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# Multi-Platform Strategies of Populis Figur in West Sumatra

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**ABSTRACT**

This article explores the digital strategies of Islamic populism in West Sumatra by examining how key figures such as Fauzi Bahar and Jel Fathullah systematically leverage social media platforms to disseminate moral discourses grounded in the local religious-philosophical paradigm of *Adat Basandi Syara', Syara' Basandi Kitabullah* (ABS-SBK). Drawing on a descriptive qualitative approach through digital observation, the study reveals a multi-platform orchestration in which Facebook functions as a site for constructing long-form religious narratives and symbolic continuity, while Instagram Reels and TikTok are deployed for affective mobilization through short, emotionally charged content featuring themes such as hijrah, almsgiving, and Islamic virtue. The interplay of symbolic messaging and technical affordances across platforms illustrates what scholars have termed symbolic convergence—a synchronization of religious rhetoric with platform-specific features to consolidate affective publics. The analysis demonstrates how figures like Jel Fathullah transform short-form visual content into emotional gateways that channel followers toward deeper ideological engagements via Facebook Live or digital sermons. User engagement through likes, shares, and comments is interpreted by followers as a form of "digital charity," signaling a shift in the mediation of moral authority from religious institutions to platform architectures and algorithms. This study argues that Islamic digital populism in West Sumatra constitutes a form of vernacular, platformized politics wherein local identity, digital aesthetics, and moral claims coalesce. It advances the understanding of how emotional resonance, identity performance, and religious legitimacy are orchestrated through hybrid media systems.

**Keywords**: Affective Publics, Digital Morality, Islamic Populism, , Symbolic Convergence, West Sumatra

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## INTRODUCTION

The advent of digital technologies—particularly social media—has radically transformed the global landscape of political communication, including within Indonesia. Social media no longer functions merely as a tool for one-way dissemination; rather, it constitutes a new public sphere that facilitates symbolic contestation, identity articulation, and political mobilisation. Within this digital terrain, the boundaries between moral expression, political campaigning, and identity production have become increasingly blurred, giving rise to new configurations of religiously infused moral populism. In West Sumatra, this phenomenon has assumed a distinct local articulation through Islamic populism grounded in the regional philosophy of *Adat Basandi Syara', Syara' Basandi Kitabullah* (ABS-SBK)—a normative framework that integrates Minangkabau customary values with Islamic sharia principles. In this context, social media operates not merely as a communication medium but as the primary arena for articulating and disseminating digital morality in alignment with populist agendas.

Figures such as Fauzi Bahar and Jel Fathullah strategically exploit the digital ecosystem to cultivate a moral persona that is both religiously devout and culturally representative. Utilizing platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok, they disseminate populist narratives that frame the "ummah" in opposition to "moral threats," both internal and external to the imagined community. These strategies serve not only to consolidate their political authority but also to deepen emotional loyalty among their audiences through religious content embedded in cultural and populist rhetorical frames. This approach is emblematic of broader trends in digital populism, which is marked by emotionalized communication, discursive simplification, and direct, unmediated engagement with followers—bypassing traditional institutional gatekeepers (Gerbaudo, 2017).

West Sumatra presents a particularly fertile social configuration for the emergence of digital Islamic populism, underpinned by mutually reinforcing structural and cultural conditions. First, the widespread penetration of social media among West Sumatran communities allows for rapid and extensive dissemination of content without institutional filtering mechanisms. Platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok function as strategic channels through which religious and political actors can directly reach the public, shape opinion, and cultivate affective forms of loyalty. Amid declining trust in mainstream media and formal political institutions, these digital spaces have become central arenas for generating trust and emotional resonance with audiences (Gerbaudo, 2017).

Second, the deeply institutionalized religio-cultural identity of the Minangkabau people, grounded in the ABS-SBK philosophy, provides a rich symbolic foundation for articulating moral populism. ABS-SBK serves not only as a marker of cultural identity but also as a framework for social and political legitimacy. When framed as a symbol of local authenticity and moral purity, this philosophy lends itself to populist logics that effectively construct a dichotomy between an "authentic us" and a "deviant them"—a binary central to populist discourse (Laclau, 2005; Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017).

Within this framework, figures such as Jel Fathullah do not merely function as conventional religious preachers; rather, they operate as digital moral entrepreneurs who simultaneously build daʿwa and political ecosystems. Through platforms such as Tazkiyah Media and his personal social media accounts, Fathullah disseminates sermons and political commentary framed in moral and religious language. Campaigns rejecting Chinese New Year celebrations or criticising rendang made with pork serve as strategic

examples of how identity-based issues are mobilized to provoke moral panic and consolidate a support base. These narratives cast specific groups—based on ethnicity, religion, or lifestyle—as moral threats to the integrity of the Muslim Minangkabau community. Such strategies generate high emotional resonance and reinforce the figure's position as a moral guardian of the ummah (Solahudin & Fakhruroji, 2020; Yilmaz et al., 2022; Furedi, 2018).

As described by Yilmaz and Morieson (2021, 2022), digital religious populism operates by constructing virtual communities bound by shared identity, moral narratives, and emotional resonance. Rather than simply transmitting messages, it fosters affective authority through symbolic digital communication. User engagement—via comments, likes, and livestream participation—functions as a form of digital liturgy, thereby legitimizing populist figures as authentic moral representatives of the ummah. This virtual ritualization reinforces exclusive identity politics and can challenge pluralism in digital contexts.

In the context of West Sumatra, this configuration reflects an emergent model of Islamic populist digital authoritarianism—a fusion of religious authority, symbolic control, and digital mobilisation. Unlike conventional authoritarianism, it operates not through direct repression but through the normalization of majoritarian moral frameworks within the digital public sphere. Through these strategies, religious populists do not merely justify their claims to moral authority; they also construct a digital landscape that silences ideological diversity in the name of cultural and religious purity.

Yet the dominance of majoritarian moral narratives is not without consequence. When the ABS-SBK philosophy is employed as a symbol of moral exclusivity in political communication, it risks eroding pluralism and entrenching binary divisions between an "authentic us" and a "deviant them." In practice, this strategy frequently marginalizes minority communities—such as the Mentawai, Chinese-Indonesians, and adherents of non-Islamic religions—who fall outside the dominant Islam–Minang identity construct (Kompas, 2022; Antaranews, 2021). Rather than serving as an inclusive public sphere, the digitalization of morality becomes an instrument of power, legitimizing exclusion and symbolic authoritarianism through social surveillance and normative pressure on difference.

It is within this sociotechnical and ideological terrain that the central research question of this article emerges: How are multiplatform strategies deployed to disseminate digital morality and consolidate the Islamic populist base? This inquiry goes beyond the technical aspects of social media usage to interrogate the symbolic power dynamics, moral representation, and identity politics embedded within them. By examining digital content, mobilisation strategies, and the identity narratives of Islamic populist figures in West Sumatra, this article seeks to illuminate the role of social media in shaping a new, exclusionary, yet emotionally resonant moral formation within Indonesia's contemporary digital public sphere.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to examine how Islamic populist actors in West Sumatra—specifically Jel Fathullah, Fauzi Bahar, and Andre Rosiade—utilize social media to disseminate moral narratives grounded in ABS-SBK values. The focus is placed on their digital communication practices, visual and affective strategies, and the dynamics of interaction between these figures and their online audiences. This approach was selected because it allows for contextual exploration of

complex, meaning-laden social phenomena without intervening directly in the object of study.

Data collection was conducted through digital ethnography (netnography) of the primary social media accounts of the selected figures across platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube. Collected materials included visual posts, captions, sermon videos, public comments, and the figures' responses to sensitive issues such as Cap Go Meh and *rendang babi*. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with key informants, including journalists, Islamic media practitioners, and active followers, to capture public interpretations and perceptions of the figures' moral narratives and digital strategies.

Data analysis was performed thematically by identifying patterns in narrative construction, moral representation, and digital mobilisation across the figures' content. Validity was ensured through triangulation of sources (social media content, interview data, and supporting documents such as Law No. 17/2022.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Digital Morality

In the digital communication era, morality is no longer constructed solely through formal institutions such as education, religion, or mainstream media, but also through dynamic interactions on social media platforms. The concept of *digital morality* refers to the processes by which moral values are constructed, circulated, negotiated, and often politicized within digital spaces—shaped by technological affordances and the affective dynamics among users.

Papacharissi (2015) introduces the notion of *affective publics*—online communities bound by shared emotions and mobilized through collective narratives expressed via affective registers such as anger, fear, or hope. In this framework, emotion is not merely a reaction, but serves as the affective infrastructure that sustains the production and dissemination of moral discourse. Morally framed emotions become powerful tools for shaping public opinion and delineating digital boundaries of community and belonging.

Gillespie (2018) further argues that content moderation logics employed by platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram play a crucial role in defining the moral contours of public discourse. Platform algorithms and governance policies do not merely filter content in technical terms but subtly shape the public moral horizon—determining what is considered shareable, censorable, or worthy of algorithmic promotion. Thus, digital morality is technologically structured yet remains open to appropriation by political and religious actors.

Within the framework of Islamic digital populism in West Sumatra, the concept of digital morality becomes particularly salient. The values of ABS-SBK—which integrate customary (adat) and Islamic (syarak) norms—are not simply upheld as static moral codes but are continuously articulated as digital narratives by figures such as Jel Fathullah and Fauzi Bahar. Through features like livestreams, religious captions, and symbolic visualizations (e.g., traditional clothing, hijab, Arabic calligraphy), these actors do more than communicate messages; they cultivate moral digital spaces where the values of "us" are safeguarded, while those of "them" are criticized or delegitimized. This dynamic reflects Gerbaudo's (2017) insight into how social media orchestrates *emotional choreography* in digital populism—where collective emotions are mobilized to generate both solidarity and antagonism.

Expanding on this, Yılmaz, Morieson, and Bachtiar (2022) introduce the concept of civilizational populism to explain how religious-political identities in Indonesia, particularly in the case of the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI), are articulated through a perceived moral clash between Islamic civilization and its secular or non-Muslim "Others." Their analysis demonstrates that moral claims function as instruments of boundary-making—defining who represents moral truth, who is cast as deviant, and who must be silenced or excluded. Within this framework, platforms like Facebook and YouTube do not merely mediate discourse, but become arenas of symbolic struggle where religious populists construct digital moral communities and amplify affective solidarity. The authors highlight how FPI leaders utilized emotional tropes—such as outrage, piety, and victimhood—to assert authority and deepen loyalty among followers.

This lens affirms the broader insight that moral digitality in Islamic populism is not merely about normative religious values, but constitutes a political and affective process embedded within platform architectures. Religious populist actors strategically deploy interactivity, visual symbolism, and algorithmic visibility to establish moral credibility and shape collective identities. As such, moral authority in digital spaces is increasingly produced not through theological depth or institutional legitimacy, but through the ability to mobilize affect, control narrative visibility, and perform moral guardianship in front of algorithmically mediated publics.

**Platform Affordances and Populism**

In digital media studies, the concept of *affordance* refers to the range of possible actions enabled by the interface and design architecture of digital platforms. Bucher and Helmond (2018) define affordances as relational properties that emerge between the technical features of platforms and the ways in which users interpret, appropriate, and employ these features for particular purposes. These include functionalities such as instant content dissemination (sharing), live broadcasting (livestreaming), emotional engagement through reactions and comments (likes, emojis), and the algorithmic personalization of public identity and visibility.

Within the context of populist politics, digital affordances have been strategically leveraged to craft communicative practices that emphasize unmediated proximity between the "leader" and the "people," while circumventing institutional gatekeeping. Engesser et al. (2017) demonstrate how populist actors exploit the affordances of platforms—through unfiltered posts, emotionally charged videos, and direct interactions—to articulate anti-elitist rhetoric, foster antagonism against established institutions, and perform themselves as the authentic embodiment of "the people's voice." Affect, immediacy, and the illusion of direct connectivity become critical elements in the construction of the populist persona.

In the Asian context, Yılmaz and Morieson (2023) demonstrate how religious populism is increasingly intertwined with digital mobilization. They contend that religious-populist actors do more than simply broadcast doctrinal content online; they actively cultivate affective digital communities anchored in moral identity and collective sentiment. Social media platforms—such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube—provide specific affordances (e.g., interactive comments, livestreaming, visual storytelling) that enable these actors to perform moral authority, reinforce group identities, and foster emotional loyalty among followers (Yılmaz & Morieson, 2023).

In West Sumatra, digital affordances are articulated in distinct ways within the framework of Islamic populism rooted in the normative synthesis of *adat* and *syarak* (ABS-SBK). Figures like Jel Fathullah, for instance, use livestreaming features to deliver

religious and political sermons, while comment sections and reaction buttons enable followers to publicly express support and affirm belonging. Symbolic visual elements—such as peci (Muslim caps), *saluak* (traditional headwear), and Arabic script—serve not merely as identity markers, but as visual strategies to generate affective resonance and moral affiliation. This dynamic affirms Gerbaudo's (2017) thesis on how social media affordances shape an *emotional choreography* of populism—affective patterns that organize collective engagement through sentiments such as anger, piety, and nostalgia.

Affordances also allow for selective interactivity: digital populists can amplify favorable comments to demonstrate responsiveness to public sentiment, while simultaneously ignoring or suppressing dissenting voices. This creates an appearance of participatory engagement that is often superficial or strategically curated. In practice, affordances are employed to construct ideologically and affectively homogeneous communities, reinforcing rhetorics of moral exclusivity while narrowing the space for critical deliberation.

Thus, platform affordances are far from neutral features; they constitute potential fields through which digital populism is articulated and intensified. In the case of Islamic populism in West Sumatra, affordances are mobilized to enact religious proximity, disseminate moral claims rooted in ABS-SBK, and construct a digital ecosystem that consolidates binary divisions between "the faithful" and "the deviant." Understanding the relationship between affordance and populist practice is therefore essential to critically examine how digital technologies shape the trajectories of identity politics and moral discourse in the contemporary era.

**Populism Islam in West Sumatra**

Islamic populism in West Sumatra does not emerge in a vacuum. Rather, it is the outcome of a dynamic articulation between Minangkabau cultural identity, Islamic narratives, and digital communication strategies. Religious actors in West Sumatra do not operate in isolation from the digital transformation of public discourse. Rather, they actively adapt their religious rhetoric to the operational logics of digital platforms—emphasizing speed, simplicity, symbolic visuality, and emotional intimacy. This adaptation enables them to reach broader audiences, particularly younger Muslim demographics active on social media, while also reframing religious messages as urgent, politicized public issues. As Febrian (2024) demonstrates, successful digital *da'wah* on Instagram often relies on *simple, affective visuals and close-up narratives* to construct moral authority and foster emotional engagement with followers. Similarly, A'yuni, Q., & Nasrullah, R (2022) show how preachers like Husein Ja'far al-Hadar utilize livestreaming and aesthetic packaging to connect with urban millennials, making religious discourse more accessible and emotionally engaging. This reflects a broader mediatization of religious life in Indonesia, where social media affordances are strategically mobilized to project piety, authority, and populist moral claims (Hew, 2018; Husein & Slama, 2018).

Within this context, the philosophy of *Adat Basandi Syara', Syara' Basandi Kitabullah* (ABS-SBK) plays a pivotal role as a moral-cultural framework that offers symbolic legitimacy to Islamic populism. ABS-SBK, which integrates Minangkabau customary law (*adat*) with Islamic *shari'a*, functions not only as a local ethical system but also as a moral vernacular used to assert authority, interpellate the public, and mobilise support. When transplanted into the digital sphere, ABS-SBK is transformed into a populist signifier—one capable of fusing religious and ethnic identities into a unified and exclusive discourse of purity and authenticity.

Gerbaudo (2016) emphasises that contemporary populism is deeply reliant on the orchestration of symbols and affects in digital media—what he terms the *choreography of assembly*. In West Sumatra, this choreography is evident in the digital performances of figures such as Jel Fathullah and Fauzi Bahar, who present themselves as defenders of ABS-SBK values against so-called "cultural threats" such as pork rendang, Chinese New Year celebrations, or shifting gender and sexual norms. These figures combine religious performativity (via clothing, language, Qur'anic references) with a digital aesthetic designed to resonate emotionally with their audiences, thereby constructing a model of leadership that is not only pious but also "authentic" and ostensibly "pro-people."

Hadiz and Robinson (2017) argue that Islamic populism in Indonesia typically blends anti-elite rhetoric with the reinforcement of religious identity, crafting a dichotomy between the "oppressed Muslim ummah" and a "secular or foreign elite" that is seen as corrupting the nation's moral foundations. In West Sumatra, Islamic populism assumes a more localised yet equally exclusionary form, positioning ABS-SBK as the principal terrain of populist articulation. Within this configuration, local culture and religion are fused into a singular identity discourse that defines who is entitled to be included in the political community—and, conversely, who is marked as deviant or excluded.

This phenomenon also illustrates how Islamic populism in West Sumatra is profoundly adaptive to existing social structures and cultural dynamics. Rather than importing transnational discourses such as *khilafah* or global jihad, local Islamic populism tends to prioritise themes of public morality, female virtue, customary purity, and the authority of *ulama*—all wrapped in the culturally embedded legitimacy of ABS-SBK. This explains why populist messaging by local religious-political figures resonates more deeply with the public: they do not speak solely in the name of Islam, but also in the name of *adat* and communal belonging.

In this regard, Islamic populism in West Sumatra can be understood as a form of *vernacular populism*—a hybrid political formation that combines local cultural traditions with global communication technologies. It manifests simultaneously as religious, cultural, and digital, forming what Yilmaz and Morieson (2022) describe as *Islamic digital populism*: an identity-based mode of populism that is platform-enabled, affectively mediated, and legitimised through religious-cultural symbols such as ABS-SBK.

**Facebook: Narratives of Continuity and Moral Authority**

Facebook plays a central role in shaping narratives of piety and cultural authority among Islamic populist figures in West Sumatra, particularly in the case of Fauzi Bahar. The platform offers distinct narrative affordances: extended textual space, high-resolution multimedia integration, and affective interactivity through comments, likes, and emojis. These affordances enable deep, visual, and symbolically layered modes of communication. As Bucher and Helmond (2018) argue, affordances are not merely technical features but relational potentials shaped by the interaction between users and platform architecture. Within this framework, Fauzi Bahar mobilizes Facebook to construct an image of himself as a grounded religious leader, curating content that includes religious events such as *Subuh Mubarakah*, Qur'anic recitation contests, and interactions with market communities.

His posts are not limited to documentary function; they consistently exhibit markers of Islamic piety: traditional Minangkabau attire, Qur'anic verses, religious expressions like *Masya Allah* in captions, and nasheed music as emotive background. This strategy creates a form of *emotional choreography*—blending religious expression, cultural affiliation, and social intimacy into a coherent digital frame. This aligns with

Gerbaudo's (2017) argument that social media platforms orchestrate affective proximity between leaders and audiences by structuring emotional engagement. Each post becomes a performative enactment of local values—especially ABS-SBK—rendered in visually and emotionally resonant formats.

Socioculturally, such representation illustrates a form of Islamic populism rooted in local values and refracted through digital practices. Fauzi Bahar's content articulates not merely religion or custom, but a collective moral continuity institutionalized via social media. This echoes Papacharissi's (2015) notion of *affective publics*—communities constituted not simply through ideology but through shared emotional experiences mediated by digital platforms. In this context, Facebook functions not merely as a communication tool, but as a field of identity articulation where morality, collective memory, and populist visual strategies are synthesized into a format widely palatable to digital Minangkabau publics.

User responses to Fauzi's content reflect high emotional engagement, averaging 2,145 likes and 635 comments per post. These responses predominantly affirm his image as a humble religious leader and custodian of ABS-SBK values, with comments such as "Trustworthy leader," "Barakallah, our mayor-ustaz," and "Guardian of *adat* and *syarak*." The repetition of such affirmations signals a pattern of emotional validation that strengthens symbolic ties between figure and follower. Here, Facebook functions not only as a medium for one-way communication but as an affective arena for two-way symbolic intimacy and moral legitimation.

This participatory dynamic aligns with Papacharissi's (2015) framing of *affective publics*—digital communities where political engagement is articulated through emotional expression and shared narratives rather than formal ideological or partisan alignment. In the case of Fauzi Bahar, the dominant affect is not antagonistic outrage—as is common in confrontational populism—but positive sentiments such as reverence, religious warmth, and cultural pride. This suggests that Islamic digital populism in West Sumatra may operate within an emotional spectrum that consolidates support through affirmative storytelling and social intimacy, rather than through moral panic or exclusionary fervor.

Comments frequently invoke Minangkabau identity markers such as "urang awak," "ABS-SBK," or "sumando nan amanah," reflecting how moral authority is co-constructed in digital discourse. This aligns with Franzia (2017), who documents the practice of embedding cultural icons into Facebook profiles to signal ethnic belonging, and Oktavianus (2023), who shows how ethnolinguistic markers become tools for expressing ethnic identity online. Together, these sources support the interpretation that Fauzi Bahar's moral authority emerges not only top-down but through co-articulated identity formation in an affective digital space rooted in Minangkabau cultural templates.

Fauzi Bahar's populism, as constructed on Facebook, contrasts starkly with the style of figures like Andre Rosiade, who utilizes X (formerly Twitter) to project a confrontational moral critique. Andre's rhetorical strategy centers on moral panic themes—such as opposition to pork rendang and Chinese New Year celebrations—framed through narratives of cultural threat. His 2022 post on pork rendang, for example, garnered over 493 likes, 103 retweets, and 59 comments, many of which reflected cultural-religious antagonism. This style aligns with what Furedi (2018) and Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser (2017) describe as moralistic populism, which thrives on dichotomies between "the people" and their moral adversaries.

By contrast, Fauzi Bahar does not foreground a clearly defined enemy; rather, he cultivates a *positive moral ecology* focused on social harmony and the preservation of ABS-SBK values. His communicative style is communitarian and integrative, casting leadership as a symbolic and moral service rooted in local ethos. Within this frame, he emerges as an idealized embodiment of Minangkabau Islamic leadership—not merely a political actor, but a custodian of value continuity in digital space.

This demonstrates how Facebook enables the articulation of a softer, affirmative, and continuity-based Islamic populism—one that does not merely react to threats but sustains authority by digitalizing tradition. Through long-form storytelling and layered affective interaction, Fauzi Bahar constructs a form of digital leadership that reproduces not only religious and political messages but also traditional legitimacy in contemporary form. His use of captions such as *Masya Allah* and nasheed music enhances the affective atmosphere, amplifying moral signaling. The digital feedback—thousands of likes and affirming comments—indicates successful positioning as a moral figure consonant with Minangkabau-Islamic identity.

According to Yilmaz & Morieson (2021), religious populism increasingly mobilizes affect through emotionally symbolic digital communication—not just to convey messages, but to construct moral authority and group identity. In this respect, Fauzi Bahar's digital presence can be categorized as *affirmative populism*: focused on communal cohesion and continuity rather than confrontation. On Facebook, he positions himself as a custodian of Minangkabau moral-cultural heritage, blending Islamic values with the regional philosophy of Adat Basandi Syara' (ABS-SBK), employing rituals, traditional symbolism, and Islamic content to anchor identity and authority in vernacular discourse.

While de la Torre (2019) emphasizes the ideological plasticity of populism—its ability to adhere to diverse political projects—cases like Fauzi's demonstrate how populism is also culturally malleable, shaped by regional histories, moral regimes, and symbolic vocabularies. Fauzi's rhetoric centres not just on defending "the ummah" in a generic sense, but on safeguarding *Islam Minang*, a culturally coded notion of moral order rooted in ABS-SBK. In this regard, his populism departs from universalist Islamist narratives and instead inhabits a localised moral field, where piety, kinship, and adat converge as sources of symbolic legitimacy.

This aligns with what Brubaker (2017) describes as "culturalized populism"—a mode of populist expression that foregrounds cultural authenticity, local symbols, and ethno-religious idioms as sources of political legitimacy. Rather than operating solely within the universalist grammar of Islamic orthodoxy, Fauzi Bahar's populism derives its authority from a performative fidelity to Minangkabau-Islamic synthesis, particularly the ABS-SBK philosophy. In this framework, digital populism in West Sumatra becomes not merely a contest over electoral power, but a form of cultural guardianship, where legitimacy is conferred upon those who most persuasively embody and enact the region's moral and symbolic order.

Digital platforms, especially Facebook, amplify this vernacularised performance by providing a space to narrate piety, share ritual imagery, and circulate community-based values. As Gerbaudo (2017) notes, platforms act as tools of emotional choreography, organising collective affect in ways that enhance populist resonance. This underscores the need to theorise how subnational moral economies condition the aesthetic and affective grammar of populist mobilisation—something global models often overlook.

What is particularly noteworthy is how Facebook's affordances—such as long-form captions, curated photo albums, and community tagging—enable this vernacularised performance. Unlike platforms oriented toward brevity or spectacle, Facebook allows Fauzi to sustain a narrative of moral continuity and embeddedness. His posts often include Quranic references side by side with recollections of local history or family lineages, creating a symbolic bridge between ancestral legitimacy and religious piety. In doing so, he appeals to both affective belonging and cultural memory, positioning himself as a leader who is not only *of* the people, but *from* the land.

Fauzi Bahar's Facebook presence thus exemplifies a vernacular moral populism: a fusion of political claim-making, religious authority, and Minangkabau cultural identity that leverages digital affordances to reinforce regional moral hierarchies. His performances foreground the ABS-SBK synthesis, re-enacting local piety through ritual imagery and long-form captions that situate current grievances within a lineage of ancestral values. By moving beyond generic notions of populism, this case encourages a theorisation of how sub-national cultures condition the performance, reception, and moral economy of populist discourse.

From a sociotechnical perspective, Facebook is an ideal stage for curating symbolic continuity and collective memory. Echoing Gerbaudo's (2017) concept of *emotional choreography*, the platform enables an orchestrated flow of affect that fosters intimacy and community cohesion. Consequently, Fauzi appears not merely as a contemporary politician but as a trans-historical custodian of Minangkabau-Islamic morality—perpetually "present" through the platform's digital persistence even beyond his formal tenure. In this sense, Facebook functions as a site of digital domestication of ABS-SBK, translating *adat* and *shariʿa* into emotionally resonant visual-textual forms. Fauzi's strategy contrasts with more confrontational populist styles, illustrating how platform-specific populism can operate in ways deeply embedded within the social habitus of a particular community (Papacharissi, 2015; Gillespie, 2018). Rather than relying on shock tactics, his populism accrues credibility by enacting an authentic, stable, and pious guardianship of communal values, thereby demonstrating how digital logics are reshaping Islamic populism in West Sumatra.

**Instagram & TikTok: The Affective Spectacle of Morality**

Whereas Facebook has been instrumental for figures like Fauzi Bahar in constructing narratives of religious authority and moral continuity grounded in *Adat Basandi Syara', Syara' Basandi Kitabullah* (ABS-SBK), platforms such as Instagram Reels and TikTok—though not always accompanied by quantifiable metrics—can be understood as key *affective stages* for contemporary Islamic populism in West Sumatra. Despite the lack of specific data on Jel Fathullah's TikTok account, similar performative and aesthetic logics are clearly discernible in his short-form videos circulated on X (formerly Twitter), YouTube, and Instagram. These digital aesthetics reveal how Islamic populism appropriates short video formats to transmit potent moral messages through emotionally charged visual content.

For example, a viral video of Andre Rosiade campaigning in a mosque—disseminated on X—employs cinematic framing techniques characteristic of TikTok: brief duration, intimate camera angles, and the presence of religious symbols such as prayer mats and *lafaz* Allah. The public's reactions—ranging from fervent praise to sharp criticism—indicate that emotion serves as a primary gateway for moral mobilization in the digital sphere. Similarly, a YouTube video advocating for the cancellation of Chinese New Year (Cap Go Meh) celebrations utilizes stark visual contrasts (Arabic calligraphy vs. Chinese

cultural ornaments) to frame a clear moral antagonism. Even text-based posts, such as Fadli Zon's tweet on *rendang babi* (pork rendang), display a compressed, provocative moral narrative style, which provokes affective responses through religious emojis, Qur'anic quotations, and claims of *halal* vs. *haram*.

| Post | Platform | Views |
|---|---|---|
| **Andre Rosiade – Mosque Campaign** | X (Twitter) | 75.200 |
| **Cap Go Meh Cancellation** | YouTube | 14.971 |
| **tvOne – Rendang Babi Debate** | YouTube | 837.000 |

**Table 1. View-Counts For Short Post**

A close examination of selected viral clips reveals the varied yet convergent strategies of Islamic digital populism in West Sumatra. Andre Rosiade's video, which features him speaking inside a mosque, exemplifies the symbolic deployment of religious space as a locus of moral and political legitimacy. Despite being distributed solely through Twitter (now X), the clip attracted considerable engagement—reaching approximately 75,000 views—demonstrating the capacity of affective mobilisation to succeed even without recourse to visually oriented platforms such as TikTok. Here, the mosque functions not merely as a setting but as a performative symbol of piety and populist authenticity.

The second example, a post criticising Cap Go Meh celebrations, highlights a symbolic confrontation between Islamic values and Chinese cultural expressions. While the number of views was relatively lower, the video sparked a morally charged digital discourse, indicating its effectiveness as a catalyst for affective polarisation and moral panic. This instance illustrates how digital populists exploit cultural tensions to reinforce binary identity narratives, drawing clear lines between the "authentic ummah" and perceived cultural outsiders.

The third case involves a segment titled "Rendang Babi," broadcast via tvOne's official YouTube channel. With viewership exceeding 837,000, this clip's reach was undoubtedly bolstered by its presence on a mainstream media platform. Yet, the moral framing embedded in the content—anchored in halal discourses and culinary identity—retains its populist appeal, resonating deeply with conservative Muslim audiences. This suggests that while institutional platform capital can expand exposure, the affective and ideological alignment of content remains crucial in shaping audience reception. Collectively, these three examples underscore how Islamic populist actors orchestrate affective engagements across various platforms, leveraging religious symbols, cultural fault lines, and moral narratives to consolidate authority and emotional allegiance in the digital sphere.

**Table. 2 Like Counts**

| Post | Likes |
|---|---|
| **tvOne – Rendang Babi** | 6.800 |
| **Andre Rosiade – Mosque Campaign** | 1.600 |
| **SammiSoh – RM Padang Babiambo** | 299 |
| **Fadli Zon – Rendang Babi Tweet** | 493 |
| **Cap Go Meh** | 236 |

The first table presents view counts for three short video clips, while the second table compares the number of likes as an indicator of affective engagement or direct

emotional resonance. Despite originating from different platforms, the visual grammar across these five clips reveals a homogenized narrative and affective structure: the deployment of religious symbols, dynamic visual effects, and spiritually themed commentaries. These findings affirm the presence of what Papacharissi (2015) refers to as *affective publics*—digital communities formed not through rational deliberation but via shared emotional resonance. Within these spaces, clicks, comments, and retweets are not merely technical interactions; they are imbued with meaning as expressions of faith and acts of "digital almsgiving."

Analysis of the three viral short clips within the context of Islamic digital populism in West Sumatra reveals that high view counts are not merely determined by the scale of distribution platforms but more closely tied to the clips' capacity to rapidly mobilize affect through moral symbols and conflicts.

The clip featuring Andre Rosiade, posted on X (formerly Twitter), depicts a campaign scene within a mosque—a space symbolically coded as sacred and authoritative. Although the video was not distributed via visually dominant platforms such as TikTok or Instagram, it amassed 75,000 views. This high level of engagement demonstrates that visually mediated religious symbols remain highly effective in triggering emotional resonance, even on text-centric platforms.

The second clip, highlighting calls to cancel the Cap Go Meh festival, illustrates another form of symbolic conflict—between Islamic values and Chinese cultural expression. Although it garnered fewer views compared to the others, it evoked high affective intensity by framing Islamic identity in moral opposition to a cultural "other." This kind of symbolic tension reinforces populist framings of "authentic" versus "foreign" identity.

In the case of the *rendang babi* video published by tvOne on YouTube, the exceptionally high view count (837,000) can be partially attributed to the platform's mainstream reach. However, the clip's resonance is also due to how it reconfigures a culinary issue into one of moral and religious identity, thereby appealing to a conservative Muslim audience.

Together, these three clips reveal that high viewership is not merely a byproduct of algorithmic amplification or platform popularity. Instead, it is a function of each clip's ability to activate moral affect swiftly and directly. This is consistent with the strategic logic of Islamic digital populism, which positions emotion as a central resource in the contestation of moral authority and the orchestration of symbolic mobilization. In this sense, high view counts are not simply metrics of visibility—they are affective reflections of a clip's success in triggering value-based conflict and emotional resonance that can be capitalized upon in populist religious discourse.

From a content production perspective, these strategies exemplify what Gerbaudo (2016) terms *choreographed affective mobilization*—the deliberate design of content to trigger collective emotion through structured aesthetics, symbolism, and editing. Elements such as prayer mats, Arabic calligraphy, slow-motion depictions of charitable acts, and rhythmic nasheed soundtracks are not merely decorative; they function as affective media that generate immediate and widely shareable religious legitimacy and authority. This reinforces the notion of *symbolic convergence* (Heryanto, 2015; Chadwick, 2013)—the process by which religious rhetoric merges with the technical affordances of platforms to construct new systems of legitimacy.

In this light, Reels, TikTok, YouTube Shorts, and other short-form platforms are not merely distribution channels for *da'wah* content; they operate as performative arenas in which religious authority is constructed through visualized affect and collective participation. Spectacle becomes a strategy, affect becomes legitimacy, and the algorithm

emerges as a new moral mediator. It is within this ecology that Islamic digital populism increasingly distances itself from long-form discourse, instead relying on the capacity to move hearts through a single click, a single frame, or a single moral exhortation—consumed, felt, and disseminated in real time.

**Cross-Platform Orchestration**

Islamic digital populism in West Sumatra does not operate in isolation across platforms; rather, it is orchestrated deliberately across channels, creating a complementary communicative ecosystem spanning Facebook, Instagram Reels, and TikTok. Figures such as Jel Fathullah and Fauzi Bahar strategically leverage the unique affordances of each platform to maximize reach, elicit affective resonance, and guide audiences toward deeper forms of ideological engagement. Short videos on TikTok or Reels often include calls to action encouraging viewers to join online sermons or *live pengajian* on Facebook, while Facebook posts frequently embed Reels as visually engaging entry points. This strategy constructs what might be called a *moral funnel*, where emotion is first stirred through brief, affectively loaded content, and then redirected toward longer, more structured, and ideologically dense formats of engagement.

This cross-platform strategy reflects what Heryanto (2015) refers to as *symbolic convergence*—the synthesis of religious rhetoric and the technical affordances of digital platforms to consolidate populist authority. This convergence is bidirectional: from long-form to short-form (narrative fragmentation for virality), and from emotional clips to in-depth religious instruction (value recruitment). At this point, Islamic populist actors are not merely using social media to transmit moral messages; they are crafting a symbolic stream that binds platform, narrative, and audience into a cohesive structure of meaning and authority.

Such cross-platform orchestration also functions as a form of algorithmic discipline: while TikTok content stimulates virality and emotional momentum, Facebook ensures the depth and continuity of the message. The two platforms are mutually reinforcing—TikTok expands the base, Facebook consolidates it. This dynamic aligns with Chadwick's (2013) theory of *hybrid media systems*, in which political actors strategically blend old and new media, long-form and short-form formats, public and personal registers, to maintain narrative control in a fluid digital environment. Within the context of Minangkabau Islamic populism, this hybridization manifests as a *choreography of ABS-SBK values*—flexibly formatted yet morally consistent across platforms.

Furthermore, this convergence enables the synchronization of affect and authority. TikTok and Reels generate emotional sentiment; Facebook channels it into long-form storytelling and real-time religious engagement. Symbolic consistency—phrases like *"the final ummah," "Adat basandi Syara',"* or repeated imagery of children reciting the Qur'an—recurs across platforms, revealing that these strategies are not mere improvisations but intentional efforts to construct a *continuity of moral identity* that is resilient across media ecologies.

## CONCLUSION

Islamic populist figures in West Sumatra orchestrate multi-platform strategies to disseminate a digital moral discourse rooted in *Adat Basandi Syara', Syara' Basandi Kitabullah* (ABS-SBK). Through the synergistic use of Facebook, Instagram Reels, and TikTok, they craft an effective blend of religious exemplarity, affective spectacle, and online communal participation. Facebook is employed to solidify moral authority and

symbolic continuity, while Reels and TikTok are optimized to elicit emotion and promote virality.

This study affirms that *digital morality* cannot be separated from platform logic; rather, it emerges through *platformization*—a process by which religious values are commodified, circulated, and reinterpreted through the technological affordances and affective dynamics of social media. The cross-platform strategies used by populist figures are not merely technical maneuvers but choreographed performances of emotion and identity distributed across media infrastructures—constructing, on one hand, a *continuity of moral authority*, and on the other, *affective enclaves* of shared belief.

Islamic digital populism thus operates not only as rhetoric, but as a performative practice that fuses religion, culture, and algorithmic mediation. These findings open new directions for the development of digital populism studies in Indonesia and Southeast Asia, particularly in culturally rooted contexts such as Minangkabau. Future research should further investigate the role of recommendation algorithms in shaping polarization, and how advanced targeting practices reinforce the segmentation of moral audiences in digital space. In other words, scholarly attention must shift not only toward message content or charismatic figures, but also toward the platforms themselves—as active agents in the formation of contemporary moral publics.

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