The influence of social media on religious identity politics among Indonesian millennial generation

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ABSTRACT

The millennial generation and social media are like two sides of a coin. Social media has become an inherent identity of the main characteristics of the millennial generation, who are adaptive, innovative, and pragmatic. Under these conditions, this research studies whether social media disproportionately impacts the behaviours of the millennial generation, especially in the era of the Covid-19 pandemic, which demands online interactions. Through qualitative methods, this article is based on the analysis of documents related to religious identity politics on social media and is strengthened by in-depth interviews. From data analysis and interviews, it is evident that the millennial generation accesses social media more than just as a medium of entertainment. It is also driven by the interests of communication and seeking answers to problems of life. Even if the millennial generation accesses platforms that lead to religious identity politics, it is more driven by a momentary curiosity about the issues that are present in their minds, except for those who have been indoctrinated by an exclusive religious understanding from the start and place politics as an inseparable part of their religious identity.

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Introduction

The millennial generation and social media are like two sides of coin. We Are Social (2022) research shows that amount of population of Indonesia is increasing 1% until February 2022. Previously, Indonesia's population was 274,9 million in 2021, increasing to 277,7 million. This growth of population correlates with an increase in the number of mobile devices connected to the internet, from 345.3 million to 370.1 million devices, which is increasing 3,6% by February 2022. The number of internet users also increased by 1%. As of February 2022, there is an increase from 202.6 million in 2021 to 204.7 million. The most significant increase was seen from active social media users, which reached 12.6%. In 2021, active social media users were only 170 million, and at February 2022, the number of active social media users has increased to 191.4 million. (Riyanto, 2022).

In the context of social media relations with the millennial generation, the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (or APJII) on 9 June 2022, reported a concentration of dominance in the use of social media. The highest internet penetration is in the age group of 13-18 years. Around 99.16% of children in this age group are connected to social media as of June 2022. This data shows that all children aged 13-18 years in Indonesia are already connected to social media. Furthermore, the age group of 19-34 years has an internet penetration of 98.64%; the group 35-54 years by 87.3%; the age group of 5-12 years has an internet penetration of 62.43%; and the age group 55 years and over had the lowest penetration with 51.73%. It was further explained that the high connectivity of children aged 13-18 years was caused by the implementation of distance learning (called PJJ) during the Covid-19 pandemic. As many as 76.63% of respondents in this age group admitted to experiencing an increase in the frequency of internet use (Pahlevi, 2022).

The report submitted by APJII above shows that the millennial generation, namely those aged between 13-18 years and 19-34 years, has an elevated level of exposure and intimacy to social media. The age range of 13-18 years and 19-34 years is more likely to be exposed to various information from social media because they use internet facilities to socialize. The social media is the online platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, Telegram, Line, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and others.

On the other hand, religious identity politics has become a new polarization in the electoral contestation in Indonesia (Herdiansah et. al., 2018). The reform era has brought political freedom with various impacts, including the symbolic involvement of religion. Sociologically, religious identity is very closely related to the life of Indonesian people. The intimacy of religious identity and social media in people's lives, especially the millennial generation in the midst of politics as the commander of the state, is important to study the relationship between these three variables.

Method

This article used a qualitative methods to examine the influence of social media on the millennial generation in the context of Islamic identity politics (Creswell, 2014). A qualitative method was an approach that emphasizes an in-depth study of various kinds of literature, especially those related to the millennial generation, social media, and Islamic identity politics during the Covid-19 pandemic. This literature was sorted and analyzed based on its level of relevance to the main problem, namely the influence of social media on the millennial generation's religious identity politics.

This article also departs from the results of discussions with a group of millennials and in-depth interviews with five millennial generations, three man and two women. They have an Islamic higher education background from the department of science, who were selected based on their activity in accessing social media. They were activists of student organizations with Islamic labels, such as the Campus Da'wah Institute (LDK), the Islamic Student Association (HMI), the Indonesian Islamic Student Movement (PMII), and the Muhammadiyah Student Association (IMM), as well as organization that break away from religious labels, namely the Indonesian National Student Movement (GMNI).

The selected students with organizational backgrounds interviewed in this article was assumed to had a broad and inclusive perspective in determining the platforms they access, so that they were able to provide rational responses to various issues that arise. The students that interviewed were selected by looking at their educational background and activities in student organizations and their intensity in accessing social media.

In addition to the literature review and in-depth interviews, researchers also made observations on social media which are in great demanded by the millennial generation, especially related to themes. From the collected data, data reduction was carried out to ensure the relevant data have been analyzed by looking for correlation and causality between the intensity leveled of millennial generation media access with their attitudes towards Islamic identity politics issues.

Results and Discussion

Social media intimacy

Millennials have an elevated level of intimacy with social media, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. Numerous factors cause the millennial generation to have intimacy with social media. The first factor is to establish relationships with relatives. Millennial generation's intimacy with social media in this aspect can be seen in the We Are Social research report, which states that the goal of the majority of social media users is to establish friendships with family and friends (58% of research respondents) (Andi. Link, 2022)

The second factor is the desire to keep updated to the latest information. This factor can be proven by the data reported by APJII, which shows that the second most significant goal of most people using the internet is to get the latest information or news. A total of 92.21% of respondents in the study stated this. Many Indonesian people obtain the latest information or news through social media. A Reuters Institute survey in collaboration with the University of Oxford in February 2022 proved this statement. The survey results report that the most common sources of news obtained by the public in Indonesia are online media (including social media), which is 88%. The Indonesian people obtain 68% of the latest information through social media and 57% from television and print media (magazines, newspapers, etc.) by 17% (Saptoyo, 2022). In general, online and social media work because the internet demanded as a source of information by Indonesians.

The third factor is to meet the demands of routines such as education and work. This statement is evidenced by a shift in the form of public communication towards a digitalized communication model. This shift has created entirely new educational and working systems, such as WFH (work from home) and PJJ (distance learning). This new work and education system implies the need to use social media as a tool to fulfil these demands.

The fourth factor is the religious factor, namely, carrying out the worshipping

process and fulfilling the religious-spiritual needs of the millennial generation amidst the threat of Covid-19. As stated by Donald B. Calne, religion is indispensable for humans when facing chaotic and scary times (Calne, 2018). So, it became clear that religious-spiritual protection was needed during the Covid-19 pandemic, which was full of threats. Furthermore, there is a tendency to increase religious activities during the Covid-19 pandemic, and the millennial generation uses social media to fulfill spiritual needs amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. In the midst of a wilderness of information related to Covid-19 that seems "scary," even in some cases, Covid-19 gave birth to psychological health problems, in the form of stress, (Itasanmi et. al., 2020), religious content scattered on social media can become a calming and healing guidance for the millennial generation.

Along with the purpose of this study, namely, to prove whether social media influences the formation of religious and political understanding of the millennial generation, the following discussion will emphasize the fourth factor of the millennial generation's intimacy with social media, namely the religious factor (Bobkowski, 2011). The Pandemic is not just forcing people to interact online but also to seek protection from the threat of Covid-19. One of the protections people seek is in religion. People are 'forced' to be closer to their God to survive the threat of Covid-19. Those who initially did not care about religion became close to God. This phenomenon does not only occur in Indonesia but also in other countries with a secularistic pattern. (Boguszewski, Rafal, 2020). Regarding the religious-spiritual needs of humans in these conditions, the question posed by the research is the Indonesian millennial generation, who is intimately attached to social media during this pandemic, has experienced the same thing, namely by seeking religious shelter through Islamic sites in responding to wanderings and searches about Islam? Furthermore, what kind of Islamic social media content is usually sought after by the millennial generation during this pandemic?.

Religious contents on social media

Firstly, we can start by looking at the reactions of the Muslim community in general to government policies related to Covid-19, especially concerning the Large-Scale Social Restriction or *Pembatasan Sosial Berskala Besar* (PSBB), which result in restrictions on religious activities for Muslims. (Taufik, 2021). According to Amos Sukamto and S. Panca Parulian (2020), there are two general reactions of the Muslim community to the PSBB policy. The reactions were those who tends to agree with PSBB and a small number of fanatical Muslim groups who initially rejected the PSBB policy but eventually followed the policy. Amos and Panca Parulian (2020) stated:

> *"The response of the religious community to this government policy was varied. The Council of Indonesian Ulama, Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI), issued several fatwas containing a ban on worship involving large numbers of people. A small group of fanatic Muslims initially opposed the policy but eventually followed it."*

In the Millennial Muslim Megashifts Webinar, Yuswohady (2021) said that the Covid-19 pandemic has made Indonesian Muslim millennials more religious. Yuswohady measured the change in Muslim millennial attitudes with five parameters: spirituality, safety and security, screen/digitalization of life, self-expression, and empathic generation. In the spiritual aspect, Muslim millennials during the Covid-19 pandemic tend to be more religious. Millennial Muslims view the pandemic as a test from God to apply religious values

in various aspects of life. The second parameter is safety and security. The halal principle has become a new urgency for Muslim millennials during the pandemic, as evidenced by the growing market for halal food products. The third parameter is the screen/digitalization of life. During the increasing intensity of online activities, including religious activities, various Islamic digital platforms have emerged that helps Muslim millennials to carry out routine daily worship activities. Various E-Commerce also began to create special channels to answer the various needs of Muslim millennials. Community participation in giving Zakat, Infaq, Shadaqa, and Waqf (ZISWAF) also continues to increase due to the existence of a digital platform that facilitates these activities. The fourth parameter is self-expression. With this change, Muslim clothing has become a new trend for Muslim millennials. Consumers are more confident in dressing according to sharia principles but still in style. The last parameter is empathic generation. The Covid-19 pandemic has created a new society full of empathy. This situation can be seen from the many sympathetic nature of the community, especially Muslim millennials, to provide donations or raise funds for groups affected by the pandemic.

Yuswohady's explanation above proves that Indonesian Muslim millennials tend to be more religious amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. However, for the millennial generation, who have long been engaged in Islamic religious studies, the existence of the Covid-19 pandemic encourages them to seek Islamic religious knowledge through social media, such as YouTube. So, what Islamic content is loved by the Muslim millennial generation during the Covid-19 pandemic? The millennial generation does not have a single loyalty, (BPS, 2018, Nindyati, 2017), including accessing social media pages, except for those who have an exclusive

religious channel on social media. This is because the millennial generation's main factor in accessing social media is looking for entertainment. This entertainment aspect can also come from religious or political content that is packaged entertainingly. Entertainment is related to many things, including the method of communication used, language packaging, to the substance of the material presented. Therefore, the millennial generation can access many pages according to their tastes and ongoing social conditions under certain conditions.

In general, religious content that is open, inclusive, in-depth, and rational is content that is favored by the millennial generation. (Zain, 2019). Some religious clerics favored by the millennial generation includes Adi Hidayat, Hanan Attaki, and Husein Ja'far Al-Hadar. They are pious young preachers, use language that is easy to understand, and have a high-quality scientific reference. For example, Husein Ja'far, known as a millennial preacher, usually carries out his digital da'wah activities through the YouTube social media platform "Jeda Nulis." Through this YouTube channel, Husein Ja'far shares various kinds of Islamic content with an approach that tends to be friendly to the Muslim millennial generation. Thus, the audience for Husein Ja'far's content also comes from Muslim millennials.

The effectiveness of Husein Ja'far's da'wah on his YouTube channel can be measured using the Superiority Media theory proposed by Richard M. Steers. According to Steers (1985), media is considered vital if it can reach and fulfill the goals and objectives allocated from the start. Based on Steers' theory, we can refer to a series of parameters formulated by Hoerotunnisa et. al., to measure the effectiveness of Husein Ja'far's digital da'wah through YouTube. These parameters are how far the da'wah account reaches readers and listeners (viewers), how many da'wah account get sympathizers

(subscribers and followers), and how many subscribers practice and invite others to practice the da'wah messages conveyed (Hoerotunnisa, 2021).

The effectiveness of Husein Ja'far's da'wah content can be measured by reviewing the number of viewers and various positive comments from Muslim millennial netizens in the three videos he uploaded on the YouTube channel "Jeda Nulis" on April 2, 3, and 5, 2020. The three videos are entitled "Talking Islam Against Corona," "Conversing Islam & Science About Corona," and "Corona as a Common Enemy." These three videos were used as the object of this research because they were uploaded when the Covid-19 pandemic became national breaking news. In addition, the topic of the video is also specifically targeting the relationship between Islamic values and the pandemic.

The video "Collecting Islam Against Corona" has 312,757 views, the video "Conversing Islam & Science about Corona" has 439,528 views, and the video "Corona as a Common Enemy" has 183,761 views. The comments on the three videos are primarily from the millennial generation. The non-Islamic millennial generation also watched and gave positive comments to the three of Husein Ja'far videos. From these comments, it can be concluded that the audience tends to catch Husein Ja'far's core message, namely that amidst a pandemic, Islam teaches the importance of empathic solidarity, openness to science, and closeness to God by strengthening faith at pandemic. Here are the millennial generation's comments in the comments section of three videos (Al Hadar, 2020a), (Al Hadar, 2020b), (Al Hadar, 2020c):

Anggi Suandana said: "Listening to the Habib makes me feel calm. His words are not at all offending anyone. He is cool, realistic, and logical. It makes people who are close to God even closer, and those who are far away to at least think about it."

Adelaine said: "The da'wah concept along with the scientific explanation is easier to understand and acceptable for me. Thank you, Habib."

Guyonan Santri (a Muslim millennial channel name) said: "I like your da'wah method of using social media, embracing the millennials, and collaborating with Indonesian YouTubers. Your da'wah method is very on point. You can change people (especially non-Muslims) about Islam."

These comments represent the high acceptability of the Islamic content conveyed by Husein Ja'far. The content has become the standard material and strategy for communicating with millennials. The standard in question is in the context of religious messages with a millennial approach that tends to be accepted by Indonesian Muslim millennials, even for some non-Muslims millennials.

The millennial generation who has an open attitude, thus opening a vast space to understand various Islamic teachings on online channels. Some of them are not loyal to one platform or social media page. The millennial generation prefers the substance and content conveyed in Islamic learning from idolized clerics. Idolizing certain clerics is based on Ustaz's consistency in providing inclusive material. In general, the millennial generation continues to focus on soothing teachings that provide space for freedom of expression, including in matters of religion. This is acknowledged by Satrio Adjie Wibowo (personal communication, September 5, 2022) who is associated with Islamic student organizations and Islamic community organizations in Jakarta.

"As a millennial generation, I prefer Islamic teachings that are conveyed in a polite manner with an inclusive mindset. Not forcing his beliefs, let alone just his understanding, on others. I was traumatized while doing remembrance in a mosque, when suddenly I was asked to leave

because it was not customary to do remembrance at the mosque. After the prayer, direct tausiyah" (Wibowo, personal communication, September 5, 2022).

The level of influence of the millennial generation on religious content on social media is more about the compatibility between the idealization of inclusive Islamic teachings among the millennial generation and the content offered (Febriani & Ritonga, 2022). On the other hand, there is a group of millennials who want to get measurable Islamic teachings that are easy to implement with a wide selection of arguments and exciting explanations. Therefore, this group likes religious content presented by Ustaz, who can provide understanding based on solid arguments and easy-to-digest explanations. In this case, Ustaz, like Adi Hidayat, is one of the alternatives the millennial generation interested in because they can provide broad explanations with humor interspersed but still full of lessons. According to Arya Putra (personal communication, September 2022), an activist in Islamic student organizations and active in the faculty's student council, the delivery of extreme religious ideas has closed the space for dialogue, while the millennial generation needs an open space of expression. Putra further stated:

"An open and rational attitude provides space for two-way discussion and communication. And this can only be done by those who have broad insight and mastery of knowledge, so they are ready to have a dialogue in meaningful ways. For example, once Adi Hidayat asked his recitation participants to erase some of his explanations written on the blackboard. Turns out they were all deleted. According to Adi Hidayat, the best we can ask for help from humans, there must be a lack, therefore we ask for help from the most perfect, namely Allah (Putra, Personal communication, September 5, 2022).

According to Putra, he liked the dialogue and metaphor given by Adi Hidayat because there was no element of patronizing let alone indoctrinating. Explanations and dialogues as well as analogies that are easily understood by the congregation are a way of conveying Islam that is favored by the millennial generation. (Putra, Personal communication, September 5, 2022).

Social media and political information

During the Covid-19 pandemic, the government issued policies related to measures to deal with Covid-19. One of the policies related to religion is to limit the use of places of worship and distance in the congregation. Policies in the political sphere received various responses from the public, namely agreeing and disagreeing to implement policies related to worship during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The reaction among Indonesian Muslims to the government's policies related to Covid-19 was initially split in two. However, over time, the people's attitudes fused into one, namely direct compliance with a series of government policies or those who were initially resistant but agreed to comply with these policies. As Amos and Parulian stated "eventually followed it" (Sukamto & Panca Parulian, 2020).

To review the extent of the millennial generation's accessibility to political information during pandemic, we can study how the millennial generation's political participation is during pandemic. Zulkarnaen et al (2020) stated:

"Millennial generation is a generation that is familiar with technological advances. As the nation's next generation, the millennial generation is very much needed in politics. If their participation is meagre, a country will have no political successor. For this reason, the research results show that millennials' role

and political participation is still significant for several democratic parties in the future."

The millennial generation's political participation during a pandemic is measured by the perceptions and opinions of the millennial generation regarding the RI 2024 presidential candidate and whom they make as a candidate's preference. We can measure the level of political participation of the millennial generation with this method because, in 2022, the political tension to 2024 presidential election is rising. The big democratic party has been prepared since now, and various names have been mentioned as the ideal RI presidential candidate in 2024 with a certain electability number. Several political parties have been looking for space to form political coalitions. Various kinds of public political participation have emerged, including the millennial generation on social media.

The millennial generation is not entirely focused to the figure but on the ideal criteria and standards of the presidential candidates. Millennials tend to choose presidential candidates in 2024 with a certain set of traits, such as democratic, visionary, assertive, democratic, authoritative and fair, millennial and flexible, ideological, transformational, open to challenges, supportive, charismatic, moralist, communicative, friendly, populist, disciplined, honest, and religiously obedient, proactive, and reflective (Pramelani, 2021).

Millennial generation is a group that tends to be intimate social media and the internet. So, few presidential candidates are using the media effectively during the pandemic to make the programs run successfully. Millennials have their own opinions about leadership styles in terms of how to communicate, analyze, motivate, make decisions, and assess the list of the 2024 presidential candidates they choose. Presidential candidates can also see citizens behavior and needs and started targeting

millennials through social media with a millennial approach. Even though their management skills are good, if they are elected as a president in 2024, they must be able to be flexible in using a leadership style that is adapted to the times – looking at the situation, being open and responsive in dealing with the community, especially those with the largest productive population, namely millennials (Pramelani, 2021).

The leadership criteria given by the millennial generation have an impact on the choice of presidential candidates who continue to move depending on the situation, conditions, and momentum that accompanies the candidate leaders until the election occurs. Based on a survey of several research institutes on presidential candidates for 2024, for example, there is a movement in the choice of the millennial generation towards the 2024 presidential candidate, which also indicates that many factors influence the choice of the millennial generation until the election takes place. Moments and events related to presidential candidates will influence the millennial generation's political choices.

The level of accessibility of millennial generation political information amidst the increasing nuance of 2024 leadership contestation is also relatively high, as evidenced by the accessibility of information related to the records of names appearing in the presidential election arena as figures whose electability highlighted. In addition, the political information conveyed by several candidates through social media can be reached by the millennial generation because the millennial generation, with their intimacy with social media amidst a pandemic, allows them to be more easily exposed to information. The characteristics of the ideal presidential candidate formulated by the millennial generation can prove that they have been entirely exposed to political

information on the 2024 election on social media through their agents.

Based on a series of data and facts above, we can conclude that during the Covid-19 pandemic, which coincides with the momentum leading to the 2024 election, social media can influence the millennial generation in political participation. Social media allows the millennial generation to access various kinds of information related to the names of candidates who are allegedly getting the spotlight and high electability. This is made possible by the high level of accessibility of the millennial generation to political information through social media.

Relation between religion and identity politics

Religious understanding of the millennial generation during this pandemic tends to be high, especially related to strengthening the value of *ukhuwah insaniyah* and compliance to government policies, especially regarding Large-Scale Social Restrictions (PSBB) during a pandemic (Sukamto & Panca Parulian, 2020). This situation can be related to the fact that the understanding of the millennial generation of Muslims and non-Muslims in Indonesia tends to receptively open to government policies related to Covid-19 and coupled with the fact that Indonesian Muslims accept the government policies related to Covid-19. So, it can be concluded that Indonesia's millennial generation accepts government policies supported by open and inclusive religious understanding and high social awareness. The religious understanding of the millennial generation contributes to the awareness of the millennial generation to comply with policies related to Covid-19 with full responsibility. In this phenomenon, social media plays an essential role in shaping the religious understanding of the millennial generation.

The fact that the religious understanding of the millennial generation tends to be open and socially caring is in stark contrast to the character of identity politics. Theoretically, the formation of identity politics is caused by what Emile Durkheim calls "social solidarity," namely solidarity that is built based on the mechanism or feeling that maintains a rope of social unity (Kurniawan, 2021). The existence of a social fact causes the emergence of identity politics that is shared by one political group. Finally, these social facts become a belief system for certain political groups. The existence of social facts that are believed simultaneously by one political group forms a mechanical framework of social solidarity. This is because the identity of political group solidarity is built on the principle of equality (homogeneous). This is known as collective conscience. Collective awareness demands uniformity so that the presence of something different from social facts in mechanical solidarity will weaken the meaning of unity in the life of the mechanical solidarity group (Kurniawan, 2021).

Identity politics based on mechanical solidarity can create deep and protracted social polarization and disintegration because the unity of political groups is based on the existence of a common enemy. This exclusivist social fact will make a group more "centered inward and attacking outward." So, what will be created is only a deep and even protracted conflict. Synergy will not be created and only creates disintegration.

The religious thinking of the millennial generation during this pandemic moves organic solidarity. According to Emile Durkheim, organic solidarity is solidarity that is built based on differentiation, diversity, and heterogeneity (Royce, 2015). The religious understanding of the millennial generation amidst a pandemic is high in the value of *ukhuwah insaniyah* (social solidarity) forms a community that works

hand-in-hand in solidarity even though the religious and cultural backgrounds are different. The existence of social facts "the Indonesian nation" and the Covid-19 pandemic as common enemies form organic social solidarity. This is contrary to identity politics, which is often mechanical. In this case, social media has proven to be an effective means of building organic social solidarity among millennials.

The high accessibility of political information through social media also causes the millennial generation to be able to formulate a series of measures related to the ideal 2024 presidential candidate. The millennial generation tends to want democratic, populist, and able to embrace various groups in Indonesia, and the millennial generation tends to want leaders in 2024 who are "one for all" who are free from the bondage of exclusiveness.

Apart from the enormous potential for the re-emergence of identity politics towards the 2024 elections, the inclusive religious understanding of the millennial generation, which has succeeded in forming organic solidarity in the midst of a pandemic, has become a substantial capital. In addition, the millennial generation's rational-objective political participation in determining the ideal 2024 presidential candidate during the pandemic can prevent sharp polarization leading to the 2024 presidential election.

The political division of society as a result of the polarization that occurred in the 2017 DKI Jakarta elections and continued in the 2019 election is still visible in the form of public response to government policies related to the handling of Covid-19. Some people who do not want to be vaccinated and neglect to wear masks are those who in the 2019 election chose Prabowo-Sandi as the presidential candidate against Joko Widodo-Ma'ruf Amin (Halimatusa'diyah & Durriyah, 2022). There are fewer Prabowo supporters who are mostly from the younger generation and millennials who are willing to be vaccinated compared to Jokowi's supporters, who are mostly middle to upper class and willing to be vaccinated. This proves that the potential for polarization in politics, one of which can lead to religious identity politics, still occurs during the Covid-19 period. The occurrence of this polarization, especially in response to government policies related to Covid-19, is a continuation of the division of society in political support for the presidential election, not because of the excessive impact of the intensity of millennial generation social media access that took place during the Covid-19 pandemic. In addition, there are other factors that are sociological (Mujani & Irvani, 2020). Millennials' rejection of government programs related to Covid-19 is not much influenced by media coverage, but rather because of their perception of themselves that they don't need to be vaccinated (Mulyani, Sri, 2021).

Thus, the intensity of social media access by the millennial generation during the Covid-19 pandemic did not significantly affect their views and attitudes about exclusive religious identity politics as during the 2017 DKI elections and 2019 elections. This is not only based on the millennial generation's perspective on inclusive leadership in 2024, there is also a change in the perspective on the government under the leadership of Joko Widodo-Ma'ruf Amien which began to melt away as Prabowo-Sandi joined the government.

In terms of religious understanding of the millennial generation, it is much influenced by teaching materials or literature obtained both at school and college. The learning process is a strong forum for transmitting knowledge in determining the conservatism of the millennial generation (Iswanto, 2018). Meanwhile, the intensity factor of social media access during the Covid-19 pandemic did not provide much room for the extensification of Islamic identity politics

among the millennial generation. This was acknowledged by Juniar Amalia, an activist from a national student organization. According to Juniar Amalia (Personal communication, August 6, 2022), religion is an important value in strengthening the spirit of doing good to fellow citizens without being trapped in religious differences, let alone primordial identity politics. Likewise in terms of leadership, it is not necessary to look at the religious aspect, but its ability to manage the country. Therefore, according to Amalia (personal communication, August 6, 2022):

"Leadership what is most needed is his ability, integrity, and concern for the fate of the community. No matter what religion, if the performance is good, the program for the benefit of the people is realized and the benefits are felt directly by the community, then I support it. Religion is not a consideration because it is the realm of the relationship between the individual and his God. It could be that his performance is good due to his religious encouragement, but I as a citizen still see it in his duties and responsibilities to the people."

The political attitude of the millennial generation is, at a certain point, influenced by the significant issues surrounding it without a solid political preference, so it is trapped in primordial considerations in its political behavior. This is acknowledged by Hani Fatunnisa, head of the branch of student organizations affiliated with one of the largest Islamic organizations in Indonesia. According to her, the trapping of some millennials in exclusive and extremist religious views is due to the influence of limited information. Monolithic access to information causes some millennials to lose a broad and inclusive view. (Fatunnisa, personal communication, August 7, 2022). According to Fatunnisa:

"It's hard to deny, some millennials are trapped in a narrow perspective in viewing political dynamics, namely by always linking political issues with the government which is considered not in favor of Islam. Even because of the influence of their friends and lack of association, the millennial generation can have an exclusive perspective, including the government system that is considered to deviate from Islamic teachings."

According to Fatunnisa, she once joined a "forbidden Islamic organization" because of limited friendships. As a newcomer in Jakarta, he made friends, the first he met were activists from Islamic organizations which were later dissolved by the government. However, as she grew friends with various backgrounds and his readings became wider, she finally decided to leave the organization because it limited her mindset, especially about Islam, which was actually very broad. (Fatunnisa, personal communication, August 7, 2022).

The level of accessibility of the millennial generation in an open (broad) cyberspace and their intense interaction with various groups, giving rise to a comprehensive perspective in determining their attitudes, behavior, and political choices. This was acknowledged by Al Kautsar Gigih Wibowo, an activist for campus da'wah institutions about the influence of social media on the political and religious views and behavior of the millennial generation. According to to Wibowo (personal communication, September 4, 2022):

"Social media as part of technological developments that are identical to the millennial generation can actually be a way for the emergence of an inclusive millennial generation's political attitude. Basically, the millennial generation is an open generation along with the development of information technology that breaks down various exclusive and even territorial barriers

which at the same time becomes a critical and open generation of millennials."

Social media that presents a world without borders, such as a wilderness of information that can be accessed by anyone, should encourage the millennial generation to be open and avoid issues of religious identity politics that tend to be exclusive. Especially in the era of the Covid-19 pandemic where the issue of religious identity politics is not as strong as during the 2019 elections because society and the state are faced with the same massive problem, namely fighting the threat of Covid-19. The politics of religious identity among the millennial generation is very dependent on the situation and conditions that surround it. Conditions that still lead to religious identity politics are more of an "escape" from disappointment (internal) over the existing situation (external) which is temporal.

Conclusion

The millennial generation is a figure whose realm of interaction and knowledge is built through online social media. Therefore, the intensity of access to social media can affect the attitudes and views of the millennial generation. However, this intensity, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, does not have a significant correlation with the strengthening of religious identity politics among the millennial generation. This is due to the millennial generation's background in accessing social media. In addition to communication media, access to social media for millennials is as a medium of entertainment and occasionally seeks confirmation of information related to issues that they consider to be actual, including political and religious issues.

Even if there are millennials who are intense in accessing issues of religious identity politics, they usually have this background of thought or understanding and get their fertilizer on social media. The polarization of political identity that still lingers in response to the Covid-19 policy does not show an increase due to the intensity of their access to social media. This happened, because the increasing level of accessibility of the millennial generation on social media during the Covid-19 period was more due to changes in interaction patterns, especially those related to learning or lectures. Therefore, the polarization that occurred in response to the Covid-19 policy was a continuation, not a development, of the political choices that took place in the 2019 election.

The intensity of the millennial generation's access to social media does not change the pattern of religious views and political choices. This happens because the millennial generation's intimacy with social media is routine even before Covid-19. The Covid-19 pandemic only shifted access intensity from offline activities to online. The rest is no different.

Declaration of Ownership

This article is our original work.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest to declare in this article.

Ethical Clearance

This study was approved by the institution.

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Interview with Al Kautsar Gigih Wibowo, an activist at Campus Da'wah Institute (LDK) UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Kamis, 4 August 2022, 19.30

Interview with Arya Putra, an activist at Indonesian Moslem Student Movement (PMII), Jumat, 5 August 2022, 19.30

Interview with Hani Fatunnisa, an activist at Muhammadiyah Student Association (IMM), Ahad, 7 August 2022, 14.00

Interview with Juniar Amalia, an activist at Indonesian National Student Movement (GMNI), Sabtu, 6 August 2022, 16.00

Interview with Satrio Adjie Wibowo, an activist at Islamic Student Association (HMI), Jumat, 5 August 2022, 09.00