

The Contestation of Hadith Memes on the Prohibition of Music

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Abstract

The contestation of prohibition of music that has been happening in the offline world is now reaching the online world. The group that has been emphasizing the prohibition of music in the offline world, and becomes a minority group, precisely in the online world this group dominates. One of the groups that emphasize prohibition of music and dominates in the online world is the Salafi group. This group formed an Islamic study on social media, such as Facebook which was named after the Kajian Islam-Sunnah. This paper aims to examine the forms of contestation about the prohibition of music in the Kajian Islam-Sunnah group and its responds for netizens. By using the theory of contestation and discourse analysis, this study finds that the contestation on prohibition of music that occurs in the Kajian Islam-Sunnah group appears from several types of memes displayed. Each meme contains an argument on the prohibition of music by citing the hadith and muslim scholars. This contestation happens for the differences in understanding between the two parties, the parties agreeing and disagreeing about the prohibition of music. The majority of those who agree are from the Salafi group, while those who disagree are from the non-Salafi group.

Keywords: Contestation, Meme, Music, social media

INTRODUCTION

The debate over whether music is permissible or not, which has long been present in the offline world, has now expanded into the online world. Groups that have long emphasized the prohibition of music in the offline world, and which have now become a minority, are actually dominating in the online world. This is evident from the presence of various content on social media, such as memes addressing different issues. One of the issues raised in a meme concerns the prohibition of music.

The contestation surrounding memes about the prohibition of music can be seen in a Facebook group called *Kajian Islam Sunnah*. Often, the content shared in this group includes verses from the Qur'an or Hadith. The appearance of memes about the prohibition of music in this group has sparked numerous comments from netizens. In connection with this, Bauchkhage mentions that memes usually spread through comments, imitation, parody, or even news coverage in the media. Aguilar et al. even show that the use of memes as a form of media has become a significant medium for expressing religious messages among online communities today.

So far, meme studies, which have become widespread, and social media are no longer unfamiliar with this term. This is evident from the increasing number of studies or research on memes. At least there are three tendencies in meme studies. First, thematic studies that focus on examining memes related to certain issues, such as political issues or democracy in Indonesia, such as the Haji Lulung meme and the meme about the Hadith on trousers. Second, research that tends to explore the meaning behind a meme, viewing memes with a religious perspective, as seen in studies done by various scholars. Third, studies that position memes as part of the transmission of Hadith. Among the existing research, there is a difference in the current study, which lies in the case discussed. This study focuses on the case of memes about the prohibition of music found in Facebook groups.

This paper complements the gaps in the literature studies previously mentioned. At least two questions are addressed here: First, what forms of contestation can be found in the memes about the prohibition of music in the *Kajian Islam Sunnah* group? Second, what factors underlie the emergence of contestation among social media users related to memes about the prohibition of music? Indirectly, the main objective of this research is to examine the issue of the prohibition of music, which is now not only prevalent in the offline world but has also extended into the online world, which in this case is referred to as contestation.

This paper assumes that the emergence of contestation regarding memes about the prohibition of music is due to the widespread presence of music both offline and online. The issue of the legality of music has long been debated by various groups, but it was previously confined to the offline world. The difference now is that the contestation about the prohibition of music is more prominent on social media because everyone can easily post and receive anything via social media. In a matter of seconds, people can relatively easily access any news, even if the news cannot be physically observed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Contestation

The term *contestation* originates from the word *contest*, which means a competition or match. In its technical sense, it refers to a competitive event where strength or superiority is challenged. In every public arena, there is always a contest (contestation) between social groups, including within social media spaces. These groups influence each other to gain power and win the contest. Therefore, almost no public space is free from contestation, including those that arise in religious contexts. Contestation is understood as a struggle between at least two or more parties over the same issue, driven by certain interests, even though the subject or matter may be limited or small. Contestation always occurs in public spaces, where many parties seek to seize space to influence or dominate others, even though the distinction between public and private spaces is very difficult to separate.

The internet era has brought religion in a disruptive manner, which may mean it exists outside the body of the religion itself, making its values contestable. Religion is no longer just a subject matter but becomes an object matter, judged by space and history. When religion enters a disruptive space and time, the connection to religion weakens because power over religion becomes contestable. Religious authority figures lose their influence, the legitimacy of groups weakens, and the displacement of religion obscures its historical roots, making it insufficiently strong to connect and relate to each other within historical and sociological narratives. Religions are facing challenges in dealing with the dynamic and contestable meanings they carry. The media acts as a bridge for the formation of contestable religious identities. Contestation of religious identity often triggers strong reactions from other religious groups. Interfaith relations today often become triggers for open conflict, which distances religion from its fundamental spirit as a guideline for life.

In literature on contestation, there are two tendencies: The first relates to religious contestation in public spaces, such as in Madura, where women perform *Kompolan* as agents of social reproduction and important media for the transformation of religious values in society. It also involves the Sampang riots, which represent contestation between religious sects in the Madura cultural context. In contrast, the tradition of *pamitan haji* among the Muslim community in Purwomartani Kalasan, Yogyakarta, is carried out as a form of religious and cultural contestation. Contention between politics and religion also occurs, such as with the power of Nahdhatul Wathan during Lombok's regional autonomy era in NTB, demonstrating that, whether consciously or not, the public space in society has been contested through politics, culture, and traditions. The second tendency involves contestation in social media, which is often associated with politics, such as the topic of the Hadith of the caliphate promoted by HTI as a political contestation. In this case, HTI interprets religious texts within a political framework, mixing religious and political functions. Additionally, social media has also been rife with contestation during presidential elections, expressed through meme culture and political satire.

Meme

The term *meme* comes from the Greek word meaning imitation. It was first introduced by British biologist Richard Dawkins around 1970. Dawkins likened the meme to the gene, a widely known biological term. He also argued that memes are similar to genes; while genes explain biological evolution, memes explain cultural evolution, encompassing everything learned through imitation, such as vocabulary, legends, songs, rules, popular sayings, fashion, and more. In a cultural context, memes are a form of cultural transmission through the replication of ideas and concepts that enter into the cognitive world of humanity. This concept is then applied to memes in social media. In this context, Allifinsyah states that memes on the internet can be understood as a form of replication, such as images, videos, and similar content, though in popular terms, memes are generally understood as images with contextual text linked to the topic being addressed.

Essentially, the images used in memes are expressions conveyed by individuals through pictures. Memes continue to evolve through comments, parodies, imitations, or news coverage on social media, and although they often start as jokes or parodies, they have become a new communication style that holds meaning. There are five motives behind someone posting a meme: curiosity, entertainment, love, expression, and self-esteem.

Social Media

Social media is an internet medium that enables users to interact, share, and collaborate with others, thus forming virtual social connections. Media also serves as a platform for conveying messages in the communication process. Media is typically categorized based on the technology used, such as print media (produced through printing machines) and electronic media (produced through electronic devices). Media contributes to the creation of meaning and culture. In other words, media not only contains content but also carries context.

To understand media, three aspects must be considered. First, media as a message carrier channel. The key aspect here is the content within the message, not the medium itself. Media can differ from one another, and the content they carry may not be the same. Second, media as a language, meaning that although the content and the message are more important than the medium that carries them, it is undeniable that the way content is presented in a particular medium can affect the message differently than when delivered in a simple format. Third, media as an environment, where the focus of media is not only on the text but also on the context. This involves two levels: the micro level, which concerns how the audience selects media for interaction or specific situations, and the macro level, which examines how media influences interaction patterns and social structures in general.

Social media can be divided into six types:

1. **Collaborative Projects:** Media where content is created and can be globally accessed by the public, such as Wikipedia.
2. **Blogs and Microblogs:** Platforms that assist users in writing detailed posts about news, opinions, experiences, or daily activities in text, images, videos, or a combination of all three.
3. **Content Communities:** Applications where users can share videos or photos either directly or indirectly.
4. **Social Networking Sites:** Websites that help individuals create profiles and connect with other users.
5. **Virtual Game Worlds:** Multiplayer games designed to attract consumers through striking graphics and vibrant designs, making them more informative and interactive.
6. **Virtual Social Worlds:** Platforms that simulate real-life experiences on the internet, allowing users to interact in 3D environments using avatars similar to real life.

Rahadi identifies seven functions of social media: identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, and groups. *Identity* refers to how users manage their identity within social media; *conversations* describe how users communicate with one another; *sharing* involves exchanging and receiving content like text, images, or videos; *presence* refers to users' ability to access others; *relationships* describe the connections between users; *reputation* represents how users can identify others and themselves; and *groups* refer to the ability of users to form communities based on background, interests, or demographics.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research method with a field research approach. The data collection techniques in this study are divided into two parts: primary and secondary data.

The primary data is collected by examining the Kajian Islam Sunnah Facebook group, focusing on the content found within its timeline. This includes gathering memes related to the prohibition of music that have been posted on the group's Facebook feed. The collection process involves documentation and direct observation, as well as accessing every post on the media to capture the various forms and trends of memes circulating within the group. Facebook was specifically chosen as the platform for this research due to its widespread dissemination of memes related to the prohibition of music. The researcher aims to understand how these memes are shared and discussed within this space, identifying key patterns and arguments being presented by group members.

Secondary data is gathered from a variety of scholarly sources and literature that are relevant to the theme of this study, including books, journal articles, and research papers. This data also involves analyzing the comments made by group members, admins, and other netizens regarding the posts within the Facebook group. These comments provide additional context, perspectives, and reactions that help to understand how the memes about the prohibition of music are received and interpreted in a wider social context.

In analyzing the primary data, the researcher uses the contestation theory developed by Hasse Jubba. This theory helps to frame the understanding of the competition or struggle for influence among different social groups, particularly in the context of religious interpretations and practices. The contestation theory will be used to analyze how different actors within the group engage in a contest over religious beliefs and the legitimacy of the prohibition of music.

For the analysis of secondary data, including the comments from group members and other netizens, discourse analysis is employed. Discourse analysis is a method used to examine spoken or written language in order to understand the underlying meanings, assumptions, and ideologies embedded in the text. By applying discourse analysis, the study aims to uncover the ideologies behind the

comments and how these contribute to the broader narrative of contestation surrounding the prohibition of music. This approach also allows for a deeper understanding of how language is used to negotiate power, belief systems, and social norms in online spaces.

The combination of these methods—field research, contestation theory, and discourse analysis—provides a comprehensive approach to understanding the dynamics of meme-based contestation regarding the prohibition of music in the online religious community. This methodology allows for a nuanced exploration of how religious ideas are debated and contested in the digital age, shedding light on the evolving intersections between religion, social media, and cultural practices.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Profile of the Kajian Islam Sunnah Group

The Kajian Islam Sunnah group is a type of social learning group on Facebook. The group was created on April 30, 2018. It has been joined by many people from various backgrounds and its membership has steadily increased, currently reaching 87,251 members. The group has 7 administrators and moderators. It is a public group, meaning that everyone can see the members and the content that is uploaded. Before being named Kajian Islam Sunnah, the group went through several name changes, starting with “love dakwah sunnah,” then changing to “thuba lil ghuroba-dakwah sunnah,” followed by “dakwah sunnah,” and finally settled on the name Kajian Islam Sunnah. This name reflects the dominant presence of the Salafi group in the group, which is evident in the group’s timeline, where most of the posts have a Salafi tone.

Before joining the group, members are encouraged to read the group’s rules set by the administrators. There are 17 rules to follow, including: (1) members must pledge to Allah not to post or share anything that may lead to sinful actions within the group, and any violation of this will be directly dealt with by Allah. (2) Members are required to post directly to the group timeline. (3) The group does not accept shared posts. (4) Posts must contain useful religious knowledge. (5) Any articles or images about dawah must include a clear source with full attribution. (6) Videos about dawah cannot have background music, meaning no melodic or rhythmic tunes or music that encourages listeners to sing along. (7) Religious posts should not promote WhatsApp numbers, personal accounts, or bank account details. (8) The use of abbreviations for religious greetings, such as “Swt” for “Subhanahu wa ta’ala” or “Saw” for “Shollallahu ‘alaihi wasallam,” is prohibited. (9) Commercial advertisements are not allowed. (10) Posts that already exist in the group cannot be reposted. (11) Comments should be kept to a minimum, and any member who comments abusively or with the intent to argue will be silenced or blocked. (12) Members are not required to ask permission to

share posts. (13) Violating members will be blocked. (14) Blocked members are not allowed to create new accounts to rejoin the group. (15) The Kajian Islam Sunnah group does not have a WhatsApp group. (16) Administrators are not required to be Ustads or Ustadzahs. (17) There is no obligation for administrators or members to answer questions in the group; it is advised that members direct their questions to a Salafi Ustad.

The Kajian Islam Sunnah group consistently posts Islamic content. The content includes Islamic posters, memes, and lectures by various Ustads presented in an engaging way. Every post often includes Quranic verses or Hadiths, though not all posts provide full text, usually only translations. The lectures featured are delivered by Salafi Ustads such as Abu Qatadah, Abdul Hakim bin Abi Amir Abdat, Abdurrahman Thoyyib, Yazid bin Abdul Qadir Jawas, Maududi Abdullah, Farhan Abu Furaihan, and many others.

Forms of Contestation in the Meme about the Prohibition of Music in the Kajian Islam Sunnah Group

As it is known, the contestation regarding the prohibition of music, which initially occurred offline, has now extended into the online realm and even dominates it due to the rapid advancement of technology. This allows anyone to easily access and post various content on social media platforms, including Facebook. People express or share their views in public spaces in many ways, one of which is through memes. In this case, memes are used as a form of contestation regarding the prohibition of music. Below, the author will describe several memes about the prohibition of music found in the Kajian Islam Sunnah group.

The first meme was posted on September 2, 2019, at 7:22 PM via the Facebook account "Warga Negara Indonesia Bertauhid" with the title: "Hukum Musik: 4 Ulama Madzhab Mencela Nyanyian" (The Law of Music: 4 Madzhab Scholars Condemn Singing) (Image 1). This meme strongly asserts that music is haram (forbidden), citing that its prohibition has been agreed upon by the four great Imams: Imam Abu Hanifah, Imam Malik bin Anas, Imam Asy-Syafi'i, and Imam Ahmad bin Hambal.

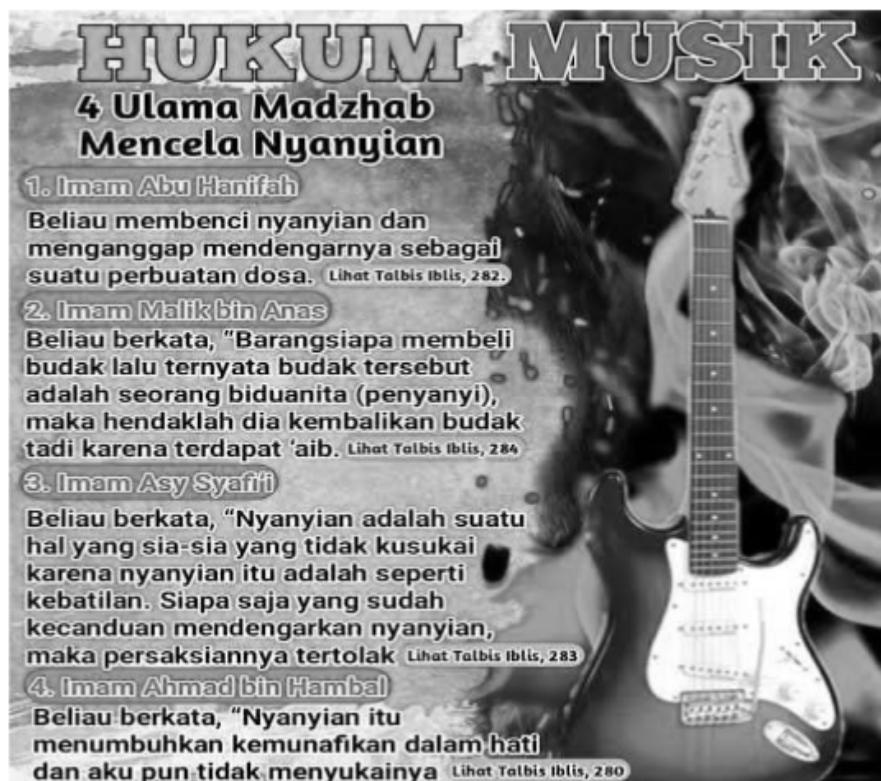


Image 1: The Law of Music: 4 Madzhab Scholars Condemn Singing

Another tweet from the account Astarudin Narbiantoro appeared on September 2, 2019, at 07:22 AM, also highlighting the prohibition of music, but in the form of a subtle criticism towards those who remain uncertain about the prohibition of music because they have heard the opinion of an Ustad who permits it. As seen in **Image 2:**



Image 2: Is Music Really Haram?

Another form of contestation also presented through a meme, as posted by the Facebook account Ukhty Niswa on September 11, 2019, at 19:45, features a Q&A about music, providing an understanding to the viewers and readers that the prohibition of music is very clear. See **Image 3**:



Image 3: Q&A Meme About Music

The last form of contestation is also seen in a post from the Facebook account Ukhy Niswa on September 11 at 07:45. See **Image 4**, which states that male singers/musicians are referred to as "banci" (effeminate) based on the words of Ibn Taymiyyah.



Image 4: Label for Male Singers

Factors Behind the Emergence of Contestation Among Facebook Social Media Users Regarding the Meme on the Prohibition of Music

The emergence of contestation among netizens regarding the meme on the prohibition of music, particularly within the *Kajian Islam Sunnah* group, is caused by two factors. The primary factor is that the group is dominated by the Salafi group, which adheres to the Salafi methodology. The Salafi commitment aims to purify the faith by returning to the Qur'an and Hadith, following the model of understanding and religious practice of the Salaf Salih (the first three generations of Muslims) (Misbah, 2019).

The identity or characteristics of the Salafi group within the *Kajian Islam Sunnah* group are evident in two aspects: First, this can be seen in the group's description, which contains specific rules that must be followed by all members, with violations resulting in immediate blocking. Some of these rules reflect the Salafi identity, such as the prohibition of using background music when posting a Da'wah video, and advising members to ask a Salafi scholar when there are questions about posts, particularly those related to Islamic rulings.

Second, this is reflected in the variety of posts shared, which provide information about Salafi methodology, through images or videos of lectures from Salafi scholars.

The second factor is that not all members of the *Kajian Islam Sunnah* group agree with the Salafi viewpoint. This leads to contestation between the two sides, those who support and those who oppose the meme on the prohibition of music. For those who support the Salafi group, they do not question the status of the prohibition of music in the Hadith; they simply like and share the posts. Additionally, they comment to justify and clarify the Salafi group's arguments to those who oppose. On the other hand, those who oppose the Salafi group tend to question why music is prohibited, what types of music are prohibited, and some even openly refute the Salafi arguments for specific reasons. To further clarify, the following table presents the arguments of the Salafi group regarding the meme on the prohibition of music, as well as comments from netizens regarding these Hadith memes:

Discussion

In line with Hasse Jubba's statement that media becomes a bridge for the formation of contesting religious identities, this is proven by the establishment of the *Kajian Islam Sunnah* group on Facebook, where contestation occurs through the various memes displayed as expressions conveyed by individuals through

images. It is indeed true that this contestation occurs as individuals or groups compete to claim their own identity, in this case, the Salafi group. Although this group engages in contestation by presenting various arguments based on Hadith or the opinions of scholars, on the one hand, they tend to make truth claims, leaving little room for other groups to argue the prohibition of music. As seen in the responses of netizens overall, there are more positive reactions than negative ones, as the majority of group members are from the Salafi group. However, it is also possible for netizens outside the Salafi group to respond positively, as they recognize the concrete arguments presented. Hence, the prohibition of music is considered definitive and irrefutable. Only a small portion of netizens responded negatively to the statement of the prohibition of music.

The Salafi group prohibits music absolutely because they tend to understand the evidence in a textual manner, without considering the context. However, when the four major scholars declare music to be haram, the source or authenticity of the opinions should be reviewed. Although there is one Hadith narrated by Bukhari with a strong authenticity used as an argument by the Salafi group (as seen in Image 3), this Hadith equates music with zina (fornication) and khamr (alcohol) because typically, adulterers and drunkards engage in these acts accompanied by music. Therefore, the music referred to in this Hadith is the one that leads to sinful acts. The prohibition of music should not be seen solely through the instrument itself, but must be understood in context—such as the content of the lyrics, the performer, and the circumstances in which the music is played. If music is used as a means for Da'wah (Islamic preaching) or for positive purposes, it is permissible. In other words, it cannot be concluded that all forms of music are haram; it depends on the context. There is no verse in the Qur'an explicitly stating the prohibition of music, unlike zina and khamr, which are clearly prohibited in the Qur'an. Some scholars, like Yusuf al-Qaradawi, follow the opinion of Abu Zahrah that music is not haram as long as it does not lead to lust. Additionally, Sheikh Muhammad al-Ghazali also permits music, following the opinion of Ibn Hazm. Therefore, the ruling on music remains a subject of disagreement (khilaf) among scholars.

If we examine the motive behind the meme on the prohibition of music in the *Kajian Islam Sunnah* group, it can be said that the memes express an opinion about the prohibition of music. Furthermore, considering the type of social media analyzed in this study, Facebook is a networked social media platform. Through Facebook, users can publish content such as profiles, daily activities, and personal opinions. Additionally, through the Facebook feed, users can share their experiences, comment on events, and express opinions, with others able to respond through agreement, rejection, or simply by clicking the 'like' button. All of this is realized in the *Kajian Islam Sunnah* group, which is one of many groups on Facebook.

CONCLUSION

The forms of contestation that occurred in the *Kajian Islam Sunnah* group can be seen through several memes related to the prohibition of music. Each meme displayed includes arguments sourced from Hadith and the opinions of scholars. The contestation regarding the meme on the prohibition of music arises from differing opinions between two parties: those who agree and those who disagree. Those who agree are from the Salafi group, while those who disagree are from non-Salafi groups. Both sides position themselves as netizens. If we look at the outcome of this contestation, the winning group is the Salafi group because they dominate all aspects and present strong and concrete arguments. Therefore, the non-Salafi group, which disagrees, can only comment or remain silent, even though they disagree internally.

The emergence of contestation on social media opens the perspective that Muslims should study, understand, and possess adequate knowledge, particularly religious knowledge, so there are no doubts about certain rulings, whether in worship (ibadah) or social transactions (mu'amalah). Once one possesses sufficient religious knowledge, they will not only be an expert in their field but also contribute to dispelling misunderstandings both offline and online. This article, of course, has limitations that need to be addressed, and it can serve as a basis for further research regarding the ruling on music. This study does not address the rulings on music according to contemporary scholars' fatwas, which could serve as references to be aligned with the current context. Hence, there is an opportunity for academics to explore this gap as material for future research.

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