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Extracting Religious Identity: The Cyber-Ethnography of Abdul Somad's Preaching

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Abstract: This article examines the communication process of Islamic proselytising (*da'wa*) carried out by Abdul Somad, commonly called UAS, on YouTube channels. Somad is a representative of the Indonesian Islamic preacher who is regarded to have become famous very quickly and well known as *Ustadz Berjuta Follower*. Some of his lectures recorded in video format and uploaded on YouTube channels have been successful in attracting the attention of the audiences. Indeed, dozens of videos have been watched by more than five million people per video. Using the Lasswell's model of communication process 'who says what, to whom, which channel, and with what effect' and textual analysis of Somad's videos on YouTube, this study found that Somad managed to communicate his lectures to the target of *da'wa* dozens of times compared to conventional lectures from the pulpit to the pulpit. Thus, the communication of *da'wa* through YouTube in terms of the targeted audience was more effective. The multiplier effect of the audience was supported by the potential of YouTube to provide space for the interaction of the audiences, so as to create a multi-level flow of information. In addition, based on the observed visual and verbal aspects of Somad's preaching on *YouTube* indicate that he is a moderate Indonesian *ulama*.

Keywords: Religious identity, *da'wa*, religious representation, Abdul Somad.

Introduction

Da'wa constitutes the unstoppable effort to actualize and implement Islamic values in all lives.¹ According to Ali Azis,² *da'wa* is

¹ Cawidu, "Dakwah dan Tantangan Global Memasuki Melinium Baru Abad ke-21," *Jurnal Dakwah: Wacana Pengkajian dan Pengembangan Dakwah* 1, 1 (2000), p. 35.

² Moh Ali Azis, *Ibnu Dakwah* (Jakarta: Kencana Prenada Mediagroup, 2004), p. 153.

the heart of religion, because the survivability of religion depends on dynamics and *da'wa* activities that should be continually conducted without ending. Currently, the internet and social media have fostered transformation in religious activities, including *da'wa* purposes. Through the internet, *da'wa* is considered to be more effective in reaching the intended audiences as it offers sizable social networks that allow geographic flexibility and less-time-consuming services compared to the conventional *da'wa*.

According to Nasrull, the networking concept is not only a matter of the interconnectivity aspect of a technological device, but it is also related to the anthropological, sociological, and cultural fields as well. The interconnectivity as the functional consequence of technology requires a change in the way of thinking, attitude, even behavior. In this sense, networking not only involves the technological aspect but also the users of technology itself.

Somad is one of the contemporary Indonesian Islamic preachers who has become popular through social media channels. Abdurahman's research result on *Tafaqqub* and *Fodamara* online channels have revealed that Somad's videos have been viewed by 16.255 million viewers and each video was watched almost 12.000 times⁴. Somad also has admitted the effectiveness of conducting digital *da'wa* through which his preaching video uploaded on YouTube has been watched 331.806 times over 20 days, and even often goes viral and gets a lot of feedbacks from netizens. In regard to the success of Somad's *da'wa* through social media is not merely because of the interconnectivity aspect of technological devices, but also because of his ability to build up the power of communicator in terms of credibility, fascination, and power⁵. In this regard, according to Iskandar the way of his preaching is light, simple, humorous, and clear. Somad is also able to convey the *da'wa* content with brief explanation using sources from traditional Islamic books (*kitab kuning*) combined with interesting stories and live experiences through which he has succeeded in putting himself as the popular *'ulama*.

⁴ "Mengenal Dakwah Digital Ustadz Abdul Somad Pekanbaru," www.detik.com. Diakses dari <https://news.detik.com/opini/d-3563958/mengenal-dakwah-digital-ustadz-abdul-somad-pekanbaru>, accessed on 5 September 2018.

⁵ Fadhly Irhas Iskandar, "Strategi Komunikasi Dakwah Ustadz Abdul Somad," Bachelor Thesis, Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, 2018.

However, Somad has also faced many challenges in conducting *da'wa* such as "persecution" and "intimidation". This is because some have considered Somad as a radical Muslim preacher; anti-*Pancasila* anti-NKRI, and anti-diversity (*kebbinakaan*)⁶. Therefore, Somad's sermons have been foiled in several places in Central Java, East Java, and Bali as well⁷, even he was also banned from entering Hong Kong, Japan, and Singapore for those reasons. As a response to accusation or the issue of whether Somad is a radical Islamic preacher or not, he was convincing Indonesian people by singing the Indonesia Raya (national anthem) behind the national flag of Indonesia on a wall of the school in the remote village of Riau province. In this sense, he implied that being a committed nationalist should not be confronted with being a pious Muslim, "several months ago I was accused [of being] anti-pluralist and anti-NKRI...[but] a day after that, it went viral [on the internet] that I was singing the Indonesia Raya (national anthem) behind the national flag of Indonesia on a wall of the school in the remote village of Riau province...therefore, the people who accused me were, I suppose, short on their internet quota"⁸.

Nevertheless, although Somad found various resistance from some groups, he has remained popular among the *ummah* (Muslim community). Indeed, whenever Somad claimed to be facing "persecution", receiving threats, or being intimidated, his Instagram and Facebook followers rose significantly. The present article takes under scrutiny Somad's preaching using Lasswell's communication model as a theoretical outlook in uncovering the effectiveness of *da'wa* and Somad's religious identity..

Somad's Religious Representation within Communication Process

One of the communication elements of Lasswell's model is 'who says what' or what Willbur Scramm called "who". It is the message agent or communicator, while "to whom" is called communicant.

⁶ Priska Sari Pratiwi, "Ustaz Abdul Somad Laporkan Ormas Bali ke Komnas HAM," <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20171218142322-20-263193/ustaz-abdul-somad-lapor-kan-ormas-bali-ke-komnas-ham>, accessed on 27 December 2019.

⁷ "Dapat Tekanan, UAS Batalkan Tabligh Akbar di Malang," <https://kumparan.com/ngopi-bareng/dapat-tekanan-uas-batal-kan-tabligh-akbar-di-malang-g-1535898337997051031>, accessed on 27 December 2019.

⁸ Yuka Kayane, "The Populism of Islamist Preachers in Indonesia's 2019 Presidential Election," *The Muslim World* 110, Autumn (2000), p. 618.

From the perspective of *da'wa*, according to Abdul Basit,¹⁰ an Islamic preacher is required to avoid just using the conventional methods such as one way of communication from preacher to hearer. In this regard, communication of *da'wa* should be packed more dialogical in order to make preachers and listeners connected. The connection between them is a crucial part of keeping the congregation engaged and the preacher relatable, which is able to lead to effectiveness and helpful to meet respective their needs. In other words, successful preaching requires some creativity from the preacher, including mastering technical areas of public speaking and comprehending the condition of the congregation. Further, according to Amin Hasan, *da'wa* activity in inland areas with minimum facilities needs more than just energy in the pulpit, but it also requires the soul or the inner compulsion of *da'wa*. This soul is considered more important than the preacher himself. Indeed, this inner compulsion within the preachers will generate the motivation for proselytising and makes them sincerely struggle and sacrifice for preaching. All the preacher does is due to God. The emergence of the soul of preaching comes from one's "feeling" of calling in the sense that his/her conscience is called to preach Islam.

Homiletically speaking, the preacher's image can be evaluated by two aspects, namely the preacher's competence and performance (physics and moral). In this sense, the deeper a preacher comprehends the material as well as the more he represents good morality, the more he has the potential to be a successful preacher.

The mentioned theoretical perspective is useful to examine Somad's *da'wa* communication, they are, the physical (attribute) and the verbal aspect (words) featured by Somad. Of the strong physical images of Somad while conducting *da'wa* are a simple outfit, wearing a hat, white clothes, a turban, and a ring in his left hand. Somad more often wears a black hat, and sometimes wears a white hat. The clothes often worn are Islamic clothes with long sleeves and sometimes with bright colors. The turban often worn is white and sometimes a dark color. The thing that never put off from his hand is agate ring (*batu akik*) in his left hand. The black hat is regarded as a symbolic code of Indonesian people that was usually worn by Bung Karno and an Indonesian Islamic preacher, Zainuddin MZ well known as *dai sejuta umma* (the Islamic preacher of one million congregation).

¹⁰ Abdul Basit, "Dakwah Cerdas di Era Modern," *Jurnal Komunikasi Islam* 3, 1 (2013), pp. 76-95.

From the provided data, Somad's costum attributes (physical aspect) in particular, it can be understood that Somad represents himself as a *ulama* with local culture-based, compared to customs worn by AA Gym and Arifin Ilham who wear Arabic headpiece. Those attributes also represent the odd modesty in a preacher.

Table 1. Somad's Video Observed

RL YouTube	Viewer	Producer
https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=R64FqOjFys	5.370.009	Taffaquh video
https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=9IwCj1pgo	2.226.028	Inspirasi Hati Islami
https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=sLNUpyxTc	4.264.624	Ceramah Aswaja Indonesia
https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=l9LtzCwXuA	2.504.355	Taffaquh Video
https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=3r9kb6rISU	7.290.501	Audio Dakwah
https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=SYM3hee-jo	3.429.316	Muhammad Gibran
https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=jWKa9E9AuN8	1.369.086	Taman Surga.Net

In addition, regarding the agate ring (*batu akik*) that is usually worn by Somad also represents his religious identity. Indeed, according to him, *batu akik* ring is only an ornament. It differs with the perspective of another Muslim group that claims the agate ring is potential to lead to *mushrik* (polytheists), *bid'ab* (unlawful innovation), and unlawful (*haram*). In this sense, Somad wants to ensure that anyone who regards him as a radicalist Muslim is definitely wrong, because he does not reject cultural aspects of being part of Indonesian Muslim identity.

In regard to verbal aspects, the examination of Somad's utterances spoken was conducted. Based on observed videos of Somad's preaching on Youtube channels, he tends to represent his religious identity as a moderate Muslim. In the video produced by *Ceramah Aswaja Indonesia Taffaquh* (see table 1), Somad has conveyed his *da'wa* messages with supporting ideas which are associated with Muslim moderate teachings. For instance, Somad's preaching concerning beards. To him, having a beard is *sunmah*. Therefore he continually hopes that the one with beard does not humiliate the one who does not beard, and vice versa. It is not wise to fight with Muslims just

because of a beard. Moreover, he has also convinced the audience that he is a follower of madzhab Shafi'i. Also in the video produced by *Taffaqub Video* on Youtube (see table 1). In this video, Somad has made a joke to make satire on those who regard him as a radical Muslim. At that moment he has a meeting with the executive of army and police, and in doing so, they have taken picture together. Somad said "that if I share the photos it could be evidence for me that I am not anti NKRI and not a radical Muslim". Similarly, in the video uploaded by Muhammad Gibran, Somad told that Prophet Muhammad once called Hasan bin Tsabit, a poet, to encourage the jihad spirit of Moslem. This poetry is prohibited by the radicalist Muslim group. In this sense, it is likely to Somad to imply that he represents himself as moderate Muslim. Hence, according to Somad it is important to clarify the information delivered by anyone on the Internet, including when someone accuses him of things that he is not doing (see video no. 7 uploaded by Taman Surga.Net).

In addition, through video no. 1, 2, and 5, Somad is portrayed as a humble and wise Muslim preacher. Video no. 5, for example, it indicates that Somad is not angry with the persecution as anger cannot solve a problem. It is also found in video no.1 that illustrates that he tries to be a humble by saying that he is not the real preacher; the real preacher is the one who lectures among drunken people. It is more complex. Additionally, in video no.1, Somad said "I never propose bad prays for people who often stop my *da'wa*." It means that there is another party that does not accept his *da'wa*. In this regard, Somad does not hate people who accuse him as well as he does not stop his *da'wa* activity. It is clear that the observed visual and verbal aspects of Somad's video indicate that he is a moderate *ulama*.

Another thing worth noting regarding the dimension of 'says what' is the theme of *da'wa* conducted by Somad. There are various themes covered within Somad's materials of preaching; from the lives after the death to the themes of *khilafah*, such as about beard and music, maintaining the unity of nation as one Indonesia, about anger, answering the poem of Sukmawati Soekarnoputri, about the existence of human on the earth. The observed data show that it has not been found that Somad recommends changing the ideology *Pancasila* with Islam as well as to change the nation state of Indonesia with *khilafah*.

However, there was a video of Somad talking about *khilafah* on YouTube uploaded on 4 March 2016 entitled "The Falling of Khilafah

Islamiah". Somad told about the falling of the Kingdom of Turkey Usmani which fell down on 4 March 1924. In this context, Somad said that Muslims in Turkey are like a chicken lost his mommy. Since that time, Turkey was not regulated using the values in al-Qur'an and *sunnah*. Khamal Pasha started to eliminate the values of Islam through changing the biggest mosque in Turkey to becoming a museum. The Arabic language and mosque load-speaker were also prohibited, Muslim community is dismissed and prohibited and Middle-East way of clothing was changed by the European fashion style. Somad emphasised this notion through quoting the *hadith* of Prophet Muhammad SAW explaining something that would later happen: I am worried that your era will be like a food on the table. One draws the head, one draws the tail, and another one cuts the thighs and chest, everyone is scrambling. Then, a friend asked, "Are we few at that time, O Messenger of Allah?" Then Rasulullah Saw replied, "Absolutely not, in fact there are many of you. But you are like foam in the ocean". It is possibly that the emergence of the prejudice of Islam Nusantara community (particularly the Banser of NU) towards Somad as one of Islamic preacher that sounding the khilafah ideology because of this video. Nevertheless, Somad himself has many times confirmed that he is a follower of *madzhab* Shafi'i, a moderate Islam, and NKRI lover.

In regard to analysing the aspect of "*in which channel*" of communication, Somad benefits from emergence of social media. Hirman figures out Somad as *Dai Berjuta Follower* due to his popularity on social media such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter¹².

Realized or not media convergence has proven beneficial for the process of *da'wa*. All types of media offer wide connectivity in distributing the message, so almost everyone cannot avoid the penetration of social media. The characteristic of mass media generally is running the *blow-up* function. Panuju said that the main characteristic of mass media is making something small become bigger (blow-up). This is because the media is likely to be able to frame the news and information through selection and assertion of the facts using framing devices such as frequency, intensity (duration/space), and page position of the news. In this context, Somad is considered as one of the Islamic preachers who is smart at utilising online media, including

¹² Hirman, *Ustadz Abdul Somad: Da'i Berjuta Follower* (Jakarta: Qultum, 2018), p. 1.

social media. Hence, the media regard him as a news resource that is important, priority, honorable, and preferential.¹³

Indeed true that some facts chosen by the media are important for the public, but actually they are also part of imagery. The image is the meaning that is created in the perception of an individual, group, or public. The executive, politician, marketer, and all people basically try to build up their positive image. By the image, the acceptance of an individual into the other individuals or object is defined. Therefore politicians compete to use the media in building their image. Even, the President Joko Widodo also has a team of media within Presidential Officers to create a positive image for the public.¹⁴

Nasrullah said that at present time, the media has become more interactive. The public is not only an object exposed by the media, but the public can also be involved in creating news, because advanced technology allows people to have direct interaction¹⁶. In addition, the satisfaction of the media also has changed. Initially it is determined by the mass, at present it is the satisfaction of a group, even an individual. The concept of follower tends to indicate the individual presence caused by accessing the media and being directly involved in the interaction. The followers are likely to give direct feedback on the communication content sent by communicators. Moreover, the follower may also distribute the content to others. In this sense, the concept of communicator and audience now has changed, namely both of them are communicators, called prosumer (producer and consumer).

In the context of *da'wa*, new media accelerate the delivery of *da'wa* messages to people and eliminate geographic boundaries. It can be seen from the table 1, the observed video of Somad's preaching reached millions audiences through social media. Indeed the video 1 only needs 6 months (March-August 2018) to get 5.370.009; video number 2 needs 5 months (April-August 2018) to get the viewers about 2.226.028, and from the video number 7 to reach the viewers of 1.369.086 need 7 months (March-August 2018). From those three videos, Somad has succeeded gaining 1.423.587 followers every month in average. Comparing to the conventional *da'wah* method that is, from

¹³ Redi Panuju, *Nalar Jurnalistik* (Malang: Bayumedia Publishing, 2005), p. 6.

¹⁴ Redi Panuju, "Komunikasi Politik Jokowi: Antara Pencitraan dan Jejaring Politik," *Jurnal Komunikatif* 6, 2 (2017), pp. 92-105.

¹⁶ Rulli Nasrullah, *Komunikasi Antar Budaya di Era Budaya Siber* (Jakarta: Prenada Media, 2018), p. 2.

one pulpit to another pulpit, it is estimated that every day a preacher lectures 5.000 audiences (similar to the capacity of Bung Karno stadium of Jakarta). It means, every month the preacher only gain $30 \times 5.000 = 150.000$ audiences. In fact, it is impossible for the preacher can lecture 30 times monthly because of physical limitations and other reasons. In this sense, from the data above, *da'wa* through YouTube channel can increase the number of audience about 1000%. Another aspect of communication to discuss is related to the dimension of "*with what effect*" of communication. In this cyber media era, every people may play the role of a journalist. They are collecting, designing, and distributing information to all parts of the world. Every person also may be the message receiver (communicant), which instantly changes the message to be shared with the other people. Therefore, the effects of social media are mostly determined by the interest of netizen in selecting the message content. There is no institution that can control communication through the internet absolutely. As cited by Maria Nala Damayanti and Elisabeth Kristine Yuwono, John Perry Barlow said that cyberspace is a medium to create the world where anything is possible. There is no special right in the world where anyone may express his beliefs without any pressure from anyone.¹⁷

In the cyber world, everyone is allowed to create more than one identity. People have ease, opportunities, and freedom in presenting themselves or using other people's identity to interact with other users. For Bell, one's identity on the internet is not permanent. Even what is presented by netizen in cyberspace is different from the actual world, what Bell called the identity that separated from "body" of the real world.¹⁸

What David Bell proposed about cyberspace is related to social media that are characterised by personal interaction, person to person, such as *Twitter* and *Facebook*. This is different with YouTube channels, which have similar characteristics to the mainstream media, such as the newspaper, radio, and TV. The mainstream media offer relatively permanent-effect and indirect feed-back to the audience. There is a time for conducting contemplation before spreading it to other people. Meanwhile, social media such as *Twitter* or *Facebook* stimulate the owner to create the messages and the feed-back quickly. Therefore, the effect

¹⁷ Maria N Damayanti, and Yuwono Elisabet K., "Avatar, Identitas dalam Cyberspace," *Jurnal Nirmala* 15, 1 (2013), pp. 13-18.

¹⁸ David Bell, *An Introduction to Cyberculture* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 116.

of Twitter is more instant and unstable. Whereas, social media like YouTube, it enables one to create the impression or effect more permanently. Therefore, *YouTube* has more opportunities to create opinions or social networks that are relatively permanent. It is even used by such groups in building a collective identity. The collective identity may follow the character built by the creator and video uploader groups.

Like the newspaper publisher, videos uploaded on YouTube have an institutional identity or legal entity. The institutional identity refers to a certain community such as religion, ethnic, political party, or other affiliations. The names of uploaders are usually associated with the contents uploaded on Youtube. For example, *Aliansi Cinta Bangsa, Kelompok pembela NKRI, Penyelamat Pancasila, Komunitas Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* usually refers to the national political affiliation (nationalism). It can be differentiated by the identity of the video owner with the name of *da'wa* media, Muhammad Gibran, Taufik TV, and Humairah TV. In regard to Somad da'wah through YouTube, the effect of communication may be directed to emphasizing the collective identity as well as the defender of other identity. The defensive characteristic can be searched through the viewers' responds in the form of the like or dislike statement and the comments displayed on the wall under the videos.

Response is one of the expressions of what is thought or what is in the mind of someone. Everyone has different feedback in response to the same stimulus, although they come from the same social, cultural, or political background. Romli said that the effect of the mass media encompasses three dimensions, namely the affective dimension, the cognitive dimension, and the psychomotor dimension. The affective effect concerning the individual's feelings, such as happy or unhappy, like or dislike, while the cognitive dimension is related to the change of thinking, and the psychomotor is related to the habit of imitating what is in media.¹⁹

This paper focuses on the affective and cognitive effects, because the psychomotor effect in the case of Somad's *da'wa* has complex variables. The public participation in Somad's *da'wa* is not certainly caused or affected by the Somad videos on YouTube. There is a possibility that it is affected by the television media that often directly

¹⁹ Khomsyahrial Romli, *Komunikasi Massa* (Jakarta: Gramedia, 2017), p. 26.

report the Somad's preaching. Therefore, it needs further research to uncover the psychomotor effect.

The affection effect of Somad's *da'wa* via YouTube channels can be traced through the viewers' decision in giving the like or dislike feedback, comments and posts shared on social media, on the video that can be recorded quantitatively. To start with giving "the likes" comments on the uploaded video, from then they desire to subscribe to the latest videos. The viewers just need to click "subscribe". The application will provide the login form to be filled with an email address. Through that email address, the notification will be sent if there is a new similar post. Therefore, a subscription is similar to a media subscription. Meanwhile, the cognitive effect can be traced through the comments of the viewers indicating various opinions. Romli²⁰ said that the theory of the cognitive effect, mass media cannot influence people in changing their attitude, but mass media is affected by what people think.

Table 2. Affective Effect of the Viewers of Somad's Video seen from the Like or Dislike and Subscription (in thousands)

Video	Like	Dislike	Subscribe
https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=R64FqOjFys	37	5.7	363
https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=v9IwCj1pgo	17	2.6	84
https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=sLNUpyxTc	48	3.5	87
https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=l9LtzCwXuA	33	2.5	636
https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=3r9kb6rISU	35	13	-
https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=S8YM3hee-jo	25	21	95
https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=jWka9E9AuN8	15	1	335
Total	210.000	48.300	1.327.000

It can be seen from the table above, the number of the "like" feedback is higher than "dislike" on Somad's videos. It is 210.000 compared to 48.300. It means that the viewers' "like" comments Somad's videos is 77% and the viewer's dislike statement is 23%. The

²⁰ Ibid.

most favourite 'like' videos is no. 3 containing verbal humor and an asking and answering (Q&A) session to everyday life subjects. The asking and answering session is commonly about the issue of khilafah among people, such as beard, music, etc. Somad answers the audiences' questions using a quotation (dalil) and the arguments of famous Ulama so that the characteristics are neutral. Therefore, on this hand, the followers of Somad lectures are due to its neutrality. Meanwhile, the most dislike video is no. 1, which is Somad's preaching in Masjid Raya Bandung with the theme of 5 regrets after death. It is argued that the lectures containing threats (punishment) are disliked by people, whereas the promises (rewards) such as gifts (pahala), heaven, sprites, are preferred. However, if it is viewed by the subscribers, the chosen video is no. 4. That is, the lecture of Somad in Mabes TNI AD where Somad discussed two phobias, namely phobia of Islam that is afraid of Allahu Akbar sounds and phobia of nationalism that afraid of the nationality. Both of them, according to Somad are false. Again, the lecture by Somad indicated neutrality, enlightenment, and peace, so they decided to watch Somad's videos of lecture again.

However, comments on *YouTube* are not natural feedback, because *YouTube* has completed its platform with technology devices that may filter the information and attached by the tools that enable *YouTube* free from the negative comment and unmannered words. This application is well known as *a blacklist of words and phrases*. In this sense, people can register the unmannered words and phrases, and then *YouTube* will enter them into the system. Therefore, the comments are free from hatred, bullying, cursing, and other similar things. By this tools *YouTube* is likely to filter the negative things so the content is about indicating the substantial from the variant appropriate with the category. Viewed from the habit of internet users, the comment given on a video indicates a high desire to like or dislike and subscribe, because on this feature people only need to click the chosen part while giving a comment, but the user should think first about what he wants to write, reconsider it, and then type the word by word. Therefore, this commentator is considered as the more serious intents, and care viewers, and also does partiality. Even among users, they can have interaction by commenting on the previous commentator. A commentator may comment on the other comments and the number is dominant. Certainly, the text of the comment contains important things. It is also indicated by the large number of like. *YouTube*

provides tools to trace the top commentators and the order based on the time. In this context, the inter-textuality analysis will be conducted..

Based on the table above, many comments are given on video no. 4 of Somad's lecture in Mabes TNI AD. Here, Somad stated through humor that his lecture in TNI AD may deny the claim of him that he is a radical Muslim preacher that is anti NKRI. In this video (<https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=199LtzCwXuA>), the most popular comment is from the account of Gema al-Qur'an. The posted text is "TNI invite him, then how is Somad called a radical?". This phrase gains 'the likes' comment around 625 thumbs up. This posted text gets various comments of the admiration for Somad, thanks to TNI, until the text of "Gema al-Qur'an Yup, the public organization of Church Saver, no one can dismiss it kwkwkw." Who is meant by the Church Saver?

By entering the keyword of "*Ormas Penjaga Gereja*" on Google search engine, it is found that it refers to Banser of NU. On YouTube channel (2017/08.08) is found a video with title "Green Clothe of Public Organization the Church Saver try to break down the mosque of Imam bin Hambal Bogor, (*Ormas baju Hijau Penjaga Gereja berusaha merobokkan masjid imam bin hambal Bogor*) 6 August 2017 (https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=IuzdgQuSu_Y). In the sites of www.sarkub.com is found an article entitled "Inilah Pelopor Penjagaan Gereja oleh Umat Islam" (2013/12/25). By further searching for the account of Gema al-Qur'an, researcher found a video entitled "Warga Langkat Usir Banser dan Ansor". This video is about the dismissing by Langkat people of the Carnival event of *Satu Negeri Banser and GP Ansor* in National building of Tanjungpura (<https://www.YouTube.com/channel/UCgnnHR6R42ArqvfXxtYRhug>). Therefore, the text interaction on the comment belongs to gema al-Qur'an became the discussion about the existence of Banser and GP Ansor that related to the persecution event faced by Somad who is accused to the Banser as the provocateur.

The second greater comment is gained by the video no. entitled "5 regrets after death". The comment which gained many likes is from the account of Mei Merry Liu with 665 likes. The content of comment is:

"It has been a long time I cannot listen to Ustadz Abdul Somad, alhamdulillah now I can listen to it again after the electricity in my house has been installed. I wish until I die always in my faith of Islam and wish collected with the brother

with similar faith in heaven together with ustad although I am just a *mualaf* (converter to Islam) can I together with ustadz after death?”

Mei Merry admits herself as a *mualaf* (converter to Islam). The comment, for instance, is proposing prayers in order to be *istiqomah*. In life after the death, Mei is convinced that she will together with her beloved people. She persuades Muslim women to wear *hijab* and stop posting their photo. There are many obstacles to the *mualaf*, particularly from the family. However, in Mei's account, she is not wearing *hijab* and showing her long hair, black and straight.

The communication effect in the form of attention is not always due to the message, but it can be resulted from the subject who delivers the message. Sholikhin²¹ emphasised that *da'wa* in current times is competing with public circumstances in various patterns and conditions, and problems. The attention of audiences on the *da'wa* communication currently relies on many factors. In traditional *da'wa*, the communication process occurs due to the obedience aspect of the public to the Ulama, so that it is interesting or not, important or not, always accepted as a form of loyalty. Nowadays, in the inclusive era the message content will be observed based on the sources and the message agent (preacher) will be observed by his credibility. Alongside with the importance of credibility in communication, empathy also determines the audience's attention. In the context of Mei Merry, her presence as *mualaf* becomes an important factor that generate empathy, brotherhood, and care.

In similar cases, ustadz and ustadzah who have background of *mualaf* draw more attention. For example: Felix Siau, Irena Handono, Fadlan Garamatan, Dewi Purnamawati, Steven Indra Wibowo, Yahya Waloni, Bernard Nababan, and Bangun Samudra.

The next video of Somad that got many replies is video no. 6 entitled “The Answer to the poem of Sukmawati”. This video has been watched more than 1.2 million times. The comment which gets other comments from other users is from the account of Ozie Galung, which 931 comments. In April 2018, Sukmawati was deemed humiliating the religion through her poem entitled “Ibu Indonesia”. Sukmawati read it at the event of “29 Years of Anne Avantie Work” at Indonesian Fashion Week 2018. The groups that accuse Sukmawati of

²¹ M Sholikhin, *Islam Rahmatan Lil'Alamin* (Jakarta: Elex Media, 2013), p. 206.

humiliating Islamic religion are because she compared the Syari'ah of Islam and the sound of *adzan* with concrete things. Balad is said to be more melodious than sound of adzan and *sari konde* is more beautiful than *purdah (cadar)*.

The comment that gets many replies from other netizen is from the account of Ozie Galung with 932 comments. Ozie posted, "it is time for Somad becomes the candidates of new leader of MUI, who agree with it, rice your hand?" This posted text got various responses from netizen. Baretha Dedhi replies "no sorry for Sukmawati, because she has humiliated Islamic religion, more dangerous than Ahok", Roy Niti Negoro comment "I am not a Muslim!! but I like Mr. Ustadz Somad, stay healthy Ustadh," Eastrun comment " I am from Malaysia, very love with the lecturing of ustaz. *Assalamualaikum.*" Tita Sagita comment, "Ustad Abdul Somad wish will be the president of RI", Zukly Salsably comment "I support UAS become the minister of Religion", Randy Andika comment "Indonesia is proud of Somad, *Ustadz Pemersatu Umat.*"

Based on the data above, there is a tendency for the communication flow on YouTube channel using the *multi-step flow*. In this sense, starting with Somad getting alot of feedback from netizens, followed by other netizens' reply to previous comments, then the netizens support each other and debate other comments. In other words, there is an effect from Somad to netizen as well as from netizen to another netizen. The model of multi-step flow communication for the first time is proposed by Paul Lazerfeld and then elaborated by Elihu Katz. The main idea of this communication model is that the information flow not always flows from one source directly to the communicant, but may occur through several steps. The new information is accepted by other people after passing to many communicants. There is a possibility that the same message before shared with the next communicant has reduction, interpretation, and may also the addition. Therefore, in this communication model, it is possible that the same message received by the third, fourth, and the next parties is not complete like the origin. Gabriel Weimann²² differentiates between influences (affect) and influential. Influence is a phenomenon of communicator, messages and the media influencing attitude, thought and behavior. Meanwhile, influential is people who

²² Gabriel Heimman, *Influentials: People Who Influence People* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994), p. 91.

affect others in communication network. In the context of netizen interaction in the wall of Somad's videos illustrates that the expansion of message occurs. In the video "the answer of the poem of Sukmawati," for instance, the comment of commentator in multi-step flow changes from the issue of the poem become the issue of *mualaf*, the idea of Somad becoming the leader of MUI, the Minister of religion, about Malaysian people, etc. Therefore, the multiplying of communication frequency occurred and is verified by the communication theme.

Conclusion

YouTube and other social media provide wide participation toward the popularity of Somad as the preacher of Islam. The convergence of technology of communication and information has integrated various types of communication media into the communication process. The media of television, radio, printed media, and video can be broadcast via the internet. The lectures of Somad are recorded in audiovisual (video) uploaded on YouTube channel. As a document, Somad video on YouTube can be accessed on-demand. It means that the viewers may access selectively as the will and the need as well as the chance owned. This kind of ease causes YouTube to become a published channel liked by people. Even with the presence of integrative technology that enables people to access the internet through mobile phones, it causes YouTube to become a very personal channel. Although the broadcast is massive, unlimited by space and time, the recipient can be personal.

The communication *da'wa* according to Lasswell model from Somad shows that all dimensions (who, says what, to whom, in which channel, and with what effect) support the effectiveness of Somad's *da'wa*. As a person, Somad is imagined on YouTube as a public figure who is moderate, funny, humble, and educated. However, he also gets persecution with the claim of being a radicalist Muslim, terrorist, and anti-NKRI. This kind of contradiction is viral on social media so that it makes him become more popular. Somad gets a lot of sympathy from various audiences, starting from TNI AD, police officers, college, and netizen. Somad gets a lot of invitations for preaching from various audiences. The chance of lecturing provides an opportunity to produce different message content, provides the opportunity to produce the next video uploaded to YouTube. The characteristics of YouTube

channels that provide the interaction through comments, subscription, and like or dislike, has created social interaction. Social interaction within social media changes the concept of public space, which initially tended to be sociological and empirical based, currently has become virtually interaction. The interaction among the users encourages them to develop a different discourse with the theme of the video's content. The characteristic of a multi-step flow of information as proposed by Paul Lazerfeld, causing the occurrence of reduction, manipulation, metamorphoses, and message compilation that are often different to the original message. However, all the reproductions of the message indicate what the support or demand from the users.

The comparison between the viewers who give appreciation of "like" is bigger than the "dislike", as well as the comments that support, admire, and respect Somad and is larger than the comments that deny, criticize, or even hate. Through *YouTube*, Somad has become popular that encourages the audience of Somad's lectures has become heterogeneous; starting from public, academics of university, Islamic boarding school to the Mabas TNI AD.

Through the media of *YouTube*, Somad succeeded in giving clarification to the claim that he is anti pluralism, anti *Pancasila*, and anti NKRI. Somad has ever been prohibited and persecuted in several areas. The clarification from Somad uploaded on YouTube successfully alleviates the persecution and even supports him. Therefore, YouTube has potential as a medium of Islamic *da'wa* that is inclusive so that it can be received by heterogeneous audiences. []

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