

## Reclaiming Traditional Religious Authority in the Contemporary Era

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### Keywords

Reclaiming, Ulama,  
Youth, Social Media

### Abstract

Existing studies have highlighted that traditional religious authorities can survive and adapt to technological and communication developments. However, previous studies did not reveal whether the traditional religious authority could adapt independently or whether other actors helped strengthen their authority and popularity on social media. This article focuses on several questions about why traditional religious authorities engage with Muslim youth and how they repackage their clerics to suit the culture of urban Muslim youth. Based on virtual ethnographic work carried out from 2021 to 2022 and personal communication with one of the Muslim youth involved with traditional religious authorities on social media, this article shows that Ustaz Abdul Somad and Ustaz Hanan Attaki, who are part of traditional religious authorities, can adapt to technological developments thanks to the support of Muslims youth. The consequence of this support is that they adapt youth culture to repackage their ulama.

### Kata kunci

Mengklaim Ulang,  
Ulama, Anak Muda,  
Media Sosial

### Abstrak

Studi-studi yang ada telah menyoroti bahwa otoritas keagamaan tradisional mampu bertahan dan beradaptasi dengan perkembangan teknologi dan komunikasi. Namun, studi-studi sebelumnya tidak mengungkap apakah otoritas keagamaan tradisional mampu beradaptasi secara mandiri atau ada aktor lain yang membantu menguatnya otoritas dan popularitas mereka di media sosial. Artikel ini fokus pada beberapa pertanyaan tentang mengapa otoritas keagamaan tradisional bertunangan dengan anak-anak muda Muslim dan bagaimana mereka mengemas ulang keulamaan mereka yang sesuai dengan budaya anak muda Muslim perkotaan. Berdasarkan kerja etnografi virtual yang dilakukan sejak tahun 2021 sampai 2022 dan komunikasi pribadi dengan salah satu anak muda Muslim yang terlibat dengan otoritas keagamaan tradisional di media sosial, artikel ini menunjukkan bahwa Ustaz Abdul Somad dan Ustaz Hanan Attaki, yang merupakan bagian dari otoritas keagamaan tradisional mampu beradaptasi dengan perkembangan teknologi berkat dukungan anak-anak muda Muslim. Konsekuensi dari dukungan itu adalah mereka mengadaptasi budaya anak muda untuk mengemas ulang keulamaan mereka.

## Introduction

That there has been a fragmentation of religious authority in Islam cannot be denied (Campbell, 2021; Cloete, 2016; Rinker, Roof, Harvey, Bailey, & Embler, 2016; Soares, 2015; Turner, 2007; Whyte, 2022). According (Eickelman & Piscatori, 1996) that the fragmentation occurs because of the objectification of Islam in the life of the Muslim community, so it has an impact on the loss of the monopoly of the *ulama* (traditional religious authorities) as the holders of authoritative religious discourse. In scholarly studies, what is meant by traditional religious authorities are those who have a classical Islamic educational background, such as Islamic boarding schools and Islamic universities that specialize in learning Islamic sciences. Because to their educational background, they can access, understand, and interpret classical Islamic books (foundational text) such as the Qur'an, hadith, and the yellow book (*Kitab kuning*), and master the Arabic language (Suhadi & Suseno, 2019).

Objectification that impacts the loss of *ulama's* monopoly as holders of authoritative religious discourse encourages the birth of new religious actors who do not have a solid Islamic educational background to talk about Islam. They generally acquire religious knowledge through the sources of translated books, religious studies (*pengajian*), and sources that can be accessed through the mass media and the internet. These new actors are gaining popularity thanks to their struggles with the mass media and modern communication technologies. In addition, they can package religious messages in exciting ways (Akmaliah, 2020b, 2020a; Burhani, 2020; Kailani & Sunarwoto, 2019; Muzakki, 2012; Pribadi, 2020).

Unlike the traditional religious authorities who appear wearing *koko*, *cap (peci)*, and turban (*surban*), these new actors appear wearing trendy clothes such as shirts, hats, skullcaps (*kupluk*), and others, which are closely related to the culture of urban Muslim youth (Kailani & Sunarwoto, 2019). Because of their ability to package religious messages that are more popular and master communication techniques in mass media and social media, in academic studies, they are known as religious entrepreneurs (Barentsen, 2019) or, in Inayah Rakhmani's terms, presenting an Islamic message in the form of *da'wahteinment* (Rakhmani, 2016).

Regarding the above, scholars (Echchaibi, 2014; Eickelman & Anderson, 2003; Giorgi, 2019; Turner, 2007; Zaid, Fedtke, Shin, El Kadoussi, & Ibahrine, 2022) argue that the rapid development of mass education, print technology, and new media, which culminates in the emergence of new religious actors, will weaken and replace the role of *ulama's* authority. (Feener, 2014) also describes the challenges and opportunities faced by traditional religious authorities on the agenda of Islamic reform and modernization in the early 19th to 20th centuries. Nevertheless, (Brinton, 2015; Campbell, 2021; Gräf, 2014; Zaman, 2002, 2009), (Burhanudin, 2010; Kailani & Sunarwoto, 2019; Kingsley, 2014; Triantoro, 2019a), refuting the thesis about the collapse of traditional religious authority amid the development of new media. The presence of new media does not

constantly challenge traditional religious authorities but, at the same time, empowers them to disseminate their lectures through print, television, and other media.

Popular lecturers such as Ustaz Abdul Somad, Ustaz Adi Hidayat, Ustaz Hanan Attaki, and Kyai Anwar Zahid prove that *ulama* can adapt to the development of modern technology (Kailani & Sunarwoto, 2019; Triantoro, 2019a). This case shows that not all new religious authorities (the terms Kailani and Sunarwoto are celebrity *ustaz*) or, to borrow (Roy, 1994) term *Lumpen Intelligentsia*, do not have good religious knowledge and come from non-religious education. Some examples of *ulama* above illustrate that some celebrity *ustaz* also come from traditional religious authority groups.

This paper attempts to show how traditional religious authorities repackage and change their lifestyles like new religious authorities. The studies that the authors have presented above focus on how traditional authorities use new technology media. Instead, they revealed *ulama's* involvement with new media. However, on the other hand, they did not reveal whether traditional religious authorities were able to adapt independently or whether other actors helped strengthen their authority and popularity on social media.

Continuing existing studies, this paper seeks to provide a new picture that traditional authorities not only adapt through social media but, at the same time, also adapt to the new lifestyle of modern Muslim society. More specifically, this paper continues and provides a new illustration of what previous scholars (Kailani & Sunarwoto, 2019) said at the beginning of their introduction, that traditional religious authority dress styles are identified with *koko* clothes, caps, and turban bandages. True, there are still and few traditional religious authorities who wear the style of dress described above. However, the recent phenomenon shows that traditional religious authorities also live like new religious actors. They wear shirts and skullcaps and occasionally move like urban Muslim youths. However, some traditional religious actors combine traditional Islamic dress culture with Muslim youth dress styles in specific contexts. In this paper, the author calls this way of repackaging their lifestyle the rebranding *ulama*.

This paper argues that lifestyle changes among traditional religious authorities are influenced by several things: First, their struggle with new media. The media that brought them popular, at the same time, gave them a new identity as a celebrity or celebrity preachers. Therefore, they live like a celebrity. Second, they get strong support from urban Muslim youth, so these traditional religious actors seek to appreciate the culture of urban Muslim youth.

To explain some of the arguments above, this paper is divided into several parts: the first part discusses the background of this research. In the second part, this article discusses the landscape of the emergence of religious authority in Indonesia and its struggles with the media. In the third part, this article discusses the role of Muslim youths in building and strengthening the popularity of Ustaz Somad and Ustaz Hanan

on social media. Finally, this article describes how traditional religious authorities rebranded themselves to attract the attention of Muslim youths.

## **Method**

This research uses a virtual ethnographic method that focuses on observing research subjects such as YouTube, Instagram, and online mass media (Kozinets, 2019). In this study, the researchers observed the Instagram accounts @ustadzabdulsomad\_official and @hanan\_attaki, as well as several youth community da'wah accounts namely @shiftmedia.id and @fodamara intensely from 2021 to 2022. These two preachers were chosen as case studies in this study due to several considerations matters: First, referring to the definition of traditional religious authority that has been studied by scholars, Ustaz Abdul Somad and Ustaz Hanan Attaki belong to a group of traditional religious authorities or what is known as the *Ulama* (see Suhadi and Suseno, 2019; Turner, 2007; Kailani and Sunarwoto, 2019; Zaman, 2002; 2009; Campbell, 2021). Second, they actively use social media as a means of disseminating their da'wah. Third, they have da'wah segmentation among youth. This can be seen from several youth preaching communities (Fodamara and *Pemuda Hijrah*) who support their da'wah movements. In addition to observing their social media accounts, the researchers observed several YouTube accounts that spread Ustaz Somad and Ustaz Hanan's lectures. As additional data, the researcher conducted personal communication with one of the Fodamara members in Pekanbaru. Finally, research data is analyzed and discussed with concepts or arguments from previous studies. Then the researchers gives a reflective conclusion.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Media and Religious Authority in Indonesia: From Television to YouTube**

In the 1990s, Indonesia's political, social, and religious situation underwent significant changes. This is because the New Order government began implementing policies that appreciated Indonesia's Islamic discourse. In those years, the *Orba* (short for New Order) began to support the founding of the Indonesian Muslim Intellectuals Association (ICMI) and the first Islamic Bank, Muamalah (Hefner, 1993). In addition, the use of headscarves for schoolgirls, which was previously prohibited, is also allowed to be used again (Smith-Hefner, 2007).

In the late 1990s, government control over the mass media was increasingly open. Rakhmani (2016) noted that five private television stations appeared in Indonesia during that period. This is in line with the increase in the middle and upper-class Muslims, which also affects Indonesia's market economy growth. TVRI, which was previously the main media for displaying the religious affairs of each religious figure (Islam, Protestant Christianity, Catholicism, Hinduism, and Buddhism) in Indonesia, has competed with several private television stations that also broadcast religious broadcasts (Rakhmani, 2016).

KH Zainuddin MZ is one example of a lecturer who uses state and private television stations to spread his da'wah message. Zainuddin often appeared in radio and TVRI rooms during the New Order period until he was known to millions of Muslims in Indonesia. Not only performing through mass media, but Zainuddin also massively lectured in several mosques and stadiums in Indonesia with Islamic music groups such as Rhoma Irama and Kantata Takwa. Zainuddin has reached the peak of popularity thanks to his struggles with the mass media. His lecture tapes were often played in several mosques in Indonesia until, finally, he was known as the "*dai sejuta umat*." However, it should be noted that before Zainuddin MZ appeared on television, there had been several religious figures appearing on television, whom Howell referred to as "Professor-Preachers" they were Muslim professors and scholars such as Hamka, Nurcholis Madjid, Jalaluddin Rakhmat, Quraish Shihab, Nasaruddin Umar, and Komaruddin Hidayat. They often appear in suits and formal shirts like college scientists. Meanwhile, Zainuddin often appears wearing a koko shirt with a cap and turban like a traditional religious authority.

Entering the early 2000s, many preachers marketed their da'wah messages through television media, such as Abdullah Gymnastiar (Aa Gym), Arifin Ilham (d. 2019), Jefri Al-Bukhori (d. 2013), and others. Aa Gym looks like an uztaz using a koko shirt and a turban attached to the head on various occasions. However, he is different from Zainuddin MZ, who has a pesantren education background. The Gym does not have a pesantren education background or any other formal Islamic religious education. He graduated from Jenderal Ahmad Yani University. According Kailani (2018), Gym is not only a lecturer but also a trainer, or what he calls the "Preacher-cum-trainer". The Gym has a well-known motivational training business, Management of *Qalbu* (MQ). Urban Muslims in Indonesia will receive his motivational business. One of his well-known motivational materials is about prosperity. Gym achieved popularity thanks to its MQ. Various products were launched using the MQ brand. Hoesterey (2017) notes several Aa Gym products such as Aa Gym Clocks, *Qolbu* Cola, MQ *Baroqah* cosmetic products, Aa Gym Dolls, and others. The popularity of Aa Gym also cannot be separated from the existence of the Darut Tauhid Islamic Boarding School, which he founded in the 1980s. The existence of the Darul Tauhid Islamic Boarding School has made the Gym authority not only a celebrity ustaz but also a kyai. His congregation often greets him as K.H. Abdullah Gymnastiar.

Besides the Gym, Ustaz Arifin Ilham is another example of a famous preacher in Indonesia. Just like Gym, which does not have a formal Islamic religious education background, Arifin Ilham is a graduate of international relations from the National University. Ilham's popularity as a preacher began with an event held during *Ramadan* at the At-Tin Mosque in Jakarta, a mosque founded by President Soeharto's wife in 2001. In this event, Ilham led the remembrance (*Zikir Akbar*) program, which later became his brand of da'wah. He is known as a preacher who often chants remembrance at each of his da'wah until Howell (2008) calls him Sufi. Occasionally he cries to

emphasize his remembrance program. Ilham often wears a long robe (jubah), sarong (*sarung*), cap, and white turban. If the Gym cannot be separated from the Darut Tauhid Islamic Boarding School, Ilham cannot be separated from the Az-Zikra Assembly, a remembrance assembly founded in 1997 at the Az-Zikra Mosque, Sentul, Bogor. Ilham often organizes religious events in the mosque, such as tabligh akbar and remembrance, by presenting well-known lecturers in Indonesia.

Ustaz Jefry Al-Bukhori is another example of a famous preacher in Indonesia. He is very popular among Muslim youths in Indonesia. In each of his da'wah events, he often greets Muslim youths with the terms "*Coy*" and "*Bro*" (a greeting to call friends among youths). Not only that, Uje, as he is usually called, also often engages in activities, usually young urban Muslims, such as touring using a big motorbike (*Moge*) (Hagomoro & Yogaswara, 2013). The message of da'wah that Uje often echoes is about the process of his migration to become a pious Muslim. He often told about his experiences in the nightlife, such as drunkenness and narcotics. In addition, another thing that attracts Muslim youths to Uje's figure is the beauty of his voice in humming the verses of the Koran and Islamic music.

In addition to some of the preachers mentioned above, many new preachers have appeared in the Indonesian public sphere in recent years. They are active in lecturing on private television stations in Indonesia. Ustaz Maulana, for example, is active in one of the television programs, "*Islam itu Indah (Islam is Beautiful)*," on Trans TV. Besides Maulana, Mamah Dedeh is another example of a popular speaker in Indonesia who often appears on television. Appearing on the "*Hati Ke Hati Bersama Mamah*" program on ANTV and "*Mamah dan Aa*" on Indosiar (later, she appeared on the "*Ada Rumah Mamah Dede*" program on Tv One), Mamah Dedeh attracted the attention of housewives. In the event entitled "confessing (*curhat*)," Mamah Dedeh acted like an Islamic counselor who gave advice and solutions on religious matters. Mamah Dedeh's event was attended mainly by homemakers and members of the *taklim* assembly (*majelis taklim*) (Sofjan and Hidayati, 2013).

A number of the preachers above, from Zainuddin, Gym, Ilham, Uje, Maulana, to Dedeh, enjoyed popularity through television. Recent developments have shown that many Indonesian preachers do not only appear on television but also social media such as Youtube and Instagram. This phenomenon coincides with the increasing development of the internet in Indonesia. Some examples of speakers who emerged and were popular in this context were Ustaz Abdul Somad (after this referred to as Ustaz Somad) and Ustaz Hanan Attaki (after this referred to as Ustaz Hanan). They are religious figures who massively disseminate their religious messages through Youtube and Instagram.

Ustaz Abdul Somad or who is familiarly called UAS, gained his popularity thanks to his viral da'wah videos on Youtube. Through Tafaqquh, the first da'wah institution that actively uploaded lectures on Youtube (now managed by UAS Official), Ustaz Somad became a well-known preacher in Indonesia and received da'wah invitations in

various places in Indonesia and abroad. In addition, since he was famous, several private television stations began to invite and broadcast religious programs that he brought.

Ustaz Hanan is another example of an Indonesian preacher who is active and popular on social media. Ustaz Hanan's da'wah is widely uploaded on Youtube and Instagram. He is different from the ustaz in general, who is full of koko clothes, caps, and turbans. Ustaz Hanan appears in urban youth's packaging, such as flannel shirts, skullcaps, and popular language or slang (Akmaliah, 2020b). The da'wah themes that he carries are also popular, such as *Move on Dari Dosa*, *Nasehat Biar Gak Putus*, *Mager*, *Forgive*, *Di-Reject*, *Kuota Fisabilillah*, and others.

The above phenomenon does not only occur in Indonesia, but also in several other countries such as Arabia. Nabil Echchaibi's findings show that popular Arab preachers, namely Amr Khaled, Moez Masoud and Ali Ardekani are widely known and gain new audiences thanks to the use of new media. Echchaibi also shows the ability of new media to delocalize religious authority in a wider space and time (Echchaibi, 2011).

### **Being a Popular Preacher on Social Media: Ustaz Somad, Ustaz Hanan, and Youth**

Ustaz Somad and Ustaz Hanan became popular since Muslim communities in Indonesia widely watched their lectures through Youtube and Instagram, so it is easy to say that the media shaped their popularity. At first glance, this argument is valid. However, it is necessary to understand that it is not only the media that has made them famous but also their clerical career, which has been pursued for a long time through formal religious education such as Islamic boarding schools and universities (Sunarwoto in Triantoro, 2019b). They are not new religious authorities who do not have a formal Islamic religious education background and study religion through the internet or translated books. They are both graduates of the world's leading Islamic university, Al-Azhar Cairo, Egypt. Especially for Ustaz Somad also graduated from Darul Hadith, Morocco, and took a doctoral program at Omdurman University, Sudan. The strength of their Islamic religious knowledge makes their popularity even stronger among Muslims in Indonesia.

In addition to media and clerical careers, the popularity of Ustaz Somad and Ustaz Hanan cannot be separated from the role played by Muslim youths. Ustaz Somad and Ustaz Hanan's da'wah content spread on Youtube and Instagram is produced by their da'wah team, mostly youths. Then the role of da'wah volunteers who spread their da'wah is also mostly dominated by Muslim youths. Therefore, the success of traditional religious authorities such as Ustaz Somad and Ustaz Hanan during the development of modern technology is closely related to the activities and mobilization of youths on social media. Previous studies conducted by scholars (Burhanudin, 2010; Campbell, 2021; Gräf, 2014; Kailani and Sunarwoto, 2019; Zaman, 2009) did not reveal the discourse behind the success of traditional religious authorities in adapting to new

environments, so indirectly, these studies that exist suggest that traditional religious authorities can survive independently.

Ustaz Somad became famous thanks to a youtube video containing the Friday sermon at the Pekanbaru Great Mosque. At that time, Ustaz Somad explained the collapse of the Ottoman Empire's Islamic caliphate. The video was uploaded by the @Fodamara PKU account (now Fodamara TV). Fodamara (Youth Forum of the Great Mosque of Senapelan) is a youth da'wah community-based in the Senapelan Great Mosque, Pekanbaru. To find out about Fodamara's role in distributing UAS da'wah videos, I interviewed one of Fodamara's members, Alam Zumiraj. I have long been friends with Alam and know his activities with Fodamara. I asked him about his involvement with Fodamara in recording Ustaz Somad's lectures in various cities. He told in detail that Fodamara was often involved in various da'wah events hosted by Ustaz Somad. When Ustaz Somad gave a lecture, Fodamara participated in recording, editing, and spreading Ustaz Somad's preaching to their various social media channels. Fodamara has a media team known as Fodamara TV. It is through Fodamara TV that Ustaz Somad's lectures are uploaded to social media. Later, Fodamara uploaded not only videos of Ustaz Somad's lectures but also of other preachers.

“Yes, Alam and Fodamara often go out of town to record Ustaz Somad's lectures. So when we knew the ustaz missionary safari's schedule, we immediately mobilized the media team members to prepare a recording device. We once recorded a UAS lecture in West Sumatera. In Pekanbaru, we have often recorded Ustaz Somad's preaching. For the technical recording, we used a Sony PXW-X70 type camera for taking pictures. As for the sound, we directly record it through the sound system mixer so that the sound is clear.”

In a Youtube video, Fodamara TV explained his activities when covering Ustaz Somad's lectures in several locations in West Sumatera. In the 48-minute, 38-second video, the Fodamara team covered the arrival of Ustaz Somad when he gave a da'wah and finished his da'wah. Then they also explained the magnificent mosque building, the geographical condition of the location of Ustaz Somad's study, and covered the enthusiasm of the congregation who attended Ustaz Somad's lecture. Fodamara TV also covered other youth preaching communities that participated in recording Ustaz Somad's lectures, such as the Youth Association of the An-Nur Great Mosque of Pekanbaru (IRMA), the Youth Gathering Forum for Mosques and Students (FSRMM), and others. In the video, Maulana, one of Fodamara's media teams, claims that the presence of several Muslim youth media teams in recording Ustaz Somad's lectures is interpreted as a "mouthpiece" of the ulama on social media. He also said in his vlog that Ustaz Somad appreciated the exhibition stand opened by Fodamara. In the exhibition, Fodamara sells various preaching t-shirts and Ustaz Somad merchandise such as caps and others (Fodamara TV, 2020).

Ustaz Somad, in a short video, said that many of his da'wah videos were uploaded by Fodamara. "This Fodamara is purely a mosque youth. The video Ustaz (UAS)



contains a lot of Fodamara, and they are mosque youths. Fodamara made a video. They shared it on the internet. They are youths who are active...." (Fodamara TV, n.d.). Then in another video, he invites young Muslims, especially in Pekanbaru, to join Fodamara.

"..Shall I show you trade, a business, which can save you from Allah's punishment? Three only. Believing in Allah, you strive in the way of Allah with your wealth. However, these three must be acquired from a youth age. From where? If you want to form reeds from bamboo, let them be from bamboo shoots. The shoots are white, circular, and curved. Where is the formation? At Fodamara. Then register yourself, join (to Fodamara), and we will reap the results, not tomorrow morning... Register (to Fodamara), write your name, and become an activist mosque activist. Everyone is in the process, and everyone will get their reward (Fodamara TV, 2017)."

Like Ustaz Somad, Ustaz Hanan is also known by the Muslim community in Indonesia thanks to his da'wah videos on social media uploaded by Pemuda Hijrah (Shift), a da'wah movement founded by Ustaz Hanan with youths at the Al-Latief Mosque, Bandung. Besides Ustaz Hanan, the figure of Fani Krismandar, who is familiarly called Kang Inong, is a Muslim youth who plays an essential role in the Shift da'wah movement. In an interview session, Kang Inong explained his closeness to Ustaz Hanan. He illustrated the appearance of Shift by staging a film. Ustaz Hanan is the owner of the original film script, while Inong is the director who translates the original script into the language of youth. Therefore, the packaging of Ustaz Hanan's da'wah, both in person and online, cannot be separated from the role of Inong (Better Youth, 2019). Through the @Shift Media account, Ustaz Hanan's lectures are often uploaded to Youtube. As of June 10, 2022, Shift Media has uploaded 369 videos with 548 thousand subscribers and 38,059,142 views. Like Fodamara, Shift media has recently uploaded lectures from other preachers from Bandung, such as Ustaz Imam Nuryanto, Ustaz Nur Ihsan Jundulloh, Ustaz Nasrullah, and Ustaz Rizal Abu Mikyal.

Besides being supported by Shift Media, Ustaz Hanan also uses social media personally through the @hanan attaki account. Through his account, Ustaz Hanan massively uploads his lectures. Until June 12, 2022, Ustaz Hanan's account has uploaded 239 videos with a total subscriber count of 2.32 million. The number of subscribers is very different from the @Shift Media account. In one Youtube video, Ustaz Hanan explains about social media fiqh. He explained that the da'wah narrative could not only be done through the pulpit but also social media. Many features in social media can be contextualized in Muslim life. He gave an example of the like feature. According to him, to make God like us, we need to be people who repent and cleanse ourselves. He built this argument by quoting a QS Al-Baqarah: 222, which reads: "Verily Allah loves those who repent and loves those who purify themselves" (Kiapel Dakwah, 2020). This shows that Ustaz Hanan understands the potential of social media in supporting the success of his da'wah among Muslim youths.

Ustaz Hanan's statement above reinforces Luik's opinion which gives characteristics to new media, namely interactive, meaning that new media provides an

increasingly wider space for communication and information (Luik, 2020). In addition, this also supports the characteristics of new media as networked, namely a process that allows content producers, distributors, and consumers to connect with each other through virtual space (Luik, 2020). Therefore, the use of new media for da'wah activities is very appropriate in the contemporary era.

Ustaz Hanan's social media popularity has been built and strengthened through the two accounts above. This matter also made the mobility of Ustaz Hanan's da'wah wider. He gave lectures not only in Bandung but in other areas in Indonesia by carrying the concept of youth da'wah. Like Ustaz Hanan, before he was popular on social media, Ustaz Somad was active in lecturing from mosque to mosque in Riau. However, thanks to his popularity on social media, the mobility of Ustaz Somad's da'wah is getting wider. He was not only invited to lecture in Riau but also outside Riau and even abroad, such as in Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, and others.

The involvement of youths in spreading the da'wah of Ustaz Somad and Ustaz Hanan reflects what Bayat (2005) calls active piety, namely practicing religious values or religious knowledge not only for himself but also for himself. Muslim youths who are involved in disseminating Ustaz Somad and Ustaz Hanan's lectures on social media think that their activities are a form of da'wah. In the case of Ustaz Somad, for example, as mentioned above, Maulana thinks that recording and uploading Ustaz Somad's lectures to social media is a form of "talking" for the ulama. Likewise, Kang Inong, one of the initiators of the Shift community, in one of the online mass media reports, CNN Indonesia, Kang Inong said that Shift's da'wah aims to invite youths to love mosques as well as to be pious and cool (CNN Indonesia, 2019).

The above shows that in rebranding their da'wah in the contemporary era, several traditional religious authorities, such as Ustaz Somad and Ustaz Hanan, cannot be separated from the role of Muslim youths. They can survive and adapt to new media developments thanks to the support of Muslim youths in packaging and disseminating their da'wah in the online space. Therefore, thanks to the strengthening of their authority in the online space, at the same time, they get celebrity culture from social media. The consequence of this celebrity culture is that Ustaz Somad and Ustaz Hanan appreciate the culture of urban youth who are segmented by their da'wah. The following section will explain how the two traditional religious authorities act like youths.

### **Ustaz Somad and Ustaz Hanan: *Moge* (Big Motorcycle), Archery, Skateboarding, and Appreciation**

The previous section has shown the role of Muslim youths in building and strengthening the popularity of Ustaz Somad and Ustaz Hanan on social media. The support of Muslim youths not only made Ustaz Somad and Ustaz Hanan able to adapt to new media developments but, at the same time, Ustaz Somad and Ustaz Hanan gained celebrity status from the new media. As explained by Hou (2018) that the visibility of new media is an alternative to constructing celebrity culture. Therefore, nowadays it is

not surprising that many people use social media channels to popularize themselves. Due to the celebrity culture, they get from social media and youth involvement in their da'wah activities, Ustaz Somad and Ustaz Hanan have to repackage themselves in several ways, such as how to dress, speak, and other activities that appreciate celebrity and youth culture.

On the aspect of dress, for example, Ustaz Hanan appeared in a flannel shirt and wore a skullcap. This way of dressing is different from traditional religious authorities in general. Most traditional religious authorities use koko clothes, sarongs, turbans, and caps in their da'wah events. Name a few examples: K.H. Mustofa Bisri, who is familiarly called Gus Mus (Mustofa Bisri), Prof. Quraish Shihab, K.H. Anwar Zahid, Gus Muffawiq, Gus Miftah, and others. They wore traditional Islamic clothes.

Meanwhile, Ustaz Hanan wore clothes like urban Muslim youth. This shows that Ustaz Hanan is trying to build closeness with the Muslim youth culture, which supports his da'wah. How he repackaged, himself was a strategy to target his da'wah among Muslim youths. Therefore, it is very relevant if Ustaz Hanan's fans mostly come from young of urban Muslims.



Source: Instagram @hanan\_attaki

Figure 1. Ustaz Hanan Attaki's Dress Style

Han (2018), in his study, has shown the beginning of Ustaz Hanan starting to use flannel shirts in his da'wah. The concept of youth propaganda carried by Ustaz Hanan cannot be separated from the role of Kang Inong, a skater (skateboarder) from Bandung. Initially, Ustaz Hanan wore koko clothes or robes like traditional clerics. However, Inong suggested that Ustaz Hanan wear clothes like urban youth. The goal is to attract the attention of urban Muslim youth to join in their da'wah activities. This matter is in line with Ustaz Hanan's mission of preaching, which wants to target youth (B-PRAST HD, 2019).

The way Ustaz Hanan dresses is different from Ustaz Somad. He always wears traditional Islamic clothes such as a koko, cap, and turban. This is what makes his da'wah segmentation different from Ustaz Hanan. Ustaz Somad's da'wah segmentation is more diverse. He is not only favored by the youth but also among the elderly.

However, his efforts to appreciate the youth culture are to become endorsements in various Muslim youth activities. To name a few examples, for example, Ustaz Somad supports the establishment of non-formal educational institutions that focus on equestrian training in Pekanbaru (@ustadzabdulsomad\_official, 2021).

Horseback riding, archery, and swimming are fun activities considered sunnah for Muslim youths in urban areas. In recent years, many equestrian and archery communities have emerged in the public sphere. Their activities also received support from several preachers. Ustaz Hanan is one of the preachers, besides Ustaz Somad, who promotes archery and equestrian sports. Ustaz Hanan uploaded his activities while riding and archery on his social media account. In one of his posts, Habil Muhammad Ghifari, an equestrian trainer, explained that riding is one of the special programs at the Ustaz Hanan Islamic Boarding School. According to him, this program is an attraction for youth to study religious knowledge at the Islamic boarding school founded by Ustaz Hanan.

In addition, Ustaz Somad was also present in a futsal fun activity initiated by Sahabat Hijrah, one of the da'wah communities for Muslim youths in Pekanbaru. Alam, one of the administrators of Sahabat Hijrah, who was also present at the activity, said that Ustaz Somad was present to support Muslim youth activities such as futsal with several ustaz in Pekanbaru. "At that time (during futsal fun), Ustaz was present with his team. Ustaz supports the activities of youth because apart from futsal, we also have a study after playing futsal. Even the Ustaz (UAS) himself tried to kick the ball yesterday during futsal." A short 16-second video, uploaded by the Instagram account @ustadzabdulsomad\_official on January 25, 2021, shows what Alam said. In the video, Ustaz Somad is kicking a ball with Muslim youths.



Source: Instagram @ustadzabdulsomad\_official

Figure 2. UAS Activities When Riding, Archery, Cycling, and Riding a Motorcycle

Cycling and touring are other ways by Ustaz Somad to accommodate the culture of urban Muslim youth. In his social media account, Ustaz Somad cycled with youths several times. Then he often uses a big motorbike or what is known as *Moge* (short for *motor gede*). Even when preaching in Brunei Darussalam, Ustaz Somad completes his da'wah activities by touring together using a motorbike. Starting from archery, horse riding, playing futsal, and cycling to using motorbikes, are activities close to the youth. This reinforces the research of Setia and Dilawati (2021) which shows that riding large motorbikes is the current trend among youth moving, so that the touring culture initiated by a number of ustaz becomes significant, to strengthen their authority in the contemporary era.

In addition to the youth activities mentioned above, Ustaz Hanan has other methods that Ustaz Somad did not do to attract the enthusiasm of urban youth. His close relationship with Kang Inong, a former skateboarder, has recently made him fond of skateboarding. Ustaz Hanan said in a study of his da'wah:

“.....that if my da'wah is only in the mosque, that da'wah is heard only by pious people. Finally, I invited them (youth) to play with them. I try my best, even though I am not good at it, not an expert, but I try to skateboard. I skateboard, I surf on the beach, surf. So if there are waves, I play surfing, and often the waves roll in. Especially when my wife is angry, I look for waves. It is more delicious to be rolled by the waves than scolded by the wife. So I surf, I skateboard, I ride so that I can play with them (B-PRAST HD, 2019).”

Ustaz Hanan often refers to his activities with youths as *shift ulin*. In Sundanese, *ulin* means to play. Then this term became the motto of his da'wah, namely lots of play, lots of benefits, and lots of rewards (*pahala*). The way he packs da'wah by playing is borrowing the term Bayat (2007) called the politics of fun. Bayat illustrates this politics of pleasure by taking case studies in Egypt, Afghanistan, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. It is called the politics of fun because this pleasure has subversive powers that can influence the government's political policies and weaken Islamist groups. To borrow the political concept of pleasure from Bayat, in the case of Ustaz Hanan and Ustaz Somad, the fun activities they do with youth can strengthen their position among urban Muslim youth.

Ustaz Somad and Ustaz Hanan have significant differences in their da'wah material. Ustaz Somad's preaching message is more directed at general studies of traditional religious authorities. The title of Ustaz Somad's study is more rigid, such as the Study of *Adab-Adab*, 5 Stairs to Prayer, The Study of Sincerity, 3 Reasons for Getting Light, Building an Economically Independent Al-Quran Generation, Inheriting *Lailahailah*, and others. Meanwhile, Ustaz Hanan packaged his preaching titles with popular languages such as Viral Secrets in the Sky, Healing with the Quran, Forgiveness, Missed, Every Day, On the Track, He Missed, Sky Logic, Lowbat, and others.

In lecturing, Ustaz Somad and Ustaz Hanan are also different. Ustaz Somad, when giving lectures, he often quoted verses from the Koran and hadith. He often answered

the questions of his congregation with the traditions of the prophet and the opinions of scholars of the school of thought. The way Ustaz Abdul Somad preaches reflects his position as a traditional religious authority. This reinforces Lestari's research (2022) that traditional religious authorities build their authority through writing the yellow book. This is different from the way of preaching new religious authority which is more emphasized on the storytelling aspect.

Unlike the case with Ustaz Hanan, when lecturing, Ustaz Hanan often uses popular dictions such as *ngelihat* (seeing), *ngedenger* (listening), *ngedrop* (weakening), *nge-unfollow* (unfollowing), *mager* (lazy moving), and *direplay* (back). Then Ustaz Hanan, in each preaching, looks more like a storyteller or motivator. He mostly shows stories from the prophet's time and avoids studies of Islamic law. Through the concept of storytelling, da'wah is the hallmark of the new religious authority. The new religious authorities deliberately avoided studies of Islamic law. They prefer to tell stories about their hijrah in the past or stories from the prophet's time. In a video on Youtube, Ustaz Hanan said he was not worthy of being called an ustaz. He prefers to be called a motivator. So far, it shows that Ustaz Hanan is trying to position himself as a new religious authority group, on the one hand, but on the other hand, he is also positioning himself as a traditional religious authority by claiming to be a graduate of Al-Azhar. These two claims have strengthened Ustaz Hanan's authority among the Muslim community.

## **Conclusion**

This study has shown that traditional religious authorities can survive and adapt to technological and communication developments thanks to their engagement with youths. As stated by previous scholars that youth as generations and creators and consumers of culture play a role in social change, on the one hand, but on the other hand, they are consumers of popular culture such as dressing in a modern style, slang language, and social media. The potential of these youth is captured by traditional religious authorities to adapt to the new environment. They appreciate youth culture to get youth's enthusiasm so that, in turn, they get support from youths in spreading their da'wah on social media.

Ustaz Hanan, for example, founded the *Pemuda Hijrah* (Shift) community to support his da'wah among youth. His trendy and pious preaching package was initiated by one youth, Kang Inong. Ustaz Somad is another example of a preacher whose da'wah is widely supported by Muslim youths in Pekanbaru. Several youth da'wah communities such as Fodamara, FSRMM, Youth in Great Mosque of An-Nur Riau, and others massively spread Ustaz Somad's da'wah to their various social media channels. These supports from urban Muslim youth inspired Ustaz Somad and Ustaz Hanan to rebrand their ulema, adapting the cultures of urban Muslim youth such as archery, horse riding, touring, cycling, and skateboarding. Finally, this study reflects that many factors influence the popularity of ulama in the era of social media, one of which is the role of

youth. This study does not focus on youth ideology and orientation in favor of the authority and popularity of the two clerics. At a glance, in the discussion of this paper, it is explained that their motive, in general, is a form of active piety, but of course, many other discourses surround it, such as political Islam discourse, hijrah discourse, and others. Therefore, further studies are expected to be able to elaborate in-depth on whether the orientation of Muslim youth in supporting the da'wah of Ustaz Somad and Ustaz Hanan on social media is due to the similarity of political Islam orientation between them, or there are other discourses surrounding them.

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