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## Digital Literacy of Middle Class Muslims

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**Abstract-***For a number of scholars, the emergence of middle class society is a considerable phenomenon. Moreover, it is linked to the transformation of education in the digital era. The middle class society has relatively established economic background, well-educated (senior secondary school and high education graduates), and high democratic consciousness. The number also flourished and thrives in line with national economic growth. Generally, they are the employees of private and government agencies, as well as entrepreneurs. In addition, they have appropriate access to information technology, indicated by the massive utilization of smartphones and social media for interaction. Nevertheless, despite the steady economic life, this group has a propensity to be conservative in terms of religion and politics. Moreover, their less wise usage of social media leads to low digital literacy. It is indicated by the common postings that involve ethnicity, religion, race and intergroup, hoax, and other violations. This paper is a descriptive study of the behaviors of middle class Muslims in using information technology.*

**Keywords:** *Education Transformation, Middle-class Muslim, Internet Usage, Social Media.*

**Abstrak-***Muncul kelas menengah merupakan fenomena penting untuk dicermati bagi akademisi. Terlebih, jika dikaitkan dengan transformasi pendidikan di era digital. Mereka memiliki latar belakang ekonomi yang cukup kuat, relatif berpendidikan baik (lulusan sekolah menengah atas maupun perguruan tinggi), dan kesadaran demokrasi yang kuat. Kelompok ini semakin tumbuh dan berkembang seiring pertumbuhan ekonomi. Sebagian bekerja di perusahaan swasta maupun instansi pemerintahan, lainnya berwirausaha. Mereka memiliki akses terhadap teknologi informasi yang baik, ditandai dengan penggunaan smartphone dan pemanfaatan media sosial untuk berinteraksi. Walaupun kehidupan ekonominya cukup bagus, kelompok ini cenderung konservatif baik dalam pemahaman keagamaan dan politik. Mereka juga tidak menggunakan media sosial secara sehat dan cerdas sehingga literasi digitalnya masih rendah. Hal ini terlihat dari banyaknya penggunaan*

*media sosial yang bernada suku, agama, ras dan antargolongan (SARA), hoaks, dan penyelewengan lainnya. Tulisan ini merupakan kajian deskriptik tentang perilaku kelas menengah muslim dalam penggunaan teknologi informasi.*

**Kata kunci:** *Transformasi Pendidikan, Kelas Menengah Muslim, Penggunaan Internet, Media Sosial.*

## **A. Introduction**

The development of digital technology affects almost all levels and aspects of life. It penetrates the life of people both in urban and rural area, children and parents, men and women, as well as affluent and common. Likewise, it becomes a part of the aspects of life, from household, business, community, to religiosity. It is an inseparable element in almost all dimensions that is stimulated by the massive utilization of cellular (mobile phones). E-marketer estimates that in 2018, there will be approximately 100.3 million smartphone users in Indonesia, ranked seventh among the countries in the world.<sup>1</sup> While the number of cellular (mobile phones) will be 132.7 million, in which some of them are classified as smartphones with internet access. Currently, there are 132.7 million internet users in Indonesia.

By considering the increasingly high utilization of information technology, Indonesia will be at front line in the usage of smartphone and its implications. Among them are the use of internet, the use of social media, the changes in consumption pattern, and the changes in religious social behavior. The study of middle class Muslim is presumed interesting due to their large numbers. Some of them live in urban areas with relatively high economic and educational levels. They also have a lofty religious spirit. In fact, the internet is employed as a source of religious knowledge. How do Muslims, particularly the middle class, utilize digital technology to seek for religious information as well as political interests?

## **B. Theoretical Framework**

The discussion about social stratification is closely linked with the division of society based on certain structures and identities. Social stratification is a privilege obtained from a society because of its inherent economic, political, and social statuses. It is derived from

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<sup>1</sup><http://www.emarketer.com/Article/2-Billion-Consumers-Worldwide-Smartphones-by-2016/1011694>).

enslavement, caste division, and social class. Compared to the other two, social classes are more flexible in which individual can move easily from class to class.

Karl Marx divides social class based on the ownership of the production means, namely the working class (proletariat) and the capitalist class (bourgeois). The division of the two classes, however, is too rigid. In many cases, there are groups of people who do not belong to those two classes. For instance, a manager who is a worker but does not possess any production means, and yet has control over many workers. On the contrary, there is an auto mechanic who has four or five workers, and yet has no firm parameter to enter the working class. Therefore, Henslin concurs what Erik Wright has suggested about contradictory class locations. By modifying Marx's model, Wright divides the classed into: (1) the capitalist who oversees many workers; (2) the lower bourgeoisie who has small-scale enterprise; (3) the manager with the status of a worker but has the authority of the capitalist to run the business and oversee many workers, and (4) the worker (proletarian).

Furthermore, Max Weber complements Marx's concept with the division based on lifestyle. According to Weber, classes are influenced by ownership, prestige, and power.<sup>2</sup>Ownership is related to wealth. In society, wealthy people are generally classified into high social class. Prestige is linked to the status of dignity, honor, privilege which is gained through the certain ownership of materials, capacity, or stratification. Meanwhile, power is related to the ability to control others for attaining particular goals.

Basically, this division of social class is not too rigid. People obtain prestige because of their power. Conversely, the rich can have power due to the involvement in the political world hence they gain power and prestige at the same time. In Indonesia, such cases can be easily found, where entrepreneurs and party elites have entrepreneurial background.

Horton and Hunt<sup>3</sup> formulated the class classification into:

1. Upper-upper class
2. Lower-upper class
3. Upper-middle class
4. Lower-middle class
5. Upper-lower class
6. Lower-lower class

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<sup>2</sup>Henslin, James M, *Sosiologi dengan Pendekatan Membumi*. Jakarta: Erlangga, 2006.

<sup>3</sup>Horton, Paul B. & Hunt, *Chester L*. Sosiologi. Jakarta: Erlangga, 2007.

Of those classes, the middle classes become the most contentious phenomenon. They are situated in the middle between two other classes: upper and lower classes. There is a probable for them to move either up or down promptly. Social mobilization can be obtained through education, wealth, politics and power, and so forth.

Furthermore, middle class is prospective as the agent of change. The Indonesian Independence movement was driven by this middle classed, including Sarekat Islam (SI) and various socio-political organizations in the early twentieth century. In the post-Independence, sophisticated groups unquestionably have a central role in the administration of the State, both during the Old Order and the New Order regime. In fact, they also led in overthrowing authoritarian regimes.

The categorization of the bourgeoisie class in Indonesia is fairly convoluted as explicated by Robinson. He investigated the development of classes from the Dutch colonial to the Soeharto era. From the relatively independent bourgeois group of Islamic traders to entrepreneurs who joined the Sarekat Islam as well as entrepreneurs in several components of middle class Muslims. Subsequently, there are classes of entrepreneurs formed from their cooperation with civil authorities and educated groups as well as with the military. In addition to the indigenous bourgeoisie that was constructed from economic liberalization.<sup>4</sup>

Nowadays, in the digital age, middle classes play a remarkable role. They are equipped with the mastery of information technology. They argue through social movements mobilized through social media. The most influential opinion leaders are not the leader from community organization, such as religious leaders, activists, *etc.*, but those who have numerous followers in social media. Made Supriatma criticized this social class by referring it as a “snob” social collective who wants to distinguish itself from the most people. They are intense to comment, argue, criticize, and become part of the citizens of cyberspace. The raised issues are broad, from good-looking police, sidewalks, slogan of “NKRI Harga Mati” meaning “A united Indonesia, at any cost”, culinary and traveling, and so on, all demonstrated in social media. Supriatma described the characteristic of middle class is not concentrated on what is produced (production) but more on what is consumed.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Winter, Jeffrey A, Indonesia: *The Rise of Capital: A Review Essay*, Southeast Asia Program Publications at Cornell University No. 45 April 1988 pp. 109-128.

<sup>5</sup>Supriatma, Made, Hipokrisi Kelas Menengah, <https://indoprogres.com/2016/01/hipokrisi-kelas-menengah/>

## 1. Middle Class Muslims

As the majority citizens in Indonesia, Muslims are classified as the active users of smartphone and internet. Based on data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (*BPS*), the number of Muslims in Indonesia reached 87% or 207.17 million people from total population of 237.64 million. Half of the Muslims live in urban areas, approximately 104.52 million, while other 102.64 million Muslims live in rural areas.

In overall, they are included in the lower, middle, and upper classes. However, most of them can be categorized in middle class, or a group of people who are situated between the upper and lower classes. Upper classes can be simply recognized from their wealth. Meanwhile, the lower classes comprises of the poor to the working class. According to the World Bank, the poor are those whose income is less than US \$ 2 per day, while the upper lower class earns US \$ 2-US \$ 4 per day. Those with an income of US \$ 4-US \$ 10 per day are classified as the middle class. The upper middle class earns US \$ 10-US \$ 20 per day. Those in the upper class category earn more than US \$ 20 per day.

Based on the Asian Development Bank (ADB), class categorization is divided into the lower class who earns less than US \$ 2; the lower middle class who earns US \$ 2-US \$ 4; the midmiddle class who earns US \$ 4-US \$ 10; and the uppermiddle who earns US \$ 10-US \$ 20. Meanwhile, the affluent class earns US \$ 20 per day.

In Indonesia, the middle class has been a concern for many studies, particularly in surveys due to its great influence on economic, social, and political fields. Social political change is frequently stirred by the middle class which members are a relatively well-educated people with an established economy and active engagement with various social activities. In a survey in 2002, *Kompas* Daily explicated the flourish of the Indonesian middle class.<sup>6</sup> The decline number of middle class people in the economic crisis of 1997-1998 was accompanied by a rapid increase in some years later as recorded by the World Bank. In 2003, the number was 81 million and rose to 134 million people in 2012. It was stimulated by the elevation of those from the lower classes.

The middle class can be depicted as those who are enthusiastic about purchasing luxury, such as more than one smartphone. Nevertheless, they incline to be intolerant. The *Kompas* survey illustrates that their consumerism is not linear with the growth of democratic values in recent society. It is indicated by the predisposition to misinterpret left-wing ideology rather than to provide a space for diverse ideologies,

<sup>6</sup>[www.kompas.com](http://www.kompas.com)- (accessed on: 08/06/2012, 11:20 WIB).

the banning of Ahmadiyya in Indonesia, and the inequality for several religious sects. From the assumption, many studies of Muslim community have been carried out. A number of surveys and research focused on middle class Muslims. They have the intellectual to the economic power. In terms of educational background, they generally graduated from high secondary school or higher education. In terms of economy, some of them are well established people, namely employees and entrepreneurs. Surely, they are from the Muslim community. Among the surveys were carried out by *Swa Magazine* and *Inventure*, as well studies by Alvara Research Institute (2017) and Wasisto Raharjo Jati (2017). It is understandably since Muslims in Indonesia are still the majority thus the middle class in this country has Islamic background.

Wasisto Raharjo Jati linked the middle class Muslims with the basis of Hajj, trade, and intellectualism.<sup>7</sup> Such a group upholds the Islamic principles, norms, and values as a political identity. The identity is actualized individually or collectively. The basis of Hajj is those having the opportunity to perform pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina as the fifth pillar of Islam. They come from Islamic scholars and traders supported by financial capacity. The basis of trade includes the Muslim bourgeoisie. They are entrepreneurs, both at small and medium-scale, and relatively autonomous. Meanwhile, the basis of intellectualism refers to sophisticated Muslims with determined religious background, both from *pesantren* and general education.

Middle class Muslims is an incredible market for business sectors. They have a relatively high earning, consumption level, and the most important is to keep up with the trend. In 2014, *Swa Magazine* and *Inventure* carried out a survey in which among the findings was: 112 million middle class Muslims with a market value of Rp112 trillion/month.

Nevertheless, the preference of a single economic approach to analyze middle class Muslims as a consumptive and popular lifestyle group would be inadequate. This class represents a political identity as well. However, political identity is not necessarily the involvement in political parties. Essentially, Muslims have been divided in addressing this political identity for some times. Some consider that political participation has been accommodated by Islamic political parties. In contrast, some argue that political votes should not be granted to Islamic

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<sup>7</sup>Jati, Raharjo Wasisto, Tinjauan Perspektif Intelegensia Muslim Terhadap Genealogi Kelas Menengah Muslim Indonesia, *Islamica: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* Volume 9, Nomor 1, September 2014.

political parties. Nationalist and secular parties can also be exploited to strive for the aspirations of people. It was evident by the fact that Islamic political party has never received the most votes despite Muslims are the majority population in Indonesia.

There are two points inherent to the middle class Muslims. *First*, the ownership of cultural capital and *second*, the class identity practices which later manifests into Islamic popular culture.<sup>8</sup> Middle class Muslims with their popular culture is derived from the collapse of the Soeharto regime. After the reform era, Muslims can actualize their economic, political and cultural interests, freely. One of the impacts is the development of popular culture among Muslims.<sup>9</sup>

### C. Discussion

One of impacts of the New Order's collapse in 1998 was the increasing number of Muslim women with veils. Nowadays, they are commonly found in various places. In schools and higher education institutions, even with secular backgrounds (State and public education institutions), young women with headscarves are common. Currently, religious-based schools are not solely the monopoly of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah. There is a rise of numbers of religious social foundations which are not affiliated with the two largest mass organizations or other religious organizations. People have awareness to send their children to educational institutions, from the Learning Group/Kindergarten (KB/TK), primary and secondary education, to religious-based higher education.

In fact, it is a phenomenon in society, even in governmental agencies. Many civil state apparatus have such a religious awareness. The government has been accommodating the struggle of political identity. Even Muslim women who are members of the Indonesian Military (TNI) and the Indonesian Police (Polri) are legally allowed to wear headscarves.

The rise of the middle class of Muslims is also marked by the rampant religious activities in various elements of society. Religious teachings can be obtained anywhere and anytime. The number of

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<sup>8</sup>Jati, Raharjo Wasisto, Tinjauan Perspektif Intelegensia Muslim Terhadap Genealogi Kelas Menengah Muslim Indonesia, *Islamica: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* Volume 9, Nomor 1, September 2014.

<sup>9</sup>Heryanto, Ariel, *Upgraded Piety and Pleasure: The New Middle Class and Islam in Indonesian Popular Culture* in Andrew Weintraub, *Islam and Popular Culture in Indonesia and Malaysia* (New York: Routledge, 2008). Quoted from: [ariel.heryanto.wordpress.com](http://ariel.heryanto.wordpress.com).

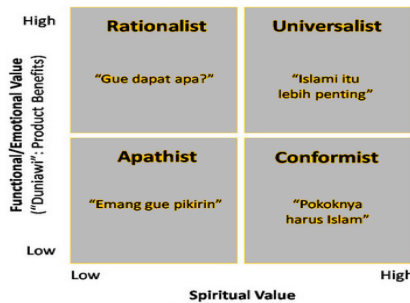


Muslims with waiting list up to a dozen years depending on the region it self. As a result, *umrah* becomes an option due to its less period of waiting list. The Umrah travel agencies are mushroomed. In 2016, the total number of *Umrah* pilgrims from Indonesia was 699,600. It is higher in compared with the number of Hajj in 2016 that reached 168,800.

The spirit of diversity is seen in the cinema world. *Ayat-ayat Cinta* (2008) the movie recorded 3,665,509 spectators and *Laskar Pelangi* (2008) with 4,719,453 spectators.<sup>10</sup> Both movies portray the Muslim life. The first movie is about the love story of Indonesian students in Egypt while the second is about the struggle of student at Muhammadiyah primary school in Belitung who pursues his dream to study abroad. The movies were subsequently studied by Ariel Heryanto.<sup>11</sup>

The cinema as a common hotspot for the middle and upper classes, mostly children to adult, is currently attended by various elements of society. Older women with veils, who never enter cinema before, start to watch movie. Similarly, the Muslim groups that have not been interested and presume it has more disadvantages than advantages start to go to the cinema. Likewise, it occurred in the era of *Habibie & Ainun* and *Ketika Cinta Bertasbih* The Movie.

Despite the classification as middle class Muslims, they have distinctive characteristics. Yuswohady distinguishes them in four categories of: apathy, rationalist, universalist and conformist groups.<sup>12</sup>



(Source: <http://www.yuswohady.com>).

<sup>10</sup>[www.Filmindonesia.or.id/moview/viewer/2007-2017#.We\\_kt72yTqB](http://www.Filmindonesia.or.id/moview/viewer/2007-2017#.We_kt72yTqB).

<sup>11</sup>Heryanto, Ariel, *Upgraded Piety and Pleasure: The New Middle Class and Islam in Indonesian Popular Culture* in Andrew Weintraub, *Islam and Popular Culture in Indonesia and Malaysia* (New York: Routledge, 2008). Quoted from: [www.ariel.heryanto.wordpress.com](http://www.ariel.heryanto.wordpress.com).

<sup>12</sup><http://www.yuswohady.com/2014/07/06/marketing-to-the-middle-class-moslem/>.



*First*, the apathy group is classified as “Islam KTP” which means being Muslim in the ID card but does not implement the Islamic laws. *Second*, the rationalist group is those who can enter various interests. *Third*, the Universalist group is those perform Islamic teachings in various aspects of life. *Fourth*, the conformist group is those who are more conservative in realizing the Islamic teachings even intolerant to other groups.

Furthermore, Jati has divided the three characteristics, namely the Islamic, Arabic-style, and religious Muslims.<sup>13</sup> Islamic groups are Muslims living a modern lifestyle but still upholding the Islamic laws. They wear modern and fashionable *hijab*. Furthermore, the Arabic-style Muslims seek to adopt Arab culture into their daily behaviors, including in social identity. Meanwhile, the religious Muslims are those who have Islamic background. In fact, the Islamic identity and background are interrelated. *Habib* and *ulama* usually wear identity symbols such as *gamis* or *koko*, while Muslim women wear *shari'a* dress which is different from popular *hijab* or headscarf.

The characteristics of middle class Muslims are explicated by a study carried out by Alvara Research Center that was published in February 2017 several major cities in Indonesia. The findings revealed that more than half of the middle class Muslims approximately 59.7% are affiliated to Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), 11.0% to Muhammadiyah, 1.9% to Al Wasliyah, 0.3% to FPI, 0.3% to LDII, while 26% are not affiliated to any groups.<sup>14</sup> Based on the survey, the affiliation to NU is due to the family and the convenient sense for NU's moderate Islamic teachings.

In addition, the research also reported that the majority of respondents received religious teachings from TV (68.4%), home-based study (54%), messenger account broadcast (17%), articles in social media (14.1%), and articles on internet (13.9%).

Nevertheless, in a matter of months, research on the attitudes and behavior toward radicalization entitled *Sikap dan Pandangan Kelas Menengah (PNS, Pegawai BUMN dan Professional) tentang Radikalisasi Agama, Khilafah, Jihad, dan Negara Islam di Indonesia* that was presented by Alvara in October 2017 showed interesting findings. The survey divulged the most outstanding religious figures,

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<sup>13</sup>Jati, Wasisto Raharjo. *Politik Kelas Menengah Muslim*. Jakarta: Pustaka LP3ES, 2017.

<sup>14</sup>*Indonesia Middle Class Muslim: Religiosity and Consumerism*, Alvara Research Institute, February 2017.

namely Mamah Dedeh (25.3%), Abdullah Gymnastiar (23.4%), and Habib Rizieq Shihab (13.9). It shows the preference of the middle class in selecting popular scholars in both conventional media (newspapers, television and radio) and new media (social media and online media).

### 1. Religious Study via Internet

For middle class Muslims, the access to information is more than for gaining certain information and entertainment, communicating, or supporting job tasks. Internet becomes a medium for accessing religious messages and information. For instance, a message in the *WhatsApp* group where a member shared a website address: shutterksa.com, which provides panoramic scenery of various sites in Mecca and Medina from diverse angles. By touching the screen, every people seem to be in the site. The design is similar to *Google Street View*. There are Hijr Ismail, Rukun Yamani, Ka'ba, tomb of the Prophet, and so forth. Furthermore, the member who shared the link also wrote: "Whoever created this (website), *jazakumullah*, please open the links one by one link. *Masya Allah*, it is so fascinating. Just move up, down, right, left, and zoom the pictures. You will feel as though you are truly there."

For Muslims who wish to come to the Mecca and Medina, the high quality pictures will be a healer. In fact, shutterksa.com does not merely provide the images of Mecca and Medina but also other countries, such as Brazil and France. However, the message was shared in religious groups as if it was religiously related. For Muslims who have never been there, they will be keener to perform *hajj* or *umrah*. As for those who have performed it, they can recall the religious practices they once performed there.

Furthermore, social media is also enlivened by religious messages and information. The contents vary from Qur'anic verses, hadiths, the history of the Prophet Muhammad and his companions, jurisprudence, morals, rituals of worship, and so forth. Not to mention the website and blog about religious messages that can be found easily. Approaching the Ramadan month, people are usually preoccupied in seeking for information about fasting (*shaum*), tarawih prayer, praying (*doa*), and so forth. *Google* facilitates people to obtain information they need. Schedule for giving sermon but have no material? Just search it via search engines, i.e. *Yahoo* and *Google*. In fact, *googling* becomes a distinguished entry for activity of seeking information via *Google*.

The survey carried out by the Indonesian Digital Association (IDA) and the Bekraf Creative Economy Agency, and Baidu, that was

published April 2017, demonstrated the behavior of *netizens* or internet/cyberspace citizens. The findings indicated religious news as the most popular entry. It dominates with a percentage of 31% while the economy and politics are at the second and third with percentages of 26% and 29%, respectively.<sup>15</sup>

The Pew Internet & American Life project survey uncovered that the internet can strengthen faith, foster spiritual and religious beliefs, and serve as a guide to perform practical ritual activities.<sup>16</sup> God has moved from worship real place to cyber world. Therefore, there are new terms such as *cyber religion*, *online religion*, *hypereology*, and so on

Undeniably, internet becomes a major provider of spiritual expression at an era when spiritual yearning is endured by people in the West and Brasher, as cited by Casey who refers it as “new religion” as an impact of human behavior in accessing internet. Instead of pursuing religious teachings directly from religious leaders, people prefer to open chat room and websites. Religious-based sites are a new source of religious teachings in which Zaleski denotes it as cyberspace spirituality.<sup>17</sup>

Consequently, the teacher, *ustadz*, and *ulama* as people who have religious authority have been replaced by the internet. Even though they were not entirely replaced since the religious materials on the internet also come from them. They just use the internet as the medium in which teachings are not necessarily conducted directly. The extensive models are religious consultation, religious advice, guidance of religious practices in accordance with particular jurisprudence, and so forth. The internet is ultimately manifested as a spiritual supermarket offering a variety of religious products. The consumers can choose any form based on their desire.

Similarly, it occurs among the middle class Muslims who generally have internet access. The ease to obtain religious teachings without a compulsion to come to a mosque or a *pengajian*/special religious forum is by using search engine. Moreover, *Youtube* offers offline *pengajian* by uploading them to the internet and any people can view them anytime. On *Youtube*, K.H. Anwar Zahid, Ustadz Yusuf Mansyur, Abdullah Gimnastyar, and Hanan Attaki are among prominent preachers who

<sup>15</sup><https://inet.detik.com/cyberlife/3166256/netizen-indonesia-lebih-gila-berburu-berita-ketika-libur>.

<sup>16</sup>Casey, Cheryl Anne, *Proceedings of the Media Ecology Association*, Volume 2, 2001.

<sup>17</sup>Zaleski, Jeff. *Spiritualitas Cyberspace: Bagaimana Teknologi Komputer Mempengaruhi Kehidupan Keberagamaan Manusia*. Bandung: Mizan, 1999.

have many viewers. Particularly the last three preachers are popular among the youth and urban middle class due to their capacity and style of teachings.

In addition, religious messages gained from the internet can be in the forms of *meme*. The combination of text and images or caricatures will attract more attention rather than Indonesian and Arabic texts. Similarly, the short half-minute videos containing religious teachings are considered attractive.

## 2. Digital Literacy of Middle Class Muslim

The mastery of economy among Muslims is accompanied by the mastery of technology, including information technology. Internet facilitates the access for information, including how to seek religious knowledge. Websites and social media become the easiest medium to find any information, including religion. Religious teachings, Qur'anic verses and hadiths, inspiring stories about the Prophet and companions, all of them are provided in social media. Moreover, the contents are in various forms of text, images, sound, video and a combination of them.

Likewise, social media is rife to various elements, both old and young, men and women, with access to social media with a requirement of having smartphone with internet access. The number of cellular in Indonesia reached 371.4 million units with internet users approximately 132.7 million. In fact, this internet access also affects consumption patterns. Online shopping among the middle class is rampant. For those emblazoned Muslim, the products are also specific, for instance fashionable *gamis* and *hijab* to *halal* and free alcohol cosmetics.

As a group with active use of smartphones, they are familiar with social media, i.e. *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *Instagram*, *Path*, and *Youtube*. Social media is used to communicate, socialize, obtain and share religious teachings, and assert political identity. The Internet also simplifies the way a community to communicate and share information.<sup>18</sup> The shared materials also vary in the forms of text, images of photos, caricatures, memes and sort of, as well as video (pictures and sound).

The ability of the society will also affect the mastery of media and technology. However, the mastery of digital media may not accompanied by the media literacy or the maturity in the use of media. There are two interrelated terms, namely media literacy and digital

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<sup>18</sup>Fenton, Natalie, *New Media and The Structural Practices of Journalism*, dalam Siapera, Eugene & Veglis, Andreas (ed), *The Handbook of Global Online Journalism*, Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.

literacy. Media literacy is defined as the ability to understand and analyze what is presented by the media. Consumers are expected to be critical of the presented media, instead of grasping it plainly. In this case, it requires a critical and skeptical attitude, instead of passively believing the information.

In the era of information technology, media literacy evolves into digital literacy. Indeed it relates to capability and competence. In the digital world, the capability to access, understand and create communication in various contexts and by using available technology and related software is required.<sup>19</sup> In Indonesia, media literacy and digital literacy are relatively low. Media literacy is more related to literacy skills. Whereas, the literacy rate reached 97.93% while the illiterate is approximately 2.07% or 3.4 million people.<sup>20</sup> In the digital world, this literacy is not linked to the lack of access to digital devices, furthermore the ability to use digital devices to read, write, and access information and knowledge, appropriately and wisely.

Indonesia is a country with high internet and smartphone access. With a population of about 262 million, the number of mobile phones reached 371.4 million units with internet users approximately 132.7 million. Active social media users reached 106 million, in which most of them utilize mobile phones (92 million).<sup>21</sup>

However, the data does not indicate the expected digital literacy. Internet-accessible smartphones are used for adverse deeds, such as to access pornographic content and violence, to post hate speech, fake news and hoaxes. As an illustration, Indonesia is among the countries that have the largest access to pornography in the world based on a survey conducted by *Google*. In 2013, Indonesia was at the sixth position of the porn site accessing countries. The following year, it ranked the third. In 2015, Indonesia was the second rank in accessing pornographic content, below the United States.<sup>22</sup> Some of them are children. It is estimated that in Indonesia, a total of 25,000 children access pornographic content from the internet every day.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>Buckingham, David, *Digital Media Literacies: Rethinking Media Education in the Age of the Internet*, Research in comparative and International Education, Volume 2, Number 1, 2007.

<sup>20</sup><https://www.kemdikbud.go.id/main/blog/2017/09/indonesia-peringati-hari-aksara-internasional-tahun-2017>.

<sup>21</sup><https://wearesocial.com/special-reports/digital-in-2017-global-overview>.

<sup>22</sup><https://www.jawapos.com/read/2016/05/07/27233/miris-indonesia-negara-dengan-pengakses-situs-por-no-terbanyak-di-dunia>.

<sup>23</sup><http://regional.kompas.com/read/2016/09/15/16173721/menteri>.

In addition, social media can be used to spread extremism and radicalism. Terrorism not only exists in the real world, but also in social media. The procedure of making a bomb can be obtained from social media. A vocational high school's graduate from Boyolali attempted to assemble bomb made from 3 kg LPG, and was detained by police because his homemade explosive bomb exploded and could be heard up to a radius of 1 km. In his confession, he was guided by a person from outside Java through social media.<sup>24</sup>

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (*ISIS*) which is in the spotlight of the international citizens also employs social media for the purposes of terrorism, ranging from recruitment process to fear dissemination. The execution of ISIS' hostages is frequently uploaded to cyberspace to spread the public fear. Researchers from the Miami University, United States, identified and analyzed the online records of 196 pro-ISIS groups during the first eight months of 2015. A total of 108,000 people were active in social media to promote ISIS and related activities, prompting individuals to join or perpetrate acts of terrorism independently or individually. At least 90,000 messages were distributed worldwide to support ISIS.<sup>25</sup> Through this method, ISIS recruited young generation.

*Jihad Selfie* the movie produced by Noor Huda Ismail depicts Akbar Maulana, a student from Aceh, Indonesia who continues his study in Turkey. He almost follows his friends who joined ISIS in Syria. By 2015, at least 3,400 young people from the West joined ISIS.

Alvara's survey also found out that the middle class Muslims utilize social media to obtain religious information in addition to conventional media, e.g. television. Nevertheless, similar survey presented an opposite findings. Based on Alvara's survey published in February 2017, the majority of middle class Muslim are affiliated with mass organizations, such as NU and Muhammadiyah. These organizations are representatives of moderate organizations. NU is best known as traditionalist that accommodates local traditions in society. However, Alvara's survey published in October 2017 indicated the middle class Muslims claimed Habib Rizieq Shihab as one of the popular *ulama* alongside Mamah Dedeh and Aa Gym. Despite Habib Rizieq is often associated with the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) and violence acts. FPI frequently carries out actions including violent ones under the

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yohana.25.000.anak.buka.situs.porno. setiap.hari.

<sup>24</sup><http://www.solopos.com/2011/09/16/pemuda-lugu-dengan-kreativitas-berbahaya-115703>.

<sup>25</sup><http://news.miami.edu/stories/2016/06/analyzing-how-isis-recruits-through-social-media.html>.

pretext of upholding *amar makruf nahi munkar*. Rizieq as the High Priest of FPI has been jailed twice for violent acts. The first, Rizieq was sentenced to seven months in prison in 2003 for inciting and resisting the security forces while damaging a nightlife spot in Jakarta. In 2008, Rizieq was sentenced to one year and 6 months for his involvement in the mass attack of the National Alliance for Freedom of Religion and Belief (*AKKBB*) in the National Monument/*Monas*. A number of activists who were demonstrating were attacked by the members of FPI. Several FPI elites had to go before the courts, including Rizieq and the Commander of the Laskar Islam, Munarman.<sup>26</sup>

Twice in jail, Habib Rizieq did not stop his active affiliation with FPI. Through *Gerakan Nasional Pengawal Fatwa* (GNPF) of MUI, Habib Rizieq mobilized Muslims to resist Basuki Tjahaja Purnama or best known as Ahok. Ahok was suspected for defamatory religion in a speech in Kepulauan Seribu. Demonstrations titled Islamic Defense Action volumes I, II, and III were success to rally various elements of Muslims. The popularity of *ulama*, e.g. Rizieq, can be observed from the demonstration of the Islamic Defense Action III on December 2, 2017 known as *Aksi 212*. The numbers are varied, from hundreds of thousands of people, one millions, up to 7.5 million people, who gathered at the Monas Square and the HI roundabout and surrounding areas.

In the action, there were few mass organizations. It should be very difficult to move people without any individual consciousness. The most reasonable is the mobilization of the masses was done through social media. People flocked from numbers of regions to Jakarta via airplanes, ships, buses, cars and motorcycles, and some even walked as motivated by personal consciousness and religious beliefs. In the action, the issue raised was the demand for the deactivation of Jakarta Governor, Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, after becoming a suspect in an allegedly religious blasphemy. The case has triggered serious sentiments of Islam. Messages on social media were very supportive in echoing the resistance for Ahok. In the action, President Joko Widodo was present and attended Friday prayer led by Habib Rizieq, a prominent figure who has been closely linked with militant groups. There was no single act of violence in the Islamic Defense Action III as occurred in the previous actions. Almost no litter could be found, unlike the usual mass gatherings. It indicated the participants were mostly the educated

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<sup>26</sup><https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20170117092140-20-186830/jejak-fpi-dan-status-napi-rizieq-shihab/>.



or middle class Muslims. Prior to the action, campaigns for peaceful, polite, no stepping on the lawn, and no littering movement had been intensively conveyed through social media. They realize that even a slight mistake would be the ammunition for opposing groups to attack them (again) through social media. Controversy over the action was rampant on social media. The pro- and the counter-Islamic Defense Action were in a war of statements and criticism.

The dispute about the case was increasingly hectic when Habib Rizieq encountered a legal case, again. It related to the nasty chat in *WhatsApp* between him and a disciple, Firza Husein. Screenshots of pornographic chats that allegedly came from them were circulated publicly after Firza was accused of treason case. Shortly thereafter, Habib Rizieq was again a suspect, so was Firza. Both of them<sup>27</sup> argued but the police insisted on having evidence including digital forensics<sup>28</sup> to process the case. Despite undergoing the legal process, Rizieq decided to go abroad and has been staying in Saudi Arabia ever since. He and his adherents denied his involvement in the pornographic case and accused the police of trying to impose his reputation. Consequently, the public split into two, those who believe in criminal in the case of Rizieq and those who assume there is criminalization of the man from Petamburan, Jakarta. In addition to pornographic case, Rizieq is also a suspect of other cases particularly linked to his actions or his hate speeches. In fact, there are numbers of hoax attacking either the government or Habib Rizieq.

Another adverse impact of the development of information technology was the spread of hoax or fake news. The problem is that Islamic groups are frequently victims of hoax. The religious hoax is ubiquitous in line with the widespread use of social media. Why does the author perceive middle-class Muslims as victims of hoax? Victims are defined as the target of hoax. They do not realize that the information they receive is classified as hoax. Therefore, in addition to being victims, they also reproduce the hoax by sharing it to colleagues, relatives, to social media groups.

In addition, the dissemination of information in social media has elevated sentiment among groups. In Ahok's case, the users of social media seem to be divided into two major groups, the pro- and the anti

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<sup>27</sup><https://metro.sindonews.com/read/1213173/170/diperiksa-polisi-firza-husein-membantah-soal-chat-mesum-dengan-habib-rizieq-1497335009>.

<sup>28</sup><https://news.detik.com/berita/d-3415214/polisi-kantongi-analisis-forensik-percakapan-wa-diduga-rizieq-firza>.

group. In fact, it was a follow-up of contestation between Joko Widodo and Prabowo in the 2014 Presidential Election. Some of their supporters had not moved from the political wound and it was continued to the DKI regional head election. The satire was prevalent. Many expressions, some unfavorable ones, are used to refer the supports of Jokowi and Ahok, such as *Jokower*, *Ahoker*, *kecebong*, *bani serbet* and *bani taplak*. Meanwhile, the supporters of Prabowo and Anis or anti-Ahok group are mocked as *kaum bumi datar*.

The phenomenon implies the invisibility of neutral group in the case. The clamor on social media increases interaction within a group. Such a political turmoil does not only enhance the tension between opposing groups. Instead, social media even strengthens the relationship among the members. There is a propensity for people to interact with others with similar mindset. In social media, people having *Twitter* and *Instagram* account will *follow* others whose viewpoint are akin, and in contrast will *unfollow* those with opposite viewpoint. Subsequently, in *Facebook*, they will be *friend* with the person with similar ideas with them while *unfriend* with those with dissimilar ideas. It is rare for people in social media to make friends with or become follower of people with diverse outlook, except to stalk their activity.

Contestation in the 2014 Presidential Election with candidates Joko Widodo and Prabowo was continued by a war in social media between the supporters. Unfollow, unfriend, and block are common activities to show off disagreement with others in social media. Similarly, the phenomenon occurred during the DKI Governor election with candidates Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, Anies Baswedan, and Agus Harimurti Yudhoyono. In the case of Habib Rizieq, there were also two opposing groups namely the believers and non-believers. The latest case, in the inauguration of the Governor of DKI, Anies Baswedan gave a speech and mentioned the term "*pribumi*" (native people) that led to controversy in social media. Meanwhile, the unfriend in social media is usually accompanied by status and posting of "Now, it is time to clean up (my) account from group ....."

Eventually, social media disposes to gather or group people with similar thoughts, hobbies, and social background. Cass Sunstein introduced the term *echo chamber* where people only get information from their surroundings, instead of releasing themselves to seek for alternative information.<sup>29</sup> The analogue of echo chamber indicates the only noise in the room is the noise itself. When people argue in

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<sup>29</sup>Anderson, Chris, *The Long Tail*, Gramedia Pustaka, Jakarta, 2007.

homogeneous social media, there will be support and reinforcement. As an impact, there is no leeway for deliberation, discussion, and exchange of thoughts.<sup>30</sup>

Cyber space, however, potentially transforms into cyber ghetto<sup>31</sup> since in social media, people gather based on their need, ideology, belief, even exclusivity. Cyber ghetto deteriorates the public culture and integrative society, even encourages intolerance. The ghetto itself is a crowded and inconvenient dwelling for Jewish.

The predisposition of echo chamber and cyber ghetto is implied by the middle class Muslims in Indonesia. They tend to be conservative. They are gathered in a group, reluctant to involve the democratic world and loathe the diversity of standpoints.<sup>32</sup> On the contrary, the progressive group acknowledges life in a democratic, pluralist world, and promotes togetherness amid differences.

Some of the Muslim-majority middle class were polarizing into a single perspective as revealed by the Alvara Research Center in October. The survey targeted 1,200 respondents who were civil servant, BUMN employee, and private professionals in Jakarta, Bandung, Semarang, Surabaya, Medan, and Makassar. There was a flourishing sense of intolerance among civil servants and BUMN employees. They were exposed by such an understanding through religious studies at work. Approximately 29.7% did not support non-Muslim leaders, 27.6% support Islamic laws, and 15.5% be lived for Islam as the most suitable State's ideology instead of Pancasila.<sup>33</sup>

With such a polarization, people would rather clinch messages in accordance to their understanding and interests, even if those messages were unverified. Essentially, they need is information that suits their interests, the reliability is less significant. Therefore, the group is relatively entrapped in conveying hoax. A person who receives a hoax is initially a victim. However, in a short time, the hoax will be shared in group. Just by clicking a panel on smartphone, people can simply share information and messages. Hence, in recent social media world, a message is easily circulated or *viral*. It can be text, image, or video.

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<sup>30</sup>Sunstein, Cass R. *Deliberative Trouble? Why Groups Go to Extremes*, The Yale Law Journal, Vol. 110, No. 1 October 2000.

<sup>31</sup>Dahlgren, Peter, *The Internet, Public Spheres, and Political Communication: Dispersion and Deliberation*, Political Communication Volume 22, 2005 - Issue 2.

<sup>32</sup><http://www.republika.co.id/berita/koran/islam-digest-koran/16/03/13/o3yuqx1-prof-gerry-van-klinken-kelas-menengah-muslim-cenderung-konservatif>.

<sup>33</sup><http://khazanah.republika.co.id/berita/dunia-islam/islam-nusantara/17/10/23/oy9y1o-ajaran-intoleransi-mulai-masuk-kalangan-terdidik>.

For instance, the viral about the image of hammer and sickle as the symbol of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) in banknotes issued by Bank Indonesia (BI), which was circulated from one smartphone to others through social media application. It led to strong distrust to BI in which the Governor of BI, Agus D. Martowardojo, had to clarify that the newly launched rupiah currency on December 19, 2016 was not a symbol of hammer and sickle but the logo of BI that is cut diagonally to form an irregular ornament called *rectoverso*. It is made as a security effort of rupiah currency.<sup>34</sup>

Public exposed to such a hoax are usually well-educated people with higher education background and classified as middle class society. In general, the responses to hoax are as follows:

- Less concerned → Delete
  - Critical and skeptical → Validate the information,
  - Consider the information as hoax without further validation → Either delete or share and warn it as hoax
  - Consider it common and less significant → Save/delete
  - Consider it true → Save/delete
  - Consider it true and significant → Share and give comment
- (Source: Processed from various sources).

How people respond to hoax is relied on their experience and digital literacy. Occasionally, people have insufficient knowledge to assess whether the information is true or hoax. Nevertheless, since it is in accordance with their interests, they will share it without any responsibility attached. For instance, a person who receives a particular message and shares it by adding a message “Is it true or merely a hoax?” or “Just forward from another group, be alert.” These comments are the attempt to release the responsibility of seeking confirmation or verifying the truth of a message. If later it is confirmed as hoax, they will make excuse that “being alert is the better way.”

#### **D. Conclusions**

The mastery of information technology is not necessarily a guarantee for the tradition of literacy. Digital literacy is not attained due to the inappropriate use of digital media. Instead, the failure of digital literacy is caused by the misuse of digital media, including for the access of pornography, terrorism and radicalism, and dissemination of hoax.

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<sup>34</sup><http://setkab.go.id/gubernur-bi-uang-rupiah-baru-tidak-muat-simbol-palu-arit/>.

Is the failure of digital literacy triggered by the lack of media literacy? These two points might be indirectly related. The failure of digital literacy is not necessarily caused by the low media literacy. In many cases, digital literacy is resulted by a variety of backgrounds. The authors found from various groups, which members are graduated from higher education and even professors. There was an interesting case in a group of communications experts. A member shared a result of interview with a US army general who praises the quality of the TNI. Subsequently, another member warned the information as a hoax, it could not be verified. Recognizing that it was a hoax, the sender of the message claimed that yet the article encloses some facts about the TNI but they were twisted and led to false conclusion. Therefore, the sender still sent the information even though finally admitted it was a hoax.

Middle class Muslims who have economic and educational advantages should promote the wise utilization of the internet and social media, particularly in improving religious understanding. Without digital literacy, there will be more non-verifiable messages, both religious and non-religious, that are circulated without any lucid sources, even hoax. Nevertheless, it is seriously perilous if people obtain a hoax with religious content.

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