

ISLAMIC POPUL[AR]ISM: RELIGIOUS POPULARISM AND ACTIVISM IN THE YUKNGAJI COMMUNITY

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Abstract

The increase of Islamic populism is in line with a massive spread of popular culture bringing Islamic symbols. This condition has brought a proliferation of Islamic activism which promotes its discourse with popular styles familiar to millennials. *YukNgaji* community, which is popularly emerging on social media, is one of the Islamic movements arising from this condition. This article examines how popular culture works in creating a discourse of Islamic activism in the *YukNgaji* online movement. This fieldwork uses a socio-political approach to analyze the proliferation of the *YukNgaji* movement in various areas driven by millennials. Some of the informants' field data and experiences were obtained through an ethnographic method. Besides, some data on Islamic activism discourse amplified by *YukNgaji* was obtained from screenshots in *YukNgaji.id* movement's Instagram accounts. This article finds the relationship between Islamic discourse by *YukNgaji* activists and popular cultural narratives. According to the finding of this article, it reveals that the phenomenon of millennial Islamic

movements can be read within the scope of Islamic populism and activism in Indonesia by two important things. First, the *YukNgaji* movement campaigns for Islamic discourse through popular culture. Second, the *YukNgaji* movement tends to create a group with a common Islamic identity, which is voiced through the concept of *hijra*.

Keywords: *YukNgaji*, Islamic popularism, *hijra*, religious activism

A. Introduction

This study investigates how popular culture works in creating Islamic activism discourse in the *YukNgaji* online movement. Some Islamic activism succeeded in creating an Islamic identity and establishing Islamic social movements. For instance, Muhammadiyah and Nahdhatul Ulama, the two largest Islamic mass organizations, take Islamic activism issue into consideration in response to the socio-cultural-political situation (Alfian, 1989; Asyari, 2017; Bush, 2009; Ismail, 2011; Nashir, 2015). In the Reformation Era, Islamic activism proliferates in some forms of movements. The fall of the New Order regime had a far-reaching impact on Indonesia's struggle for identity and politics. The identity canals dammed up for 32 years were opened after the reformation in May 1998. Consequently, public space was filled with various associations from different identities, professions, and political ideologies. This condition brings democracy to a freer direction politically. Political contestation and popular culture have significant impacts on changing socio-political conditions. Scholars stated that Islamic power in public space is a symptom of political Islam reinforcement. Political Islam does not only try to bring Islam in religious ritual but also needs to be fought through a power struggle. Some scholars

argued that political Islam has failed to form a mass base in the public space. Due to the popularity factor, it needs to adopt a culture that amplifies its ascendancy over another culture. Otherwise, it will be a fragment of the Islamic group uprooted from the traditional roots. This condition might create violence and extremism as an aspiration for a political situation thought to be unfriendly to Islam (Kepel, 2006).

A decade after the reformation, the political landscape has exhibited insignificant twists and turns towards polarization. Along with the developing democratization, the pattern of political struggle leads to populism. The political populism evolves continually to color every electoral-political moment that tends to identity struggle. Islam, as the Indonesian people's largest religion, was swept away by the current populism discourse. The new direction of political populism in Indonesia reveals that Islam is a vehicle for gathering allied groups into social movements. Islamic populism always presents political contestation as a form of narrative dialect between religious piety and power struggles in the public sphere. The simplification of populism may define as one common interest represented by "the people" against opposite power to "the people" interest. In the case of Islamic populism, "the people" is described by "umma" who tries to represent all Muslim communities. This "umma" is perseveringly against other groups that allegedly obstruct Muslim interest (Hadiz, 2016). On this trajectory of Islamic populism, various popular Islamic identities and symbols are often used as communication tools in unifying some differences. Therefore, "popular" is a second keyword in looking at *YukNgaji* was taken from a populism perspective.

The increase in populist Islam is accompanied by popular culture upholding Islamic themes. The phenomenon of *hijra*

(need to elaborate the meaning and concept) is a symptom of a strengthening popular culture among Muslim youth. *Hijra* was initially a migratory event of Prophet Muhammad from Mecca to Madinah in response to contentious political conditions from his enemy in Mecca. It has an Arabic origin, precisely the word *Ha* (هـ) *Ja* (ج) *Ra* (ر), meaning to move or to switch. It is used as a theological term for relinquishing unwanted deeds to be better and in line with the Quran and Hadith. The concept of *hijra* has developed in understanding nowadays. *Hijra* is a social phenomenon that continues to develop from generation to generation, especially in generation Z. *Hijra* is now popularly defined as someone's effort to be more religiously individual by leaving bad things from several aspects such as fashion, friends, and other particular lifestyles (Rofi'I *et al.*, n.d.; Sunesti *et al.*, 2018; Yurisa *et al.*, 2020).

Similar to popular culture, *hijra* narratives are presented with modern characters, popularity, lifestyle, and fandom. Not surprisingly, the phenomenon of *hijra* has become popular in several commodities, including the fashion industries, accessories, and "divine" lifestyles. Some of these commodities appear in campaigns in various public spaces, especially in social media. In addition, this kind of pop-culture discourse is promoted by micro-celebrities. They strive to take part in creating public Islam through the communication of popular cultures and Islamic narratives to Muslim communities. Furthermore, micro-celebrities present the Islamic identity in popular culture. According to Lewis (2013), celebrities are not only as conveyors of popular styles, but also as spiritual advisors to Muslim communities which addicted to online media. Therefore, popular culture works in line with faith, even though it is different from "Islamic and secular" populism (Lewis, 2013). In this way, it has become a

thematic pattern of popular culture related to religious piety. This new thematic pattern of religious pop culture may be called as Islamic popularism.

Behind the stretch of Muslim society towards Islamic populism and popularism, these two entities interplay to share their influence in several aspects. In political activism, Islamic populism actors consider 'Islam *kāffah*' (a holistic actualization of Islam) as the actualization of populist ideas. The theme helps the Muslim community utilize the momentum of religious sentiment to determine everyone's capacity of their religious piety. There is a high Islamic spirit in case the people support the discourse voiced by the actors.

Apart from political activism, fashion also plays a significant role in Islamic populism and popularism. Modern Muslim clothing has become popular among Muslims in Indonesia. Previously, sarong and cap were religious symbols in Islam in Indonesia. Today, however, both attributes no longer represent piety in the fashion aspect. Along with the popular fashion among Muslim youth, the Islamic popularism opted to use it as a religious proselytizing tool. Ustadz Hanan Attaki, for example, displays both religious and modern images. Trendy fashion cannot contradict an individual's intention to be more religious. This condition raises several religious products such as *Dian Pelangi*, *Rabbani*, *Zoya*, and others to the large industrial markets in Islamic fashion. Furthermore, preachers also participate in enlivening the *Sharia* industry. For instance, Ustadz Felix Siauw passionately promotes *Hijab Alila* as a good choice for their clothes, preferable for Muslim women.

The phenomenon of *hijab* and Muslim or Muslimah fashion trends is related to the hectic *hijra* campaign. The *hijra* concept shows a complex negotiation process between

following Islamic rules and maintaining their identity as young, contemporary, and modern (Sunesti *et al.*, 2018). One of *hijra* actualizations is promoting a 'halal' lifestyle model in Muslim communities. In this actualization, *hijra* becomes a spiritual process in which people negotiate their identity with an outside identity. This negotiation process often limits people to separate themselves from an identity outside their ideology of *hijra*.

Islamic activism, *hijra*, and *hijab* seem like a unity that cannot be separated. Several social media accounts show how Islamic popularism and populism gradually progressed in this context. Some movements emerge in response to this situation both in offline and online realm. The social media accounts compete in promoting *hijra*, the use of *shar'i hijab*, and Islamic wise words from popular preachers. One movement that arises in campaigning *hijra* among Muslim youth is *YukNgaji.id*. This article discusses how popular Islamic populism discourse was organized by young people as activism, especially over the internet. This article analyzes the project continuity between Islamic discourse and Islamic populism as a reflection of Islamic activism.

This research was designed to obtain holistic results using a qualitative approach. It uses a socio-anthropological approach with ethnographic methods. Then, techniques used for data collection include observation, interview, and social media digital investigation. The primary data was obtained from various millennial preaching communities, including *YukNgaji*, *Shift-Pemuda Hijra*, *Sadiq*, and *Insan Kamil*. The data extracted from several informants was mainly about their interest in millennial preaching, the activity process, and campaigns. From several interviewed informants, relevant information was mostly procured by several individuals,

including Andri, Ghofar, Dimas, Putra, and Andra. The account posting content of the millennial missionary movement was also essential data. Social media account posts are essential representations of ideas built, discussed, disseminated, and campaigned for by movement figures. The four movements are used as research objects since they are filled with millennial missionary movements. A temporary classification related to traditional propaganda (*Da'wah*) models and millennial propaganda was made. The two models have differences in the method, content, identity, and networking of the *Da'wah* movement. Currently, *YukNgaji* is a national movement that has been spread to 47 regions in Indonesia. This research was conducted in several cities with active Instagram accounts containing more than 3000 followers for balanced data.

B. Islam, populism and Islamic activism in the Contemporary Muslim world

In the last few decades, studies on Muslim youth have proliferated. Studies ranging from academics, governmental and non-governmental organizations, and scientific research institutions discuss young people's behavioral condition and role as channels of progress and change. The serious concerns in the preaching sector range from security, population explosion, unemployment, injustice, civil conflict, HIV and AIDS, and drugs, violence, and extremism issues. These issues are attributed to narratives and liberalization frameworks prevalent in almost all countries.

Liberalization influenced the younger generation of Muslims actively involved in identity struggles on social media. These young Muslims are always in contact with popular culture. Accordingly, popular culture plays a role in shaping Muslim youth's behavior with their character like

trendy, modern, fashionable, and popular. Some previous studies emphasized that popular culture is critical in shaping human behavior. Studies on religion and popular culture have recently been published in reputable international journals. Bart Barendregt, an expert of Indonesian ethnographic study, analyze the issue of popular culture as well. The beginning of a religious encounter with popular culture was marked by the emergence of *qasidah* (song with religious lyrics in Indonesia), Arabic poetry songs, and the Nasyid music group. The culture of religious music is enhanced by technological advancements that enable the packaging of songs in the form of digital discs. Religion and popular culture tightened when a group of young people began to adore Nasyid as one of the “Holy Entertainment.” Nasyid’s reference as a popular culture for young Indonesians emerged from the Malaysian Nasyid group in the early 2000s. However, Islam and popular culture form a commercialistic attitude that brings religious symbols to market mechanisms and economic benefits (Barendregt & Bogaerts, 2016; Barendregt & Van Zanten, 2002).

Islam and popular culture can be perceived from the radical actions among Islamists. According to the youth identity theory, a person could be trapped at crossroads due to social structure and power relations pressures. This makes young people resist the restraining power relations through rebellious acts. The identity expression and dreams of young people are primarily influenced by the global situation and local processes surrounding their identity. Young people with high prosperity in crowded cities could express themselves by enjoying karaoke venues with hip-hop, rap, or jazz music to deal with fatigue from restraining activities. Some intellectual Muslim youth establish a protest movement against the policies that hamper their interests.

Muslim youth need to position themselves in two identities; declaring themselves as young free, modern and productive on one side, and being a Muslim obedient to religious rules in another side. The expression of young Muslim identity varies in different parts of the world. Some express themselves by forming groups that reflect two nuances: youth and Muslim. For instance, the Muslim Rap music group Fun-Da-Mental carries the jihad theme in England. Some young people formed protesting movements that addressed justice issues in response to the political situation in several Muslim countries in the Middle East (Bayat & Herrera, 2010; Swedenburg, 2010). Islamic popularism and populism can be analyzed using Herrera's analysis. In terms of *hijra*, *hijab*, and Islamic political activism, they combine two identities, including religiosity and modern.

Farish A. Noor describes the phenomenon as popular religiosity (Noor, 2015). Islam can be seen everywhere, expressed in various media such as fashion, *halal* cosmetics, Islamic architecture, and regulations considered Islamic values. Although demanding an Islamic formalization through Islamic symbols, this phenomenon cannot be perceived as the revival of Islamism in Indonesia. It results from a meeting between Islamic identity and popular culture, becoming a new religious awareness among the Muslim middle class considered to be social change agents (Noor, 2015). Noor's (2015) study is of profound value to the discussion on religious movements and popular culture in a popular religiosity terminology. However, popular religiosity only explains the diffusion of religious movements and pop culture on the identity, performative, and consumeristic nature of pop culture. Noor (2015) had not analyzed the seemingly divided nature of popular religious movements, including politics, by

advocating for power struggle and apolitical by distancing from practical politics.

Research on the *YukNgaji* community has been conducted by some scholars. For instance, a thesis written by Ahmad Yazid (2019) discusses the *YukNgaji* community in Yogyakarta and its relation to young Hizbut-Tahrir Indonesian activists to spread Islamic ideology. Enthusiasts from the *YukNgaji* community are often middle-class and educated people in urban areas. Moreover, the variety of problems faced makes them wander in search of identities. Some of these problems become issues of discussion in the *YukNgaji* community, including work, marriage, and religious identity. Community members often re-question the democratic system in Indonesia, which believed the *Khilafah* system as a solution. However, this was a remedy for temporary frustration over the urban problems they faced rather than a seriousness to uphold the Caliphate ideology (Ahmad Yazid, 2019).

All previous studies on Islam and popular culture took an in-depth approach with a multidisciplinary academic approach. This study will enrich previous studies on Islam and popular culture. Additionally, this study analyzes the development of the discourse for movements with a tendency to political activism. In a particular study, Niewkerk (2016) comprehensively explained Islam and popular culture, establishing three propositions on the importance of studying Islam and popular culture. First, popular culture helps understand the primary processes of social transformation in the Muslim world. Second, popular culture is not equivalent to the process of “westernization,” “secularization,” or other single cultures. Islam and popular culture should be examined in the context of a broader and flexible globalization rubric.

Third, popular culture cannot be simplified in terms of decoration of identity politics (Nieuwkerk *et al.*, 2016).

Digital religious' studies evolve through four phases of study waves due to the development of internet studies touched by sociological nature. The four phases began with the descriptive era. This period is mainly carried out by scholars describing what happens with the religious community behavior amid the ongoing development of information technology. The second wave is the categorization period. This occurred when scholars presented their works analyzing typologies and identifying trends within religious practices in the internet era. The third wave is when scholars tried to identify methods and frameworks to aid the analysis of offline religious communities' strategies regarding social media usage. Fourth, current studies focus on the negotiation of religious actors between online and offline life and how this informs a broader understanding of religion in contemporary society. Some of these developments can be theorized in three forms of efforts in studying the internet and religion: mediatization, RSST, and meaning mediation (Campbell, 2016).

Activism is a political terminology involving collective behavior and social movements. Initial conditions influence early social movements in the industrial economy, creating social inequalities. The people involved in this social movement demand increased welfare and employment. Since the early industrial era evolved into the post-industrial era, the social movements' character and the pattern seemed to change. After the Universal Declaration of Human Rights declared by the United Nations (UN), people began demanding a lot from human rights in the industrial world. Therefore, a

social movement was changed into a brand-new and more sound social movement to strengthen identity edification in a democratic world (Tarrow, 1998; Tilly & Wood, 2015). This new social movement brings political studies towards social activism. Activism is an attempt to promote, regulate, block, influence, and intervene in the direction of public policy to effect change in people's lives. It has several elements, such as political opposition, actor, ideology, and mobilization.

The activism symptoms are not only on the workers' issue and public policy demands. The struggle for religious identity uses activism to gain broader influence within a society. Islamic activism became popular following the success of traditional Iranian Islamic activism in defeating Shah Reza Pahlavi and demanding the release of Ayatollah Ruhullah Khomeini from Western political patronage. Activism began to be widely discussed when the Palestinian-Israeli conflict emerged in the 80s. In 1987, the Intifada Movement involved many young Palestinians in retaliation against the Israeli regime in the West Bank. Islamic activism is increasingly associated with the Islamism ideology demanding a radical change towards an Islamic state. Examples of the Islamism movement cases show that the dynamics, process, and organization of Islamic activism are a crucial element of the contradictions often discoursed by Islamists (Wiktorowicz, 2004).

Millennial Islamic activities are critical in conveying the content and method of the movement substance. Islamic messages are attractively conveyed to the public in simple and popular languages. The use of the internet as a means of delivering Islamic discourse is common in millennial Islamic activism. Through the internet, activism elements are easily carried out with a high possibility of becoming widespread.

Organizing messages can be conducted effectively, efficiently, and cheaply with an easy mass mobilization process. The actors in this movement only need to spread the message through social media channels in each region. Consequently, the people interested in the movement issues engage them through online platforms, becoming a social movement advocating for better policies. Based on this narrative, collective identity, a keyword for social movements, will easily be created and organized online.

Da'wah networking activities on social media create a pattern of activism called Islamic clicktivism. The spread benchmark of an idea is lifted from online responses of a movement account, such as the number of followers and how reactive the uploaded messages are. Attention to the number of followers and reactions to a post needs to be developed for events to be amplified through social media messages. Furthermore, the amplification became part of identity political activities in building networks and fighting for mass influence in public space. Network building is a pattern discussed in identity politics and social movements study. The mass obtained through social media groups is an informal resource that can be organized for action (Ahyar, 2017; Ahyar & Alfitri, 2019).

C. *YukNgaji* and Popular Islamic Discourse

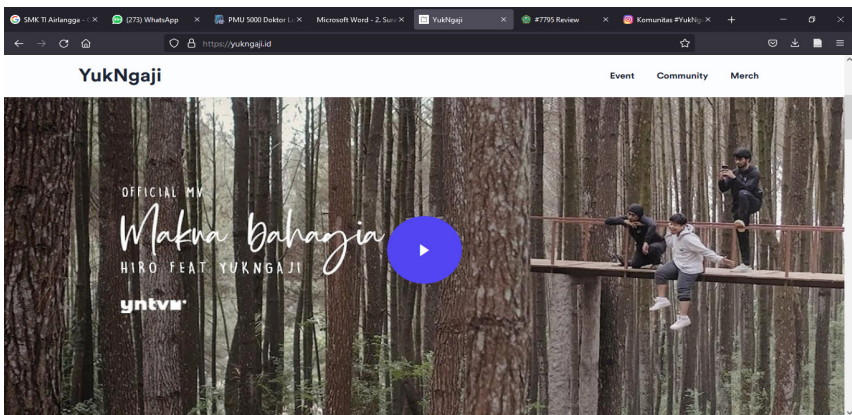
YukNgaji is a trans-regional movement in Indonesia. It is a community that gathers the potential of various professions, generations, and identities to share popular Islamic identity. The tagline of this movement is "*the Power of Ngaji*," which helped convince young people that humans require sufficient provisions to be successful. These provisions are material,

such as worldly work, and immaterial, for instance, human life experience. *YukNgaji* interprets the term “*Ngaji*,” a derivative of “*kaji*,” a process of self-provisioning with an Islamic foundation and establishing solutions to the life’s problems in Islam at the micro, meso, and macro level.

The founders of *YukNgaji* community were several young Muslims with a common vision and mission. Some of them are Felix Siau, Husain Assadi, Cahyo Ahmad Irsyad, Ihsanul Muttaqin, and Abietya Sakti. Felix Yanwar Siau (Siau Chen Kwok) emerged as the prominent figure in the *YukNgaji* community’s existence. He is a famous millennial preacher often appeared on online social media. Felix was an orator in the Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI, Hizbut Tahrir in Indonesia). He pursued higher education at the Agriculture Faculty of Bogor Agricultural University in 2006. His involvement in some student movements enabled him to cement his position in the Islamic movement. A study on Islamic proselytizing and social media shows that HTI is the organization that changed Felix’s perspective on Islam and Muslim life. Through his religious experience as a *muallaf* (a person who is newly converted to Islam), Felix persuades some people with his Islamic and modern personality. Moreover, Felix is adept at delivering *da’wah* with visual persuasion through social media accounts, including Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, and Instagram (Wang, 2018). Today, Felix is one key figure of the *YukNgaji* community. He has inspired many millennial Muslims. At the onset of his public appearance, Felix often preached the benefits of Islam and shared personal experiences in converting to Islam.

The *YukNgaji* community has been showing its existence since 2015. A grand event was held in two big places, including the Bogor Institute of Sciences (LIPI) Building on July 4, 2015, and *Asrama Haji Pondok Gede* (Haji Dormitory

in Pondok Gede) in Jakarta on July 5, 2015. This community exists because of its ideological underlining. Its founders had a common perception of the cultural liberalization effects on young people. The young generation is believed to be highly potential but liable to misinterpretation by freedom. Therefore, the founders believed that joint efforts in establishing a space for sharing goodness were necessary to create a useful interaction forum.

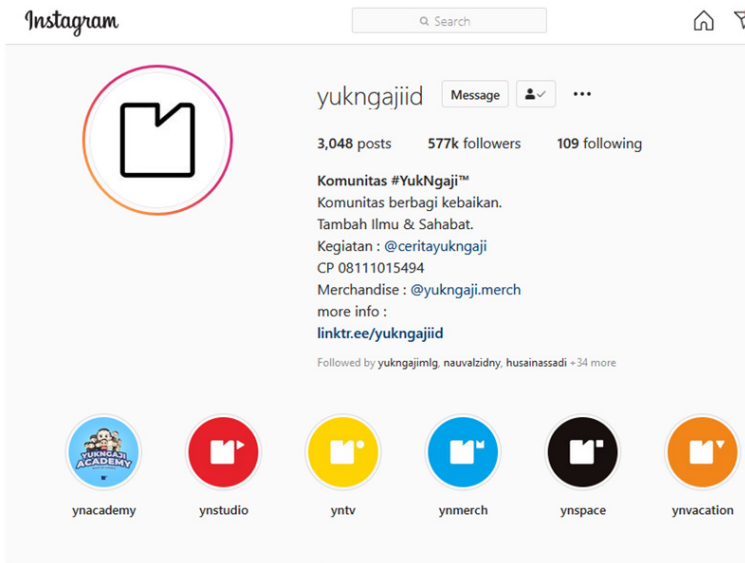


Picture 1 Homepage of *YukNgaji* official website

Source: <https://YukNgaji.id/>

YukNgaji community claimed itself as a movement that provides systematic Islamic teachings and shares wonderful experiences among its members (*YukNgaji*, 2020). The founders hope that the provisions obtained might enable people to solve their problems and become useful. In the early years of its founding, *YukNgaji* had regional communities in 15 major cities, such as Bogor, Jakarta, Bandung, Solo, Yogyakarta, and Semarang. Today, there are 48 regional of *YukNgaji* communities in various regions in Indonesia and 2 from overseas. These include:

1. <i>YukNgaji</i> Aceh	2. <i>YukNgaji</i> Lamongan
3. <i>YukNgaji</i> Bandung	4. <i>YukNgaji</i> Lampung
5. <i>YukNgaji</i> Bali	6. <i>YukNgaji</i> Lombok
7. <i>YukNgaji</i> Banjarbaru	8. <i>YukNgaji</i> Magelang
9. <i>YukNgaji</i> Banjarmasin	10. <i>YukNgaji</i> Makassar
11. <i>YukNgaji</i> Banyuwangi	12. <i>YukNgaji</i> Malang
13. <i>YukNgaji</i> Batam	14. <i>YukNgaji</i> Medan
15. <i>YukNgaji</i> Bekasi	16. <i>YukNgaji</i> Mojokerto
17. <i>YukNgaji</i> Belitung	18. <i>YukNgaji</i> Padang
19. <i>YukNgaji</i> Bintaro	20. <i>YukNgaji</i> Palembang
21. <i>YukNgaji</i> Bogor	22. <i>YukNgaji</i> Palopo
23. <i>YukNgaji</i> Bone	24. <i>YukNgaji</i> Palu
25. <i>YukNgaji</i> Bumi Serpong Damai	26. <i>YukNgaji</i> Pekanbaru
27. <i>YukNgaji</i> Ciamis	28. <i>YukNgaji</i> Samarinda
29. <i>YukNgaji</i> Cibubur	30. <i>YukNgaji</i> Semarang
31. <i>YukNgaji</i> Depok	32. <i>YukNgaji</i> Solo
33. <i>YukNgaji</i> Garut	34. <i>YukNgaji</i> Sukoharjo
35. <i>YukNgaji</i> Jakbar	36. <i>YukNgaji</i> Surabaya
37. <i>YukNgaji</i> Jakpus	38. <i>YukNgaji</i> Takengon
39. <i>YukNgaji</i> Jaksel	40. <i>YukNgaji</i> Tuban
41. <i>YukNgaji</i> Jaktim	42. <i>YukNgaji</i> ParePare
43. <i>YukNgaji</i> Yogyakarta	44. <i>YukNgaji</i> Lhokseumawe
45. <i>YukNgaji</i> Klaten	46. <i>YukNgaji</i> Cilegon
47. <i>YukNgaji</i> Langsa	48. <i>YukNgaji</i> Istanbul
49. <i>YukNgaji</i> Kulonprogo	50. <i>YukNgaji</i> Hongkong



Picture 2 Front page profile of *YukNgaji* Instagram official account

Source: <https://www.instagram.com/YukNgajiid/>

As a community-engaged in religion, *YukNgaji* uses the *da'wah* method as practiced by the *da'wah bil-lisān* (verbal proselytizing), *da'wah 'āmmah* (common proselytizing), *da'wah bil-kitābah* (preaching through writing), and *da'wah bil-hāl* (proselytizing with examples of wise actions). The distinction of *YukNgaji* over other communities is the proselytizing target, which prioritizes young people. The *YukNgaji* movement leaders are well educated in mapping generation; they know well about the distribution of generation from baby boomers, millennials, generation X to generation Y and Z. They also take an appropriate strategy in sharing all information media commonly used by each generation differently.

The millennial *da'wah* movement was conveyed and implemented through offline and online methods. Activists

from the *YukNgaji* community and other millennial *da'wah* movements commenced Islamic recitation from internet social media. Islamic recitations are delivered visually in a fun style and easily understood by young people. Furthermore, video documentation was made in two versions; the extended version distributed via YouTube and the short version uploaded on Instagram. For this reason, the most critical messages are uploaded on Instagram for a faster and easier campaign. Apart from audiovisual, the recitation material is simplified into graphic forms, such as photos, memes, infographics, and comics.

In order to consolidate a broader mass strength, *YukNgaji* invited recitation participants on social media. Furthermore, offline recitation is often held in several models. The first model is recitation with a reasonably intense period, such as weekly. This is followed by the core team organizing the *YukNgaji* community. Another model is a monthly recitation in which many members participate, followed by conditional recitation in certain events. This model receives a response from the larger community, especially young people. For instance, the participants were from *YukNgaji* management, members, and active participants on social media. These participants involve other communities sharing the same vision with *YukNgaji*. *YukNgaji* engages the same religious interests, practice patterns, Islamic thought, and idol figures (*ustadz*). For example, they build a “frequency” that makes Ustadz Felix Siauw a role model in Islamic thought. This frequency is created because of their active membership proliferation in various communities. They share more about their opinions, experiences, and challenges encountered by the *da'wah* movement. This interaction facilitates the process of frequency identification in choosing the *Ustadz*

for recitation, religious observance, and Islamic thought. Therefore, the more the number of active members in other communities, the more the *YukNgaji* network is built in the same frequency.

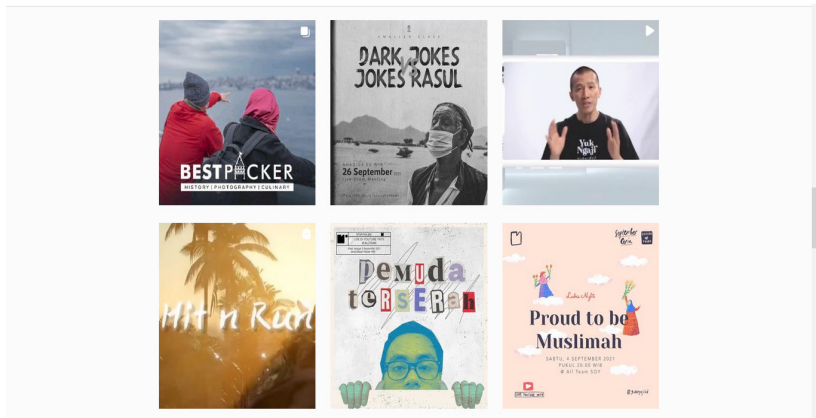
The millennial *da'wah* movement used the familiarity approach. Consequently, *YukNgaji* reached the wider community's enthusiasm, especially the youth, in campaigning for Islamic discourses. *YukNgaji* reached more followers both in central and other regions. The millennial *da'wah* movement often utilizes the latest information technology and media with wide access. In this case, Instagram, Youtube, WhatsApp, and Telegram are used in the Movement campaign. Social media platforms and message senders are used according to their respective portions. The table below shows the number of Instagram account followers arranged in descending order. The data was compiled on March 27 2020

No	<i>YukNgaji</i> Regional	Posts	Followers
1	<i>YukNgaji</i> .id	2657	498000
2	Yogyakarta	742	30900
3	Solo	823	24100
4	Jakbar	176	21300
5	Bogor	331	13400
6	Bintaro	432	12000
7	Bekasi	505	11500
8	Malang	465	10900
9	Palembang	618	10200
10	Bandung	374	10100
11	Jaksel	430	9810
12	Lampung	370	7988
13	Makassar	323	7852
14	Pekanbaru	291	7769
15	Depok	342	7123
16	Bali	390	6079

17	Surabaya	150	5905
18	Lombok	335	5477
19	Padang	562	5210
20	Samarinda	659	5200
21	Palu	403	4590
22	Cibubur	260	4301
23	Banjarmasin	188	3760
24	Semarang	144	3482
25	Medan	225	3189
26	Kulonprogo	319	3053
27	Jakpus	48	2702
28	Aceh	131	2574
29	Jaktim	71	2306
30	Lamongan	130	2138
31	Banjarbaru	133	1886
32	Magelang	93	1866
33	Mojokerto	180	1737
34	Batam	238	1646
35	BSD	62	1550
36	Belitung	52	1455
37	Takengon	227	1191
38	Banyuwangi	99	991
39	Lhokseumawe	174	924
40	Garut	99	894
41	Klaten	36	826
42	Sukoharjo	39	785
43	Ciamis	84	709
44	Langsa	81	699
45	Bone	33	525
46	Palopo	1	390
47	Cilegon	5	200
48	Tuban	18	199
48	Lhokseumawe	174	

Table 1. *YukNgaji* movement in some regions in Indonesia sorted out from the greatest number of followers

By utilizing its 48 regions, the *YukNgaji.id* finds campaigning and disseminating the Islamic discourses much easier. The discourse can be seen in every recitation held by the *YukNgaji* community, both offline and online. The issues raised are contemporary and well known by young people through observation. From many propaganda campaign posts spread through social media, several issues related to lifestyle, ranging from clothing, *halal* food, tourism, entertainment, economy, and romance. All these issues are conveyed with a popular Islamic discourse.



Picture 3 Some posts of *YukNgaji* on Instagram

Source: <https://www.instagram.com/YukNgajiid/>

The ease of understanding Islamic recitation is critical in advocating for Islamic discourse. This movement always campaigns on *hijra*. The *YukNgaji* community's agenda is to invite people, especially the youth, to have a lifestyle guided by Islamic tenets through the *hijra* concept. The community leaders know that young people and popular culture are inseparable due to information technology advancement. However, young people should replace the popular culture with Islamic values, leading to a combination of popular terms Islamicized, such as Islamic traveler, cartoon, cuisine, and *hijab*.



Picture 4 The first post of *YukNgaji.id* Instagram account

Source: <https://www.instagram.com/p/4iRnetEVbd/>

YukNgaji is also actively campaigning the prohibitions in Islam, such as the prohibition of *pacaran* (dating with someone in a non-marital relationship) with the jargon “*udah, putusin aja*” (just break with your girlfriend up). *YukNgaji* also creates stylish terms of Islamic invitations like Islamic *YukNgaji* and *PesanTrend* (message to be good person in Islamic perspective). All these campaigns are delivered in contemporary youth language and easily understood by social media users. Another example is the reaction of *YukNgaji* activists towards Korean popularity favored by young people. The interest of the Indonesian youth in Korean culture is often known as *Halyu*. This phenomenon is considered by *YukNgaji* activists to be dangerous for the young people’s religiosity since it contains elements contrasting with Islamic law, including girlfriends, excessive admiration of physical beauty, and hedonism. In order to overcome this phenomenon, *YukNgaji* activists formed a resistance movement called “*dehalyusinasi*.”



**Picture 5 “Dehallyusinasi” project was appeared in several posts of
YukNgaji Instagram accounts**

Source: <https://www.instagram.com/p/B8C-Rj-hotx/>

YukNgaji movement brings Korean Pop themes in popularizing Islamic discourses among millennial Muslims. *Dehallyusinasi* is popularly introduced as a negational effort of the wave of Korean dramatical film. As a result, it becomes a brand of proselytization for campaigning Islam through popular culture. This theme of Islamic proselytization is the thematical action of *YukNgaji* movement in calling for millennial Muslim to leave idolization of flamboyant Korean artists. Actually, substantial content of *Dehallyusinasi* is delivered by three millennial Muslim figures: Shifrun, Fuadh Naim, and Hawariyun. These three actors put their position in millennial preachers and try to get across interactive dialogue with audiences. Interactive communication with audiences is addressed to introduce some precedent Islamic figures and challenge millennial Muslims to avoid preoccupation with K-Pop. According to these millennial preachers, K-Pop is considered as a futile activity from Islamic perspective

because there are no theological values inside. *Dehalyusinasi* actors divert popular themes from Korean romantic drama into popular Islamic teachings which are familiar to young people. For instance, a popular Korean dramatical film entitled “*The World of Marriage*” is reviewed briefly using the storyteller style. The narrative of the story is commonly related to some Islamic values; that Islam forbids adultery, Islam also orders to respect the rights of children and hasten marriage. The transfer of Islamic values to the story of Korean romantical film is certainly accepted by millennial Muslims who are familiar with popular culture. The audience seriously listened to the popular Islamic discourse delivered in soft content, without bothering to study Islam by reading classical Arabic book of Islamic norms.

D. Sharing Experiences: The *Hijra* Process through *YukNgaji*

On several occasions, researchers engaged people in the millennial *da'wah* community, such as administrators, core members, and participants. This meeting took place in the Samarinda Yuk Ngaji community to represent the *YukNgaji* establishment process in various regions. The core team members included the Movement leader and coordinators, such as the media and the event division. Members from other movements collaborating with the *YukNgaji* Movement were also involved. These members have national reference figures, Islamic discourse, and the value of a similar movement between the movements. The national reference figures for popular religious figures on social media include Ustadz Felix Siau, Hanan Attaki, Ustadz Salim Fillah, Ustadz Abdul Somad, and Habib Anis. In

general, these figures are active in sounding the 212 Islamic movements. They are currently known as Barisan Bangun Negeri (BBN) members, created as a joint movement of millennial Muslims.

The BBN was formed on September 24, 2019, and campaigned with three main projects: alms trash and less wastem Mosque, share a smile, and millennial entrepreneurship. The *YukNgaji* Islamic movement also has connections with several other members in different regions. In Samarinda, East Kalimantan, *YukNgaji* collaborates with other communities such as Sadiq and boarding houses recitation. In Malang, local communities often collaborating with *YukNgaji* are Nawak Hijra, the millennial Muslim movement with the theme of Malang city's locality characters.

The activists' members are young, with most of them born in the 90s. Activists showed their interest in the *da'wah* movement since they were students in senior high school institutions. Most of their involvement in Islamic organization started as a member of Rohani Islam (*Rohis*, Islamic spiritual organization). The interest of *YukNgaji* activists grows as they continue their studies at the university and are involved in *Harokah Islamiyah*, a specific term they use in referring to Islamic movement. Their interest in being active participants in the Islamic movement is diverse in motivation. Some of them started their involvement from several religious ritual activities such as a *tahsin qiraah* recitation, the *hijra* community in various regions, and also their formal involvement in the Lembaga Dakwah Kampus (LDK, Campus *Da'wah* Institute) in universities.

Before being active in the *YukNgaji* movement, activists had a way in worship composition as mainstream Islamic organizations, like Muhammadiyah and Nahdhatul Ulama.

However, they are often reluctant to be active in these Islamic organizations because they are considered elitist. Furthermore, they were required to become *santri*, Islamic students in boarding school, years of systematic Islamic education in Islamic boarding schools, and famous classical scholars. This prerequisite is difficult for ordinary people with a strong spirit (*ghiroh*) in studying Islam. Certain narrations, such as “*If religious studies can be simplified, why go through complicated stages, which not everyone has the opportunity to study at Islamic boarding schools as a santri?*” are common among some activists. Besides students, this movement was followed by various young people that worked in several companies and entrepreneurs, such as heavy equipment and communication companies, banks, administrative staff in educational institutions, online food vendors, and fragrance refill sellers.

The recruitment process in the core team is through organ selection, a more active and communal position. Some *YukNgaji* members have had good reputations in the organization since their time in high school. For instance, some activists have chaired the Study Program Association or department on various campuses. Furthermore, some communities stated that a person should be known first to gain trust in a movement. Several *YukNgaji* activists are involved in other movements, such as the *Gerakan Shift-Pemuda Hijra*, a movement initiated by Ustadz Hanan Attaki as a popular millennial preacher on social media.

In addition, *YukNgaji* activists share a common Islamic spirit by competing in *hijra* for a better direction. *Hijra* is an essential keyword in millennial Islamic activism, such as *YukNgaji*. *Hijra* should be conducted comprehensively (*kaffah*) in various dimensions, not only in the necessity of ritual worship. It should involve the system implemented

by predecessor Islamic figures in the Prophet Muhammad era and the Islamic dynasties following the Prophet's death. Subsequently, it should be conducted congregational through experienced religious guides. Besides *hijra*, the congregation is a critical word in millennial Islamic activism, such as *YukNgaji*. Therefore, *hijra* and congregation are identities for Islamic activists formed by individual and communal approaches. A person will find identity in millennial Islamic activism communities such as *YukNgaji*.

Some members of *YukNgaji* convinced that their understanding of Islam is affected by *YukNgaji's* religious campaign. Some members of *YukNgaji* explained that a brief narrative of Islamic teachings in social media helped them understand Islam. Instead of systematically learning about Islam from the sophisticated book written by Muslim scholars, they prefer to read a brief explanation of Islamic teaching on the official account of *YukNgaji* social media. According to them, Islam is simple teaching to follow as long as people completely believe in the goodness of God's commandments. Another interesting experience is honestly delivered by other members of *YukNgaji* who have passion in a graphic design. Based on their perspective, The *YukNgaji* community has a uniqueness in the use of designs and graphics in delivering proselytizing messages on online social media which are close to contemporary graphic design characteristics. This Islamic campaign with contemporary methods makes graphic designers feel that the *YukNgaji* community is close to their field. Therefore, Islamic messages on social media should go hand in hand with someone's passion for graphic design. On another experience, some followers of the *YukNgaji* community argued that *YukNgaji*

has a youth characteristic. Although it is not a determinant argument of people interest in following the *YukNgaji* community, dashing looks, and the use of diction in religious lecturers delivered by young preachers are the reasons for their anxiety on this movement.

The narrative of the interview above shows that people's interest in *YukNgaji* varies in their own motivation. Someone's decision to start with the *hijra* phase could be passed through various gates. An instant process in understanding Islam, passion, fandom, and popularity are pathways of their involvement in the *YukNgaji* and their engagement with *hijra*. Therefore, several strategies taken by some actors of *YukNgaji* were methodologically effective in influencing religious behavior. Particularly, for Muslim youth who do not establish themselves in any Islamic school traditions.

E. Conclusion

Summing up this brief article, Islamic populism is actually a variant of political populism; a current growing socio-political phenomenon that impacts the openness of identity politics in the era of democracy. As a prominent and communal identity in Indonesia, Islam is used as a power that represents "the Islamic people" as a whole. Meanwhile, popularism in this article is a simplified terminology to describe a general phenomenon of popular culture. Popularism could be meant as a distinctive practice which means everything has a public value according to its popularity. There is no contradiction between both Islamic populism and popularism but interplay practically. Popularism interestingly wraps Islamic symbols and identities, while populism sells them to a broader

community. The *YukNgaji* community kindly represents this connection between populism and popularism. *YukNgaji*, as a millennial Islamic proselytizing movement, creates a religious campaign through Islamic popular culture. Moreover, *YukNgaji* also consolidates Islamic solidarity with a common idea of Muslim who wants to be more good people than before. This common idea is actualized by a group “to congregate” (*berjamaah*) called as *hijra*. The characteristics of millennial people, which are related to modernity, cool, and trendy, make this movement easily acceptable. The relationship between Islamic populism with activism can be seen through the *YukNgaji* campaign on social media. The movement advocates a change for a more Islamic society through the *hijra* process. *Hijra* was popularized by a common culture that is close to a common characteristic of youth. Furthermore, *hijra* was accepted by some youth for not only religious reasons, but also for its popularity among millennials Muslim in online social media.

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