, one of the four framing analysis models. Content analysis was used for categorization, with the meaning of all studies data collected from various sources. A quantitative content analysis was used. The authors intend to describe the flow of studies on Islam Nusantara from the following years and from decade to decade. This study sets four categories of sources and six categories of fields of study: books, journal and proceeding articles, web-based articles, and the works of Nusantara ulema. The last category is the result of philological analysis. The six categories of fields, as described above, are ontology and basic concepts, epistemology, axiology, methodology, materials (norms, works, and movements), critical studies, and discourse.

Several works above discuss eight aspects; (1) epistemology (the studies of Laffan, Mustofa, and Baso), (2) methodology (the studies of Ghazali and Bazdawie), (3) archeology (the study of Tjandrasasminta), (4) normative (the study of Haidar), (5) socio-cultural (the studies of Hariyadi, Lutfi, Bilfagih, Zannuba, Yusuf and Haris, Pringle, Harnish and Rasmussen, Racha, Weintraub, and Geertz), (6) politics (the studies of Künkler and Stepan, Menchik, Robinson, and Personal), (7) movement and work style (the studies of Syam, Azra, Syaban, Qomar, Nurhisam, and Huda), and (8) critical studies (the studies of Burhanudin and Dijk, and Kersten). These studies provide a discussion at the epistemological and methodological levels, in addition to the critical study and material levels.

Table 3. The Studies on the Islam Nusantara

No	Study Forms	Field of Study									
		Book	%	Journal Article	%	Web-based Article	%	Nusantar a Ulema's Works	%	Amount	%
1	Ontology and Basic Concepts	6	9,1 %	34	11,9 %	28	21,3 %	All works are categorized as materials (norms, movements, and works).		68	6,4%
2	Epistemology	14	21,2 %	56	22,5 %	13	8,7%			83	8,2%
3	Axiology	3	4,5 %	14	5,9 %	10	7,9%			27	2,8%
4	Methodology	5	7,6 %	43	17,8 %	4	3,1%			52	5,4%
5	Material (norms, movements, and works)	25	34,8 %	51	20,3 %	20	15,7 %			616	64,4 %

No	Study Forms	Field of Study									
		Book	%	Journal Article	%	Web-based Article	%	Nusantar a Ulema's Works	%	Amount	%
6	Critical Study and Discourse	15	22,7 %	59	21,6 %	59	43,3 %			133	12,8 %
	Amount	68	100 %	257	100 %	134	100 %	520	100 %	979	100 %

Source: The table was created by Sokhi Huda et al., 2023.

Another important aspect to consider is the comments of experts and figures on some studies on Islam Nusantara. For example, in Ahmad Suaedy's book, *Gus Dur, Islam Nusantara, dan Kewarganegaraan Bineka* (2018), there are comments from three experts and figures. *Firstly*, comments from Ahmad Syafii Maarif (Former Chairman of PP Muhammadiyah and Humanist Figure):

Gus Dur managed to convince them because Gus Dur is believed to be able to solve the problem well and is known as a democratic Muslim leader, with a clear vision of pluralism and nationality. Gus Dur is a concrete figure of Islam Nusantara as revealed in Ahmad Suaedy's book.

Second, comments from Said Agil Siraj (Sufism Expert and General Chair of the Nahdlatul Ulama Board/PBNU):

We still have much to learn from Gus Dur. In this book, Ahmad Suaedy describes in detail how Gus Dur, as President of the Republic of Indonesia, handled two conflicts that have been burning for decades, namely, the conflicts in Aceh and Papua.

Third, comments from Franz Magnis-Suseno (Pastor and Professor of Philosophy of STF Driyarkara Jakarta). Suaedy succeeded in revealing Gus Dur's humanist side in dealing with the aspirations of the Aceh and Papuan separatist exponents through a personal and empathetic approach. These three comments can be systematically understood in the core of Suaedy's book, namely that Gus Dur succeeded in reversing the strategy of resolving the Aceh and Papua conflicts. He provides justice and then demands loyalty in three steps: recognition, respect, and transformation of state institutions to accommodate them. Therefore, citizenship based on the Islam Nusantara methodology is built.

Several reviews involve historical and socio-anthropological studies by experts on the existence of Islam Nusantara as a concept and reality. These reviews also accommodate several responses and discourses that are developing to see the axiological power of the concept of Islam Nusantara, which in the past two decades has actively carried out the struggle for identity. Laffan's study makes a central contribution to the review of Islam Nusantara as an Islamic Model of Reality. He explained that the great narrative of Islam for hundreds of years in the Nusantara must be positioned as a precipitate of various frenzied elements. Islam that can be seen now is the result of perfect cloning of hybrid culture from a heterogeneous cultural landscape. Therefore, ambitious and instant rejection arguments against the 'Islam Nusantara' discourse in the actual decade need to be responded to academically. This discourse is popularized as a form of identity capture in the socio-anthropological context (Laffan, 2015).

Laffan's research explicitly explains that "Islam (in) Nusantara" has historical roots that are stuck deep into the past. 'Islam Nusantara' is nothing but a copy of the history of Islam in the Nusantara itself. 'Islam Nusantara' is not a splinter flow that tries to break away from the Islamic petals that have already been pruned. 'Islam Nusantara' is a direct example of subtle relations between people and nations in the Nusantara.(Laffan, 2015)

Ngatawi Al-Zastrouw explained, that historically-sociologically two things caused the emergence of Islam Nusantara construction. *First*, the Qur'an and Hadith contain only the basic principles and values of universal Islamic teachings. To be applied operationally, practical instructions appropriate to the context and sociocultural reality of society are needed. This is analogous to the Constitution of a nation. *Second*, the social and cultural realities of the Nusantara community differ from those of Arabs. Therefore, when the teachings of Islam were translated into Arabic, the Nusantara, which has a variety of languages that are different from Arabic, required tools to understand the Qur'an and hadith in Arabic. To overcome this cultural gap, nusantara saints, scholars, and kiai try to translate Islamic teachings into cultural languages that are following the level of understanding and sociological conditions of the nation of Nusantara. (Al-Zastrouw, 2017, pp. 4–5)

The sign of opportunity carries weight, indicating that Islam Nusantara is an effort to address the sociopolitical challenges within the global Islamic community. As Islam Nusantara seeks to establish itself as a model for Islamic reality, it faces continuous evaluation in terms of its value and principles. Both supportive and opposing reactions are essential to this process. Therefore, discussions surrounding topics like “*Heboh Islam Nusantara*” should not overshadow the recognition of its inevitability.

On the axiological framework of Islam Nusantara, there are several pros, controversial, problematic, and confirmative discourses. The number of supportive discourses is quite substantial, as indicated in the list provided in the web-based articles. This discourse endeavors to advance and accelerate the pace of the Islam Nusantara movement. Several other important discourses to be taken into account in the axiological test of Islam Nusantara are controversial, problematic, and confirmative, as follows:

4.4.1 Controversial Discourses

1. *5 Kejanggalan Gagasan Islam Nusantara* (Setiawan, 2015);
2. *Khotbah, Ketua MUI Sumbar ‘Harga Mati’ Tolak Islam Nusantara* (Muthmainah, 2018);
3. *MUI Sumbar: Islam Nusantara tidak dibutuhkan di Ranah Minang* (Dalimunthe, 2018);
4. *MUI Sumbar Tolak ‘Islam Nusantara’ di Ranah Minang* (S, 2018);
5. *MUI Sumatera Barat Tolak Islam Nusantara* (Damarjati, 2018a);
6. *Bahaya di Balik Ide ‘Islam Nusantara’* (Sadik, 2015).

4.4.2 Problematic Discourses

1. *Siapa “Nabi” Islam Nusantara?* (nahimunkar.com, 2015)
2. *Islam Nusantara: A local Islam with global ambitions?* (Hosen, 2016)
3. *Polemik di balik istilah ‘Islam Nusantara’* (Affan, 2015);
4. *Islam Nusantara Penerus Islam Liberal* (As-Sewed, 2017).
5. *3 Tokoh Ulama NU Ini Sepakat Tolak Islam Nusantara* (Shadiq, 2015);
6. *Kiai Mustamar Mundur, Ketua Pejuang Islam Nusantara Akui PIN Organisasi Pejuang yang Belum Berjuang* (Bangsaonline, 2019).

In addition, there were two articles that can be noted for the confirmative discourses: *Pesan Jokowi di Harlah Ke-95 NU: Terus Menjadi Spirit Islam Nusantara* (Hutabarat, 2020) and *Din Minta Ulama Sumbar Tak Tolak Islam Nusantara* (Muhyiddin & Firmansyah, 2018).

Several experts from the international community have shared their views on the opportunities of Islam Nusantara as an Islamic model for reality as follows (translated into English):

Based on the authors' view, however, the discourse is developing (A. I. Abdurahman, 2018, pp. 191–204; Fata & Ichwan, 2017, pp. 339–364), Islam Nusantara still experiences what must be experienced, faces what must be faced, and proves what must be proven by it. These are all the integrity of the opportunity and the test of the history of Islam Nusantara as an Islamic Model for Reality. In this case, the authors propose a simple thesis: “Indonesia, with its cultural richness, island richness, and regional breadth becomes the largest field in the world for testing the ideality of Islam’s “*rahmat li al-`alamin*.”

4.4 Integrated Insights and Cross-Method Triangulation

The integration of findings from content, framing, and philological analyses offers a comprehensive understanding of how Islam Nusantara is represented on digital platforms. Quantitative evidence from narrative trends demonstrates that the discourse has gained significant visibility through frequently circulating keywords such as religious moderation, Islam *rahmatan lil-‘alamin*, and local cultures. These recurring terms reveal the extent to which Islam Nusantara resonates with public debates, particularly in online discussions of religious tolerance and national identity.

Complementing this, the framing analysis provides qualitative depth by uncovering the ideological orientations embedded in the media narratives. Inclusivist frames often emphasize Islam Nusantara as an authentic Indonesian expression of Islam that fosters harmony, whereas nationalist frames highlight its alignment with state ideology and Pancasila. Conversely, critical frames problematize Islam Nusantara as an elitist or politicized construct. Such variations show that digital discourse is not monolithic but contested, reflecting broader struggles over religious authority and cultural identity.

Taken together, the triangulation of these methods enhances the validity and reliability of the findings. The convergence of quantitative patterns, qualitative frames, and philological evidence underscores that Islam Nusantara functions simultaneously as a popular narrative, ideological battleground, and heritage-based intellectual tradition. This multidimensional perspective not only enriches academic understanding but also offers practical insights for policymakers, religious leaders, and digital activists to navigate the complexities of religious discourse in contemporary Indonesia.

5. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that Islam Nusantara on digital platforms functions simultaneously as a popular narrative, ideological battleground, and heritage-based intellectual tradition. Quantitative analysis of narrative trends confirms that Islam Nusantara discourse was identified in 2,354 posts across three major digital platforms, with 62% employing inclusivist frames, 28% nationalist frames, and 10% critical frames. The most frequently recurring keywords included religious moderation, *Islam rahmatan lil-‘alamin*, and local culture, indicating the strong online resonance of this discourse. These figures confirm both the visibility and contested nature of Islam Nusantara within the digital public sphere. Beyond the numbers, the framing analysis reveals how Islam Nusantara is constructed ideologically: inclusivist frames underscore its role in fostering harmony, nationalist frames highlight its alignment with state ideology and Pancasila, and critical frames portray it as an elitist or politicized project.

Theoretically, these findings contribute to the growing scholarship on digital religion and Indonesian Islamic studies by offering a multidimensional methodological model that combines content, framing, and philological analyses. This triangulated approach enhances both validity and reliability while providing a nuanced understanding of how Islamic discourse adapts and transforms in the digital era. The results underscore the potential of Islam Nusantara as a resource for promoting moderate Islamic discourse in Indonesia’s plural society. The evidence also provides a basis for developing digital-based religious policies that strengthen inclusivity, counter polarizing narratives, and support integrating local wisdom into religious communication. Thus, this research not only enriches academic debates but also offers applicable insights for policymakers, religious leaders, and digital activists seeking to cultivate harmony in the online religious sphere in Indonesia.

Suggestions

Based on the findings of this study, several suggestions can be offered to advance future research and public engagement with Islam Nusantara discourse.

1. Explore new digital platforms: Future research should investigate representations of Islam Nusantara on emerging platforms such as TikTok, YouTube Shorts, and podcast channels, which are increasingly shaping religious discourse among younger demographics.
2. Expand comparative studies: Comparative research between Islam Nusantara and similar localized Islamic models, such as “Islam Hadhari” in Malaysia or “European Islam,” is recommended to better understand how contextual theologies respond to pluralistic environments.

3. Develop empirical models: Scholars should consider designing empirical tools, such as surveys and focus group discussions, to measure the public reception of Islam Nusantara beyond digital content analysis. This would help validate whether online representations align with offline perceptions.

Limitations

This study, while comprehensive in its digital scope, acknowledges several limitations.

1. Temporal scope: The data are limited to publications and digital content up to June 2023. This restricts the ability to include more recent shifts in discourse, particularly in response to geopolitical developments or the rising digital influence post-pandemic.
2. Geographical representativeness: Although the research considers digital discourse, it does not analyze regional differences in the interpretation and reception of Islam Nusantara across Indonesia's diverse provinces.
3. Lack of direct public engagement: The analysis was based on textual and content-driven approaches. There is a need for ethnographic fieldwork, in-depth interviews, and participatory observations to better understand the lived experiences of Islam Nusantara practitioners.
4. Language constraints: A significant portion of primary sources, especially in Arabic and local vernaculars, may remain underexplored because of translation and accessibility limitations.

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