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The Quest for Islamic Identity among Muslim University Students in Riau, Indonesia

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This study investigates the dynamics of transnational Islamic identity among Muslim students in Riau, Indonesia, focusing on its two distinct yet interconnected manifestations: religious activism and socio-political engagement. This research is grounded in the socio-historical context of Islamic student movements in Indonesia, which evolved from operating discreetly under the authoritarian New Order to becoming more visible and diverse in the post-Reformasi Era. This study explores how transnational Islamic identity shapes students' religious self-understanding in a rapidly changing social landscape. Employing qualitative methods, the research draws on in-depth interviews and participant observations conducted at three major universities in Riau: Sultan Syarif Kasim State Islamic University (UIN Suska), University of Riau (UNRI), and Islamic University of Riau (UIR). The findings reveal that students negotiate their Islamic identities through engagement with transnational Islamic networks and adaptation to local cultural contexts. This negotiation reflects not a binary opposition between radicalism and moderation but a spectrum of interpretations shaped by institutional, social and global influences. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of how globalization and local sociopolitical conditions produce diverse expressions of Muslim identity in higher-education contexts. It also highlights the need for policy interventions within universities to foster critical religious literacy, intercultural dialogue, and inclusive campus environments that allow students to articulate their faith identity constructively. For future research, comparative studies across regions and institutions are recommended to examine how transnational Islamic discourses interact with local political and educational structures beyond the university settings.

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Public Interest Statement

This study examines the fluid nature of Islamic identity among Muslim student organizations, particularly Lembaga Dakwah Kampus (LDK) in Riau, Indonesia. While previous studies frame campus Islamic activism within the binaries of radicalism versus moderation, this study shows a dynamic spectrum shaped by transnational influences, local contexts, and student agency. By focusing on Riau, an underrepresented region in the Malay cultural sphere, this study addresses a significant analytical void. The findings challenge the static portrayals of student religiosity, offering nuanced insights that enrich debates in Islamic studies, youth culture, and Southeast Asian religious movements literature.

Introduction

Currently, Muslim youth face multiple challenges in defining their religious identities. They constantly negotiate between global and local faith. The proliferation of social media platforms and global Islamic authorities exposes them to diverse worldviews that can enrich and unsettle their Muslim identity. Simultaneously, they encounter competing discourses about what constitutes "authentic" Islam, ranging from conservative revivalist narratives to inclusive, pluralist interpretations. Local and global Islam have been shaping the Islamic identity of youth, reflecting the dynamic discussion on Islamic identity. The topic of Islamic identity has long been at the heart of scholarly

discussions (Belhaj, 2023; Yucel & Whyte, 2023). The debate on Islamic identity particularly focuses on how to be a Muslim in the modern era. Globalization, digital media, and the expansion of transnational Islamic movements have transformed how young Muslims access religious knowledge and construct their moral selves. The proliferation of social media platforms and digital preachers (*ustadz digital*) exposes Muslim youth to competing global and local interpretations of Islam, which often coexist uneasily within the same social and cultural spaces (Nisa, 2018; Prajarto & Purwaningtyas, 2021). This digital religiosity blurs the boundaries between authority and authenticity, creating new tensions between the individualized expressions of piety and institutionalized religious norms. In this case, how to establish an Islamic identity is a long discussion that encompasses theological, sociopolitical, and cultural dimensions that continue to evolve across time and space. On the one hand, essentialist approaches tend to view Islamic identity as a fixed, monolithic, and divinely ordained essence rooted in scriptural sources and classical traditions. Scholars in this tradition argue that an authentic Muslim identity must reflect normative values and practices derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah, regardless of the socio-historical context (Chittick, 2007; Nasr, 2001).

In contrast, constructivist and postmodern perspectives reject essentialism, arguing that Islamic identity is fluid, socially constructed, and continuously negotiated in response to changing political, cultural, and economic conditions. For example, Hall (1996) posited that all forms of identity are subject to historical contingencies and discursive formations. Applying this to Islam, scholars such as Asad (1993) and Hirschkind (2006) emphasize that being Muslim is not merely about doctrinal adherence but also about embodied practices, social belonging, and political subjectivity shaped by modern institutions and secular power.

This debate has also been localized in the Southeast Asian context, where scholars have observed tensions between traditional Islamic values and the influence of modernity, state ideology, and transnational Islamic movements (Fealy & White, 2008; Hoesterey, 2016). In Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim-majority country, younger Muslims navigate multiple identities — religious, national, ethnic, and global — within democratic and digital spaces (Hasan, 2009; Pepinsky & Mujani, 2012). The tensions between traditional Islamic values and the influence of modernity, state ideology, and transnational Islamic movements are particularly visible among the educated Indonesian youth. University students are not only participants in religious revival but also agents in shaping new modes of Islamic expression that reflect the pluralism and contradictions of modern Muslim life (Bagguley & Hussain, 2020; Chaplin, 2018; Smith-Hefner, 2019). They live in a rapidly evolving moral landscape marked by negotiations of faith, modernity and national belonging. On the one hand, they encounter revivalist discourses emphasizing moral purity, self-discipline, and scriptural authenticity. However, they are influenced by pluralist and reformist interpretations that stress inclusivity, social justice, and contextual ethics (Jouili, 2019). However, these studies do not focus on the quest for Islamic identity among Indonesian university students who interact specifically with transnational Islam. This study provides empirical insights into university students' negotiations with transnational Islam, especially in Riau, Indonesia. Some of these students participate in a specific *da'wah* organization disseminating transnational Islam, such as LDK (Lembaga Dakwah Kampus), and access digital platforms that inform transnational Islam. This interaction makes the formation of Islamic identity a deeply contested process of negotiation, rather than a straightforward inheritance of tradition. Notably, the growing presence of transnational Islamic movements, ranging from Salafism and Hizb ut-Tahrir to Muslim humanitarian and *daʿwa* networks, has further complicated identity formation by offering competing moral frameworks and imaginaries of the ummah, thus influencing how Muslim university students articulate and perform their Islamic identities in contemporary Indonesia.

As the main argument of this article suggests, consistent with earlier observations of student religiosity in post-Reformasi Indonesia (Fealy & White, 2008; Hasan, 2009) and preliminary interviews, Muslim students in Riau are not primarily engaged in critically rethinking Islamic teachings; instead, they tend to seek forms of Islamic knowledge and authority that reaffirm their personal piety and moral certitude. This tendency signals a broader epistemic shift toward religious essentialism and authenticity, in which Islamic identity is constructed through personal discipline and moral rigor rather than through theological flexibility or historical contextualization (Asad, 1993; Bayat, 2007). Theoretically, this study contributes to the ongoing debates on Islamic identity formation by demonstrating how global Islamic discourses intersect with local sociocultural contexts to produce hybrid yet disciplined forms of religiosity among university students. It enriches the sociological and anthropological understanding of Islam in Southeast Asia by moving beyond the dichotomy of radicalism and moderation, instead emphasizing the moral and epistemic logics underlying youth religiosity. This study offers insights for educational institutions and policymakers to design programs that promote critical religious literacy, intercultural dialogue, and ethical reflexivity among Muslim youth. Recognizing these patterns of piety-oriented religiosity can help universities create learning environments that encourage both devotion and intellectual openness, thereby fostering a more inclusive and reflective Islamic student culture. This study identifies two distinct manifestations of transnational Islamic thought among university students in Riau, Indonesia. At the individual level, many Muslim university students in Riau actively seek religious knowledge

through informal networks, particularly those centered around mosques and digital platforms. Their engagement with transnational Islamic ideologies is both fluid and loosely structured. Although they may not explicitly identify themselves as followers of specific movements, their sartorial choices, digital affiliations, and social behaviors often mirror the ethical and aesthetic markers associated with Salafi, Tablighi, or Hizb at-Tahrir. Despite such symbolic affiliations, many students maintain an apolitical stance, prioritizing moral self-improvement over political activism. Their involvement with Islam is thus primarily ethical and pedagogical, directed toward cultivating a disciplined and pious Muslim self-image.

Literature Review

Despite the growing body of literature on youth religiosity in Indonesia (Hasan, 2009; Nilan & Robinson, 2011; Rosidi, 2024; Slama & Jones, 2017; Smith-Hefner, 2007), empirical studies focusing specifically on the quest for Islamic identity—particularly in semi-peripheral regions such as Riau, which borders Malaysia and functions as a socio-religious contact zone— are limited. Most existing research has concentrated on the major urban or political centers of Islamic activism, such as Jakarta, Yogyakarta, and Surabaya, where student movements and Islamic organizations have long been the focus of scholarly attention (Fealy and White 2008; Hefner 2000). A Study by Nisa (2018), for instance, explores Muslim youth identity and piety movements in Java and urban universities, but rarely extend their analysis to provincial contexts like Riau. How Muslim university students in this region conceptualize, experience, and negotiate their Islamic identity in light of competing social expectations, institutional influences, and transnational Islamic discourses remains an open and underexplored question in literature.

More importantly, the personal dynamics of university students often involve subtle processes of negotiation and contestation in the formation of their religious identities (Parker and Nilan, 2013). Rather than radically transforming religious values, students tended to accept change as a means of reinforcing their pre-existing Islamic identity. In many cases, religion is not perceived as a flexible or contextually contingent identity but rather as a stable reference point to which modernity must conform (Bubandt and van Beek, 2012). This orientation reflects a broader trend observed among young Muslims in Indonesia (Smith-Hefner, 2007), where the pursuit of an authentic Islamic identity often takes precedence over efforts to reinterpret Islam in light of contemporary social conditions (Alatas, 2014). To better understand this phenomenon, revisiting the intellectual roots of Islamic reform and revival, which continue to shape contemporary Muslim thought, is crucial. Thinkers such as Ibn Taymiyyah (1993) and Muhammad ibn ʻAbd al-Wahhab (1999) emphasized purification of Islam from what they viewed as innovations (*bidʻah*) and a return to scriptural authenticity, establishing a moral framework that resonates with many young Muslims seeking religious certainty today. In contrast, modern reformists such as Muhammad ʻAbduh (1957) and Rashid Rida (1966) sought to reconcile Islam with reason, modernity, and social progress, thereby laying the groundwork for a more contextual understanding of Islamic teachings. Meanwhile, thinkers such as Sayyid Qutb (2000) and Ali Shariati (1980) redefined Islamic reform through the lens of political resistance and social justice, inspiring generations of activists who view Islam as a comprehensive system for social transformation. Drawing on Asad's (1993) conceptualization of Islam as a discursive tradition, this study interprets Muslim students' quest for Islamic identity not merely as a theological return to religious texts or practices but as a dynamic negotiation of the religious authority and moral belonging. This negotiation is shaped by intersecting institutional, ideological, and transnational forces. From this perspective, identity is not a static essence but a historically and socially situated process that evolves constantly.

Bayat (2007) explains that many young Muslims today aspire to live morally consistent and pious lives without necessarily being affiliated with formal political or ideological movements. This tendency marks what he terms a post-Islamist sensibility, where Islam functions more as a source of ethical self-discipline and moral orientation than as a political ideology. Among Muslim students in Riau, such sensibilities are evident in their emphasis on personal piety, ethical conduct, and social modesty as the primary markers of their Islamic identity.

One significant influence shaping students' religious subjectivity is transnational Islam, a term that broadly encompasses movements such as Salafism, Tablighi Jama'at, and Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia (HTI). Studies on Salafism (Hasan, 2009; Rosidi, 2024) reveal its appeal among educated youth seeking moral discipline, textual purity, and a sense of global Islamic authenticity. Meanwhile, research on Jamaah Tabligh (Baskara, 2020; Shorfana, 2024) highlights its emphasis on piety through *daʻwah* and communal living, which offers young Muslims an apolitical yet spiritually immersive form of religious expression. In contrast, Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia (HTI) has been examined for its ideological project of re-establishing the caliphate and its influence on student activism before its official ban in 2017 (Muhtadi, 2009). Collectively, these studies demonstrate how transnational Islamic currents not only provide alternative models of Muslim identity but also shape students' religious imaginaries and moral orientations in local contexts such as Riau, Indonesia. These movements transcend national boundaries and offer alternative moral and epistemological frameworks, often through informal networks, student organizations, and digital platforms (Mandaville, 2007). In Indonesia, scholars have identified how these ideologies spread through the media (Rosidi,

2024), informal networks, educational institutions, and *da'wah* organizations on campuses (Harifuddin & Masdar, 2021; Pomalingo & Tangahu, 2024).

A more institutionalized manifestation of transnational Islam can be observed within formal student organizations such as Lembaga Dakwah Kampus (LDK, Campus *Da'wah* Institutions). Historically connected to global movements such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Hizb ut-Tahrir Indonesia, LDKs have frequently been scrutinized for promoting purist interpretations of Islam and distancing themselves from vernacular Islamic traditions in Indonesia (Machmudi, 2008; Noor, 2012). These organizations serve as structured sites of ideological transmission, where global Islamic discourses are localized and operationalized through mentoring systems, reading circles and leadership training (Hasan, 2009; Muhtadi, 2009; Nisa, 2012).

While such organizations have occasionally been labeled as vectors of radicalism, it is important to approach their influence with analytical nuance and avoid overgeneralization. Rather than functioning as monolithic ideological actors, LDKs often serve as arenas of negotiation in which students grapple with competing Islamic worldviews in their search for coherence and authenticity. Therefore, the appeal of transnational Islam among students should be understood within the broader context of their religious aspirations, identity formation, and efforts to navigate a plural and globalized moral landscape.

Materials and Methods

This study employed a qualitative research design to capture the complexities of transnational Islamic identity formation among Muslim students in Riau, Indonesia. Drawing on an interpretive-phenomenological approach, this research sought to explore how students construct, negotiate, and express their Islamic identities within the socio-political and cultural contexts of higher education. This approach involved conducting in-depth semi-structured interviews and participant observations to capture students lived experiences, followed by iterative coding and thematic interpretation to identify patterns of meaning and subjective understanding that emerged from their narratives. Throughout the process, the researcher engaged in reflexive analysis to minimize interpretive bias and employed triangulation across data sources, as well as member checking with selected participants to ensure the credibility and authenticity of findings. The choice of a qualitative method was driven by the need to obtain nuanced, context-rich insights into students' subjective experiences, meanings, and practices that are not fully accessible through quantitative surveys alone. As scholars of qualitative inquiry emphasize, such an approach enables researchers to explore the complexity of human meaning-making within specific social and cultural contexts (Creswell and Poth, 2018; Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). In the study of religion and identity, qualitative methods, particularly interpretative and phenomenological designs, allow for a deeper understanding of how individuals internalize, negotiate, and perform their faith in their daily lives (McGuire, 2008; Smith and Larkin, 2009).

Fieldwork was conducted over eight months, from March to October 2024, at three major universities in Riau: Sultan Syarif Kasim State Islamic University (UIN Suska), University of Riau (UNRI), and Islamic University of Riau (UIR). The selection of these universities was purposive, as they represent diverse institutional characteristics, ranging from state Islamic higher education to state universities under the Ministry of Higher Education and private Islamic universities, thereby providing a comparative framework for understanding variations in Islamic identity expression. These universities were purposively selected as they represent diverse institutional and socio-religious environments, allowing for comparative insights into the formation of Islamic identity among students. UIN Suska, a state Islamic higher education institution under the Ministry of Religious Affairs, integrates Islamic studies with modern disciplines and attracts students with strong religious backgrounds, making it a hub for various *da'wah* and transnational Islamic movements in the country. UNRI, a state university under the Ministry of Higher Education, provides a more pluralistic academic atmosphere where Muslim and non-Muslim students interact, offering a contrasting environment for observing how Islamic identity is expressed within a multireligious and civic framework. Meanwhile, UIR, a private Islamic university founded by local Muslim organizations, combines religious commitment with entrepreneurial and community-oriented education, reflecting a more localized form of Islamic engagement in the educational sphere than UINs. These three institutions illustrate different modalities of religious socialization and institutional influence, making them particularly suitable sites for examining how Muslim students negotiate and articulate their Islamic identities across diverse educational contexts in the country. Primary data were collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews with 36 Muslim students (12 from each university), complemented by participant observation of student religious activities, including those organized by Lembaga Dakwah Kampus (LDK) and informal religious study circles (*Halaqah*). The interview and observation protocols were developed based on the research objectives and theoretical framework and subsequently validated through expert judgment by three scholars specializing in Islamic studies and youth religiosity to ensure content validity and clarity of the tools. Table 1 summarizes the main instruments, their focus areas and expected data outputs.

Table 1. Data collection instruments: interview and observation protocols

Instrument Type	Main Focus	Key Indicators/Questions	Expected Data Output
Interview Guide	Personal religious identity and practice	Self-description as a Muslim; perceptions of being pious and/or modern	Narratives of identity formation
Interview Guide	Organizational influence	Experiences with religious organizations (LDK); self-positioning and identity negotiation	Accounts of organizational influence and identity negotiation
Interview Guide	Social interaction	Students' attitudes and interactions during religious activities; modes of faith expression	Descriptions of interactional dynamics and faith expression
Observation Guide	Participation in LDK and halaqah activities	Types of activities; leadership patterns; gender roles; ideological orientation	Patterns of da'wah practice and community building
Observation Guide	Informal student interactions	Daily religious practices; peer discussions; use of religious symbols	Lived religiosity and performative expressions of faith

Data analysis followed a thematic coding process that combined both inductive and deductive strategies (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Miles & Saldaña, 2014). Interview transcripts and field notes were first coded manually to identify recurring patterns, which were then organized into thematic clusters related to key dimensions of transnational Islamic identity, such as theological orientation, organizational affiliation, and cultural adaptation. The coding process was iterative and involved constant comparisons between the emerging themes and theoretical constructs (Creswell and Poth, 2018). To ensure the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of the findings, triangulation was achieved by integrating multiple data sources, including observational data, interview data, and peer debriefing with the researchers (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). This process strengthened the trustworthiness of the interpretations and ensured that the themes accurately reflected the participants lived experiences.

Table 2. Thematic Coding of Participant

Theme	Sub-theme / Code	Definition (What counts / What does not)	Representative Excerpts
T1. Piety-oriented Islamic Identity	C1. Hijrah as Moral Turning Point	Counts: narrative of self-change, repentance, turning point; Does not: routine practice without reflection	"After joining halaqah, I felt like I was reborn spiritually…" (Rahmat, UIN Suska)
	C2. Taqwa as Personal Project	Islam is understood as a self-formation project	"Being Muslim for me is about controlling myself, not politics." (Dina, UNRI)
T2. Digital Transnational Exposure	C3. Online Preacher Dependence	Dependence on YouTube/TikTok preachers	"Most of my religious knowledge comes from YouTube ustadz." (Khairul, UIR)
	C4. Algorithmic Echo Chamber	One-way content, one school of thought	"My feed only shows one type of Islamic teaching." (Aisyah, UNRI)
T3. Selective Ideological Adoption	C5. Aesthetic Salafism	Syar'i hijab, beard, no ideological commitment	"I dress like Salafi but I'm not joining any movement." (Adrian, UIN Suska)
	C6. Rejection of Political Islam	Rejection of the Khalifah agenda	"NKRI is final; Islam is about morals." (Riska, UIN Suska)
T4. LDK as Moral Incubator	C7. Halaqah as Alternative Classroom	LDK as the main source of religious knowledge	"Class is not enough; halaqah teaches real Islam." (Rifky, UIR)
	C8. Gender Segregation Norm	Gender segregation in activities	"We sit separately to maintain adab." (Deki, UIN Suska)

Results and Discussion

Transnational Islam as an Expression of Individual Piety

Fieldwork for this study was conducted across three major universities in Riau Province: Sultan Syarif Kasim State Islamic University (UIN Suska), the University of Riau (UNRI), and the Islamic University of Riau (UIR). These institutions represent distinct configurations of Islamic education, modernity, and private religiosity, which collectively provide a rich comparative framework for understanding the complexity of Muslim identity formation among youth.

As a state Islamic university, UIN Suska integrates religious and scientific disciplines into Islamic higher education. Da*'wah* organizations such as *Lembaga Dakwah Kampus* (LDK) are not merely tolerated but are institutionally embedded in the university. Here, the ethos of *tafaqquh fi al-din* (deep religious learning) coexists with modern academic rationality. In contrast, UNRI is a *state university* under the Ministry of Higher Education with a heterogeneous student body. Religious activities are more informal and often occur within autonomous student communities or extracurricular networks. UIR, a private Islamic university, balances organizational religiosity with professional education. The three institutions exemplify different modes of Islamic engagement–state-endorsed and privately ideological–each producing distinct spaces for Islamic expression and negotiation.

Based on participant observations at the State Islamic University of Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, University of Riau, and Islamic University of Riau, university life serves as both a space of aspiration and moral contestation for Muslim students in Riau, Indonesia. Many, particularly those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, view higher education as a means of social mobility and moral transformation. Interviews indicated that these students often enter university with high spiritual aspirations, seeking intellectual growth and moral grounding. This is supported by Rosidi (2020), who explains that university life represents an aspirational realm for much of Indonesia's youth. This is due to the social reality that access to higher education requires considerable material and financial resources. Many young people who aspire to pursue tertiary education are often constrained by their families' poverty. This condition is further compounded by cognitive barriers, as entry into higher education demands standardized academic readiness. Consequently, students who succeed in passing the competitive university entrance process can be regarded as a group that holds a relatively strong social and intellectual position within the generational pyramid.

Nevertheless, based on participant observation at the State Islamic University of Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, the University of Riau, and the Islamic University of Riau, not all students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and with limited academic preparation fail to gain access to higher-education. In fact, a number of students from poor families with only average academic performance have managed to enter the three universities. What appears decisive in many cases is not primarily financial capital or credentialed cultural capital but a form of agency—a future-oriented determination to improve life chances and pursue upward mobility (Archer, 2003; Bourdieu, 1986; Emirbayer and Mische, 1998). In this context, "transformative zeal" can be read as a symbolic and motivational force that helps students navigate structural constraints by strengthening their capacity to aspire and sustain long-term educational projects (Appadurai, 2004). Most of these students are young Muslims who seek intellectual and religious experiences that they believe will shape them into modern, open-minded, and civilized Muslim citizens.

However, based on participant observation at the State Islamic University of Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, University of Riau, and Islamic University of Riau, the social realities of campus life at State Islamic University of Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, University of Riau, and Islamic University of Riau and the rapid urbanization of Pekanbaru present new complexities. These universities are not merely academic spaces but also arenas where competing values intersect, including consumerist lifestyles and permissive social interaction. Rapid urbanization and exposure to consumerist and permissive cultures contribute to students 'sense of spiritual dislocation. Participant observations at UIN Suska, UNRI, and UIR show that this dislocation often drives students to seek structured religious guidance through online Islamic study groups, digital sermons, and local *da'wah* communities. Transnational Islam is an ideological landscape offering a coherent, systematic, and emotionally compelling Islamic narrative.

One of the most widely accessed channels by students in these three universities is digital space. The digital realm is not only a source of information but also a platform for alternative *da'wah* and education that effectively provides a more assertive Islamic discourse. The dynamics of social media and algorithmic curation play a crucial role in this process, as transnational Islamic preaching is often packaged in visually appealing formats tailored to users' preferences and interests. According to Solahudin and Fakhruroji (2020), this creates echo chambers that reinforce particular viewpoints while marginalizing alternative perspectives.

These findings indicate that Transnational Islamic Thought, such as Salafism, the Muslim Brotherhood, Hizb ut-Tahrir, and the Tablighi Jamaat, has emerged as an adaptive ideological force in confronting the realities of global modernity (Aidulsyah, 2023). Through effective communication strategies, these movements package Islamic messages in sleek, digestible, and rapidly disseminated digital formats, ranging from short TikTok videos, *da'wah* podcasts, and Islamic blogs to cinematic-style religious sermons on YouTube. The digital pedagogy employed by these groups offers moral guidance that is direct, practical, and seemingly straightforward, presenting itself as a solution to the complex challenges of contemporary life. This gives them a strategic advantage in reaching students who grapple with moral and spiritual uncertainty in the dynamic atmosphere of university life. Digital media functions not only as a vehicle for the distribution of ideas but also as a site for articulating identity and constructing new forms of religious authority. In this sphere, religious authority is no longer primarily institutional or tradition-bound but is

instead produced through digital interaction and the performative capacity of virtual clerics and transnational *da'wah* influencers. These figures are capable of rivalling and, in many cases, replacing the role of local scholars or campus-based religious authorities, as they provide Islamic narratives that are consistent, systematic, and applicable to everyday life (Febrian, 2024; Rosidi & Yazid, 2021). Amid the cultural ambiguity of the campus, often marked by value relativism, consumerism, and identity fragmentation, transnational Islam arrives with the promise of a coherent intellectual framework and appealing normative certainty. Through universalist rhetoric, a narrative of Islamic civilizational superiority, and the promise of an ideal, well-ordered Islamic life, these movements respond to Muslim students' existential needs in an increasingly fluid world in the search for direction, meaning, and identity. In this sense, transnational Islam is not merely a set of religious doctrines but also a comprehensive orientation for life and a source of collective identity amid the social dislocation wrought by modernity (Dikici, 2021).

Based on participant observation at the State Islamic University of Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, University of Riau, and Islamic University of Riau, student religiosity manifests through both structured and spontaneous activities, such as formal sermons, informal *halaqah* (listening to a preacher), Qur'an recitations, mentoring, and charitable programs. These practices reflect varying degrees of transnational Islamic influence. For instance, Salafi-oriented reading circles were more visible at UIN Suska, while Salafi movements maintained a small but active following at UNRI. At UIR, student discussions frequently referenced figures such as Yusuf al-Qaradawi and Said Hawwa, reflecting global reformist thought integrated with a modernist ethos.

Interviews revealed that students often enter university life with limited exposure to diverse Islamic traditions but gradually encounter transnational Islamic discourses through peer networks, online platforms, and campus organizations. This exposure triggers an active reconfiguration of their self-understanding. Many respondents described a "turning point" in their religiosity, a moment of self-realization, repentance, or moral awakening, often prompted by attending a *halaqah*. These narratives emphasize personal piety (*taqwa*), moral discipline, and religious authenticity, suggesting that religiosity is an ongoing project of self-cultivation rather than merely the inheritance of communal norms.

Based on participant observation at the State Islamic University of Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, a spectrum of Islamic engagement is plural, from students who emphasize *tarbiyah*-based activism rooted in organizational discipline to those who seek individualized spirituality through *dzikr* and online Islamic influencers. These practices represent varying articulations of transnational Islam, Salafi, Tablighi, Ikhwani, and reformist-modernist orientations, adapted to local cultural sensibilities. Importantly, despite their ideological differences, these movements share an underlying moral project: the pursuit of authentic Muslim selfhood amid modern life's uncertainties. However, the findings suggest that student affiliation with transnational Islamic thought does not always reflect a rigid or total ideological commitment. Instead, this phenomenon, referring to Sunesti (2018), may be understood as an ongoing process of identity negotiation, in which individuals selectively adopt elements from the moral frameworks and religious practices offered by these movements (Khotimah & Rosidi, 2020). Many students engage with these ideas as an ethical project or flexible space for spiritual exploration, allowing them to construct their own religious subjectivity. For example, a student at Sultan Syarif Kasim State Islamic University adopted Syar 'i styles of dress and participated actively in study circles as part of a quest for authenticity, yet without fully internalizing the political agenda or ideological platform of the Salafi movement or Hizb at-Tahrir. Such practices are often rooted in the desire to find meaning, foster a sense of belonging, or respond to social pressures in an increasingly competitive campus environment. Accordingly, their affiliations are better understood as forms of religious ad hocism, wherein students appropriate what they perceive to be ethically and spiritually beneficial while discarding elements they find irrelevant to their daily lives. Students in these three universities in Riau have Islamic identities, which are the product of an ongoing mediation between transnational narratives and local realities, in which they retain agency in shaping themselves as modern Muslim. Transnational Islam functions less as a monolithic ideological system and more as a rich cultural–religious repertoire from which students selectively draw and adapt elements to construct their own Islamic identities.

Based on participant observation and interviews at the State Islamic University of Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, University of Riau, and Islamic University of Riau, Muslim students have engaged with transnational Islam since their study in Senior High School. This engagement represents a continuation of students' prior religious experiences at the secondary school level, particularly through organizations such as Rohani Islam (Rohis). Rohis functioned as an early incubator of puritanical, scripturalist, and communal Islamic consciousness. The transition to university life expands their religious horizons while simultaneously reinforcing an Islamic identity that began to take shape during high school. Students carry this pre-formed religious identity into a more heterogeneous and competitive environment, where it is challenged and adapted. While this identity is not excessively rigid, it is often confronted by the pluralism of campus culture and the expectations of modern academic life. In this context, what was once a communal religious orientation has evolved into a more personal and reflective spiritual quest for meaning. Their experiences in Rohis

activities form an initial body of complex and dynamic religious capital that they bring to higher education. These students do not simply become passive consumers of ideology; rather, they act as active subjects who interpret transnational Islamic thought in line with their own moral and existential needs to be pious. The Islamic identity shaped through Rohis is subsequently tested and developed in response to the challenges of urban modernity and the expanded access to digital spaces.

Based on participant observation at Riau University, State Islamic University of Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, and Islamic University of Riau, Muslim students' inclinations toward transnational Islamic currents such as Salafism or Hizb ut-Tahrir are generally not expressed through formal membership or explicit ideological affiliation. Most do not openly identify themselves as part of a particular transnational movement, and many are not even active in campus *da'wah* institutions or other religious organizations in Indonesia. Nevertheless, they still access and internalize religious narratives rooted in transnational Islamic discourse, primarily via social media, online sermons, and other digital content. These students are always searching for personal piety and an authentic spiritual identity as young Muslims rather than participating in a political agenda or specific ideological mission.

Based on interviews conducted with students, they rejected the notion that their involvement and interaction with transnational Islam is reduced to binary categories such as radicalization versus moderation or deviation versus orthodoxy. Instead, they acknowledged that their engagement with transnational Islam is a complex spiritual dynamic. They state that they are not merely passive recipients of global ideological flows but rather active agents who reflexively reconstruct their Islamic understanding of it. Amid rapid social change, high educational mobility, and a crisis of local religious authority, students have emerged as autonomous religious actors in the Muslim community. The Islam they practice is not the institutional Islam formally prescribed by the state or mainstream religious organizations, but rather a personal construction shaped through individual selection from various global Islamic sources, spiritual reflection, and, in some cases, eclectic ideological combinations that are not always internally consistent.

These findings illustrate an ongoing process of negotiating religious identity between the legacy of local traditions, the appeal of transnational Islamic narratives, and the demands of modernity, such as professionalism, social mobility and moral autonomy. Talal Asad's (1993) concept of the discursive tradition provides a foundational lens for interpreting how students relate to Islam as both a source of divine truth and a living social practice. For Asad, Islam is not a fixed doctrinal system but a tradition that is continuously redefined through interpretive acts, institutional authority, and discipline. In this study, students' engagement with transnational movements such as Salafism or The Tablighi Jama'at can be seen as participation in this discursive tradition and as an effort to reconnect with an imagined "pure Islam" while navigating the pressures of secular modernity. In these three universities, this discursive process materializes through localized reinterpretations of the global Islamic discourse. Students often appropriate transnational idioms such as *hijrah* (migration to piety) and *jihad an-nafs* (struggle against the self) to frame their moral transformation. This act of borrowing and contextualizing demonstrates how global Islamic narratives are reassembled in local settings, creating what Asad (1993) calls a moral community of interpretation. However, this rearticulation also entails an epistemic narrowing. While transnational Islamic movements encourage deep scriptural engagement, they often prioritize textual certainty over interpretive pluralism. As a result, many students describe Islam as a fixed moral order to which society must conform, echoing Mahmood's (2005) observation that pious subjects in Egypt's mosque movements did not seek to liberalize Islam but to reshape themselves according to the divine norms.

This phenomenon also resonates with Hall's (1996) argument that identity is not a fixed entity but a socially constructed process that is continually negotiated in interaction with shifting historical, political, and cultural contexts. While these students may not explicitly identify themselves as followers of transnational movements such as Salafism or Hizb ut-Tahrir, the influence of these discourses permeates their religious practice. Consequently, students' understanding of transnational Islam has shifted from an institutional–formal paradigm to an individualized expression of piety shaped by lived experiences, social tensions, and a search for personal meaning.

Based on participant observation at the State Islamic University of Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, University of Riau, and Islamic University of Riau, one significant arena where such expressions of piety take place is the Lembaga Dakwah Kampus (LDK, Campus *Da'wah* Organization). Although not all students influenced by transnational Islamic discourse are active in formal *da'wah* organizations, some find in the LDK a space to articulate and experiment with their spiritual commitments to Islam.

Seeking Piety in the Lembaga Dakwah Kampus (LDK)

Based on participant observation at the State Islamic University of Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, significant structural transformations have taken place at Sultan Syarif Kasim State Islamic University (UIN Suska) Riau in the past decade.

Initially established as an Islamic higher education institution focusing on religious disciplines, UIN Suska expanded its academic structure by opening several general faculties. The Faculty of Economics and Social Sciences was established in 2005, followed by the Faculty of Science and Technology in 2008, and the Faculty of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry in 2014. These expansions reflect a national trend in Indonesia's Islamic higher-education system to integrate religious and general sciences within the broader framework of the Islamic university model (Rosidi, 2023). This structural diversification has facilitated the entry of students from general secondary schools (SMA) and vocational schools (SMK) into Islamic campuses, who previously would not have considered pursuing Islamic higher education. However, owing to the limited capacity and competitive admission processes of these new general faculties, many students from non-religious backgrounds eventually enrolled in religious departments such as Islamic Education, Islamic Education Management, Qur'anic Exegesis and Hadith, and *da'wah* Management courses. Consequently, the religious faculties at UIN Suska and other Islamic universities in Indonesia have experienced growing heterogeneity in student composition.

This demographic shift has significant implications for the internal dynamics of Islamic higher education. The increasing diversity of educational backgrounds within religious faculties has broadened the spectrum of students' Islamic understanding and expressions of religiosity. Some students approach Islamic studies from a devotional standpoint, while others engage with religion through intellectual, cultural, or even professional lenses. These variations indicate that institutional transformation has not only changed the structural composition of UIN Suska but also reshaped the social and ideological landscape of Islamic learning within the campus environment.

Based on participant observation at the State Islamic University of Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, University of Riau, and Islamic University of Riau, at UIN Suska, the University of Riau, and the Islamic University of Riau, the Lembaga Dakwah Kampus (LDK) functions as one of the most visible student religious organizations. Each campus hosts multiple LDK units, both at the university and faculty levels, which organize regular religious study sessions (*halaqah*), Friday sermons, and Islamic leadership training. For instance, at UIN Suska, the main LDK, LDK Al-Karamah, coordinates eight faculty-based LDK branches, each of which manages weekly Qur'an recitations and mentoring programs for new students. Similarly, the University of Riau has LDK UKMI Ar-Royyan, which plays a central role in organizing Islamic motivation seminars and dauroh (intensive training), while at the Islamic University of Riau, LDK UKMI Al-Kahfi conducts humanitarian activities, *da'wah*, and inter-campus Islamic discussion forums. These empirical observations indicate that the LDK has become a significant platform for students from diverse educational and social backgrounds to interact and negotiate their understanding of Islam. The organization functions not merely as a *da'wah* forum but also as a social and spiritual arena where students seek to consolidate their religious identities within a plural and secular university environment. Drawing on Abdul (2021), this process reflects how Islamic activism on campus operates as a form of identity consolidation and moral discipline. From an anthropological perspective, and in line with Talal Asad's (1993) concept of discursive tradition, the LDK can be understood as a site where Islamic practices and moral reasoning are continuously debated, reinterpreted, and transmitted among students through speech, text, and rituals. Thus, rather than being a static institution, LDK represents an evolving arena in which Islamic traditions are performed, rearticulated and reproduced in response to new educational and cultural contexts. For some students, involvement in the LDK is not merely an organizational activity but an avenue for self-actualization and a more directed pursuit of piety. Within this space, transnational Islamic discourses often find room to live and develop, albeit in forms that are not always ideologically coherent. Thus, the LDK becomes a hybrid space where global and local values, as well as modern and traditional norms, intersect and are negotiated in students' everyday religious practices.

Based on participant observation at the State Islamic University of Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, University of Riau, and Islamic University of Riau, and interview data from these three universities, many students seeking to deepen their Islamic understanding often look beyond the formal academic setting. Students in all three campuses expressed that classroom-based instruction was insufficient to satisfy their "religious knowledge thirst." They described university classrooms as overly bound by curricular structures, assessment requirements, and learner-centered pedagogies that demand active participation from students. However, many of these students, particularly those from general secondary or vocational school backgrounds, were still in the early stages of academic engagement and remained more accustomed to the passive, teacher-centered learning models of their previous schooling. Consequently, university classrooms are often not perceived as optimal spaces for enhancing religious knowledge. Instead, students gravitated toward alternative spaces such as *halaqah,* mosque-based lectures, and LDK mentoring sessions that allowed for a more receptive mode of learning focused on doctrinal, practical, and solution-oriented Islamic teachings. This passive learning disposition, shaped by earlier educational experiences, continues to influence how students construct and sustain their learning traditions in higher Islamic education environments. These findings illustrate how structural and

pedagogical shifts in Indonesian Islamic universities interact with students' prior learning cultures, shaping their pursuit and embodiment of religious knowledge.

In this regard, the LDK serves as a space where students can engage in intensive Islamic learning (Latif and Ramadhan, 2022). Based on participant observation at the State Islamic University of Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, they interact with senior peers who act as mentors in developing their religious knowledge. At UIN Suska Riau, for instance, each faculty has its own LDK that maintains links with the university-level one. In turn, the university-level LDK is connected to inter-campus *da'wah* forums at the national level. Hierarchically, faculty-based LDKs are part of an organizational network embedded within a broader, complex, and nationally connected *da'wah* structure. This networked and tiered configuration reflects the broader typology of organizational life in Indonesia, which is often hierarchical and multi-layered.

For instance, based on participant observation at the State Islamic University of Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, the *Lembaga Dakwah Kampus* (LDK) within the Faculty of *Da'wah* clearly maintains a relationship with the university-level LDK; however, this relationship is both fluid and dynamic. At times, the activities of the faculty-level LDK are not even known to the university-level LDK. This suggests that the hierarchical correlation between the two is largely superficial and symbolic. Such dynamics indicate that organizational life within the LDK cannot be tightly controlled like formal institutions, much less the religious orientations of its members.

Therefore, it is unsurprising that members of this organization display a dynamic range of understandings of transnational Islamic thought. As academic youth, students involved in the LDK also engage with worlds that are "non-Islamic." They generally accept Islam as their core identity but simultaneously require other identities to strengthen their daily social interactions. It is thus not unusual to find LDK members absorbing transnational Islamic influences on the one hand, while also incorporating democratic concepts and values of modernity into their organizational structures. For example, the election of organizational leaders still involves a voting process, and the organizational framework itself is inspired by modern institutional systems. Specific tasks are assigned to designated divisions, and information regarding certain activities is disseminated through modern communication platforms such as WhatsApp.

This picture underscores that the presence of transnational Islamic ideas within formal organizational structures such as the LDK is neither "foreign" nor isolated from the broader macro-historical description of Islam in Indonesia. The interplay between Islam and local traditions has been an inherent feature of Indonesian Islamic history (Sudarman, 2021). In the contemporary context, Indonesian Islam must contend with global traditions, not just local ones. This dual engagement between the local and global is clearly observable in the configuration of LDK as a student Islamic organization. The Islamic identity espoused by the LDK is not strongly cohesive in nature. Rather than being stable, it is highly fluid. In the framework of Bauman's (2000) concept of *liquid modernity*, identity in modern society tends to be flexible, adaptive, and subject to change in response to surrounding social, cultural, and political dynamics. This view aligns with Melucci's (1996) argument that collective identity within social movements is the outcome of ongoing negotiations among members, which are shaped by both internal interactions and external pressures.

This is evident in their diverse responses to the concept of the *khilafah*. A veiled female student in the LDK said *"NKRI is final; Islam is about morals."* (Riska, UIN Suska). Conversely, Lisma argued that " *Khilafah* is good to solve many problems in Indonesia currently" (Lisma, UNRI). She argued that these problems stemmed from the absence of *khilafah* in the country. However, for the most part, their involvement in LDK is driven by a spiritual desire to increase their piety. From the perspective of *pious self-formation* (Mahmood, 2005), this reflects a process of self-cultivation through moral discipline and ritual. When asked about Islamic politics, they often responded that the status of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (*NKRI*) is final and requires no further evaluation or discussion. This stance corresponds to *everyday Islam* orientation (Göle, 2015), in which religious practice is oriented toward shaping daily conduct and ethics, particularly among youth. For these students, the crucial issue is how Islam shapes Muslims' everyday behavior. Amidst moral exhortations from parents, religious scholars, and preachers, the moral conduct of Muslim youth is the primary concern they seek to address. In other words, their religious orientation is largely intrinsic (Allport, 1967), emphasizing the internalization of religious teachings for moral improvement rather than pursuing a political or Islamic agenda.

Thus, it is unsurprising that their activities are largely aimed at enhancing personal piety. Preachers (*ustaz*) invited to study sessions are not required to adhere to predetermined themes or to specific texts. Instead, they are given the freedom to speak according to their expertise without the obligation to reference fixed, textual sources. Consequently, the sermons delivered in these sessions do not significantly differ from those typically heard in mosques outside the campus.

Based on participant observation at the University of Riau, LDKs generally make campus mosques the central hub of their activities. For example, the LDK at the University of Riau (UNRI) has been more prominent and relatively successful in mobilizing Islamic activities to enhance the moral character of the campus community. Compared to UIN Suska Riau, the LDK at UNRI has managed to organize itself more effectively around a mosque-based model of student development. From Bourdieu's (1990) perspective of social space, campus mosques can be understood as arenas where the LDK accumulates symbolic capital in the form of moral authority and social influence. The mosque is utilized as a *public sphere* (Habermas, 1989) to shape moral discourse within the campus community. By coordinating religious activities in the mosque, the LDK not only facilitates worship but also builds social capital that strengthens the cohesion of the Muslim community on campus. As Lefebvre (1991) describes, such a mosque becomes a *social space*—a physical and symbolic site produced and imbued with meaning through social practices and social interactions. For LDK members, the mosque is not merely a place of worship but the "spirit" that drives piety, religious morality, and solidarity (*ukhuwah*). Routine activities in the mosque—whether communal prayers, *halaqah*, or informal discussions—create a *moral community* (Durkheim, 1912) that underpins both social and religious cohesion among students.

In contrast to UIN Suska, where LDK activities are more dynamically integrated into the broader student life, based on participant observation at UNRI, the LDK at UNRI remains more centralized around campus mosques and prayer rooms. This reflects the organization's enduring connection to mosque life, a characteristic that can be traced back to its early development during the New Order. When state authoritarianism was at its peak, LDK members often conducted activities clandestinely under the protection of campus mosques (Hefner, 2000; Heryanto, 1999) to avoid disruption by state authorities. While UNRI's LDK displays a similar mosque-centered orientation, its rationale differs significantly from that of the New Order. Rather than evading state repression, UNRI's LDK mosque-based activities are now motivated by the strategic advantage of forging alliances with students, lecturers, and other academics in the pursuit of personal religious piety. This approach fosters a morally vibrant campus life underpinned by Islamic values, with the aspiration that the "moral light" envisioned by the LDK can be more readily realized when supported by the campus community.

The activities organized by the LDK are predominantly religious and involve lectures. The themes are not predetermined by the LDK, allowing each invited preacher the freedom to choose their topic and content as they see fit. This flexibility reflects the fluidity of religious programs. Far from being radical or containing suspicious elements, the sermons they host tend to be similar in content and tone to those delivered by preachers outside campus.

Based on participant observation at the Islamic University of Riau, to strengthen the foundation of Islam at the individual level among students, the Islamic Student Preaching Organization (Lembaga Dakwah Kampus, LDK) at Universitas Islam Riau (UIR) has developed a series of intensive programs, such as Qur'ān memorization activities. This program serves as a distinctive magnet for students seeking to deepen their adherence to Islamic law (*Sharīʿa*) in their daily lives. This approach underscores the notion that sustainable socio-religious transformation is more effectively initiated through the cultivation of individual Islamic values and practices before advancing to broader social reforms.

The LDK's religious activities are also marked by a relatively strict application of gender segregation, particularly in routine study circles (pengajian) for women. This separation is grounded in normative interpretations of Islamic law and is consistent with the religious practice characteristic of the Salafi-quietist tradition (Wiktorowicz, 2006), in which moral discipline and social etiquette (adab) are integral components of faith cultivation. While these rules may appear rigid, LDK activities operate in harmony with the academic system and do not conflict with formal university regulations.

As Rifky state, a board member of LDK al-Kahfi at Universitas Islam Riau, explains "class is not enough; halaqah teaches real Islam (Rifky, UIR)." The LDK emphasizes Islam's prophetic mission, which, in Kuntowijoyo's (2004) framework, refers to the pursuit of humanization, liberation, and transcendence through *daʿwah*. Piety is nurtured through regular study sessions held at the campus mosque, where sermons (ceramah) essentially resemble wirid or pengajian conducted in broader community settings. The content of these sermons is flexible, depending on the invited ustaz's interests and expertise, thereby reflecting discursive plurality in the daʿwa practice. Although participants are asked to sign attendance lists to monitor their commitment to religious learning and organizational engagement, this functions as a form of *soft surveillance* (Foucault, 1977). Absence does not result in formal sanctions but instead serves as an instrument to foster sustained participation in the worship community.

From the perspective of students involved in LDK, Islamic religiosity on university campuses—particularly in the three institutions studied—appears to be in decline. This perception motivates LDK to assume a protective role,

aiming to improve and regulate student morality in response to what they view as the degradation of religious ethics in the educational environment. This phenomenon reflects the processes of *moral entrepreneurship* and *moral regulation*, wherein organizational actors seek to redefine normative boundaries and construct a repertoire of moral education as a solution (Becker, 1973; Goode and Ben-Yehuda, 2009). In practice, the emphasis on everyday moral cultivation—through regular sermons, study circles, and habitual worship at the campus mosque—functions not only to reinforce individual piety but also as a collective strategy to produce disciplined religious subjects who conform to the organization's moral norms.

Simultaneously, the diverse cultural backgrounds of its members open up space for discussions on national political issues, positioning the LDK as a forum for critical discourse on governance and contemporary affairs. Nevertheless, such critiques are generally channeled into normative and ethical terms rather than partisan political mobilization, owing to campus political opportunity structures, organizational resource constraints, and collective framing strategies that prioritize moral formation over direct political action (Benford & Snow, 2000; McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Tarrow, 1998).

From their perspective, at the macro level, the state is often seen as failing to embody Islamic exemplarity and, at times, as not treating the Muslim community with fairness. However, this perception does not lead them to advocate political models that oppose the existing system of governance. The Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) is regarded as a non-negotiable, final consensus. This position aligns with *quietist Islamism* (Wiktorowicz, 2006), reflecting the tendency of certain Islamic groups to avoid direct political confrontation, focusing instead on moral cultivation and the dissemination of what they consider a pure understanding of Islam.

Students in LDK who lean toward transnational Islamic orientations often align more closely with Salafi tendencies—an orientation which, in Roy's (2004) terms, emphasizes the *deculturation* and *purification* of Islam from practices considered bidʿah or inconsistent with the Sunnah. Within the Salafi-quietist paradigm, micro-level piety is viewed as a more essential foundation than macro-level changes in politics. This aligns with the concept of *Islamization from below* (Abaza, 2002), wherein societal transformation begins with the improvement of individuals rather than state-level institutional reform. Instead of advocating for alternative political systems that might provoke public resistance, they develop educational and mentoring programs that strengthen the personal piety of Muslim students, such as *halaqah*, mentoring sessions, and Islamic literacy programs. The *politics of piety* (Mahmood, 2005) strategy adopted by the LDK thus prioritizes the formation of pious Muslim subjects as a cultural rather than a structural political goal. This orientation is clearly reflected in their focus on individual moral improvement and spiritual guidance, rather than the pursuit of direct political system change.

Conclusion

The search for Islamic identity among Muslim students in Riau tends to gravitate toward a transnational Islamic identity, which refers to three major currents of contemporary Islamic movements: Salafism, Tablighi Jamaat, and Hizb ut-Tahrir. By focusing on these three variants, this study reveals that expressions of transnational Islam among students in Pekanbaru manifest in two primary forms: first, transnational Islamic orientations personally embraced by individual students, and second, those adopted or articulated through formal campus-based student organizations, particularly the *Lembaga Dakwah Kampus* (LDK, Campus *Da'wah* Organization).

This study demonstrates that the manifestations of transnational Islamic orientations across the three universities under study are neither rigid nor static but are fluid, dynamic, and subject to ongoing processes of negotiation. While the ideological tendencies of Muslim students in these institutions generally lean toward Salafi orientations, their religious commitments cannot be reduced to a pure or monolithic form of Salafism. Instead, their religious practices and understanding reveal instances of hybridization, incorporating elements from other variants of transnational Islam and local Islamic traditions.

Ultimately, these findings underscore that singular categorizations, such as "Salafi" are insufficient to account for the diversity and complexity of students' religious orientations. Their Islamic identities are shaped by the interplay between ideological doctrines, social experiences, and pluralistic realities of campus life. This suggests that studies of transnational Islam within student communities must consider the dynamics of hybridity, the negotiation of identity, and the interpretive flexibility of religious teachings as integral to their adaptation to the sociopolitical context of contemporary Indonesia. However, several issues remain unresolved. First, the study primarily captures students' perspectives and campus-based experiences, while broader institutional and policy dimensions, such as the influence of university governance, national religious education policies, and digital religious networks, remain underexplored in the literature. Second, the longitudinal trajectories of students' religious identities beyond their university years have not been systematically studied. Future studies could therefore extend this research by incorporating institutional

analyses, tracing graduates' post-campus religious engagements, and employing digital ethnography to understand how online Islamic spaces interact with transnational discourses and local identity formation in the Indonesian context. Such directions would deepen our understanding of how young Muslims navigate between global Islamic movements and Indonesia's evolving sociopolitical landscape.

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