

***Dzikir* in Digital Space: A Sufi Reading of Devotional Practice on Indonesian Social Media**

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Abstract

This article examines how Sufi *dzikir* [remembrance of God] is reorganized when it moves onto Indonesian social media and interprets that reorganization through the ethical vocabulary of *tasawuf akhlaqi* [ethical Sufism] rather than through media theory alone. Using a netnographic approach, the study observed twelve livestreams and short-form devotional posts from January to June 2026 across three established Sufi actors: the Idrisiyyah order of Tasikmalaya, Lora Taufiq, and Rumi Centre Indonesia. The analysis also examined comment interactions and account-level follower and cumulative-like counts. Three findings emerge. First, within this corpus, content format appears more consistently associated with patterns of devotional participation than platform brand alone, with livestreamed ritual and short-form devotional content producing distinct interactional patterns. Second, comment feeds reveal a digitally specific mode of translocal participation in which distant viewers mark their location and invoke the shaykh's *madad* [spiritual assistance] as a form of *rabitah* [spiritual connection to the master] across distance. Third, the actor whose teaching is most critical of popularity holds the largest following of the three, highlighting a tension between sincerity and ostentatious display, and between truthfulness and falsehood. The study argues that digital devotion places outward visibility and inward sincerity within the same frame without allowing the platform itself to resolve their relationship. Its contribution lies in combining a typology of devotional form with an internal ethical reading drawn from the Sufi tradition and in questioning the assumption that platform-native creator styles necessarily attract the largest religious audiences online.

Keywords: *dzikir*; digital religion; *tasawuf akhlaqi*; netnography; religious authority.

INTRODUCTION

Every Thursday night a *shaykh* [master of a Sufi order] in Tasikmalaya sits before a camera and leads *dzikir* [remembrance of God]. The *majelis* [religious gathering] has gathered this way since 1930 (Pejalan Ruhani, 2021; Sidiq, 2025), and the ritual in the room has changed very little, yet the people attending it now type from Lombok, from Jambi, from Buntok in Central Kalimantan, and from Kuala Lumpur, each of them marking a place and a verb in the comment box as the prayer begins. What used to be a gathering bounded by the walls of one mosque has become a congregation scattered across the archipelago and beyond, present to the same remembrance at the same hour without leaving home. This is the plain fact the present article takes as its starting point, that the devotional life of Indonesian Sufi orders now runs through YouTube, Facebook, and TikTok, and that it runs there at a scale worth pausing over (Howell, 2001; Hidayat, 2023; Kholili et al., 2024).

The scale is easy to state and hard to absorb. One order's account holds a quarter of a million followers and millions of recorded likes (account data as of 20 June 2026), numbers that would

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have described a national broadcaster a generation ago and now describe a *tarekat* [Sufi order] whose center is a *pesantren* [Islamic boarding school] in the hills of West Java. The move is not marginal or experimental. It is where a growing share of Indonesian religious life is now conducted, taught, and received, and it invites a question that belongs as much to the tradition as to the sociology of media (Setianto, 2026).

That question is a spiritual one before it is anything else. *Dzikir*, the disciplined remembrance of God, asks for *hudhur* [presence of the heart], the full presence of the heart, and the classical manuals treat this presence as the line that separates a remembrance reaching God from a remembrance that stops at the tongue (Ibn 'Ata'allah al-Iskandari, 1914). A medium engineered for notifications, endless scrolling, and the accounting of attention pulls in the opposite direction, rewarding the glance rather than the settled heart. So the passage of *dzikir* onto a screen raises a problem the orders themselves would recognize, whether the remembrance survives its new setting or the setting quietly remakes the remembrance into something the tradition would no longer call by the same name (Schimmel, 1975).

Scholarship on digital religion supplies part of the equipment for that question. An early and durable distinction, drawn by Helland, separates religion online from online religion (Helland, 2000), the first being ritual and information simply transmitted through a digital channel, the second being religious practice generated by the logic of the channel itself, interactive and participatory and shaped by the medium (Indriyani & Khadiq, 2023). The distinction has organized two decades of research and does real work here, though the corpus will move the line to a place the platform names alone would not predict.

The distinction has been challenged, and the challenge matters here. Later work argues that the line between transmitting religion and generating it is porous, since most sites and streams do a little of both, so the useful question is less which side a practice falls on than how the two mix within it. This corpus bears that out, since a livestreamed *majelis* transmits an offline ritual and, in its comment column, generates a participatory practice the mosque never hosted. The article keeps Helland's terms as poles of a continuum, the sharpest tool for naming the difference between a ritual carried through a channel and a ritual born of one, along which a single broadcast can sit at more than one point at once (Helland, 2000).

Two further bodies of theory complete the frame. Campbell's account of networked religion describes how authority, community, and ritual reorganize once religious life migrates onto a network, spreading across platforms and loosening the hold of any single institutional center while opening new points of contact between leaders and followers (Campbell, 2013). Verter's reworking of Bourdieu into a theory of spiritual capital gives a language for the way religious belonging is accumulated, displayed, and exchanged, a language that turns out to fit the comment feed of a livestreamed *majelis* with uncomfortable precision (Verter, 2003). Between them, these accounts describe the shapes that religion takes online and the economies that run beneath those shapes.

Closer to the Indonesian ground, a substantial and quickly growing body of work has tracked the rise of online preachers, the platforms that carry them, and the audiences that gather around them, mapping the celebrity *da'i* [Islamic preacher], the short sermon, and the algorithmic circulation of piety (Makalalag et al., 2025). This scholarship has mapped the terrain well. What remains thin is a reading of these digital practices through the evaluative vocabulary of *tasawuf* [Sufism] itself (Taqiyuddin, 2025). The orders do not merely appear online (Khotimah, 2025). They teach, in the same broadcasts, a demanding doctrine about sincerity, presence, and the danger of

seeking human praise, and that doctrine supplies a standard against which the very practice they now perform on camera can be measured. The measure is internal to the tradition, and it is largely absent from the literature that studies the tradition's digital life.

The Indonesian case has contours that the general theory does not fully anticipate. The actors examined here are not new movements built for the platform but established *tarekat* lineages—the Shadhili-Idrisi, the Qadiri, and the Naqshbandi-Haqqani—each with a *silsilah* [spiritual lineage] reaching back through named masters and each with a settled offline life of *pesantren*, weekly *majelis*, and communal ritual. Their turn to social media is therefore not simply a migration from offline to online space but a process of mediated adaptation undertaken by institutions that predate the platforms themselves. Comparable Indonesian research shows that digital media can preserve inherited religious-cultural values while simultaneously reshaping the forms through which those values are communicated to wider audiences (Mahanani & Syafuddin, 2024). In the Sufi cases examined here, this process carries into digital media a worked-out theology of the master-disciple bond, spiritual transmission through a chain of teachers, and the presence the heart owes to God in remembrance. The central question is therefore not only how these traditions enter digital media, but what is preserved, what is reorganized, and what becomes newly visible when established devotional traditions are mediated through platforms. That theological dimension is the resource this article treats as central, and one that scholarship on Indonesian digital dakwah has often kept at the margin by focusing more heavily on reach, virality, and preacher personae than on the doctrinal standards by which the traditions themselves distinguish sound remembrance from hollow performance (Mustapha, 2024).

Where the Idrisiyyah order has been studied, the study has stayed offline. Nurul Jannati (2025) examines the meaning of *dzikir* among the order's leaders and congregation, reading its significance and its benefits without addressing the digital channels through which so much of that *dzikir* now reaches its audience (Nurul Jannati, 2025). The present article takes exactly that digital life as its object. From January to June 2026 I observed twelve livestreams and short-form posts from three actors chosen for the distance between them, the Idrisiyyah order of Tasikmalaya, the *kiai* [Javanese Islamic teacher] Lora Taufiq, and Rumi Centre Indonesia. Reading their streams, the comments beneath them, and the follower and like counts of their accounts against al-Ghazali on sincerity and display and al-Sha'rani on the true and false disciple allows the question of digital devotion to be posed in ethical terms that digital-religion frameworks alone do not supply, without claiming access to participants' inward states (al-Sha'rani, 1993, pp. 19-25).

The study's contribution is to bring those two literatures into contact. The sociology of digital religion can describe how a tradition reorganizes online, and the tradition itself can judge whether what reorganizes is still the thing it was, and neither does the whole job alone (Solahudin & Fakhruroji, 2020). A sociological reading records the location stamps and the metrics and stops at a networked practice, while a doctrinal reading weighs the presence of the heart and never notices that the heart now reports itself through a comment box among strangers. Holding the two together, and allowing the *akhlaqi* [ethical] standard to interrogate the digital form, is what the article offers. The orders' own sermons, metaphors, and warnings are therefore treated not only as empirical data but also as emic conceptual resources through which digitally mediated devotion can be interpreted (Rizki & Rusdi, 2024).

The evaluative vocabulary carries most of the analytic weight of what follows, so it is worth setting out. From al-Ghazali's *Ihya Ulumuddin* the study draws the paired concepts of *ikhlas*

[sincerity] and *riya* [ostentatious display], sincerity and display, together with the ranked stations of remembrance that move from the tongue to the heart to the innermost secret (al-Ghazali, 2005, p. 1202). From Ibn Atha'illah it draws *hudhur*, the presence of the heart that the tradition sets as the test of a living remembrance (Ibn 'Ata'allah al-Iskandari, 1914, p. 18). From al-Sha'rani's al-Anwar al-Qudsiyah, a text one of the *shaykhs* in this corpus reads aloud on camera, it draws the opposition of *sidq* [truthfulness] and *kazib* [falsehood], the true disciple whose outward act and inward reality agree and the false disciple in whom they diverge (al-Sha'rani, 1993, pp. 21-23). These are not decorative citations. They are the instrument, a set of distinctions the orders use to tell devotion from its counterfeit, and the article applies that instrument to the digital practices the same orders produce.

The reading develops from the observation that, within this corpus, content format appears more consistently associated with patterns of devotional participation than platform brand alone. A livestreamed *majelis* behaves as religion online wherever it is hosted, an offline ritual sent whole through a channel with the *shaykh's* authority undisturbed, while a short devotional clip behaves as online religion, cut to the platform's reward for brevity and opened to its invitation to reply. Lora Taufiq provides the clearest within-account evidence for this pattern: the same actor employs both livestreamed *manaqib* [hagiographic recitation] and short-form devotional posts, while the interactional patterns associated with the two formats differ substantially. This comparison holds the actor and account relatively constant and therefore makes the analytical relevance of content format particularly visible (Bunt, 2018).

A paradox holds the whole argument together and gives it its edge. The teaching most hostile to popularity in this corpus sits on its most followed account. The *shaykh* who traces the disorder of the age to love of the world, and who warns his listeners against worship that hunts for human approval, commands 251,900 followers and 2.5 million likes (account data as of 20 June 2026), roughly eight times the following of the casual creator-*kiai* one might have expected to dominate a platform like TikTok. These cases show that a platform-native creator style does not automatically outdraw more institutional or traditional forms of authority, and the result unsettles a familiar assumption about who captures attention online (Purba & Sihombing, 2023.; Hasibuan et al., 2024; Kholili et al., 2024; Makalalag et al., 2025; Refalina & Guefara, 2025; Rizki & Rusdi, 2024). From these observations the article pursues three questions. It asks, first, what forms *dzikir* takes across the three actors and how those forms are mediated. It asks, second, how content format and platform affordances reshape the practice and the bond between *shaykh* and congregation. And it asks, third, how a reading grounded in *akhlaqi* Sufism assesses the authenticity and the performance of this digital *dzikir*, most sharply where an anti-popularity teaching meets a metric-driven platform. What the study contributes, in answer, is a typology of devotional form read through the tradition's own ethical vocabulary, and a caution against reading the digital religious field through the figure of the creator alone.

METHODS

This qualitative study employs netnography, the adaptation of ethnographic fieldwork to social worlds formed and sustained online (Kozinets, 2020). The study uses a multiple-case design in which three Sufi actors are examined first as distinct digital settings and subsequently compared across cases (Yin, 2018, pp. 54-63). The cases are not intended to constitute a representative sample of Indonesian Sufism. Rather, they were selected purposively according to characteristics

observable prior to analysis: each represents an established *tarekat* tradition with an identifiable offline institutional presence, each regularly disseminated *dzikir* or related devotional material through social media during the observation period, and together they provided variation in lineage, content format, platform use, audience size, and forms of observable interaction. These pre-analytical characteristics provided the basis for comparison without presupposing the analytical categories that emerged from the data. The three digital postures identified later in the Results are therefore treated as outcomes of the analysis rather than as criteria used to select the cases.

Three actors were included in the study. The Idrisiyyah order of Tasikmalaya, representing the Shadhili-Idrisi lineage, regularly disseminated livestreamed devotional activities across multiple digital platforms and had the largest follower base among the three cases during the observation period. Lora Taufiq, a *kiai* associated with the Qadiri *manaqib* tradition, produced both livestreamed *manaqib* and short-form devotional posts and also responded to follower comments on selected posts. Rumi Centre Indonesia, representing the Naqshbandi-Haqqani lineage, primarily disseminated complete ritual and *suhbah* [spiritual companionship] materials, with comparatively limited observable interaction in the comment feeds examined. The inclusion of actors from three different *tarekat* lineages allowed the study to compare digital devotional practices across distinct institutional and doctrinal settings without assuming in advance that lineage, platform, or content format would account for the patterns subsequently observed. The observation period extended from January to June 2026, including Ramadan, when devotional activity and religious broadcasting were particularly visible across the selected accounts.

During the January–June 2026 observation period, the researchers monitored livestreams and short-form devotional posts across the three accounts. Twelve items were purposively retained for systematic analysis. An item was included when it (1) fell within the defined observation period; (2) represented the actor's regular *dzikir*, *manaqib*, *suhbah*, or closely related devotional output rather than incidental content; and (3) remained recoverable in sufficient form to permit analysis of verbal content, ritual practice, comments, or other relevant interactional material. Items were excluded when they fell outside the observation period, lay outside the devotional focus of the study, or provided insufficient recoverable material for systematic analysis. The resulting corpus therefore comprises twelve analytically usable items selected for qualitative comparison rather than a statistically representative sample of the actors' total digital output.

The retained corpus spans three *tarekat* lineages, several content formats, and multiple social-media platforms. Table 1 presents the twelve corpus items, their observation dates and formats, and the specific layers of data available for each item.

Table 1. The corpus

Code	Actor (tradition)	Date	Format	Layers available
I-1	Idrisiyyah (Shadhili-Idrisi)	12 Feb 2026	Livestreamed <i>majelis</i>	Structured observation, seven segments (no verbatim transcript)
I-2	Idrisiyyah	26 Feb 2026	Livestreamed <i>majelis</i>	Full transcript + ~45 live comments
I-3	Idrisiyyah	5 Mar 2026	Livestreamed <i>majelis</i>	Full transcript + ~45 live comments
I-4	Idrisiyyah	14 May 2026	Livestreamed <i>majelis</i>	Partial transcript (~30 min)

Code	Actor (tradition)	Date	Format	Layers available
R-1	Rumi Centre (Naqshbandi-Haqqani)	2 Mar 2026	Livestreamed ritual	Field summary + 2 comments (no verbatim transcript)
R-2	Rumi Centre	9 Mar 2026	Livestreamed ritual	Full transcript (<i>suhbah</i>)
R-3	Rumi Centre	16 Mar 2026	Livestreamed ritual	Full transcript (<i>suhbah</i>)
G-1	Lora Taufiq (Qadiri <i>manaqib</i>)	25 Jan 2026	Short-form post	~10 comments + creator replies
G-2	Lora Taufiq	12 Feb 2026	Livestreamed <i>manaqib</i>	Full transcript + ~20 located comments
G-3	Lora Taufiq	17 Feb 2026	Short-form post	~6 comments + creator replies
G-4	Lora Taufiq	9 May 2026	Short-form post	~10 comments + creator replies
G-5	Lora Taufiq	May-Jun 2026	Short-form post	~12 comments + creator reply (hadith)

Note. Full or partial verbatim transcripts were available for six corpus items (I-2, I-3, I-4, R-2, R-3, and G-2). I-1 and R-1 were documented through structured observation and field summaries rather than verbatim transcription. The four short-form posts (G-1, G-3, G-4, and G-5) were documented through captions, on-screen text, comments, and creator replies.

The corpus contains several hours of livestreamed ritual and devotional teaching. Livestreams were observed from archived recordings where the platform retained them and from real-time observation notes where the live material was ephemeral. For longer recordings, timestamped observation notes were maintained, while verbal material selected for transcription was transcribed automatically and subsequently checked against the original recording to correct errors, particularly those involving Arabic and religious terminology. The recordings were primarily in Indonesian, with occasional Sundanese and Arabic expressions. Quotations presented in English were translated by the authors and checked against the original recordings. Comments were captured as written, and usernames were removed at the point of extraction.

The two fully recovered Idrisiyyah comment threads (I-2 and I-3) and the Lora Taufiq *manaqib* thread (G-2) were read in full rather than sampled. Shorter comment sets associated with the remaining posts were retained as available. The unit of coding was the utterance for sermon and *suhbah* material and the individual comment for interactional data. Account-level follower and cumulative-like counts were recorded as a single snapshot on 20 June 2026. These figures are treated only as indicators of account-level visibility at that date and not as measures of unique reach, post-level engagement, or devotional participation.

The analysis proceeded in two layers. The first compared the observed practices across both content formats and platform contexts using Helland's (2000) distinction between religion online and online religion, Campbell's (2013, p. 57) account of networked religion, and Verter's (2003) concept of spiritual capital to interpret recurring patterns of *madad* and translocal belonging. Rather than treating content format or platform as an explanatory variable in advance, this layer examined how observable patterns of participation varied across formats, platforms, and cases. The second layer reads the practices against an ethical standard drawn from *akhlaqi* Sufism, al-Ghazali

on sincerity and display (al-Ghazali, 2005, p. 1202), Ibn Atha'illah on the presence of the heart (Ibn 'Ata'allah al-Iskandari, 1914: 18), and al-Sha'rani on the true and the false disciple (al-Sha'rani, 1993), in order to weigh authenticity against performance. The transcripts and comments were coded thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006), coding first for the digital-religion categories and then for the *akhlaqi* concepts, with two of the authors coding independently and reconciling their readings, and iterating until further passes produced no new themes and the category set held steady.

Several limits shape what the study can claim. Live video on TikTok is ephemeral and leaves no archive, so the live layer survives only where an actor cross-posts to a platform that retains it or where the stream was observed in real time. The metrics are account-level rather than post-level, which ties the reading of spiritual capital to account-level visibility rather than to the engagement of any single post. The June snapshot postdates some of the content by several months. On positionality, the lead author works as a translator within the Traditionalist Sufi current, which supplies the *akhlaqi* vocabulary the reading depends on and also a sympathy the reading has to keep in check, a check the authors have tried to maintain by tying every evaluative claim to the actors' own words rather than to an estimate of their hearts. All of the material is publicly posted. Even so, the study treats commenters as identifiable persons, anonymizing usernames throughout and quoting only the content of a comment, never the handle attached to it.

RESULTS

The same act reaches the screen in three shapes. *Dzikir*, the remembrance of God, runs through the channels of three Sufi actors and comes out networked in the first, intimate in the second, and sealed in the third. Across these cases, content format is consistently associated with differences in how devotional participation becomes visible, while the ethical vocabularies of the orders provide a second analytical layer for interpreting those practices.

Table 2. Evidence matrix linking the study's findings to corpus items, observed digital data, visual evidence, and the dominant empirical pattern in each case.

Finding (research question)	Corpus items	Observed digital data	Visual evidence	Dominant empirical pattern
Three digital forms of <i>dzikir</i> (RQ1)	I-1 to I-4, R-1 to R-3, G-1 to G-5	Account metrics, following behaviour, and comment volume across the twelve items	Figure 1	<i>Dzikir</i> takes three forms: networked (Idrisiyyah), creator-interactive (Lora Taufiq), and a sealed broadcast (Rumi Centre)
Translocal attendance made visible (RQ2)	I-2, I-3, G-2	Recovered comment threads containing location-based attendance statements, expressions of <i>menyimak</i> , invocations of <i>madad</i> and <i>rabitah</i> [spiritual connection to the	Table 3	Viewers convert attendance into a located, named devotional act and call on the <i>shaykh</i> at a distance

Finding (research question)	Corpus items	Observed digital data	Visual evidence	Dominant empirical pattern
		murshid], and short prayers		
Personalized creator interaction (RQ2)	G-1, G-3, G-4, G-5	Follower comments answered by the account holder with a blessing, a verse, or a hadith	Table 4	A short-form affordance turns the <i>shaykh</i> -congregation bond into a direct personal exchange
Companionship in a sealed broadcast (RQ2)	R-2, R-3	<i>Suhbah</i> on companionship, obedience, and the refusal of solitude, with limited observable interaction in the recovered comment feed	(none)	The broadcast teaches companionship as the path yet enacts little of it in the feed
Visible performance and hidden presence (RQ3)	I-1, I-2, I-3	Transcribed teachings on <i>hubb al-dunya</i> [love of the world], <i>riya</i> , <i>syariat</i> [outer religious law] and <i>hakikat</i> [inner spiritual reality], <i>hudhur</i> , and <i>sidq</i> and <i>kazib</i> , set beside visible metrics	Figure 2	The corpus juxtaposes visible devotion with teachings on inwardness; the screen renders form, not the inner state

1. Digital forms and postures of *dzikir*

The three accounts declare their differences before any transcript is opened. The Idrisiyyah account holds 251,900 followers and 2.5 million likes, Lora Taufiq holds 31,700 followers and 308,400 likes, and Rumi Centre holds 2,995 followers and 25,300 likes while following no one in return (account data as of 20 June 2026). The live rooms behave in keeping with those figures. The recovered Idrisiyyah streams show comment activity throughout the *majelis*, whereas the Rumi Centre item examined here preserved only two comments. This contrast points to different observable patterns of interaction across the cases (Rumi Centre Indonesia, 2026a). These observations suggest three recurring ways of being present online across the cases examined..

Read together, the accounts describe three postures. The Idrisiyyah posture is networked and participatory, a congregation that types itself into presence from across the islands and expects its arrival to be registered. The Lora Taufiq posture is creator-interactive, a *kiai* who answers his audience one comment at a time and often replies with a pasted verse or a line of hadith, closing the loop between a post and its readers in a way a livestreamed *majelis* never attempts. The Rumi Centre posture is closed broadcast, a complete ritual sent out with the channel of interaction all but shut, an account that follows no one and invites little. These three sit at different points on Campbell's gradation of networked religion (Campbell, 2013, pp. 1, 6), and the spread across that gradation is not random, since each posture keeps faith, as the later sections will show, with the doctrine its actor preaches.

Figure 1 sets the three postures side by side, the participatory livestream, the creator-interactive post, and the sealed broadcast.



Figure 1. Three digital postures of Sufi devotion: a participatory livestream (Idrisiyyah), creator-interactive short-form content (Lora Taufiq), and a limited-interaction broadcast (Rumi Centre). Personal identifiers have been removed by the authors. Source: authors' netnographic observation.

One descriptive figure sits beside the postures. The three accounts differ by about two orders of magnitude in followers and in cumulative likes, from Idrisiyyah at the top to Rumi Centre at the smallest, and this spread is offered as account-level description only. A total like-count is shaped by the number of posts, the age of an account, its posting rhythm, the odd viral item, and each platform's own way of counting, so the study draws no measure of religiosity, devotion, or engagement per follower from these totals and reports no engagement ratio. What differs across the actors is the width of the congregation a given format and posture manage to gather, a point that will matter when the discussion turns to spiritual capital.

The three accounts differ, too, in whom they follow, and the difference is not idle. The Idrisiyyah and Lora Taufiq accounts each follow a modest number of others, keeping a thread back into the wider network of teachers and admirers, while the Rumi Centre account follows no one at all, a posture of pure address that expects nothing to travel back up the channel. Set beside the comment volumes, the pattern is consistent. Across these cases, accounts that display greater reciprocal interaction also show more visible participation in the recovered comment material, whereas the Rumi Centre account exhibits comparatively limited observable interaction. Given the small number of cases, these patterns should be read as descriptive associations rather than causal relationships. The direction of the channel is legible in the metrics before it is legible in the theology, and the two turn out to agree.

For the first research question, the corpus resolves into a clear empirical difference. *Dzikir* does not take a single digital form across the corpus. The analysis identifies three postures, networked and participatory at Idrisiyyah, creator-interactive at Lora Taufiq, and limited-interaction or sealed broadcasting at Rumi Centre. Within these cases, differences in participation appear consistently associated with the content formats through which devotional practice is mediated.

2. Translocal participation and the *shaykh*-congregation relationship

The characteristic comment in an Idrisiyyah stream is a place joined to a verb. A viewer writes that Bandung is listening, that Lombok is able to listen, that a comment stands in for all of Central Kalimantan, naming Buntok and Tamiang Layang in one breath. Across the two sessions for which the full chat was captured, the stamps arrive from Jambi and Lampung and Malang, from Subang and Garut and Bondowoso, from the dense ring of towns around Jakarta, a congregation scattered across the islands reporting in as the prayer opens. The verb is doing real work. *Menyimak*, to attend closely, appears repeatedly in the recovered comments and is used by viewers to frame the video feed as a *majelis* they understand themselves to be attending rather than merely watching.

The viewers name what they are doing in the tradition's own terms, which is what lifts these comments above small talk. One posts an Arabic supplication asking to be counted among those present with the people of presence, a plea to be numbered among *ahl al-hudhur*:

The essence is "*musyahadatur rububiyah*". What is *musyahadah*? Heart. The heart witnesses to Allah. "*Mouncongghok*" but in Sundanese, yes, that's like *muncongghok* at Allah. The heart is *musyahadah*, a witness to Allah. "*Ka'annaka tarahu*". His heart was so full of witness to Allah *al-ma'bud* whom he worshiped. In our prayers the one who is worshiped is Allah. His heart witnesses to Allah. Not seeing with our eyes, but witnessing with our hearts. Another language, "*hudhurul qolbi ma'allah*". His heart is with Allah (*Tarekat Idrisiyah*, 2026c).

Hudhur is precisely the quality Ibn Atha'illah sets as the test that divides a remembrance reaching God from one that halts at the tongue. Another viewer writes, in the middle of the stream, that she performs *rabitah* and calls on the *shaykh's* *madad* while preparing to follow the gathering from Pamarican district (*Tarekat Idrisiyah*, 2026c). Here, *rabitah*—the binding of the heart to the *murshid* [spiritual guide]—is articulated as an act that can be performed through mediated participation. Calls for *madad* likewise appear across the recovered sessions as recurring devotional expressions through which viewers articulate their relationship to the *shaykh*. Table 3 presents an illustrative selection of these interactional forms from the two recovered Idrisiyyah comment threads.

Table 3. Illustrative forms of participation in the Idrisiyyah livestream comments

Interactional form	Original comment	English translation
Location-based attendance	"Alhamdulillah, Lombok hadir"	"Praise be to God, joining from Lombok."
Location-based attendance	"Banjar Patroman hadir"	"Joining from Banjar Patroman."
Location-based attendance	"Hadir, Kuningan, Jawa Barat"	"Present from Kuningan, West Java."
Location-based attendance	"Alhamdulillah, Lampung, nyimak"	"Praise be to God, listening from Lampung."
Attentive participation	"Tigaraksa, Tangerang, menyimak"	"Listening from Tigaraksa, Tangerang."
Attentive participation	"Cikampek menyimak"	"Listening from Cikampek."
Zawiyah affiliation	"Perwakilan zawiyah Bandung"	"Representative of the Bandung Sufi lodge."
Zawiyah affiliation	"Zawiyah Karawang hadir"	"The Karawang Sufi lodge is present."
Devotional invocation	"Madad, Syaikh Akbar"	"Spiritual assistance, Grand Shaykh."
Greeting to the shaykh	"Assalamualaikum, Syekh"	"Peace be upon you, Shaykh."

Note. The examples are drawn from the recovered Idrisiyyah comment material (I-2 and I-3). Usernames, handles, profile images, and other identifying information have been removed. The original comments are reproduced as observed, while the presentation has been reconstructed for

anonymity and readability. English translations were prepared by the authors and checked against the original material. Source: authors' netnographic observation.

These viewers are not simply improvising a private devotion but responding to instructions articulated within the ritual itself. In the 5 March session (I-3), the *shaykh* guides participants into remembrance through the classical counsel to keep the company of one who keeps the company of God. He instructs them to take a *wasila* [means of spiritual approach] and to ask for *madad* as a sick person seeks the assistance of a physician, while emphasizing that healing ultimately comes from God and that the physician functions only as an appointed means (Tarekat Idrisiyah, 2026c, 1:08:18). The location statements and invocations of *madad* appearing in the comment feed can therefore be read as digitally mediated enactments of that instruction. Through Verter's (2003) concept of spiritual capital, these expressions perform at least two related functions: they make affiliation with a translocal community of the *shaykh*'s followers publicly visible, and they articulate a devotional claim to proximity, blessing, and spiritual connection despite geographical distance. This dynamic resonates with Indonesian research on virtual ngaji, which shows that digital access can extend the reach and authority of religious teachers while concepts such as *baraka* [blessing] and *sanad* [chain of transmission] continue to structure followers' understandings of spiritual proximity and legitimate transmission (Mutaqin et al., 2024). More broadly, digital religious media can simultaneously preserve inherited religious-cultural forms and reshape the ways in which those forms are communicated and experienced (Mahanani & Syafuddin, 2024). In the Idrisiyyah case, this process becomes visible in the combination of simultaneous participation, location-based self-identification, *rabitah*, and calls for *madad*. The screen does not abolish the older vocabulary of spiritual transmission; rather, it provides a new communicative setting in which that vocabulary is enacted and made publicly visible. The claim here is therefore not that digital participation is equivalent to embodied presence, but that social media enables a distinctive form of translocal devotional participation in which physical co-presence is no longer the only observable marker of belonging to the *majelis*.

The traditions themselves reach for media metaphors to describe this presence, which suggests they are aware of the transposition they are performing. At Rumi Centre the master of ceremonies frames the gathering as a medium through which the spirituality of the teachers is displayed and spread to the *muhibbin* [devotees], and the visiting *shaykh* likens the receptive heart to a satellite dish already opened to a downward flow, a stream he names with the word *faiz* [spiritual effusion], an outpouring or torrent from God (Rumi Centre Indonesia, 2026b, 1:49:48). The imagery is telling. A tradition that predates broadcasting by centuries describes the reception of grace in the language of antennae and signals and flow, and it does so without embarrassment, folding the vocabulary of the medium into the vocabulary of the mystical path. The location stamp of the Idrisiyyah viewer and the satellite-dish heart of the Rumi Centre preacher are two versions of the same claim, that the transmission is real and that presence can travel it.

The networked posture also gathers a wider affiliation than a single order's membership, which is one of the marks Campbell attaches to networked religion (Campbell, 2013, pp. 25, 117). In the Idrisiyyah chat a commenter introduces himself as a disciple of other teachers entirely, naming a lineage of well-known Sufi masters before asking permission to attend the session (Tarekat Idrisiyah, 2026c). The remembrance streamed from one order's mosque draws watchers loyal to others, a porousness the walled *majelis* of an earlier era did not have, and the comment column becomes a meeting place for affiliations that would rarely share a physical room. The

translocal congregation is not only geographically scattered. It is, at its edges, a gathering across the boundaries of the orders themselves.

That the viewers report their presence as an act at all rests on a theology of effort the Idrisiyyah *shaykh* makes explicit. In the session of 26 February (I-2) he teaches that destiny is not a fixed sentence but, in the portion of it written in the lower heaven, a decree that human effort can move, that almsgiving and the keeping of kinship and supplication can lengthen a life or widen a provision, and that God wrongs no one, so that the person who fails has very often failed himself (Tarekat Idrisiyah, 2026b, 36:45). The teaching casts the believer as an agent rather than a spectator, someone whose deeds register and count, and the viewer who types her attendance is behaving as that theology would have her behave, treating her presence as an act she performs rather than a broadcast she consumes. The stream is received, then, by an audience the tradition has trained to understand reception itself as a deed, which is part of why the comment column fills the way it does.

The *shaykh*'s own teaching gives the accumulation of belonging a theological warrant that deepens the reading. In the same session he expounds a doctrine of the bonus reward, drawn from a verse of Surah al-Tur, in which descendants who follow their forebears in faith are raised to the forebears' higher station in paradise, the elevated drawing up those below them (Tarekat Idrisiyah, 2026b, 36:37). He is careful that the transfer runs one way and touches merit alone, since sin is never inherited, and the asymmetry is the point. Belonging to a saintly lineage is, on this teaching, a transferable good, a rank one can be lifted into by attachment to a master, and the comment column enacts a digital version of the same logic. To type a location beneath the *shaykh*'s stream and to sign it with a call for his *madad* is to lay claim, publicly and in storable form, to a place within his chain of transmission, an attachment the tradition describes as able to raise the one who holds it. Verter's spiritual capital and the *shaykh*'s bonus reward are, in this light, two descriptions of one economy (Verter, 2003), the one sociological and the other theological, and the location stamp sits where they meet.

Across the two Idrisiyyah sessions for which the chat was recovered in full, several recurring forms of interaction were observed. Many comments took the form of location-based announcements of attendance, typically combining a place name with a verb such as *hadir* or *menyimak*. Other comments invoked the *shaykh* through *madad* or *rabitah*, while some consisted of short supplications or formulas of blessing. Comments outside these devotional forms were also present but were less prominent in the recovered material. Taken together, these recurring patterns suggest that the comment feed functioned as a digitally mediated extension of the *majelis*, where viewers made attendance visible, articulated devotional attachment, and participated through petition and blessing rather than using the space primarily for general conversation.

The Lora Taufiq posts differ from the Idrisiyyah streams in one decisive respect: the account holder responds directly to followers. Across the short-form posts (G-1, G-3, G-4, and G-5), comments are not simply left beneath the content but are repeatedly answered, with responses ranging from brief affective acknowledgements to blessings, scriptural quotations, and follow-up devotional content. This pattern points to a more personalized mode of digitally mediated religious authority in which the *shaykh*-follower relationship is maintained through direct exchange rather than through one-directional broadcast alone. Table 4 presents illustrative examples from the recovered material.

Table 4. Illustrative creator-follower interaction in Lora Taufiq's short-form devotional posts

Interactional position	Original message or response	English translation
Follower	"Sehat selalu, guruku."	"May you always be healthy, my teacher."
Follower	"Sehat selalu, Kiyai. Alhamdulillah, saya bisa hadir bersama tetangga, dua puluh satu orang, malam Jumat manis."	"May you always be healthy, Kiyai. Praise be to God, I was able to attend with twenty-one neighbors on the eve of Jumat Manis [a Friday designation in the Javanese calendrical cycle]."
Account holder (creator)	Responds within the comment threads and posts a follow-up video, "Pentingnya Introspeksi Diri."	Responds within the comment threads and posts a follow-up video, "The Importance of Self-Examination."

Note. The examples are drawn from Lora Taufiq's short-form devotional posts (G-4 and G-5). Usernames, handles, profile images, and other identifying information have been removed. The original comments are reproduced as observed, while the presentation has been reconstructed for anonymity and readability. English translations were prepared by the authors and checked against the original material. Source: authors' netnographic observation.

3. Companionship at a distance

The Naqshbandi order names companionship as the path itself, which makes the streamed *suhbah* a sharper test for it than for a tradition that locates the path in solitude. In the Lailatul Qadar *suhbah* at Rumi Centre (R-2) the visiting *shaykh* returns to a maxim he attributes to Bahauddin Naqshband, that the order's way is companionship and that the good lies in the gathering, a formula the master is said to have repeated many thousands of times (Rumi Centre Indonesia, 2026b, 01:42:42). The claim is strong and specific. The road to God, on this account, is not walked alone but travelled in the company of a master and a fellowship, and the *suhbah*, the discourse and the sitting together that carries it, is not a preliminary to the method but the method in its substance. So the streamed *suhbah* raises a question that would barely trouble a solitary practice, whether companionship, the very stuff of the way, can be conducted through a screen.

The same *suhbah* frames that fellowship as an order of authority as much as of affection. Its opening text is the Qur'anic command to obey God, to obey the Messenger, and to obey those among the believers entrusted with authority, a verse the *shaykh* reads as the charter of the master-disciple bond and the reason a gathering opens with submission before it opens with instruction (Rumi Centre Indonesia, 2026b, 01:42:42). Authority, in this frame, is the condition of companionship rather than an obstacle to it, the line of transmission along which the fellowship is constituted in the first place. And the tradition's answer to whether such companionship survives mediation is given less in argument than in the metaphors already met, the heart as a satellite dish opened to a descending flow and the gathering as a medium through which the masters' spirituality is shown and spread (Rumi Centre Indonesia, 2026b, 01:42:42). If companionship is a transmission and the heart is a receiver, the screen is one more relay in a chain the tradition already understood as immaterial, and the streamed *suhbah* becomes companionship carried by other means.

A story the *shaykh* tells against the wish for solitude turns, in this setting, into a warrant for the orders' movement toward the crowd. He describes a man so troubled by the noise of his village

that he flees to a cave, only to be found within hours by a stranger hammering at the rock below, so that the disturbance he fled reaches him even there, because the conditions that school the soul in patience and gratitude follow a person wherever he goes and are sent, the *shaykh* says, by God:

In ancient times, in the *suhbah* Maulana said there was a person who lived in a village. But the person always feels disturbed. His surroundings always make him keep making mistakes, keep making mistakes. [...] Maulana Sheikh Nazim passed on to us, it is wisdom for all of us. Wherever we go, believers, there will be things that will make us practice patience and gratitude. It will definitely come by itself, Allah will definitely send those two. Conditions for patience, conditions for gratitude. (Rumi Centre Indonesia, 2026b, 01:42:42)

The lesson he draws is that no withdrawal is ever complete, since the servant is always held within God's grip and never stands outside the traffic of the world. It is a short step from that lesson to treating the busiest spaces there are, the platforms where the noise is densest, as arenas in which the discipline of presence is to be practiced rather than fled, and the orders take the step in their several ways.

The different ways in which the three orders enact companionship suggest that digital posture and content format are analytically important alongside doctrinal context. The Idrisiyyah fellowship conducts its companionship in the open, a master addressing a translocal congregation that answers in the comment column, so that the *suhbah* becomes a gathering anyone may join. The Lora Taufiq fellowship conducts a version of companionship one reply at a time, the *kiai* reaching back to individual followers in a mode the short post makes possible. The Rumi Centre fellowship conducts its companionship as a sealed transmission, offered to whoever will sit and receive but inviting little exchange, a *suhbah* that keeps the shape of the master speaking and the disciple listening even when the disciples are dispersed across a hundred screens. Companionship at a distance is possible in all three, and the tradition's own theology of transmission is what makes it thinkable, but the form it takes on each account follows the posture that account has adopted rather than any difference in what companionship is held to be.

For the second research question, the corpus shows that format and platform affordances reshape the *shaykh*-congregation bond rather than dissolve it. Where a livestream opens a comment channel, viewers convert attendance into a located, named act and call on the *shaykh* at a distance (I-2, I-3, G-2); where a short-form post lets the account holder answer, the bond becomes a personal exchange (G-1, G-3, G-4, G-5); and where a broadcast seals itself, companionship is taught but little enacted in the feed (R-2, R-3).

4. Visible devotion and the limits of assessing inward presence

The teaching most hostile to popularity in this corpus sits on its most followed account, and the coincidence is the finding rather than an embarrassment to it. In the session of 12 February (I-1) the *shaykh* traces the disorder of the age to *hubb al-dunya*, the love of the world, and warns his listeners against the appetite for display and for worldly standing. Two weeks later he tells the room, in the plainest terms, that the most exhausting life is the one spent chasing other people's praise, and that worship aimed at winning human approval has already lost the object it was meant to seek (Tarekat Idrisiyyah, 2026b, 08:04). The man who says this holds a quarter of a million followers and millions of likes, and the tension between the message and the medium is not a flaw in the case but the very thing the case is about.

Figure 2 shows the livestreamed teaching described here, the visible event whose inward reality the screen cannot reach.



Figure 2. Livestreamed Sufi teaching as a publicly visible devotional event (1-3, 5 March 2026). The platform renders the outward performance and its engagement metrics visible, while inward presence remains inaccessible to observation. Personal identifiers have been removed by the authors. Source: authors' netnographic observation.

The tradition supplies the frame within which the tension can be read, and the *shaykh* hands it over in his own image of the durian. The rind is the outward act, the *syariat*, and the flesh is the inward reality, the *hakikat*, and he presses the image in both directions, since flesh without a rind cannot ripen and a rind hollowed of its flesh only rots (Tarekat Idrisiyah, 2026c, 42:18). A livestream can carry the outward form of remembrance whole, the recited names, the bowed posture, the correct words arriving at the correct minute, while the inward presence that alone gives the form its worth is absent, the worshipper glancing at the clock as he goes. Read against al-Ghazali on sincerity and display, digital *dzikir* holds sincerity and performance in a single frame that will not resolve cleanly to one side (Hafil et al., 2025; al-Ghazali, 2005: 1730). A location stamp can be *hudhur*, the heart honestly reporting its presence, or it can be a small performance staged for the feed. A call for *madad* can be devotion or a bid to be seen among the devoted. The tradition carries a name for each pole, *sidq* and *kazib*, the true disciple in whom the outward and the inward agree and the false disciple in whom they part, an opposition al-Sha'rani sets out in the very text one of these *shaykhs* reads on camera (al-Sha'rani, 1993), and it is this internal vocabulary that allows the actors to arraign the attention economy that carries them even as it carries them.

The durian is the homely face of a formal doctrine the *shaykh* sets out at length, the pairing of *syariat* and *hakikat*, the outward law of an act and its inward reality, which he takes from the Risalah of al-Qusyairi and presses as the definition of worship that carries weight with God (Tarekat Idrisiyah, 2026c, 11:59; al-Qusyairi, 2001, pp. 195-196). He gives the pairing teeth by naming the two ways it fails. An outward observance emptied of inward reality he calls, with Imam Malik, the mark of the corrupt, and an inward claim that discards outward observance he calls the mark of the heretic who has stepped outside the faith, so that neither the hollow form nor the disembodied intention will serve and only their union counts (Tarekat Idrisiyah, 2026c, 20:57). He hears the same pairing in the

opening of the Fatiha, reading the words that name worship as a pledge to keep the outward law and the words that name reliance as a confession that the inward help comes from God alone, a believer seeking a physician while knowing the cure is God's (*Tarekat Idrisiyah*, 2026c, 21:49). Carried to the screen, the doctrine gives the authenticity question its exact shape, since the livestream is very good at conveying *syariat*, the visible form of the rite, and silent about *hakikat*, the presence of the heart, so that the digital rite is by its nature all rind, its flesh a matter the medium cannot display and the tradition refuses to assume.

The gradation the tradition draws within remembrance itself sharpens the point. The manuals rank *dzikir* from the tongue, to the heart, to the innermost secret, treating the moving tongue as only the outermost shell of an act whose worth deepens inward, out of all view. A camera captures the first station in full, the audible litany, the visible lips, the counted beads, and it captures nothing of the two beneath it, where the tradition locates whatever makes the remembrance real. The livestream is therefore not merely an incomplete record of the rite but a record confined by its nature to the rite's surface, showing the station that matters least and blind to the stations that matter most. What the viewer at home witnesses, and what she joins by typing her presence, is the outer shell of a practice whose living core the screen was never able to carry.

The danger of display carries a sharp moral edge in an earlier session, where the *shaykh* teaches that God wrongs no one and that the harm a person suffers is very often a harm he works on himself (*Tarekat Idrisiyah*, 2026b, 48:24). He illustrates it first through the body, the smoker and the heedless eater injuring the health they were given, and the figure extends to the soul without strain. Worship performed for an audience is, on this reading, a self-inflicted wound, an act that spends its own reward in the search for a smaller one, the approval of onlookers in place of the regard of God. The platform is built to supply that smaller reward in a steady and countable stream, the like, the view, the returning comment, and the warning lands with a force the listeners can feel each time they open the application. The digital form does not invent the temptation to display, which is as old as worship, but it instruments the temptation, fits it with a running score, and turns the ancient discipline of sincerity into a daily and quantified struggle the mosque never imposed.

The ambivalence is not resolvable from the outside, and the study does not pretend to resolve it. Nothing in a comment column reveals whether the viewer who types her location has gathered her heart or merely her thumbs, and the *akhlaqi* tradition is the first to insist on that opacity, since it reserves the reading of intentions to God and warns the observer against the presumption of judging them. What the tradition offers is not a verdict on individuals but a standard against which the practice as a whole can be described, and by that standard the digital form is neither sincere nor performative in itself. It is a frame capacious enough to hold both, an occasion that can be filled with presence or emptied into display, and the same location stamp can be either depending on a disposition the screen does not show. The honest description of digital *dzikir* is therefore a description of an ambivalence, and the paradox of the anti-popularity teaching on the popular account is the sharpest instance of it, a doctrine that turns the whole apparatus of reach against the desire for reach while riding that apparatus to a quarter of a million people.

DISCUSSION

1. Format over platform

Helland's line between religion online and online religion runs through this corpus, though it does not run where the platform names would place it (Helland, 2000). A livestreamed *majelis* behaves as religion online wherever it is hosted. The Idrisiyyah streams and the Rumi Centre streams carry rituals that existed in full long before the camera arrived, the weekly *Dzikir* Makhsus of the one and the Khatam Khwajagan and maulid of the other, and the channel leaves the order of those rituals intact and the *shaykh*'s authority undisturbed. A short devotional clip behaves as online religion, cut to the platform's reward for brevity and opened to its invitation to reply, its shape owed to the medium rather than carried into the medium from elsewhere.

Lora Taufiq provides the clearest within-account comparison because the same actor works across both sides of this distinction. His livestreamed *manaqib* on 12 February, a full ritual gathering built around the recitation for *Shaykh* Abd al-Qadir al-Jailani, draws the same located, attending comments as the Idrisiyyah rooms, arrivals from Ngawi, from Probolinggo, from Malaysia, from Pringsewu in Lampung, each announcing a presence at a transmitted ritual (Lora Taufiq, 2026). His short *dzikir* posts draw a different register entirely, dense with hearts and folded hands and lines such as the wish for the teacher's continued health, each comment answered by the creator, sometimes with nothing more than a returned emoji and sometimes with a pasted verse of blessing upon the Prophet (Lora Taufiq [@lorataufiq], 2026). One account and one actor thus provide two distinct devotional formats accompanied by different interactional patterns. Because the actor and account remain relatively constant while the format changes, the Lora Taufiq case provides the strongest within-case evidence that content format is analytically salient to the organization of participation.

The comparison therefore suggests that content format deserves greater analytical attention alongside platform-specific affordances. Research on Hindu ritual mediation on TikTok similarly shows that short-video environments can reorganize ritual authority, audience participation, and perceptions of religious authenticity rather than merely transmit pre-existing sacred practice (Suardana & Sain, 2025). The present corpus adds a further distinction: because Lora Taufiq uses both livestreamed ritual and short-form devotional content within the same account, the contrast becomes visible not only between platforms but between formats used by the same religious actor.

The distinction shows most plainly in what each format does to the shape of the rite. A livestreamed *majelis* preserves the ritual whole and in order, the opening, the litany, the sequence of names, the closing supplication, so that a viewer joins a rite already underway and governed from the front of the room, its authority seated in the *shaykh* and untouched by the channel. A short clip does the reverse, lifting a single fragment out of that sequence, a moment of recitation or a line of counsel, and setting it to circulate on its own, cut loose from the order that gave it its place. The livestream transmits an extended ritual sequence, whereas the short-form post circulates a devotional fragment outside that sequence. In this corpus, the distinction identified by Helland is therefore more clearly observable at the level of content format than through platform brand alone.

2. Mediated religious authority

Each actor meets the tension between remembrance and medium in a way that mirrors the doctrine it teaches, and here the three postures from the opening section close their loop. The Idrisiyyah response is to recruit the science of the age in defense of the practice. In the 12 February session a disciple who works as a hypnotherapist reframes *khusyuk* [devotional concentration] as a trance state, describing the rhythmic *dzikir* as a lowering of the brain's activity from one band to a

calmer one and the lantern of love as a release of endorphins achieved without any chemical (Tarekat Idrisiyah, 2026a, 1:20:36). The move enlists a secular, therapeutic register to legitimate an esoteric act for an audience gathered on a screen, and it is exactly the renegotiation of religious authority Campbell describes as characteristic of digital culture, in which traditional and non-traditional sources of legitimacy are braided together (Campbell, 2013). It also sits in quiet friction with the same session's warning against worldly standing, since the appeal to neuroscience borrows the prestige of a worldly authority to underwrite a spiritual claim, a tension the order seems willing to carry.

The Lora Taufiq response is intimacy at scale, an authority maintained through the reply thread rather than in spite of it. The short posts draw brief, affective comments, and the creator answers them, returning a heart, pasting a verse of blessing upon the Prophet, or offering the hadith that a person will be gathered on the last day with those he loved (Lora Taufiq [@lorataufiq], 2026). The affordance that a livestream lacks becomes, on the post, the very mechanism of the *guru-murid* [disciple] bond, a public and repeatable gesture of attention that lets a *kiai* be close to thousands one exchange at a time. The livestreamed *manaqib* on the same account works differently again, and its live chat shows the strain as well as the reach, with viewers asking why the video is missing, complaining about the audio, and questioning the choice of venue alongside location-based announcements of attendance (Lora Taufiq, 2026). The creator posture, in other words, opens the practice to a familiarity and a friction that the sealed broadcast never risks.

The Rumi Centre response is the opposite of recruitment and of intimacy alike, a withholding that matches a doctrine of self-erasure. Its Naqshbandi *suhbah*, read from the discourses of the order's late master, teaches the disciple to become nothing, to fall to dust beneath the master's feet, and warns in the same breath against the disciple who wanders from teacher to teacher hoping to become someone, since the fault of the seeker in the present age is precisely the wish to be something rather than nothing (Rumi Centre Indonesia, 2026b, 1:49:19). An account that follows no one, that posts a complete and largely uninterrupted ritual, and that draws two comments is a medium tuned to that message, a digital posture that withholds the self as the teaching withholds it. The pattern across the three is consistent and, once seen, hard to unsee. Where the doctrine gathers a congregation, as at Idrisiyyah, the digital posture invites the participation, and with it the display the *shaykh* warns against. Where the doctrine erases the self, as at Rumi Centre, the digital posture seals the channel and refuses the very interaction that would put a self on show. The posture each actor strikes online carries an affinity with what each one preaches, and the medium, far from flattening the traditions into a single online religion, lets each tradition inscribe its own theology into the shape of its presence.

The constancy of the underlying doctrine across the three lineages is worth marking, since it is what makes format, rather than doctrine, the more plausible explanation of the differences among them. The visiting preacher at Lora Taufiq's *manaqib*, though he stands in the Qadiri rather than the Naqshbandi line, reaches for the same image of self-effacement, calling himself a single speck of dust as he speaks of his devotion to his own teacher and telling the gathering that when a servant loves one of God's beloved, God will love that servant in (Lora Taufiq, 2026, 48:12). The love of the master, the effacement of the self before him, and the passage of favour down the chain of the beloved are common property here, taught in the Idrisiyyah *majelis* and in the Naqshbandi *suhbah* and in the Qadiri *manaqib* alike. When a theme this steady appears across three orders that differ in doctrine and in digital posture, the differences in how they appear online are the more

plainly owed to format and to the shape of each community than to the content of the teaching, which varies far less than the postures do.

The Lora Taufiq case bears on a live question about authority online, whether the platform dissolves the traditional teacher into an accessible personality. What the corpus shows is subtler than dissolution. The *kiai* does take on the creator's habits, the direct reply, the returned affection, the short and shareable clip, and in doing so he trades some of the distance that traditional authority has always kept for a closeness the platform rewards. Yet the authority itself does not thin. He answers as a teacher, pastes scripture rather than opinion, and frames even a casual exchange as guidance, so that the creator's intimacy becomes a vehicle for the *murshid's* authority rather than a replacement for it. The platform reshapes the manner of the bond without loosening the hierarchy inside it, and the *kiai* appears less as an influencer who happens to be pious than as a teacher who has learned to teach in the grammar of the feed.

The comparison also qualifies a common claim about digital religious authority: that networked media simply erode the position of traditional gatekeepers in favor of accessible, self-presenting influencers (Hakim, 2025; Shadiqin & Jamil, 2024; Sito Rohmawati et al., 2025; Waheed et al., 2024; Wahyudi et al., 2025). Recent Indonesian scholarship suggests a more relational picture. Efendi et al. (2026) conceptualize digital religious authority as a mediated configuration emerging from the interaction of inherited religious legitimacy, platform architecture, regulatory structures, and religious community agency, rather than as a straightforward transfer of authority from traditional institutions to digital personalities. Research on contemporary Indonesian social Sufism likewise shows that charismatic authority may remain grounded in ethical exemplarity, simplicity, social proximity, *ta'dzim* [reverential respect], and *khidmah* [service], even outside formal institutional structures and without dependence on media visibility alone (Muniron et al., 2025). The three cases examined here are consistent with this more relational account of authority. The evidence supplies a counterexample rather than a general reverse pattern. The most tightly traditional actor, a *murshid* whose teaching is the most demanding and least accommodating to the tastes of a scrolling audience, holds by a wide margin the largest following and the largest volume of recorded approval. The creator-*kiai*, whose mode is the most platform-native and personable, holds only a fraction of that following, while the order whose theology most resists self-display has the smallest following of the three. These differences do not establish that traditional authority itself produces a larger audience. The study does not control for account age, offline constituency, posting frequency, platform history, institutional resources, or audience composition. More modestly, the cases show that platform-native or creator-style communication does not necessarily correspond to the largest following. Audience size in this corpus therefore cannot be read as a simple proxy for accessibility, platform-nativeness, or spiritual authority. It is better understood as the visible outcome of an interaction among pre-existing community structures, inherited forms of legitimacy, content format, and platform affordances, while the inward quality of religious attachment remains beyond what public metrics can reveal.

3. *Akhlaq*i ethics and the limits of digital visibility

The digital-religion frameworks describe this material well, and the study leans on them without apology. Helland's distinction sorts the livestreamed ritual from the short post and, once relocated to the axis of format, does so cleanly (Helland, 2000). Campbell's networked religion names the translocal congregation, the porous affiliations, and the braided authority on display

across the three cases (Campbell, 2013). Verter's spiritual capital reads the ledger of location stamps and calls for *madad* as the accumulation and exchange of belonging it plainly is (Verter, 2003). What none of the three can do is ask the question the orders ask of themselves, whether the remembrance on the screen reaches the heart, because that question requires a standard the sociology of media does not contain and the tradition does.

The *akhlaqi* lens does not provide a way to settle the question of sincerity from the outside; rather, it supplies the tradition's own vocabulary for asking that question. This approach resonates with recent Islamic critiques of algorithmic spirituality that reposition technology as *wasīlah*, an instrumental means toward spiritual formation, rather than *ghāyah* [spiritual end], an end in itself, and that warn against allowing algorithmic visibility, commodification, and engagement optimization to displace disciplined religious formation (Wijaya et al., 2025). In this respect, the present study moves from an ontological critique of digital spirituality to the analysis of concrete devotional practice. The typology that emerges from the three cases maps the observable forms through which Sufi devotion is mediated—the livestreamed ritual and the short-form post, the networked posture and the limited-interaction broadcast—but this visible typology is overlaid by an ethical grammar much older than the platforms themselves. Concepts such as *sidq* and *kazib*, *ikhlas* and *riya*, and *hudhur* ask whether outward religious performance corresponds to inward spiritual reality. The screen can render the outward form of devotion visible and even measurable through comments, followers, likes, and other public traces, but it cannot disclose the inward presence by which the tradition ultimately evaluates that devotion. The contribution of the *akhlaqi* reading, therefore, is not to classify individual participants as sincere or performative, but to show that digital mediation places outward visibility and inward opacity in the same analytical frame. In this sense, the orders bring to the digital attention economy an inherited capacity for self-scrutiny: the same traditions that now employ platforms for religious transmission also possess an ethical vocabulary capable of questioning whether visibility remains a means to remembrance or risks becoming an end in itself.

A methodological yield sits alongside the substantive one. These findings suggest a methodological benefit in treating content format as a comparative unit alongside platform. Comparing livestreams across services, or different formats within the same account, can help distinguish interactional patterns associated with format from those that may arise from platform-specific affordances. The case of a single *kiai* who streams a two-hour *manaqib* and posts a fifteen-second clip, and whose audiences answer in two distinct registers as a result, is the clearest argument for the shift, since it holds the platform still and lets the format move. The unit that travels between platforms, and that lets the analyst hold one thing constant while turning another, is the form the content takes, and the study commends it as the more portable ground for comparative work on digital religion.

The claim should be held at its proper size. The argument is not that doctrine is irrelevant to how a tradition appears online, since the closing of the loop between each order's theology and its digital posture shows the reverse, that a doctrine of self-erasure and a sealed channel belong together and that a doctrine of gathering and an open comment column belong together. The more limited claim advanced here is that, within this corpus and within the possibilities established by each tradition, content format is consistently associated with the forms of participation that become observable online. Doctrine informs the interpretive and institutional setting, content

format is associated with observable patterns of participation, and the vocabulary of *sidq* and *kazib* provides an ethical frame for interpreting those practices.

Two lines of inquiry open from here. The first is comparative, since the format axis proposed here can be tested wherever a tradition streams a whole ritual and also circulates short devotional fragments, from other Sufi orders to the wider field of digital religion, to ask whether audiences everywhere sort themselves by format as they do in this corpus. The second reaches past the screen to the viewers who type their presence, to learn from them what the location stamp and the call for *madad* feel like from the inside, and whether the *hudhur* they announce is the *hudhur* the tradition means or a hope, a habit, or a performance they would themselves tell apart from it. The present study maps the forms and names the measure. What the forms hold, in the hearts of those who join them, is the question the tradition would ask next, and it is one no follower count can answer.

CONCLUSION

The reading set out to weigh *dzikir* on Indonesian social media against the ethics the orders hold for themselves, and it returns three answers that belong together. *Dzikir* reaches the screen in three postures, networked at Idrisiyyah, creator-interactive at Lora Taufiq, and sealed at Rumi Centre, and each posture keeps faith with the doctrine its actor preaches, so that the shape a remembrance takes online turns out to echo the shape of the teaching behind it. The forms are legible, and they are not arbitrary.

Within this corpus, content format appears more consistently associated with differences in devotional participation than platform brand alone. A livestreamed *majelis* remains religion online wherever it is hosted, an offline ritual sent whole through a channel with its authority intact, while a short clip becomes online religion, remade by the reward for brevity and the open reply thread. The Lora Taufiq case provides the clearest support for this interpretation because the same actor uses both livestreamed ritual and short-form devotional content while eliciting different forms of interaction. Around those affordances the bond between *shaykh* and congregation reorganizes into a digitally specific mode of making translocal attendance visible, the location stamp and the call for *madad*, a *rabitah* performed across a distance a single mosque never had to bridge and a presence the tradition itself describes in the borrowed language of antennae and flow.

The *akhlaqi* lens adds what the digital-religion frameworks cannot supply, the tradition's own vocabulary for asking whether the act reaches the heart, and that vocabulary returns a verdict that stays open. A location stamp can be presence or performance, a call for *madad* can be devotion or a bid to be seen, and the screen shows only the outward rind while the inward flesh stays hidden. The paradox sharpens the point rather than dissolving it, since the teaching most hostile to popularity holds the largest following of the three, which means the orders carry in the opposition of the true and the false disciple the very vocabulary needed to put on trial the attention economy that now carries them. The interest of their move online lies as much in that inherited capacity for self-scrutiny as in the reach they have gained.

A last implication reaches past the three cases. If, as this corpus suggests, patterns of digitally mediated remembrance are partly associated with content format while their ethical significance depends on an inward presence that the screen cannot reveal and the worth of that remembrance rests on an inward presence the screen cannot show, then the study of digital religion in traditions like these will need both kinds of attention at once, the one trained on the mechanics of platforms and formats and the other on the standards a tradition holds for itself. The orders gathered here supply the second kind readily, since they narrate their own practice in the vocabulary of sincerity,

presence, and transmission and hand the analyst a measure ready to use. Reading them well means taking that vocabulary seriously as an account of what is happening on the screen, and not only as pious framing around a practice whose real logic is assumed to lie somewhere else, in the algorithm or the metric or the market for attention.

The study's contribution is a typology of devotional form read through the tradition's own ethical vocabulary, together with a caution against reading the digital religious field through the figure of the creator alone, since in this corpus a platform-native creator style does not attract the largest following, though the data do not establish what does. The limits are plain. The reading covers three actors over the January to June 2026 window rather than a representative field, its metrics describe accounts rather than posts and were captured at a single date, and the ephemerality of live video on some platforms leaves parts of the record beyond recovery. Per-post engagement and a wider run of cases would test whether the axis of format holds beyond these three, and a closer study of the commenters themselves would test how far the presence they announce is the presence the tradition means. The deeper question, in the end, stays with the tradition rather than with the platform, since whether the *dzikir* on the screen is sincere or performed is not a matter a follower count was ever able to settle.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use Statement

Grammarly was used solely for language editing, including grammar correction, sentence clarity, and stylistic refinement. It was not used for conceptualization, data analysis, interpretation, reference generation, or the development of the article's arguments and conclusions. All substantive content was produced and verified by the authors, who take full responsibility for the final manuscript.

Author Contributions

Saude: Conceptualization, methodology, investigation, data curation, formal analysis, writing—original draft. Kamridah: Formal analysis, validation, writing—review and editing. Darmawansyah: Validation, supervision, writing—review and editing. All authors reviewed and approved the final manuscript.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest related to the research, authorship, or publication of this article.

Data Availability Statement

The publicly accessible digital materials analyzed in this study are identified in the corpus table and reference list where stable links were available. Anonymized research materials are

available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request, subject to ethical and privacy considerations.

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