

## **Audiences Respond to Interfaith Dialogue Messages on the Jeda Nulis YouTube Channel in the Context of Indonesian Pluralism**

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### **Abstract**

**Purpose:** This study examines audience reception of interfaith dialogue on the YouTube channel Jeda Nulis, particularly the “Indonesia Rumah Bersama” series, to analyze how digital narratives promote religious pluralism and social cohesion in Indonesia. **Methodology:** The research employed a qualitative digital netnography to collect and analyze hundreds of publicly available comments on selected videos, which were then interpreted through Stuart Hall’s encoding/decoding framework. **Findings:** The findings reveal that the majority of comments reflected *dominant-hegemonic readings* that fully accepted the tolerant, reflective, and inclusive messages conveyed in the dialogues. A smaller portion of comments demonstrated *negotiated readings*, where audiences partly agreed with the messages but adapted them to personal beliefs or cultural traditions, while only a marginal minority expressed *oppositional readings* that rejected the messages on ideological grounds. These reception patterns indicate that humanistic and narrative-driven communication reduces ideological resistance and fosters more open interfaith engagement in digital spaces. **Research Implications:** Practically, the findings provide insights for content creators, faith-based organizations, NGOs, and government agencies to design more inclusive digital communication strategies that cultivate intergroup trust. Theoretically, this study advances an audience-centered perspective in religious communication by mapping interpretive positions toward interfaith dialogue in live social media interactions. **Originality/Value:** Unlike much Indonesian scholarship that predominantly emphasizes discourse production and elite messaging, this article highlights the role of audience reception by integrating *digital netnography* with Hall’s model to explore how digital publics interpret interfaith narratives.

**Keywords:** religious pluralism; interfaith communication; audience reception; *digital netnography*; YouTube discourse; Jeda Nulis, *encoding/decoding*.

### **Abstrak**

**Tujuan:** Penelitian ini menelaah resepsi audiens terhadap dialog lintas iman di kanal YouTube Jeda Nulis, khususnya seri “Indonesia Rumah Bersama”, untuk menganalisis bagaimana narasi digital mendorong pluralisme agama dan kohesi sosial di Indonesia. **Metodologi:** Metode yang digunakan adalah netnografi digital kualitatif dengan mengumpulkan dan menganalisis ratusan komentar publik pada video terpilih, kemudian menafsirkannya melalui kerangka encoding/decoding Stuart Hall. **Temuan:** Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa mayoritas komentar merefleksikan *dominant-hegemonic readings* yang sepenuhnya menerima pesan toleransi yang inklusif, reflektif, dan santai. Sebagian kecil komentar menunjukkan *negotiated readings*, yakni menerima pesan tetapi menyesuaikannya dengan keyakinan atau tradisi budaya masing-masing, sementara hanya segelintir yang menampilkan *oppositional readings* dengan menolak pesan atas dasar ideologi tertentu. Pola resepsi ini mengindikasikan bahwa komunikasi naratif-humanis mampu menurunkan resistensi ideologis serta mendorong keterbukaan dalam dialog lintas iman di ruang digital. **Implikasi Penelitian:** Secara praktis, temuan ini memberikan masukan bagi pembuat konten, organisasi keagamaan, LSM (Lembaga Swadaya Masyarakat), dan lembaga pemerintah untuk merancang strategi komunikasi digital yang lebih inklusif dalam membangun kepercayaan antar kelompok. Secara teoretis, penelitian ini memperluas perspektif komunikasi agama berbasis audiens dengan memetakan posisi interpretatif terhadap dialog lintas iman dalam interaksi media sosial.

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Received: January 14, 2024; Revised: July 27, 2024; Accepted: August 29, 2024

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**Orisinalitas/Nilai:** Berbeda dengan banyak kajian di Indonesia yang lebih menekankan pada produksi wacana dan pesan elit, artikel ini menempatkan resepsi audiens sebagai pusat analisis dengan memadukan netnografi digital dan model Hall untuk memahami bagaimana publik digital menafsirkan narasi lintas iman.

**Kata Kunci:** pluralisme agama; komunikasi lintas iman; resepsi audiens; netnografi digital; wacana *YouTube*; Jeda Nulis, *encoding/decoding*.

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## INTRODUCTION

The development of digital media has transformed patterns of social interaction across boundaries, including interreligious communication. *YouTube*, with more than 2.5 billion active users worldwide each month (We Are Social, 2023), has become one of the most important arenas for the global public to engage in discourse. In Indonesia, the number of *YouTube* users has reached 139 million, or more than half of the population. This fact demonstrates that *YouTube* is not merely an entertainment platform but also a highly potential arena for the dissemination of public discourse, including religious discussions (Riskha, 2024). However, the widespread penetration of *YouTube* also opens up spaces for debate, differences of interpretation, and symbolic conflict that can affect social cohesion (Toni et al., 2021).

The Religious Harmony Index (*Indeks Kerukunan Umat Beragama*, KUB) issued by the Research and Development Agency of the Ministry of Religious Affairs shows a positive trend. The KUB score increased from 73.09 in 2022 to 76.02 in 2023, and further rose to 76.47 in 2024 (Barjah, 2024). This increase indicates a relative success of the government's religious moderation programs. Nevertheless, these figures do not represent the absence of tolerance problems, since cases of rejection of houses of worship, disruptions of religious services, and social resistance to diversity continue to occur. In other words, behind the encouraging figures remain vulnerabilities in interreligious relations within society.

This is reinforced by data from the SETARA Institute, which recorded an increasing trend of violations of freedom of religion/belief (KBB) in Indonesia in 2023–2024 (SETARA Institute, 2023). During this period, there were 477 incidents with 731 acts of intolerance. In detail, 217 incidents with 329 acts occurred in 2023, while in 2024 the number increased to 260 incidents with 402 acts. Looking further back, between 2007 and 2022 there were also 573 cases of intolerance, ranging from the rejection of house of worship construction to the disruption of religious services and even the destruction or burning of religious facilities. These data demonstrate that intolerance based on religion remains a serious structural issue that has not yet been resolved.

In addition to intolerance in religious practice, hate speech on social media adds further complexity to the problem. Data from the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (*Kominfo*) show that in early 2023 the government detected nearly 3 million pieces of negative content on social media, most of which contained hate speech (Kominfo RI, 2023). During the monitoring of the 2024 election campaign, X/Twitter was recorded as the platform with the highest amount of hate speech (120,381 tweets), followed by Facebook (56,780 posts) and Instagram (4,472 posts). The most dominant types of hate speech included identity attacks (123,968 texts), insults (104,664 texts), profanity (42,267 texts), and threats/incitement (39,153 texts). The most frequent targets included Jewish communities (90,911 texts), people with disabilities (46,278 texts), and Chinese ethnic groups (9,563 texts). These facts confirm that digital spaces remain vulnerable as breeding grounds for social polarization and the reproduction of identity-based intolerance.

Thus, digital media in Indonesia, particularly *YouTube*, presents a paradox. On the one hand, it offers enormous opportunities to foster interfaith dialogue, promote tolerance, and strengthen religious harmony (Tur-Viñes & González-Río, 2021). On the other hand, it also serves as a fertile arena for the reproduction of intolerance, hate speech, and polarization. This dynamic makes research on audience reception of interfaith dialogue on *YouTube* channels such as Jeda Nulis crucial, because the ways audiences accept, negotiate, or reject messages reflect broader social conditions related to religious diversity in Indonesia's digital space.

The literature on interfaith communication in digital media highlights several important patterns. First, several studies emphasize the role of *YouTube* as a forum for religious discussion and tolerance education (Maliki & Nazar, 2023; Nurrohman & Mujahidin, 2022; Wasik & Philips, 2022). These findings highlight the communication strategies of content creators but do not examine in depth how audiences interpret the messages they receive. Second, Stuart Hall's *encoding/decoding* theory (1980) has been used to analyze audience reception in digital domains, such as in the personal branding of religious figures (Haq, 2022; Hidayah & Widodo, 2021) and cultural representation (Radja & Sunjaya, 2024). However, its application in the context of interfaith dialogue on Indonesian *YouTube* channels, particularly Jeda Nulis, remains very limited. Third, digital netnography has proven relevant in analyzing digital interactions in socio-political issues and the commodification of religion (Faradini, 2022; Sahid, 2023; Suryawati & Rusadi, 2021). Yet, its use to study how audiences negotiate religious dialogue messages has not been widely applied. Fourth, studies on interfaith dialogue in the digital era emphasize the importance of religious moderation, global ethics, and interfaith communication models (Fadli, 2023; Gani et al., 2024; Puspitasari, 2020; Setiawan, 2024). However, most of these studies focus more on discourse production and communicator strategies rather than the dimension of audience reception. In the global context, the field of digital religion (Campbell, 2012; Cheong, 2018) stresses the importance of seeing religion as a negotiated practice within digital spaces. These comparisons indicate a clear research gap concerning the dimension of audience reception in Indonesia.

Based on this review, a clear research gap emerges: previous studies have highlighted communication techniques and message construction in interfaith content, but very few have examined how audiences interpret, negotiate, or reject these messages. In fact, audience reception is a crucial dimension to understand the extent to which interfaith communication in digital spaces effectively promotes tolerance. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by analyzing audience reception of interfaith dialogue on the Jeda Nulis *YouTube* channel through the combined use of *digital netnography* and Stuart Hall's *encoding/decoding* theory.

Specifically, the objectives of this study are to: (1) map the categories of audience reception of interfaith dialogue content on the Jeda Nulis channel (*dominant-hegemonic*, *negotiated*, or *oppositional*), and (2) explain the social, cultural, and ideological factors influencing audience decoding processes. Thus, this research is not only descriptive but also analytical in uncovering the dynamics of audience reception on issues of religious diversity in digital spaces.

This study is based on the argument that audience responses to interfaith dialogue are not neutral but are influenced by the social, cultural, and ideological backgrounds of individuals. Consistent with Stuart Hall's theory (1980), audiences may accept messages fully, negotiate them, or reject them. Nevertheless, this study hypothesizes that most audiences of the Jeda Nulis channel will occupy a *dominant-hegemonic* position, since the channel's inclusive, reflective, and humorous style of communication facilitates message acceptance. Even so, oppositional readings are expected to appear in small numbers, and their presence is important as an indicator of polarization and resistance in digital discourse.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The unit of analysis in this study is public comments on the *YouTube* channel Jeda Nulis, specifically the *Indonesia Rumah Bersama* series that explicitly discusses interfaith dialogue. From the entire series, this study selected three main episodes published between January and December 2023. The selection was based on two criteria: (1) videos with relatively high numbers of views and comments, and (2) videos that thematically highlighted interreligious interaction and messages of tolerance. From these three episodes, a total of 700 comments were obtained as the research sample. The comments were selected using purposive sampling, which included only comments relevant to issues of diversity, tolerance, and interfaith dialogue, while technical comments (e.g., “like,” emojis, link promotions) were excluded.

This study employed a qualitative approach (2017) with a *digital netnography* design (2020) combined with Stuart Hall’s (1980) *encoding/decoding* framework. *Digital netnography* was chosen because it can better capture the social, ideological, and emotional dynamics that naturally emerge in digital spaces, unlike quantitative surveys that tend to limit answers to structured forms. Similarly, conventional content analysis generally counts word frequencies without adequately exploring the meanings embedded in digital discussions. Accordingly, *digital netnography* was used as a data collection strategy (through observation and documentation of digital interactions), while the *encoding/decoding* framework served as the analytical lens to interpret how audiences constructed meaning from interfaith dialogue messages.

The primary data consisted of publicly available *YouTube* user comments posted on episodes of the *Indonesia Rumah Bersama* series on the Jeda Nulis channel. Secondary data included academic literature, official reports, and previous studies on interfaith communication in digital media, which were used to support the interpretation. The comments were collected during February–March 2024, so the analysis reflects relatively recent audience perceptions of religious diversity issues.

Data collection was carried out through *digital observation* using *netnographic* techniques. The comments were manually compiled from *YouTube*’s public data storage features and then screened based on relevance (comments expressing appreciation, criticism, or negotiation related to messages of tolerance and interfaith dialogue). From the total dataset, 700 comments were selected for analysis. In the initial stage, comments were categorized into three reception indicators: (1) support/acceptance, (2) negotiation, and (3) rejection/opposition. This study adhered to digital research ethics by maintaining the anonymity of commenters, not disclosing personal identities, and using only publicly available data in accordance with platform policies.

Data analysis was conducted using *thematic analysis* in combination with Hall’s *encoding/decoding* model. The process began with data familiarization by repeatedly reading all selected comments to gain a comprehensive understanding. This was followed by initial coding, assigning codes to comments based on emerging content themes such as tolerance, critique, humor, or negotiated meaning. The coded data were then grouped into the three decoding categories proposed by Hall: *dominant-hegemonic reading*, *negotiated reading*, and *oppositional reading*. The final stage involved theoretical interpretation, in which patterns of meaning and interaction were analyzed and connected to the social, ideological, and cultural context of Indonesian audiences.

To maintain validity, the findings were compared with secondary literature and other research reports on interfaith communication in digital media. Triangulation was conducted by cross-checking consistency between the primary data (*YouTube* comments) and secondary sources, while peer debriefing among the researchers was undertaken to minimize interpretive bias.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### YouTube Jeda Nulis

The *YouTube* channel Jeda Nulis is one of the most popular Islamic da'wah media outlets in Indonesia, with more than 1.64 million subscribers and 418 uploaded videos to date. Initially, the content on this channel was produced directly by Habib Husein Ja'far Al Hadar, covering topics related to Islamic concepts and general issues, such as *"Islam Bukan Agama Perang"* (Islam Is Not a Religion of War), *"Belajar Islam di Nusantara Jadi Lebih Mudah"* (Learning Islam in the Archipelago Made Easier), and *"Betapa Agungnya Nabi Muhammad SAW"* (The Greatness of the Prophet Muhammad).

Habib Husein is widely recognized as a millennial ulama who consistently advocates peace through social media, particularly *YouTube* (Ervinda, 2023). He employs a popular approach that resonates with younger generations by combining religious preaching with a light, humorous, and reflective style. Beyond Jeda Nulis, Habib Husein has also participated in the LOGIN program on Deddy Corbuzier's *YouTube* channel, alongside five religious figures from different faiths (Masfupah, 2019). This program has become an important platform for building interfaith dialogue in a digital format that reaches a wide, cross-generational audience.



Figure 1. Homepage of the Jeda Nulis *YouTube* channel

A significant development for Jeda Nulis occurred on December 22, 2018, when Habib Husein began collaborating with Irfan Amalee, a figure who in 2011 was listed among the 500 most influential Muslims in the world by the Royal Institute. Since then, Jeda Nulis has become increasingly consistent in addressing issues of religious tolerance, both in Indonesia and globally (Masfupah, 2019).

In addition to collaborating with Irfan Amalee, Habib Husein actively engages with a wide variety of public figures, including comedians, influencers, musicians, academics, and religious leaders (Fikri, 2023). This pattern of collaboration has enabled Jeda Nulis to attract highly diverse audiences. Another added value of Habib Husein's preaching lies in his interactive question-and-answer sessions on social media, which foster a more personal and participatory connection with audiences.

One of the channel's flagship programs is the "*Indonesia Rumah Bersama*" (Indonesia: Our Shared Home) series, which consists of nine videos. In this series, Habib Husein engages in dialogue with six religious leaders and representatives of different faiths. The format represents a digital miniature of Indonesia, where six religions and various belief systems are able to be present, engage in dialogue, and coexist peacefully and respectfully.

The communication strategy, which combines inclusive Islamic narratives, a relaxed youth-oriented style, and interfaith dialogue, has made most of Jeda Nulis's content well received by audiences. Furthermore, the channel has proven effective in disseminating messages of religious tolerance and strengthening a spirit of harmony within Indonesia's multicultural society.

### Strategies for Conveying Messages of Tolerance in Interfaith Dialogue at Jeda Nulis

The "*Indonesia Rumah Bersama*" (Indonesia: Our Shared Home) video series features Habib Husein Ja'far in dialogue with six religious leaders and representatives of different faiths. There are six main episodes, including "*Duduk Bersama Protestan*" (Sitting with Protestants) with Pastor Tomy Simanjuntak, "*Duduk Bersama Konghucu*" (Sitting with Confucians) with Ws Urip Saputra, "*Duduk Bersama Buddha*" (Sitting with Buddhists) with Bhikku Dhirapunna, and other episodes with Catholic, Hindu, and Kebatinan representatives. Through this series, messages of tolerance are conveyed through diverse narratives such as the use of inclusive language, reflective storytelling, cross-religious analogies, quotations from various holy scriptures, and warm visual presentation. For instance, in the episode with a Confucian leader, Habib Ja'far connected Confucian moral principles about social responsibility with a saying of the Prophet Muhammad on human kindness. In the episode with a Buddhist leader, the five Buddhist precepts were paralleled with Islamic moral values. Equality among the speakers was reinforced through visual symbols such as a circle seating arrangement and open body language.

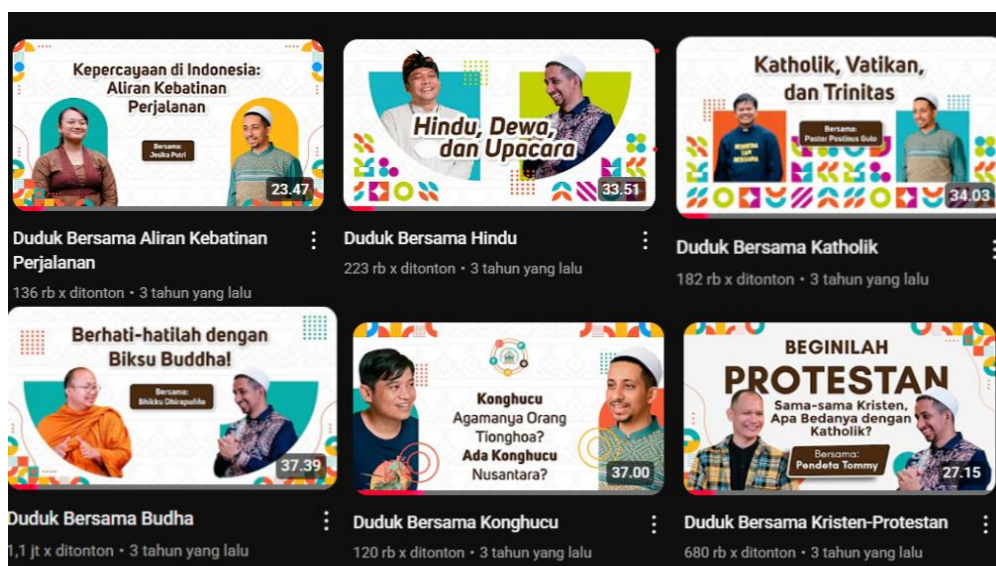


Figure 2. Episodes of *Indonesia Rumah Bersama* focusing on Interfaith Dialogue



Messages of tolerance were also emphasized through direct quotations from the videos. In the episode *"Duduk Bersama Buddha"*, Habib Ja'far stated: *"I believe that the essence of all religious teachings is love and compassion"* (Jeda Nulis, 2022b). This statement underscored that there is no reason to hate one another when love can be found behind differences. Similarly, in the episode with the Confucian leader, the following quote appeared: *"The best of people are those who bring benefits to humankind"* (Jeda Nulis, 2022d). This quotation illustrates how interfaith messages are built on shared ethics and universal spiritual values.

The first prominent strategy is interactive and reflective dialogue. This pattern is characterized by equal exchanges in which Habib Ja'far and religious leaders ask each other questions and provide in-depth responses, rather than engaging in one-way doctrinal exposition. For example, in the episode *"Duduk Bersama Katolik"* (Sitting with Catholics), Habib Ja'far asked: *"So, how do you explain the role of the Holy Spirit as different from God the Father?"* The speaker replied: *"Well, actually, Habib, many people misunderstand this as tritheism, as if there were three gods, but in fact, Catholics and Protestants believe in the Trinity ..."* After this response, Habib Ja'far commented: *"That is quite profound. It sounds like a very reflective understanding rather than a simple dogma."* The guest then affirmed: *"Exactly. It comes from reading, reflecting, and living the faith authentically"* (Jeda Nulis, 2022c).

A similar pattern also appeared in the episode *"Duduk Bersama Aliran Kebatinan"* (Sitting with Kebatinan). Habib Ja'far asked: *"So, how do you view the relationship between caring for the environment and your belief system?"* The guest responded: *"Actually, in our spiritual journey, caring for the environment is the same as caring for ourselves. Because we say, human beings are made from the earth, so preserving nature is the same as preserving ourselves."* Habib Ja'far then commented: *"That is quite profound. It sounds like a very reflective understanding rather than a simple dogma."* The guest emphasized again: *"Exactly. If we do not respect the earth, how can we respect ourselves?"* (Jeda Nulis, 2022a). These findings demonstrate that the reflective approach opens a space for discussion that is not only informative but also transformative.

The second strategy is the use of cross-religious analogies. Habib Ja'far and the guest speakers often employed parables to connect theological concepts from one religion with similar values in another. For example, in the episode *"Duduk Bersama Buddha"* (Sitting with Buddhists), Habib Ja'far asked: *"I see that you compared the bitterness of coffee to the hardships of life. Could you elaborate further on that analogy?"* The guest responded: *"Exactly! Just like bitter coffee that we sometimes enjoy without sugar, life also has bitter moments. Learning to accept those moments makes life's sweetness more meaningful ..."* (Jeda Nulis, 2022b).

Another example appeared in the episode *"Duduk Bersama Konghucu"* (Sitting with Confucians). Habib Ja'far asked: *"There are many ethnic festivals in Indonesia, but giving a special day such as Chinese New Year to the Chinese community is interesting. How do you explain this?"* The guest explained: *"I would compare it to a coin with two inseparable sides. Chinese culture and Confucianism are like the two sides of that coin."* Habib Ja'far followed up: *"So, even though Chinese New Year is a cultural celebration, does it also contain religious values?"* The guest replied: *"Yes, this shows how religion and culture are interconnected, similar to teachings that are linked across many traditions."* (Jeda Nulis, 2022d). These findings indicate that cross-religious analogies effectively bridge doctrinal differences and foster interfaith empathy.

The third strategy is the use of humor and simple language. This approach makes complex themes such as interfaith dialogue easier to relate to everyday life. In the episode *"Duduk Bersama Buddha"*, Habib Ja'far opened the conversation with a joke: *"The robe you are wearing looks like it was once made from a burial shroud, right?"* The guest laughed and then explained the philosophical meaning behind the attire:

*"Yes, it originally came from burial shrouds! Just imagine: a monk walking around in clothes from the dead. Maybe it is not fashionable, but it reminds us not to be too attached to appearances!"* (Jeda Nulis, 2022b).

A similar pattern appeared in the episode *"Duduk Bersama Konghucu"*. Habib Ja'far asked in a casual tone: *"Talking about dragons, turtles, and qilin, this reminds me of Dragon Ball! Does Confucianism have its own superheroes?"* The guest responded while laughing: *"Well, not exactly superheroes with superpowers, but yes, these animals symbolize strength, longevity, and wisdom ..."* (Jeda Nulis, 2022d). This humorous strategy created a relaxed atmosphere, enabling the audience to understand religious symbolism in a light but meaningful way.

**Table 1. Strategies for Conveying Messages of Tolerance in the *Indonesia Rumah Bersama* Series**

Strategy	Form of Implementation	Example of Quotation/Interaction
Interactive and Reflective Dialogue	In-depth question-and-answer exchanges rather than one-way preaching; building empathy and interfaith understanding	<i>"So, how do you explain the role of the Holy Spirit as different from God the Father?"</i> (Jeda Nulis, 2022c)
Cross-Religious Analogy	Connecting theological concepts across religions through relatable parables	<i>"Just like bitter coffee ... life also has its bitter moments ..."</i> (Jeda Nulis, 2022b)
Humor and Simple Language	Using jokes, popular culture references, and a relaxed style to create an inclusive atmosphere	<i>"The robe you are wearing looks like it was once made from a burial shroud, right?"</i> (Jeda Nulis, 2022b)
Narratives of Universal Values	Quoting ethics and teachings from multiple scriptures to emphasize love, compassion, and social benefit	<i>"I believe that the essence of all religious teachings is love and compassion"</i> (Jeda Nulis, 2022b)

Table 1 demonstrates that dialogical and egalitarian patterns are more dominant than one-way preaching. Most interactions in the *Indonesia Rumah Bersama* series emphasize interactive and reflective dialogue, where Habib Ja'far and religious leaders engage in equal exchanges through in-depth questioning. This approach not only broadens understanding but also builds empathy and trust among audiences. Thus, the participatory model has proven more effective than one-way doctrinal delivery.

In addition, the use of cross-religious analogies emerges as an important strategy for bridging differences. Simple parables, such as bitter coffee or a coin with two inseparable sides, enable audiences from different backgrounds to identify shared values without being trapped in doctrinal distinctions. Such analogies redirect attention away from claims of religious supremacy toward the search for common ground in the form of universal values that can be collectively embraced.

Another prominent strategy is the use of humor and simple language. Lighthearted jokes, casual remarks, and references to popular culture create an atmosphere of familiarity that reduces psychological distance between speakers and audiences. Through humor, complex themes such as interfaith dialogue



are delivered in ways that are easier to understand, relatable to everyday life, and at the same time reinforce audience acceptance of messages of tolerance.

Equally important are narratives of universal values, which serve as a major reinforcement in these dialogues. Quotations from scriptures and interreligious ethics emphasizing love, compassion, and social benefit underline the idea that despite doctrinal differences, all religions share a common foundation in human values. This message encourages audiences to view differences as opportunities for sharing goodness rather than as sources of conflict.

Based on these four findings, it can be concluded that Habib Ja'far's communication strategies in the *Indonesia Rumah Bersama* series combine reflective dialogue, cross-religious analogies, humor, and emphasis on universal values. This combination makes messages of tolerance more easily accepted while underscoring that effective interfaith communication requires humanistic, simple, and collaborative approaches. Accordingly, the digital dialogue format practiced in this series has the potential to serve as a model of public communication that strengthens religious pluralism in Indonesia.

### Audience Reception of Interfaith Dialogue Messages on *YouTube* Jeda Nulis

Audience reception of the *"Indonesia Rumah Bersama"* series on the Jeda Nulis *YouTube* channel demonstrated very positive acceptance. Out of a total of 700 comments analyzed, 621 comments (88%) fell into the *dominant-hegemonic* category, 75 comments (11%) into the *negotiated* category, and only 4 comments (1%) were classified as *oppositional*. These findings show that the majority of audiences accepted the message of tolerance as intended by the content creators, while a smaller portion negotiated it with personal views, and only a few directly rejected it.

The *dominant-hegemonic* category reflects full acceptance of the interfaith dialogue messages delivered by Habib Husein Ja'far and the invited speakers. Many audiences perceived the conversations in the videos as warm, egalitarian, and rich in values of brotherhood. For example, user @ddgsmile2461 commented: *"This discussion feels very warm, humorous, relaxed, with no sense of belittling or superiority, only friendly banter, Masyaallah... if all of Indonesia were like this, wow... this would truly be about learning together."* This comment illustrates complete acceptance of equality and mutual respect. A similar comment was made by @kiwclips1766: *"Incredible! There was no tension, it was very relaxed. They understood each other so well that at one point they even sipped coffee together. Respect! May all humanity always be blessed 🍀."* This comment emphasizes the sense of camaraderie created in the dialogue. Meanwhile, @sesantekno8622 added: *"This is the Indonesia we aspire to. People of all religions can joke, be friends, and respect each other's beliefs without offense. It is so refreshing to watch this. Hopefully Indonesia will truly become like this one day..."* These comments indicate that the audience not only understood the message of tolerance but also expressed aspirations for the realization of a peaceful religious life in Indonesia.

In the *negotiated* category, audiences accepted the interfaith dialogue messages but adapted them to their personal perspectives. They agreed on the importance of tolerance but still maintained exclusivity in their religious beliefs. For instance, @jahegepoek9567 wrote: *"This is true tolerance... Whatever religion we embrace, it is our faith. Likewise, whatever religion others embrace, it is their faith. Do not act as if one religion is absolutely correct... Instead, focus on being good and righteous."* This comment supports tolerance but also underscores boundaries related to truth claims of religion. A similar sentiment is reflected in the comment by @KusunokiSG47: *"Religion is not only about God but also about humanity. May everyone be*

*blessed.*" This statement shows appreciation of interfaith values, yet it still stresses a personal view of religion as a social relationship. Another example comes from @bfiskahwiwnsvsh4193: *"Basically, authentic Javanese society, even though Muslim, still preserved Kebatinan practices for their children, not as religion but as tradition... For example, when I had a birthday, it was not with cake but with ritual offerings and nasi tumpeng, blessed by the elders. For me, there is much philosophy in it."* This comment illustrates acceptance of the tolerance message but interprets it through the lens of local traditions and personal experiences.

Meanwhile, the *oppositional* category shows rejection of the interfaith dialogue messages. Although oppositional comments were very limited in number, they affirm the presence of audience groups who perceive interfaith dialogue as a threat to the truth of their own teachings. For example, @suciqolbuna165channel8 wrote: *"There are people destined to be wicked even though they know the truth. ... Alhamdulillah, I have read and studied many religions, but Alhamdulillah, I have only strengthened my conviction in the religion I have embraced since childhood."* This comment rejects the idea of pluralism by insisting that there is only one absolute truth. A similar statement was made by @muhammadfaqih8087: *"My late father was Chinese and a non-Muslim ... but always told me to hold firmly to Islam because the best religion is Islam. ... May our faith always be strengthened, so that we do not take the wrong path ..."* This narrative reflects the belief in the superiority of a particular religion and the view that interfaith dialogue can be misleading. In addition, @fendyhuang1938 stated: *"When the guest speaker explained, it came across as condescending. Even though the request was to share in a spirit of sitting together."* This rejection was directed more toward the communication style, which was perceived as unequal.

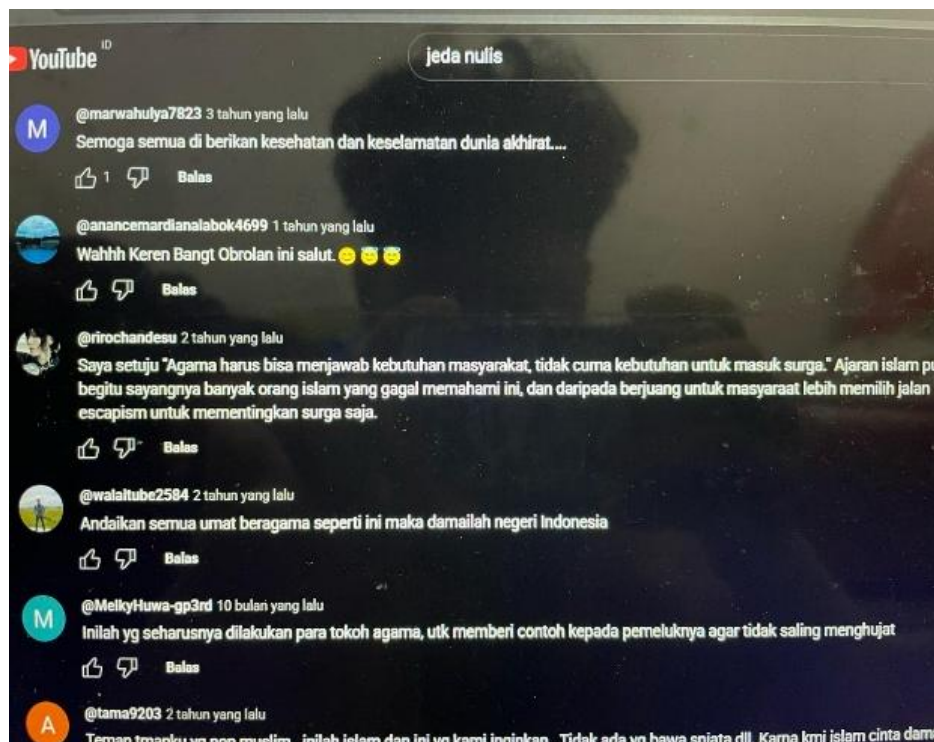


Figure 3. Example of the Dominant-Hegemonic Category

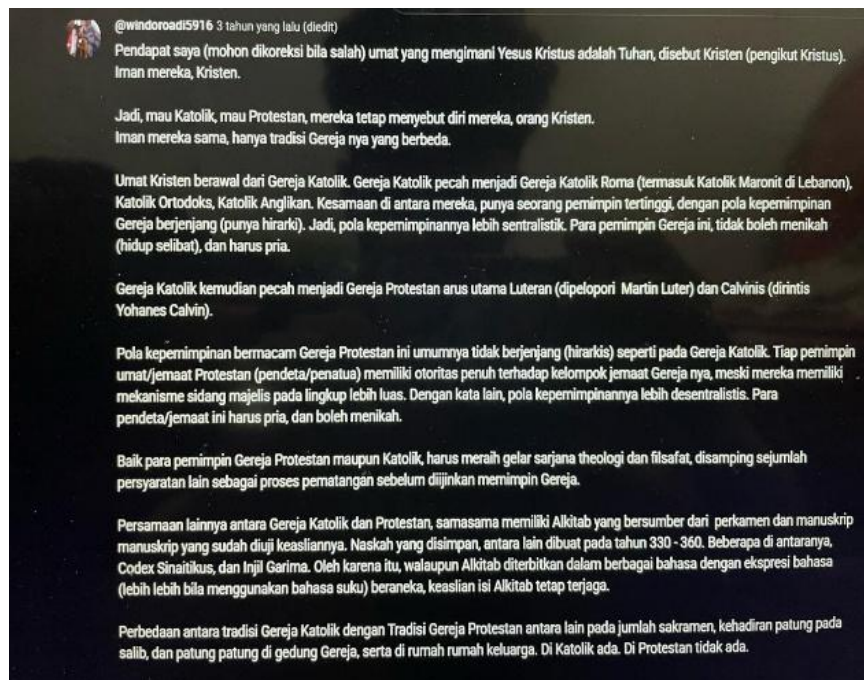


Figure 4. Example of the Negotiated Category

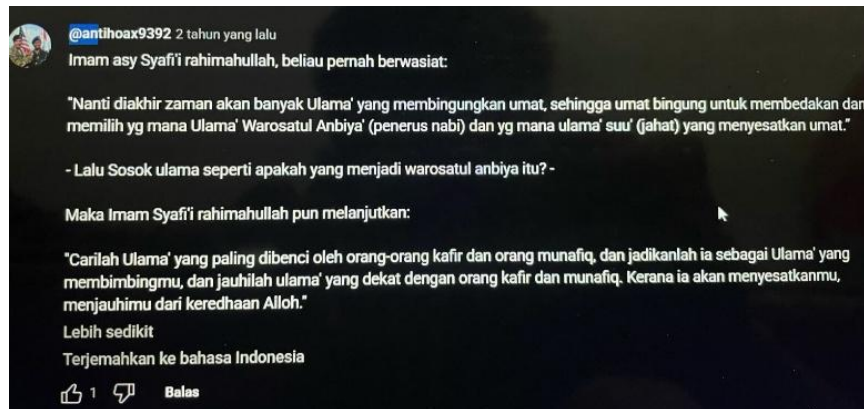


Figure 5. Example of the Oppositional Category

**Table 2. Audience Reception of Interfaith Dialogue Messages on the Jeda Nulis *YouTube* Channel**

	Number of Comments	Percentage	Example Comment
<b>Dominant-Hegemonic</b>	621	88%	<i>"This discussion feels very warm, humorous, relaxed, with no sense of belittling or superiority ... this is truly about learning together."</i> (@ddgsmile2461)
<b>Negotiated</b>	75	11%	<i>"This is true tolerance... Whatever religion we embrace, it is our faith ... do not act as if one religion is absolutely correct."</i> (@jahegepoek9567)
<b>Oppositional</b>	4	1%	<i>"There are people destined to be wicked even though they know the truth ... Alhamdulillah, I have only strengthened my conviction in the religion I have embraced since childhood."</i> (@suciqolbuna165channel8)
<b>Total</b>	<b>700</b>	<b>100%</b>	—

From Table 2 it is clear that audience reception patterns were dominated by the *dominant-hegemonic* category (88%), in which the majority of viewers fully accepted the messages of tolerance conveyed in the *Indonesia Rumah Bersama* series. They interpreted interfaith dialogue as a genuine effort to foster brotherhood and harmony, and they expressed support through positive and emotionally engaging narratives.

Meanwhile, the *negotiated* pattern (11%) indicates that some audiences accepted the tolerance messages but adjusted them to their personal perspectives, local traditions, or the exclusivity of their respective religious teachings. Only a very small proportion of audiences rejected the messages in the *oppositional* category (1%), with comments that emphasized the absolute truth of a particular teaching or criticized the delivery style of the speakers. This pattern suggests that, although positive acceptance was overwhelmingly dominant, a space for resistance remains—reflecting the diversity of ideological, social, and cultural backgrounds among digital audiences.

These findings demonstrate that the majority of audiences showed positive acceptance through *dominant-hegemonic* readings, followed by a smaller share of *negotiated* readings, and only a few *oppositional* responses. This reception pattern aligns with Stuart Hall's (1980) *encoding/decoding* framework, in which most audience decoding is consistent with the communicator's intended meaning. Nevertheless, the presence of negotiated and oppositional comments indicates that interfaith dialogue discourse remains shaped by the social, cultural, and ideological contexts of individual audiences. This point is crucial for underlining the boundaries of public acceptance toward religious moderation discourse in digital spaces.

### Supporting Factors that Influence Audience Response

One of the supporting factors that influenced the positive audience response was the reputation and credibility of the communicator. Habib Husein Ja'far is widely known as a young cleric who is popular among millennials and Gen Z (Fikri, 2023; Siregar, 2023). He is identified with an open and progressive preaching style that emphasizes peace. This credibility fostered trust among audiences, making his messages easier to accept as sincere appeals rather than mere rhetoric (Celesta, 2022).

In addition to credibility, the *YouTube* platform itself played a significant supporting role. The *YouTube* algorithm, which allows direct interaction through the comment section and sharing features, enabled messages of tolerance to reach a wider audience across geographic and religious boundaries. These features created space for audience participation in expressing their views, so they felt part of the public conversation rather than merely passive viewers.

The consistent and high-quality content production format also contributed to the success of audience reception. The *Indonesia Rumah Bersama* videos were presented with visuals that were simple yet professional, clear sound quality, and careful editing (Ervinda, 2023). This production quality conveyed a serious yet approachable impression, leading audiences to regard the content as worth watching and sharing. The attention to production detail added legitimacy to the messages being delivered.

Another supporting factor was the relevance of the issues to Indonesia's social context. Discourses on tolerance and interreligious harmony remain highly relevant given the continuing cases of intolerance and polarization in society. By presenting warm interfaith dialogues, Jeda Nulis addressed the social concerns of audiences while offering an ideal model of how diversity should be managed. This relevance explains why audiences responded enthusiastically to the content.

Overall, the combination of communicator credibility, digital platform support, content production quality, and social issue relevance served as important factors that strengthened positive audience reception. These factors indicate that the success of interfaith communication in digital spaces is determined not only by narrative strategies but also by the social and technical contexts that accompany them.

### Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that audiences of the Jeda Nulis *YouTube* channel, particularly the "*Indonesia Rumah Bersama*" series, predominantly responded positively to interfaith dialogue messages. Out of 700 comments analyzed, 621 comments (88%) were categorized as *dominant-hegemonic*, 75 comments (11%) as *negotiated*, and only 4 comments (1%) as *oppositional*. These findings reveal that the majority of audiences accepted the tolerance messages as intended by the content creators, a smaller portion negotiated them with personal perspectives, and only a handful rejected them. Supporting factors such as the communicator's credibility, the quality of content production, and the relevance of tolerance issues to Indonesia's social context further strengthened this acceptance.

These results can be explained by the relationship between communication strategies, communicator characteristics, and social context. Habib Husein Ja'far used reflective dialogue, cross-religious analogies, humor, and emphasis on universal values, which made audiences feel more comfortable and open. His personal credibility as a progressive young cleric fostered trust, while Indonesia's social context—still often marked by intolerance—prompted audiences to respond enthusiastically to the content. Viewed through Stuart Hall's (1980) *encoding/decoding* framework, most audiences occupied the *dominant-hegemonic* position, as they interpreted the messages in line with the

communicator's intent. The inclusive and humanistic narrative strategies facilitated the decoding process, making the tolerance messages more easily accepted without significant resistance. A smaller share of audiences took a *negotiated* position, accepting the messages while adapting them to local experiences or traditions. Meanwhile, those in the *oppositional* position rejected the messages by adhering to exclusive religious ideologies. Thus, the results of this study occurred because effective communication strategies aligned with Hall's framework, reinforced by the communicator's credibility and the relevance of the issues to social realities.

Compared with previous studies, these findings confirm and extend existing scholarship. Earlier research (Maliki & Nazar, 2023; Nurrohman & Mujahidin, 2022; Wasik & Philips, 2022) demonstrated the role of *YouTube* as a space for religious discussion and tolerance education but focused more on communicator strategies. This study offers novelty by emphasizing the dimension of audience reception. The application of Stuart Hall's *encoding/decoding* theory, which has previously been used to analyze the personal branding of religious figures (Haq, 2022; Hidayah & Widodo, 2021) and cultural representation (Radja & Sunjaya, 2024), is extended here to the context of interfaith dialogue in Indonesia. Furthermore, while other studies have emphasized discourse production (Fadli, 2023; Setiawan, 2024), this research places the audience at the center of analysis. The novelty of this study lies in mapping audience reception positions in digital interfaith communication, an area that remains underexplored.

Historically, this study reflects the transformation of Islamic *da'wah* traditions in Indonesia, which were previously carried out mainly in face-to-face forums but have now migrated to digital spaces and embraced interfaith engagement. This shift demonstrates the continuity of Indonesia's pluralism legacy in a new medium. This phenomenon aligns with the development of *digital da'wah*, which increasingly highlights the role of digital media as a new arena for disseminating religious messages. Digital platforms, including online television and social media, have made religious preaching more accessible to millions, although in some cases it has tended to fall into commodification and *religi-tainment* that prioritize entertainment over substantive teachings (Nurliah & Juwita, 2023).

Another significant development has been the emergence of celebrity clerics such as Aa Gym and Das'ad Latif, who utilize *YouTube* and Instagram to expand their *da'wah* authority. Their content is packaged persuasively, aesthetically, and appealingly for urban millennials and educated middle classes, audiences often less engaged with traditional preaching models (Raya, 2024). However, the digitalization of *da'wah* is not entirely neutral, as it is also linked to political dimensions. Some preachers use digital platforms to critique the secular government and promote more pragmatic forms of political Islam (Rosidi, 2021).

In this context, traditional groups such as Nahdlatul Ulama have also adapted through *da'wah 2.0* strategies by strengthening their presence on social media, emphasizing visual aesthetics, and employing more fluid communication styles, thereby competing with modern and even radical religious content in the digital sphere (Rohmatulloh et al., 2022). Meanwhile, online community-based *da'wah* movements such as Kajian Musawarah illustrate how digital platforms facilitate the formation of new religious identities and virtual communities (Yusri, 2021).

Thus, the transformation of Islamic *da'wah* in Indonesia during the digital era reflects not only a shift in medium but also new dynamics between traditional and celebrity authority, between substantive teachings and commodification, and between normative and political preaching. This context explains why digital spaces such as the Jeda Nulis channel have become important media for interfaith dialogue: they function not merely to convey religious teachings but also to negotiate identity, authority, and pluralism within Indonesia's evolving religious landscape.

Socially, the findings of this study show that audiences were not passive; rather, they actively negotiated messages in line with their life experiences and cultural values. The digital sphere functioned as a social meeting arena that expanded the boundaries of tolerance while simultaneously creating opportunities for the negotiation of meaning. This phenomenon aligns with studies on *digital religion*, defined as the practice and understanding of religion that occurs in both online and offline contexts, where the two interact and influence each other (Campbell, 2012; Campbell & Cheong, 2022). *Digital religion* serves as a bridge that extends traditional religious practices into digital spaces, thereby creating new forms of expression, community, and identity negotiation (Helland, 2016).

Within this framework, audiences used digital media not only to consume religious messages but also to negotiate their own understandings. Recent studies indicate that religious applications and social media allow audiences to develop new forms of religious engagement, ranging from private practices to interfaith interactions (Bellar, 2017; S. U. Haq & Kwok, 2024). However, such patterns may also generate *religious bubbles* or digital echo chambers, where audiences connect primarily with homogeneous content that reinforces intrareligious boundaries, while still leaving space for negotiation with other groups (Novak et al., 2022).

Moreover, the dynamics of audience negotiation in *digital religion* are evident in interdenominational projects such as the Christian Media Center, which adapted traditional religious practices to new media and demonstrated internal negotiations to align with digital capabilities (Martini, 2020). In Indonesia, similar challenges have arisen in the context of *digital da'wah*, where broadcast regulation struggles to control the flow of diverse religious content (Kholili et al., 2024). This underscores that digital spaces not only broaden access to religious messages but also introduce new complexities related to authority, mediatization, and the commodification of religion (Mishol-Shauli, 2019; Poon et al., 2012).

Thus, audience reception in digital spaces must be understood as an active process in which religious messages are renegotiated through social, cultural, and technological interactions. Rather than merely reinforcing doctrine, *digital religion* fosters the emergence of new social spaces that enable plurality while simultaneously presenting challenges such as fragmentation, echo chambers, and distributed authority.

Ideologically, although most audiences accepted the messages of tolerance, a small group rejected them on the basis of absolute truth claims. This indicates clear boundaries of public acceptance toward pluralism and demonstrates that ideological resistance remains a challenge in *interfaith communication*. Within the framework of studies on *religious exclusivism*, this view aligns with the belief that only one religion is true, while others are considered false (Aijaz, 2014; Qorbani, 2020). Such exclusivism has implications for neglecting the values of other religions, generating ideological conflicts, and obstructing the creation of inclusive dialogue spaces (Clark, 2007; Davis, 2010).

Consequently, exclusivist attitudes can weaken social cohesion and contribute to societal fragmentation, thereby intensifying challenges for the implementation of *interfaith dialogue* (Patton, 2018; Widiyanto, 2023). Previous studies emphasize that *interfaith dialogue* aims to promote understanding, cooperation, and mutual respect among religious communities, which are essential foundations for peaceful coexistence in pluralistic societies (Adeoye, 2024; Hazaymeh, 2024). However, exclusivist attitudes often hinder these objectives by refusing engagement or advancing singular truth claims (Nes-Visscher, 2013).

Nevertheless, several approaches suggest that exclusivists can still be involved in dialogue when the objectives are clearly defined, such as theological exchange without requiring the loss of religious



identity (Aguti, 2021; Nes-Visscher, 2013). The effectiveness of *interfaith dialogue* is also strongly influenced by the role of facilitators who cultivate empathy, preserve space for ideological difference, and guide participants to focus on shared values (Pope, 2021; Pope & Paulus, 2023). Forms of dialogue that emphasize ethical values and shared practical goals—such as community activities or international interfaith meetings—have been proven to build social cohesion and reduce prejudice (Admirand, 2016; Ibrahim et al., 2012; King, 2010).

Therefore, the presence of a small group of audiences rejecting messages of tolerance should not merely be seen as an obstacle but also as a reminder that *interfaith dialogue* must be designed with strategies sensitive to exclusivism. Integrating approaches of moderate pluralism and emphasizing universal values offers a middle path that enables the creation of constructive dialogue spaces, even in societies still heavily shaped by absolute truth claims.

The main function of this study is to provide empirical evidence that humanistic narrative-based communication strategies in digital spaces are effective in reinforcing messages of tolerance. In addition, the study expands perspectives in the field of religious communication by positioning audiences as active subjects. However, the dysfunction identified is the presence of a small group of audiences who rejected the tolerance messages, even though the content was delivered using an inclusive approach. This indicates that *ideological resistance* cannot be fully addressed through communication strategies alone and has the potential to reintroduce polarization. This phenomenon is consistent with findings on *ideological resistance* in *interfaith communication*, where political, historical, and social factors are the main barriers. Thomsen and Rafiqi (2019) showed that right-wing political ideology tends to constrain the positive outcomes of intergroup contact, as individuals with strong convictions are more likely to adopt defensive attitudes in interfaith interactions.

Beyond political factors, historical and social contexts also shape ideological resistance. Mernissi (2023) emphasized that historical prejudice and political conflicts in Europe have hindered efforts to build inclusive interfaith dialogue. A similar situation occurred in Ukraine, where war and the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated vulnerabilities in interdenominational dialogue and challenged earlier achievements (Fylypovych & Horkusha, 2020). In such contexts, trust becomes a key element. A *game theory* model proposed by Güner and Sandal (2022) demonstrated that interfaith interactions can succeed only when participants value cooperation more highly than maintaining a defiant stance for reputational purposes.

In addition to structural factors, key actors also play a critical role in reducing resistance. Karim, Saili, and Khambali (2016) highlighted that religious leaders have a strategic role in mediating interfaith dialogue because their experience, authority, and ability to build relationships significantly affect the success of interactions. Equally important, the participation of younger generations contributes greatly to the sustainability of interfaith dialogue. Kusuma and Susilo (2020) found that interfaith youth groups in Indonesia exhibited high levels of cultural and religious sensitivity, which serve as important assets for reducing ethnocentrism and fostering peaceful coexistence.

Therefore, *ideological resistance* in *interfaith communication* is not solely a matter of individual belief but is shaped by political ideology, historical contexts, trust between parties, and the involvement of key actors such as religious leaders and youth. Addressing this resistance requires a comprehensive approach that emphasizes trust-building, strengthens intergenerational participation, and sustains dialogue amid complex socio-political challenges.

Based on the dysfunction of persistent *ideological resistance* despite the inclusive framing of tolerance messages, several action plans can be proposed. First, it is necessary to develop tolerance-based

digital literacy programs that enhance audiences' critical skills in responding to absolute truth claims and exclusivist narratives. Second, the involvement of religious leaders should be strengthened as key mediators in interfaith dialogue, since their moral authority and experience can help reduce resistance. Third, interfaith youth groups should be actively facilitated in digital activities and community initiatives, given their high cultural and religious sensitivity, which can serve as a force to curb polarization. Finally, the government, together with civil society organizations, should promote public communication policies oriented toward building trust rather than merely disseminating messages. With these measures, *ideological resistance* can be more effectively managed, while the positive function of reinforcing pluralism in digital spaces can continue to expand.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that audiences of the Jeda Nulis *YouTube* channel, particularly the "*Indonesia Rumah Bersama*" series, predominantly responded positively to interfaith dialogue messages. The majority of comments reflected full acceptance (*dominant-hegemonic*) of the tolerance messages conveyed, a smaller proportion interpreted them with adjustments (*negotiated*), and only a few rejected them (*oppositional*). The communication strategies employed—reflective dialogue, cross-religious analogies, humor, and emphasis on universal values—proved effective in creating a familiar atmosphere, reducing resistance, and strengthening audience acceptance of pluralism.

The main contribution of this research lies in its emphasis on audience reception within the study of digital interfaith communication in Indonesia, which has previously focused more on discourse production or communicator strategies. By employing *digital netnography* and Stuart Hall's *encoding/decoding* framework, this study shows how audiences not only receive messages passively but also actively negotiate meanings in line with their social, cultural, and ideological backgrounds. These findings enrich the study of religious communication by providing empirical data on audience decoding patterns in digital spaces, while underscoring that humanistic narrative-based content can serve as a model of public communication for strengthening religious pluralism.

Nevertheless, this study has limitations regarding its scope of data, which focused only on one *YouTube* channel and a specific video series. The number of comments analyzed was also limited to 700 samples, which does not fully represent the broader dynamics of audience reception across various digital platforms. Future research is recommended to expand the object of study to other channels and social media, increase the volume of data, and combine qualitative methods with quantitative approaches to produce a more comprehensive mapping of audience reception. In doing so, understanding of interfaith communication in digital spaces can be further enriched and made more relevant for strengthening harmony in Indonesia's multicultural society.

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