



Research Article

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Interfaith Holiday Greetings in Digital Religious Discourse: Polarization and Tolerance among Netizens on YouTube

¹ Rizqi Anshori

This study aims to examine the dynamics of netizen interactions regarding interfaith holiday greetings in digital spaces, particularly within discussions on the YouTube account Majelis Islam. The research is important because debates about interfaith greetings often reflect broader tensions between social tolerance and theological boundaries in plural societies. This study employs a qualitative research approach using digital discourse analysis. Data were collected through observation and documentation of video content and netizen comments on selected YouTube uploads discussing the permissibility of interfaith holiday greetings. The data were then analysed using thematic analysis to identify patterns of responses, narrative tendencies, and the role of religious authority in shaping online discussions. The findings show that narratives of tolerance dominate the interaction among netizens, although resistance from groups adhering to literal theological interpretations remains present. The study also finds that generational background and references to religious authorities significantly influence how audiences interpret and respond to sensitive religious issues in digital environments. These findings highlight how social media functions as a public arena where religious identity, theological interpretation, and social tolerance are continuously negotiated. The study contributes to the field of digital religion and religious moderation by providing empirical insights into how religious discourse develops within online public spaces. The originality of this research lies in its focus on analysing netizen interaction patterns on YouTube to understand how debates on interfaith greetings are constructed, contested, and negotiated in Indonesia's digital religious landscape.

1. Introduction

Indonesia is widely recognised as one of the most religiously diverse societies in the world. The coexistence of multiple religious communities has shaped the social fabric of the nation, creating a complex environment in which individuals from different religious traditions interact in everyday life (Nazmudin, 2017). In such a plural context, social harmony is maintained not only through doctrinal teachings within each religion but also through social practices that emphasise mutual respect, coexistence, and collective responsibility. Nevertheless, religious diversity also presents challenges, particularly when social practices intersect with theological boundaries defined by religious authorities and traditions.

One social practice that frequently generates debate within Indonesia's multireligious society is the act of expressing holiday greetings across religious boundaries, particularly during major religious celebrations such as Eid al-Fitr and Christmas. For some individuals, offering such greetings represents an expression of tolerance and respect for religious diversity. For others, however, the practice is perceived as theologically problematic, as it may symbolically imply recognition of another religion's doctrinal beliefs. These differing interpretations illustrate that the concept of tolerance within society is not universally understood but is continuously negotiated through social interaction, religious discourse, and public debate.

Despite these debates, empirical indicators suggest that interreligious relations in Indonesia remain relatively harmonious. According to national data, the Religious Harmony Index (Indeks Kerukunan Umat Beragama) in 2025 reached 77.89, the highest score recorded over the past eleven years. This figure indicates that, at a structural level, Indonesian society demonstrates a relatively strong capacity for maintaining interreligious coexistence (Dharma, 2025). However, the persistence of public debates surrounding sensitive religious issues suggests a discrepancy between institutional measures of harmony and the dynamic discourses that unfold within everyday social interactions. This gap becomes particularly visible in the public sphere, where interpretations of religious tolerance and theological boundaries are openly contested.

The rapid expansion of digital media has significantly transformed the landscape in which such debates occur. Social media platforms have become key arenas for the dissemination of religious discourse and the negotiation of public opinion (Fakhruroji, Rustandi, & Busro, 2020). Among these platforms, YouTube plays a particularly influential role, enabling individuals, religious communities, and public figures to produce and circulate religious narratives to a broad audience. Through features such as comment sections, audiences do not merely consume content passively; they actively participate in discussions, express agreement or disagreement, and assert religious identities in the digital public sphere. Consequently, YouTube can be understood as a form of digital public space in which religious narratives, interpretations of tolerance, and theological boundaries are continuously constructed and contested by diverse actors.

Previous studies have examined the polemic surrounding cross-religious holiday greetings in digital media from various perspectives. Broadly speaking, these studies can be categorised into several research tendencies. First, a number of studies focus on analysing religious discourse concerning the theological legitimacy of cross-religious greetings. For instance, Yasmin (2023) analysed the controversy surrounding Christmas greetings delivered by Muslim preachers on social media using Theo van Leeuwen's Critical Discourse Analysis framework. The study identified a division of arguments between groups that permit and those that prohibit the practice, with each position supported by interpretations of Qur'anic texts, theological reasoning, and sociological considerations within the Indonesian context.

Second, another body of research explores social media as a space for shaping public opinion on issues of religious tolerance. Inshafi (2021), for example, analysed religious discourse on Twitter accounts such as @NUGarisLucu and @MuhammadiyahGL using Van Dijk's discourse analysis and Lasswell's communication model. The study found that humour can function as a communicative strategy to reduce potential intolerance and promote more inclusive narratives in responding to religious differences.

Third, several studies examine digital conflicts and the polarisation of public opinion within online discussions. Abdullah (2023) demonstrated that controversy surrounding the Indonesian Minister of Religious Affairs' greeting to followers of the Baha'i faith generated strong polarisation among social media users. Similarly, Heriansyah (2025), writing in the *Journal of Religions Comparative Study of Religions*, showed that debates about Christmas greetings in Indonesia often intensify ideological divisions and reflect broader tensions within the digital public sphere.

Although these studies have contributed significantly to understanding the polemic surrounding cross-religious greetings in digital media, most research has focused on popular accounts, prominent religious figures, or platforms such as Twitter and Instagram. Studies that specifically examine netizen interactions within relatively small yet ideologically oriented religious YouTube channels remain limited. However, such digital spaces may still play a crucial role in shaping religious discourse, constructing authority, and influencing perceptions of religious tolerance within online communities.

In response to this research gap, the present study investigates netizen interactions on the YouTube channel @majelisislam3490, which discusses the Islamic legal perspective on expressing holiday greetings to followers of other religions. The channel itself has a relatively modest reach, with approximately 254 subscribers and 26 uploaded videos. Nevertheless, its content actively engages with theological questions concerning the boundaries of religious tolerance in Islam. In addition to analysing responses to this specific video, the study also examines other YouTube videos produced by individuals, religious communities, and public figures that express cross-religious holiday greetings.

Accordingly, the aim of this research is to analyse the production of narratives, patterns of netizen interaction, and the construction of polemics surrounding cross-religious holiday greetings within the digital space of YouTube. Particular attention is given to how meanings of religious tolerance, theological boundaries, and religious authority are negotiated through interactions in comment sections and through the circulation of related video content.

This study argues that YouTube functions not only as a medium for disseminating religious teachings but also as a digital public arena in which diverse actors including individuals, religious communities, and institutional authorities produce, negotiate, and contest interpretations of religious tolerance. Within this environment, netizen interactions tend to generate a spectrum of responses ranging from support for strict theological boundaries, to expressions of social tolerance, and to attempts at negotiating a balance between the two. Therefore, the study hypothesises that the polemic surrounding cross-religious holiday greetings on YouTube produces polarised patterns of interaction while simultaneously creating opportunities for dialogue and negotiation of religious tolerance within Indonesia's digital public sphere.

2. Methodology

This study focuses on the analysis of digital interactions related to cross-religious holiday greetings on YouTube. The primary unit of analysis consists of video content discussing the practice and legal perspectives of cross-religious holiday greetings and the netizen comments responding to these videos. In particular, the study examines interactions occurring on the YouTube channel @majelisislam3490, which features discussions concerning Islamic perspectives on offering holiday greetings to followers of *Rizqi Anshori / Interfaith Holiday Greetings in Digital Religious Discourse: Polarization and Tolerance among Netizens on YouTube*

other religions. In addition, several related videos produced by individuals and religious communities that portray cross-religious greetings were also examined to provide contextual understanding of how such narratives are represented and debated in the digital sphere. Through these units of analysis, the research seeks to explore how narratives of tolerance, theological boundaries, and religious authority are constructed and negotiated within online discussions.

This research employs a qualitative approach using a case study design. The qualitative method was selected because it allows for an in-depth exploration of meanings, interpretations, and discursive dynamics embedded within online interactions. The case study approach is particularly appropriate for examining contemporary social phenomena occurring within specific contexts, such as digital platforms where communication is shaped by algorithmic visibility, audience participation, and real-time interaction. Following Yin's (2014) framework, the case study enables the researcher to investigate "how" and "why" particular patterns of interaction emerge within a bounded system. In this study, the bounded system refers to the YouTube channel @majelislam3490 and its comment sections, which serve as a microcosm of broader debates surrounding religious tolerance in Indonesia's digital public sphere.

The data used in this study consist of both primary and secondary sources. Primary data include YouTube videos discussing cross-religious holiday greetings and the comments posted by netizens in response to those videos. The study focuses on two to four of the most viewed videos on the selected channel that explicitly address the issue of cross-religious greetings. Secondary data include supporting information such as video metadata (number of views, likes, and publication dates), as well as relevant literature discussing religious discourse and digital interaction in social media contexts. These sources provide contextual information that supports the interpretation of the patterns observed within the comment sections.

Data collection was conducted through content analysis of videos and systematic collection of netizen comments. First, relevant videos were identified and selected using purposive sampling criteria, particularly videos discussing the permissibility or prohibition of cross-religious holiday greetings and having more than 1,000 views. This threshold was used to ensure sufficient audience engagement and interaction. From these selected videos, at least 100 comments were collected for analysis. Only comments written in Indonesian and containing a minimum of fifteen words were included in the dataset in order to ensure that each comment contained sufficient argumentation or opinion for discourse analysis. The data were collected in January 2026 by documenting the comment texts, usernames, timestamps, and the number of likes associated with each comment.

The data were analysed through several interconnected stages. The first stage involved data reduction, in which comments were coded and categorised according to dominant themes, such as supportive views, opposing views, or moderate perspectives regarding cross-religious greetings. The second stage consisted of data display, where patterns of sentiment, argument structures, and discursive positions were mapped in order to identify recurring narratives within the comment sections. The third stage involved interpretation and conclusion drawing, in which the identified patterns were analysed using Van Dijk's critical discourse analysis framework to understand how ideological positions, power relations, and religious arguments are articulated within digital interactions. To enhance the credibility of the findings, the analysis process involved peer discussion and systematic documentation of coding procedures to minimise interpretive bias and ensure analytical transparency.

community delivers Eid al-Fitr greetings to Muslims. As shown in Figure 2, the description of the video begins with an interfaith greeting, namely “*Shaloom, Assalamualaikum warahmatullahi wrb.*” The description also states that the video was created as an effort to “maintain tolerance among religious communities.” In addition, the video includes hashtags such as #PemudaGKPS and #PemudaSimalungun, indicating the community identity of the content producers.



Figure 2. Upload of Eid al-Fitr greetings by the GKPS Resort Setia Negara youth community.

Beyond videos produced by individuals and religious communities, the study also identified holiday greeting content delivered by state figures through digital platforms. One example is a Christmas greeting video delivered by the Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia, Gibran Rakabuming. The video was uploaded on 24 December 2025, just before the Christmas celebration. As illustrated in Figure 3, the Vice President conveys a message emphasising the importance of brotherhood, peace, and togetherness within Indonesia’s diverse society. According to data available on the YouTube platform, the video has received 9,513 views and is equipped with an automatic voice-over feature, allowing the message to be understood by audiences from different linguistic backgrounds (Namaposo GKPS Resort Setia Negara, 2020).

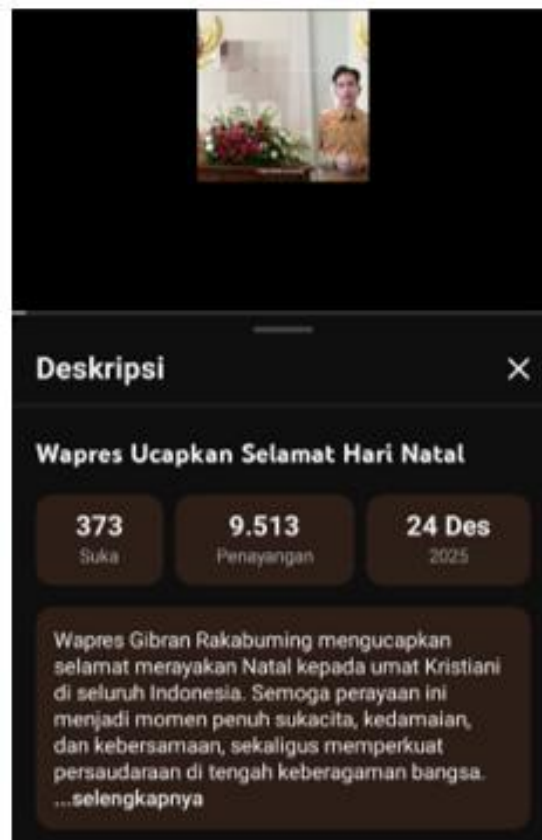


Figure 3. Christmas greeting video delivered by the Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia through the YouTube platform

The data presented demonstrate that the practice of interfaith holiday greetings on YouTube appears in various forms of content production created by different actors, ranging from individuals and religious communities to state figures. Videos uploaded by personal accounts such as @dinamarian637 illustrate how individuals deliver Eid al-Fitr greetings to Muslims through simple videos recorded in domestic settings using symbolic elements associated with the celebration, such as *ketupat* and *opor ayam*. Meanwhile, videos produced by religious communities, such as the GKPS Resort Setia Negara youth channel, convey Eid greetings through the use of interfaith salutations and messages promoting interreligious tolerance. At a more formal level, interfaith greetings are also conveyed through official messages, such as the Christmas greeting delivered by the Vice President of Indonesia and disseminated through YouTube (2025). These findings suggest that interfaith holiday greetings in digital spaces are produced by various social actors through diverse forms of communication and distributed to the public via the YouTube platform.

Based on the data presented above, several patterns or tendencies emerge that illustrate how the practice of interfaith holiday greetings is produced and disseminated through YouTube by different social actors. The first pattern indicates that the production of interfaith greeting videos is often carried out by ordinary individuals who utilise digital media as a means of social expression. This is evident in the video uploaded by @dinamarian637, where a Christian individual conveys Eid al-Fitr greetings to Muslims through a simple video recorded in a domestic setting. The personal and non-professional style of production demonstrates how YouTube functions as a medium that enables ordinary citizens to communicate messages of tolerance directly to the public without relying on formal institutions.

The second pattern reveals the involvement of religious communities in producing interfaith greeting content as part of their social and religious activities. The video uploaded by the GKPS Resort Setia Negara youth community illustrates how a church youth organisation collectively delivers Eid al-Fitr greetings to Muslims. The use of interfaith salutations and hashtags reflecting community identity suggests that practices of tolerance are not only carried out individually but are also produced collectively by organised religious communities within digital spaces.

The third pattern shows that interfaith greeting practices are also produced by state actors as part of official public communication. The Christmas greeting video delivered by the Vice President of the Republic of Indonesia demonstrates how messages of tolerance and social harmony are communicated through digital platforms with a broader audience reach. The presence of state figures in such content indicates that the issue of religious tolerance is not confined to everyday social interaction but also forms part of national-level public communication narratives.

Based on these three patterns, it can be provisionally concluded that the practice of interfaith holiday greetings on YouTube is not produced by a single group but involves various social actors, including individuals, religious communities, and state institutions. The diversity of actors involved indicates that digital spaces function as a medium that facilitates the widespread dissemination of interfaith tolerance messages while simultaneously serving as a public arena where different perspectives regarding such practices may intersect and interact.

Patterns of Netizen Interaction in the Comment Section

The findings of this study indicate that netizen interactions within the comment sections of YouTube videos discussing interfaith holiday greetings demonstrate a variety of responses to the content being shared. In the video published by the account @dinamarian637, numerous comments appear as responses to the Eid al-Fitr greeting delivered by a creator who identifies as Christian.



Figure 4. Netizen interactions in the comment section of the upload by the account @dinamarian637

As shown in Figure 4, several comments from netizens express positive responses to the message conveyed in the video. The account @Atyarum, for example, posted a comment expressing gratitude for the holiday greeting delivered by the creator, while also acknowledging the creator's religious background. The comment was accompanied by the customary Eid greeting "*mohon maaf lahir batin*", reflecting a reciprocal expression of goodwill. In addition, the accounts @Arifmuchanel and @Sandyharsyah commented on the presence of traditional Eid dishes visible in the video, such as *ketupat* and *opor ayam*. These comments were written in a light and appreciative tone, indicating positive engagement with the content. Meanwhile, the account @priyantkeche1688 commented with the phrase "*Alhamdulillah saling menghargai*" (Thank God we respect one another), responding to the interfaith greeting presented in the video. These comments also received responses from the content creator in the form of likes and replies marked with heart icons, suggesting a reciprocal interaction between the creator and the audience.

Beyond these positive interactions, the study also identified comments reflecting debate within digital spaces in other videos discussing the same issue. One example can be found in a video uploaded by the account @anitaintan, entitled "*Bolehkah Muslim Mengucapkan Selamat Hari Raya pada Non-Muslim?*" (Is it Permissible for Muslims to Say Happy Holiday to Non-Muslims?). The video presents a conversational sketch involving three characters discussing differing scholarly opinions regarding the permissibility of interfaith holiday greetings.



Figure 5. Debate within digital interaction spaces in the comment section of the account @anitaintan.

As illustrated in Figure 5, the comment section of this video reveals contrasting responses from netizens. Some comments support the presentation of differing scholarly opinions on the issue, while others express rejection of the practice of interfaith greetings. The account @triastuti5722, for instance, described the content as "very dangerous" and "full of *syubhat* (doubtful matters)." Another comment *Rizqi Anshori / Interfaith Holiday Greetings in Digital Religious Discourse: Polarization and Tolerance among Netizens on YouTube*

from @viviwidiyanti1395 referred to the authority of certain religious scholars and cited the phrase “*Lakum dinukum waliyadin*” (for you your religion and for me mine) to reinforce their perspective on the boundaries of tolerance in interfaith holiday greetings.

Furthermore, some comments express stronger and more critical reactions to the video content. Within the same comment section, the account @arimasud2632 wrote, “*mulai malas dengerin channel ini*” (starting to lose interest in listening to this channel), while the account @DelTotal wrote a comment indicating a desire to “tear apart this channel.” These comments illustrate expressions of disagreement and dissatisfaction with the content being discussed.



Figure 6. A group of netizens constructing narratives of rejection through the comment section.

As shown in Figure 6, the comment section also contains a group of netizens expressing rejection of the practice of interfaith holiday greetings. At the same time, other comments reflect personal experiences related to interfaith social relationships. One example is provided by the account @chivtyvhactymah6119, who shared a personal experience suggesting that friendships across religious boundaries can remain harmonious even without exchanging holiday greetings. The comment also mentioned that non-Muslim friends had shown respect for the individual’s fasting practices during Ramadan.

Overall, the data indicate that the comment sections of YouTube videos discussing interfaith holiday greetings function as spaces of interaction where netizens express a wide range of responses to the content being presented. In the case of the video from @dinamarian637, many netizens responded positively to the Eid greeting delivered by a Christian creator, expressing gratitude, returning holiday greetings, and commenting on elements within the video such as traditional Eid dishes. In contrast, the video uploaded by @anitaintan, which discusses differing scholarly opinions regarding interfaith

greetings, generated a broader range of responses. Some netizens supported the presentation of multiple religious perspectives, while others rejected the content by labelling it problematic or dangerous. In addition, several comments reflected personal experiences of interfaith relationships in everyday social life. These findings suggest that YouTube comment sections function as interactive spaces where netizens articulate a variety of perspectives, ranging from support and criticism to personal reflections regarding the issue of interfaith holiday greetings.

Based on the interaction data observed in the comment sections of YouTube videos discussing interfaith holiday greetings, several response patterns emerge that illustrate how audiences engage with such content within digital spaces. The first pattern reflects positive responses emphasising appreciation and mutual respect among religious communities. This can be observed in comments responding to the video uploaded by @dinamarian637, where netizens express gratitude for the Eid greeting delivered by the Christian creator. Some viewers also reciprocate with traditional Eid expressions such as “*mohon maaf labir batin.*” Other comments highlight elements visible in the video, such as *ketupat* and *opor ayam*, which are discussed in a light and appreciative manner. These responses indicate that some netizens interpret the content as a positive representation of interfaith respect.

The second pattern demonstrates the emergence of religious debate in response to content discussing the legal or theological status of interfaith greetings. This pattern is visible in the comment section of the video uploaded by @anitaintan, which presents differing scholarly perspectives on the issue. Some comments support the inclusion of multiple religious viewpoints, while others express disagreement with the practice of interfaith greetings based on particular theological interpretations. These contrasting responses suggest that a single piece of content may generate multiple interpretations among audiences.

The third pattern involves stronger and more emotional forms of rejection directed at content perceived as contradicting certain religious beliefs. Several comments describe the content as “dangerous” or “misleading,” while others express dissatisfaction with the channel that uploaded the video. These reactions indicate that discussions concerning interfaith greetings can provoke emotionally charged responses within digital spaces.

The fourth pattern reveals comments grounded in personal social experiences involving interfaith relationships. Some netizens share their experiences of maintaining friendships with individuals from different religious backgrounds, emphasising that harmonious relationships can exist even without exchanging holiday greetings. Such comments suggest that some netizens interpret tolerance through everyday social interactions and personal experiences rather than solely through theological arguments.

Taken together, these patterns suggest that YouTube comment sections serve as interactive spaces that reveal a wide spectrum of netizen responses to the issue of interfaith holiday greetings. These responses include appreciation of tolerant practices, debates concerning theological boundaries, emotionally charged rejection, and reflections based on personal interfaith experiences. This indicates that digital spaces function not only as platforms for disseminating content but also as arenas where different perspectives on tolerance and religious belief are exchanged and negotiated among social media users.

Pro–Contra Polemics: The Law of Conveying Interfaith Holiday Greetings

The research data indicate that debates regarding the permissibility of conveying interfaith holiday greetings in digital spaces emerge through religious preaching content uploaded to the YouTube platform. One of the videos analysed in this study is entitled “*Hukum Mengucapkan Selamat Hari Raya ke*

Agama Lain” (The Law of Conveying Holiday Greetings to Followers of Other Religions), uploaded by the channel @majelisislam3490 (Majelis Islam). The video features a preacher, Ustadz Adi Hidayat, seated behind a table holding a microphone, wearing Muslim attire and a traditional cap (*peci*), while delivering a sermon in a formal study setting (Majelis Islam, 2019). This visual presentation can be observed in Figure 7, which displays a screenshot from the lecture video uploaded by the channel.



Figure 7. Upload from the account @majelisislam3490 quoting a lecture by Ustadz Adi Hidayat explaining the legal perspective on conveying holiday greetings.

In the sermon delivered within the video, the preacher explains the distinction between social relations among people (*muamalah*) and matters related to faith and creed (*aqidah*). According to the explanation presented, Muslims are encouraged to maintain good social relations with followers of other religions. However, conveying holiday greetings to followers of other religions is considered to potentially carry theological implications associated with recognising the religious beliefs of others.



Figure 8. Display of netizen comment interactions on the post uploaded by the account @majelisislam3490.

In addition to the sermon itself, the research data were also obtained from the comment section of the video, which reveals a variety of netizen responses to the content presented. As illustrated in Figure 8, the comment section contains numerous questions, reactions, and opinions regarding the issue discussed in the video. One comment from the account @ditzchannel1320 questions whether conveying holiday greetings to followers of other religions could lead to apostasy. Meanwhile, the accounts @trisaningsih3296 and @BasiRudinNdiN emphasise the importance of maintaining faith while still respecting religious differences in social life. Overall, the comment section displays various forms of interaction, including questions, statements of opinion, and discussions referring to different religious perspectives.

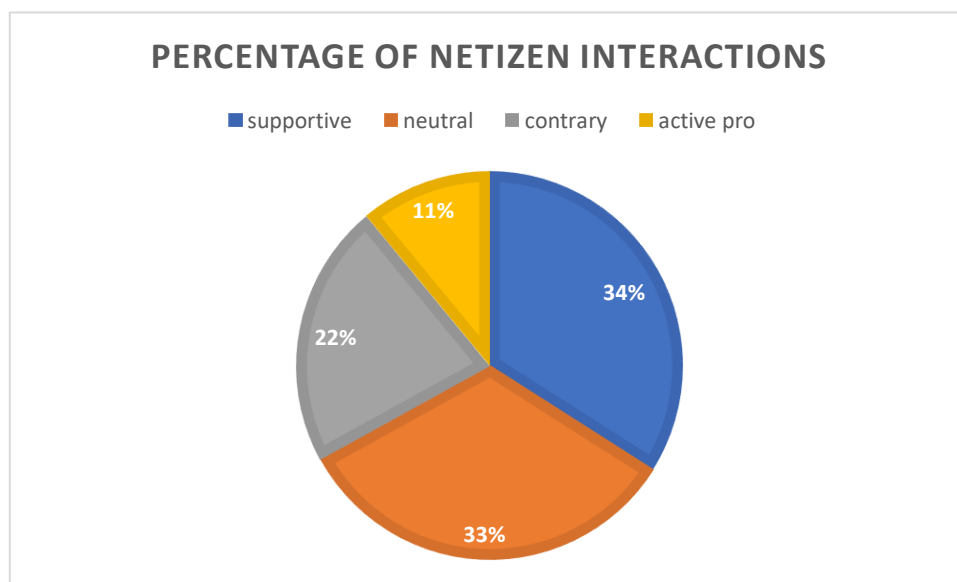


Figure 9. Percentage of netizen interactions in the comment section.

Additional data in this study were obtained from the classification of netizen responses, which were visualised in the form of a pie chart illustrating the percentage of netizen interactions within the video's comment section. As shown in Figure 9, the responses are distributed across four main categories. The supportive category represents the largest proportion at 34%, indicating that a significant portion of netizens expressed agreement with the arguments presented in the sermon. The neutral category accounts for 33%, representing comments that are informative, inquisitive, or descriptive without clearly expressing support or opposition. Meanwhile, the contrary category represents 22%, reflecting rejection or criticism of the views expressed in the video. Finally, the active pro category, comprising 11%, represents comments that explicitly express strong ideological agreement with the theological arguments presented by the preacher.

These data indicate that YouTube videos discussing the permissibility of conveying holiday greetings to followers of other religions generate diverse responses among netizens in the comment section. In the video uploaded by @majelislam3490, Ustadz Adi Hidayat presents a religious perspective that distinguishes between social interaction and the boundaries of Islamic creed. After the video was published, numerous netizens responded through the comment section. Some raised questions regarding the legal and theological implications of interfaith greetings, while others expressed either support for or disagreement with the arguments presented in the video. Based on the classification of the analysed comments, netizen responses fall into several categories, including supportive comments, neutral comments, critical or opposing comments, and comments that actively endorse the theological arguments presented. These findings indicate that religious preaching videos on YouTube function not only as a

medium for disseminating religious views but also as spaces where netizens express and debate differing perspectives on the issue of interfaith holiday greetings.

Based on the patterns of interaction observed among netizens responding to YouTube videos discussing the law of interfaith holiday greetings, several response patterns emerge that illustrate how audiences interpret and engage with religious narratives in digital spaces. The first pattern reveals support for the theological perspective presented by the preacher. This is reflected in the 34% of comments classified as supportive, where netizens generally agree with the explanation emphasising the separation between social tolerance and the boundaries of Islamic creed. Individuals in this group tend to view the sermon as providing authoritative religious guidance that clarifies appropriate religious practice. Their support is often expressed through comments affirming the arguments presented or emphasising the importance of safeguarding the purity of faith.

The second pattern reflects the presence of a substantial number of neutral responses within the comment section. Data indicate that 33% of the comments fall into this category. These comments do not explicitly support or oppose the content of the video but are instead informative or reflective in nature. Some netizens pose questions regarding the permissibility of interfaith holiday greetings, while others offer descriptive remarks without adopting a firm stance. This pattern suggests that some audience members use the comment section as a space to seek clarification or discuss the issue being addressed.

The third pattern demonstrates the presence of criticism or rejection of the perspective presented in the video. Approximately 22% of comments express opposition to the sermon's message. Comments in this category typically challenge the prohibition of interfaith greetings and emphasise the importance of tolerance within social life. Netizens in this group often associate the practice of conveying holiday greetings with values of social harmony and multicultural coexistence, thus regarding the prohibition as an issue worthy of debate.

The fourth pattern reflects active ideological support for the religious arguments presented in the video. Although smaller in proportion, comprising 11% of comments, this category includes netizens who strongly endorse the theological reasoning articulated by the preacher. These individuals often reinforce their stance by citing religious principles, Qur'anic verses, or the opinions of recognised scholars to support their arguments within the comment discussion.

Taken together, these patterns suggest that the comment sections of YouTube preaching videos function as dynamic discussion spaces where netizens express a wide range of responses to the issue of interfaith holiday greetings. These responses include support for theological interpretations, neutral reflections, criticism of the prohibition, and active ideological endorsement of the religious arguments presented. This indicates that digital spaces serve not only as platforms for delivering religious messages but also as arenas where religious perspectives are interpreted, debated, and negotiated by audiences engaging with the content.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that debates surrounding interfaith holiday greetings in Indonesia's digital space demonstrate a clear polarisation of views among netizens. Analysis of comment interactions on several YouTube videos indicates that a majority of users interpret the practice as a form of social tolerance and a means of maintaining interreligious harmony. At the same time, another group rejects the practice based on normative interpretations of religious teachings related to matters of faith (*aqidah*). In addition, a smaller group adopts a neutral position, typically raising questions or offering descriptive comments without expressing a firm stance. These findings suggest that digital platforms function not

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only as channels for disseminating religious messages but also as arenas for public discussion where religious issues are debated and negotiated by the wider community.

The polarisation of views can be understood through the interaction of two different normative frameworks: social ethics within human relations (*muamalah*) and the effort to preserve theological purity (*aqidah*). In everyday social life, exchanging holiday greetings is often perceived as a form of social courtesy and an expression of solidarity within a plural society. However, from certain theological perspectives, such practices are considered potentially problematic because they may symbolically imply recognition of another religious belief. This tension becomes more visible when such issues are discussed in digital spaces. Platforms such as YouTube allow religious messages to reach a wide audience while simultaneously enabling immediate responses through comment sections. The participatory and open nature of social media allows differing interpretations of religious teachings to emerge more visibly and often develop into public debate.

The findings of this study are consistent with those of Yasmin (2023), who identified that public debates regarding interfaith holiday greetings in Indonesia often rely on similar theological references related to the boundaries of religious tolerance. However, this study offers a new contribution by demonstrating how such debates unfold dynamically within digital environments through interactions among netizens on YouTube. Unlike previous studies that focused primarily on religious discourse or scholarly opinions, this research highlights the active role of digital audiences in shaping and reproducing these discussions through comments, questions, and personal experiences shared in online spaces. Furthermore, this study identifies a tendency towards generational differences in attitudes, with younger audiences generally showing greater acceptance of diversity in social practice.

The findings of this study can be interpreted through several analytical perspectives—historical, social, and ideological—which together help explain how debates about interfaith holiday greetings emerge and evolve within contemporary digital environments. From a historical perspective, debates about interfaith holiday greetings are not new within Indonesian religious discourse. Discussions concerning the permissibility of such practices have long appeared in Islamic jurisprudential debates as well as in broader public conversations about interreligious tolerance. What distinguishes the contemporary context, however, is the transformation of the space in which these debates occur. Discussions that were previously limited to religious forums, sermons, or scholarly writings have increasingly shifted to digital platforms that are more open and participatory. This transformation reflects what scholars describe as digital religion, a field that examines how religious practices, discourses, and identities are reshaped through digital media and online interaction (Campbell & Evolvi, 2020; Helland, 2016). Within this framework, religious debates no longer occur solely within institutional or clerical settings but unfold within networked digital environments, where audiences actively respond, reinterpret, and circulate religious ideas. As a result, the boundaries between offline religious authority and online participation become increasingly blurred, producing what researchers call hybrid or networked religious communities in which religious meanings are negotiated through continuous interaction between digital and everyday social contexts (Cheong & Campbell, 2022; Zhandossova, Seitakhmetova, Shaukenova, & Nurov, 2025).

From a social perspective, the findings indicate a gap between everyday social practices and the discourse that develops in digital environments. In everyday life, interactions among individuals from different religious backgrounds often proceed harmoniously, including through informal gestures such as exchanging holiday greetings. However, when such practices become topics of discussion in digital spaces, they frequently trigger polarised debates. This phenomenon can be understood through the concept of online polarisation, where social media environments tend to intensify divisions among users

due to mechanisms such as echo chambers and algorithmic filtering that reinforce existing beliefs and limit exposure to diverse perspectives (Boutsikaris & Polykalas, 2025; Neumann, Kelm, & Dohle, 2021). Digital platforms like YouTube allow individuals with similar viewpoints to cluster together, strengthening in-group identities while simultaneously amplifying disagreement with opposing groups (Bliuc, Smith, & Moynihan, 2020). Consequently, discussions that may appear relatively unproblematic in everyday social contexts can become highly contested in online spaces, where algorithmic curation and group dynamics contribute to the amplification of ideological differences rather than reflecting the more nuanced realities of interreligious coexistence in society.

From an ideological perspective, the polemic surrounding interfaith holiday greetings reflects a contest between two orientations of religious thought within plural societies. On one side are inclusive perspectives that emphasise tolerance, dialogue, and social harmony among followers of different religions, which align with the broader idea of religious pluralism, namely the recognition and acceptance of religious diversity within society (Körs, Weisse, & Willaime, 2020). On the other side are more exclusive interpretations that stress the importance of maintaining clear theological boundaries in order to preserve doctrinal purity and religious identity. Such tensions between inclusivism and exclusivism are commonly observed in plural religious contexts, where the coexistence of different belief systems often raises philosophical and theological questions about the validity of competing religious claims (Chaturvedi, 2016). In contemporary digital environments, these ideological orientations increasingly interact within online platforms, where religious actors and audiences negotiate meanings, defend doctrinal positions, and seek legitimacy for their interpretations in the wider public sphere. As a result, social media becomes a significant arena in which debates over religious pluralism, tolerance, and theological boundaries are articulated and contested in modern multicultural societies (Asadu, Diarall, & Asogwa, 2020).

From a functional perspective, digital platforms such as YouTube provide opportunities for broader public engagement in religious discussions. These platforms enable the dissemination of religious knowledge to a wide audience while also allowing individuals to ask questions, exchange views, and reflect upon religious issues relevant to their social lives. In this sense, digital media can function as a space for religious education as well as a forum for public dialogue. However, digital spaces also present certain dysfunctions. The fast-paced and emotionally driven nature of online communication can intensify polarisation and foster conflict within public discourse. This phenomenon is closely related to what scholars describe as digital polarisation, in which social media environments amplify ideological divisions through mechanisms such as algorithmic content curation, echo chambers, and filter bubbles that reinforce existing beliefs while limiting exposure to diverse viewpoints (Dutta, R, & E, 2025; Ghafouri, Alatawi, Karami, Such, & Suarez-Tangil, 2024). In such environments, users are more likely to encounter information that aligns with their prior attitudes, which can strengthen group identities and deepen disagreements with opposing perspectives. When religious issues are discussed without a constructive framework for dialogue, these dynamics may escalate differences of opinion into mutual accusations or the delegitimation of alternative viewpoints. Moreover, the circulation of disinformation and ideologically biased narratives within digital platforms can further intensify societal fragmentation and weaken the quality of public deliberation (Vasist, Chatterjee, & Krishnan, 2024; Xing, Zhang, Storey, & Koochang, 2024). Consequently, although digital platforms expand access to religious discussions and allow broader participation in public debates, they may simultaneously contribute to the fragmentation of society by amplifying ideological conflict rather than facilitating constructive engagement across differing viewpoints.

Based on the findings of this study, several strategic actions are necessary to reduce the potential for polarisation in digital religious discourse. First, religious education that emphasises inclusivity and interreligious understanding should be strengthened, particularly among younger generations who are highly active on social media. Second, religious leaders and preachers who have influence within digital spaces should communicate religious teachings in a more contextual and responsible manner, taking into account the sensitivities of a multicultural society. Third, improving digital literacy among social media users is essential so that individuals can engage more critically with religious discussions and avoid becoming trapped in polarised narratives. Through these efforts, digital spaces may evolve not merely as arenas of debate but as constructive platforms for dialogue that contribute to the development of a more harmonious and respectful plural society.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that discussions surrounding interfaith holiday greetings in digital spaces reflect the dynamic interaction between religious discourse, social tolerance, and online communication. The findings indicate that narratives of tolerance tend to dominate netizen interactions, although resistance from groups that adhere to more literal theological interpretations remains visible as part of the diversity of religious discourse in Indonesia. The results also demonstrate that generational background and references to particular religious authorities significantly influence how netizens interpret and respond to sensitive religious issues online. In this context, social media functions not merely as a medium for disseminating religious information, but also as a space where religious identity is negotiated and where the boundaries between social tolerance and theological conviction are continually reinterpreted within public digital discourse.

The scientific contribution of this research lies in its effort to map the patterns of digital communication among Indonesian Muslims in responding to controversial religious issues, particularly through the analysis of netizen interactions on YouTube. By examining how narratives of tolerance, criticism, and theological argumentation are articulated in online discussions, this study provides empirical insight into how religious discourse is constructed and negotiated in digital public spaces. These findings enrich the broader study of religious moderation and digital religion by demonstrating how social media platforms serve as arenas where religious authority, public opinion, and interpretations of tolerance interact and shape contemporary religious discourse.

Nevertheless, this study has several limitations. The analysis focuses on a single platform and a specific YouTube account, which means that the findings may not fully represent the broader complexity of public opinion across different social media ecosystems. Each digital platform has its own audience characteristics, communication styles, and algorithmic dynamics that may influence how religious discussions unfold. For this reason, future research is recommended to conduct cross-platform studies involving platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, or X (Twitter) in order to examine whether similar patterns of discourse emerge. Expanding the scope of data and comparative analysis across platforms will help deepen understanding of the transformation of religious authority, online polarization, and the practice of interreligious tolerance in the digital era.

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