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## **Hijrah and Islamic Movement in Social Media: A Social Movement Study of Anti- Dating Movement #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran**

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### **Abstract**

This article examines a flourishing Islamic youth movement in Indonesia, #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran or Indonesia without Dating. This movement calls for *hijrah* (literally means a movement to another place) from Western dating habits to *ta'aruf* or an Islamic practice of getting married without dating among the Moslem millennial. This article aims to explain the emergence of this movement. Drawing approach from social movement theory, I argue that this movement is culturally embedded since piety, religious commodification and political resistance against existing political nuance are overshadowed the emergence of this anti-dating movement. It is found out that this movement is an offshoot of banned Islamic organization *Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia* (HTI) that continuously struggles to revive the past transnational rule of *khalifah* (caliphate) in Indonesia. Consequently, the concept of *hijrah* in social media campaign does not only to promote Islamic lifestyle like *ta'aruf* but also to promote caliphate as an alternative to secular democracy. This study is presented given the fact that the research on Islamic youth movement in social media is still lack of attention, despite the so called *hijrah* movement is legion and may strategically important to make social change through the use of social media.

### **Keywords:**

*Hijrah, Islamic Movement, Ta'aruf, Anti-dating, Social Media.*

## Introduction

In recent years, there is a relatively new rising tide phenomenon in social media namely *hijrah* phenomenon. The *hijrah* phenomenon is also remarked by the emergence of *hijrah* movements that flourish in the latest social media platform such as *Instagram*. Few of them are for examples *Gerakan Pemuda Hijrah* @shiftmedia.id, @hijrahcinta\_ , @beraniberhijrah many others.<sup>1</sup> Those movements discuss a wide range of issues in social media but characteristically, of all the discussion, these *hijrah* movements propagate Moslems to improve their personal's piety from a less religious into a more pious Moslem (Surya 2017; Temby n.d.; Sunesti, Hasan, and Azca 2018). Surely, the term *hijrah* employed here is no longer defined as an emigration to Mecca to Medinah but it is more stressed on personal transformation that tangled with choice of dresses and lifestyle.<sup>2</sup>

By the same token, such concept of *hijrah* is also adopted by one of growing Islamic movements in social media i.e. *Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran* or Indonesia without courtship (hereinafter referred to as #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran). With the extensive use of social media, #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran amplifies preaching that Moslem youth must avoid courtship and act upon Islamic teaching namely by performing *ta'aruf* as a process to proceed to marriage.<sup>3</sup> Besides, this movement promotes Islamic lifestyle by encouraging the female audience to wear veils, to join study circle and to consume certain *Islamic* goods.

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1 *Instagram* is a free photo and video sharing application, downloaded available on mobile phone or desktop. Those mentioned *hijrah* accounts are followed by millions of followers. As of Januari 28<sup>th</sup> 2020, @shiftmedia.id is followed by 1,9 million followers, @hijrahcinta\_ has 1.2 Million followers and @beraniberhijrah is followed by 3.7 million followers.

2 *Hijrah* term was used to refer to the emigration of Prophet Muhammad and his cohort from Dar al-Harb (lit. territory of war) or Mecca to Medinah Dar al-Islam (lit. territory of Islam) in the 622 centuries. However, term *hijrah* is interpreted in protean manner among Islamic scholars, this can be referring the emigration to the righteous way in according to Islam.

3 *Ta'aruf* is an Arabic term, refers to process to know the potential spouse through intermediary as an initial stage before proceeding marriage.

The #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran movement gets a great deal of attention given the number of followers nationwide and in some neighbouring countries. Based on interview with the founder of this movement, La Ode Munafar, this movement has gathered more than 30.000 exclusive members within Indonesia and in some neighbouring countries e.g. Malaysia, Taiwan, and Hongkong. This movement has 80 regional movements or branches nationwide and nearly 1 million followers on Facebook and Instagram.<sup>4</sup> Despite the support, this movement is also accused by the opponents for religious commercialization and conservatism. Commercialization, for the paid membership and business accounts, which sell various merchandises.<sup>5</sup> Conservatism, for its main mission to reject dating among Indonesian youngsters and urge them to perform *ta'aruf* and marriage to overcome youth puberty.

The critique of religious commodification and conservatism is common in the debate over the resurgence of contemporary Islamic movements. Many see that the emergence of Islamic movements is often linked to other conjunctures like religious commodification and conservatism (Hew 2018; Mohammad Iqbal Ahnaf 2013; Van Bruinessen 2013; Hadiz 2016; Zuhazmi and Hastuti 2018). Yet, little put attention that the contemporary Islamic movement is not only aiming for economic

4 On the first Interview on September 25<sup>th</sup> 2018 at Gaul Fresh office, a private company owned by the founder of #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran movement La Ode claimed that there are around 20.000 members, as of October 20<sup>th</sup> 2019 he updated that the number increases to 30.000 members. As of January 20<sup>th</sup> 2020, #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran Facebook fan page has reached nearly 902.000 members and 1 Million Followers in Instagram.

5 An online news article with the title of *Bisnis dan Kontroversi Gerakan Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran*, written by Reja Hidayat, published on May 28th 2018 on <https://tirto.id/bisnis-dan-kontroversi-gerakan-indonesia-tanpa-pacaran-cK25> mentioned that this movement has approximately earned at least 2- 3.6 billion Rupiah from the membership fee only. To join as a member, someone must pay 200.000 Rupiah. It must be noted the membership fee is sharply increasing, while the demand is growing. In addition to that, this movement also frequently conducts offline activities and it applies participation fee started from 20.000 Rupiah. They now also expand business by establishing company selling Islamic books, veils and accessories. Retrieved on August 15th 2018, 14.23 PM.

benefit and following the mainstream Islam as mostly displayed through new media. Some may set ulterior motive to challenge existing political system in Indonesia. A research on a contemporary Islamic movement #IndonesiaTanpaJIL movement indicates that the Islamic movement is feasibly connected with the forerunner of conservative Islamic movement in Indonesia like Masyumi, *Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia* (DDII), *Partai Keadilan Sejahtera* (PKS) or the Justice and Prosperous Party, and other emerging trans-national Islamic movements such as the Salafist and Hizb al-Tahrir (HT) movements that share similar vision to uphold Islamic system bylaws (Ardhianto 2018).

By the same token, with focusing on anti- dating movement #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran this study aims to extend the existing studies about Islamic movements in Indonesia that are driven by political agenda. I argue that emergence of *hijrah* movement #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran in online media is culturally embedded, it has economic interests but it also sets political agenda. As a matter of fact, I found the connection between this movement and *Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia*. HTI is part of global Islamic political movement, *Hizb al-Tahrir* that envisions to revive the past transnational rule of the *khilafah* or caliphate (Mohammad Iqbal Ahnaf 2017). HTI was dissolved by Indonesian government by the reason of anti- democracy and against Indonesian constitution. As an implication of its political aspiration, I argue that the concept of *hijrah* that they introduce to the target audiences, does not only strive for personal transformation but also political reformation.

This article is part of my master thesis.<sup>6</sup> Due to some limitations, this article only discusses about why this movement emerges. Substantially, this article will elaborate on interests and context that underpin the emergence

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<sup>6</sup> I indebted thanks to my thesis supervisors Dr. Fatimah Husein and Dr. Ratna Noviani to allow me to publish my thesis with the title *Hijrah* and Islamic Movement in Cyberspace: A Social Movement Study of Anti-Dating Movement #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran.

of the #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran movement. In finishing this research, I collected data from September 2018 until March 2019, then continued from October 2019 to January 20<sup>th</sup> 2020. through multiple methods such as interviews, online and offline observation or field observation.

This article made up of some parts and begins by describing the profile of #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran and the *da'wa* trajectory of the founder. This approach aims to understand his ideological root and interests that drive him to mobilization. However, social movement theorists argue that ideology or interests itself are insufficient in mobilizing groups (Wiktorowicz 2004; Tilly 2019; Mueller et al. 1997). Thus, this article purports with explanation on external factors that become important for this movement to contextualize its interest into collective action. I used the approach of political opportunity structure (POS) theory namely by looking at the timing of the collective action and the openness or closure of the institutionalized political system (Mueller et al. 1997).

### **The History and Profile of #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran Movement.**

#IndonesiaTanpaPacaran was established on September 7<sup>th</sup> 2015 by La Ode Munafar. Initially, this movement was developed from the reader network of La Ode Munafar, a motivator and author to more than 60 books on youth and relationship theme. As he gained popularity, he himself in midst 2014 initiated gathering for his book readers or followers in a Whatsapp group with the hope to keep in touch with them and to promote his new books. Together with his wife, La Ode managed Whatsapp group of #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran movement, the first social media platform used by this movement. The name is taken from one of his book titles namely *Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran*.

Given the large enthusiasm showed by Muslim youth to joining this platform, La Ode later created accounts on other chat messenger platforms

such as Line and Telegram. He immediately created Facebook Fan Page on October 6<sup>th</sup> 2016, Instagram and YouTube. Ever since, this movement runs the mission to deploy anti-dating discourse among Muslim youth in all social media platforms.

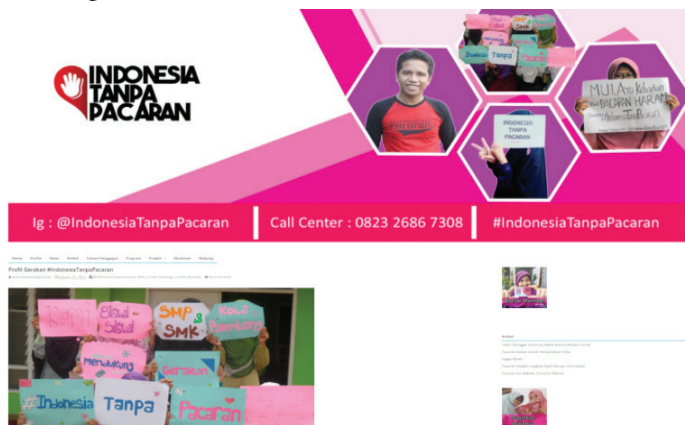


Figure 1. Home Profile *Gerakan #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran* on the website.

[www.indonesiatanpapacaran.com](http://www.indonesiatanpapacaran.com)

Having closer look at its official website, this movement ambitiously sets national goal to totally realize Indonesia free from dating by 2024. Speaking of target, this movement aims to target young people between 18-25 years old. However, based on my offline observation this movement casually opens membership to anyone despite the age and status. Considering the only condition to be a member is single or not married yet, or casually called *jomblo*.<sup>7</sup>

Youth become the selected target of this *da'wa* activism on the basis of two considerations. First, the age category is seemingly risky to dating practice. This movement believes that they are considered not mature yet, hence dating among this group would lead to irresponsible sexual

<sup>7</sup> I joined the exclusive membership managed under *Pusat* (central) at the age of 26. Additionally, I once met a 31-year-old woman participated in offline event in Pondok Gede branch. She admitted that she frequently attended #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran events and is registered as exclusive (paid) member.



behaviour. This concern is in line with the backdrop of the change of courtship pattern among Indonesian youth that is susceptible becoming freer due to new social freedom and modern authority (Smith-Hefner 2005). This movement believes that Moslem youth are vulnerable to immoral behaviour promoted by western lifestyle, in fact youth of today have responsibility to carry on Islamic duty.<sup>8</sup>

Second, youth are being targeted by this movement because they are the largest population in internet. Indonesia Internet Service Provide Association (APJII) in 2017 conducted a statistic that presents the penetration of internet user among population (circa two hundred sixty-two million people). It reveals that there are 75,50% teenagers between 13-18 occupied the largest penetration of internet user category. It then followed by people aged 19-34 as much 74,23 % (APPJI 2017, 9).<sup>9</sup> The statistic affirms that the penetration of internet is overtly received by young people. Thus, this movement has mission to save youth generation from negative and pornographic content in internet by feeding them Islamic knowledge. Along the line, social media ease them to transmit the anti-dating propagation.

In spreading the propagation against dating, internet becomes so important on daily basis. Based on my observation, no less than 20 posts are posted daily on @IndonesiaTanpaPacaran account. It is not accumulated yet with other accounts that are connected to this movement. It must be clarified here that #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran movement is one of *da'wa* platform to extend anti-dating discourse managed professionally under the private company owned by La Ode Munafar namely Gaul Fresh company. As alternatives for this enjoyment, he devises a strategy

<sup>8</sup> According to La Ode (interview on 25<sup>th</sup> September 2018) and Adjih Mubarok (interview on 8<sup>th</sup> November 2018).

<sup>9</sup> Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia (APJII). 2017. Infographic on *Penetrasi dan Perilaku Pengguna Internet 2017*. Accessed on [https://web.kominfo.go.id/sites/default/files/Laporan%20Survei%20APJII\\_2017\\_v1.3.pdf](https://web.kominfo.go.id/sites/default/files/Laporan%20Survei%20APJII_2017_v1.3.pdf), October 10th 2019, 11.25.

by creating few channels to strengthening *hijrah* (from dating to *ta'aruf* and marriage) namely *Gerakan Nikah Muda*, *Berani Nikah Takut Pacaran*, *Calon Umi Solehah*, *Gaul Fresh*, *Gaul Fresh Cloths* and *Gaul Fresh Walimahan*. Below figure will clearly explain social media accounts that are actually interwoven with the #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran movement.

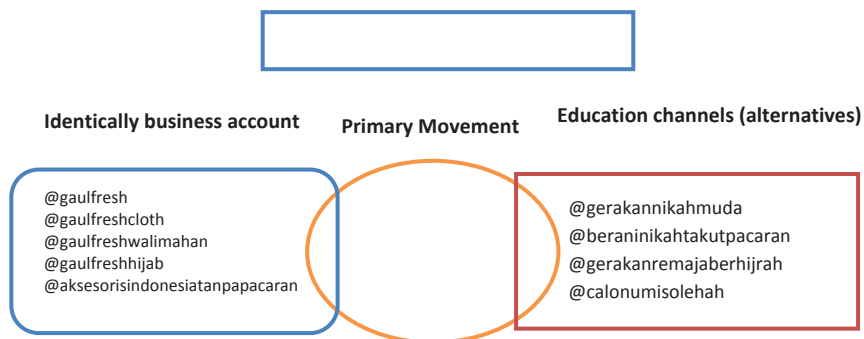


Figure 2. Social Media Network linking up with  
#IndonesiaTanpaPacaran movement

There are few reasons why La Ode created such account networks. First, he wanted to carry out consecutive *da'wa* by offering solutions in lieu of dating. Thenceforth, through @GerakanNikahMuda and @BeraniNikahTakutPacaran he provides counsels for Moslem men and women to be readily marry without dating. Interestingly, La Ode pays deeper concern to young girls, he specifically designed education channel to women Moslem namely @CalonUmiSolehah, in order to preparing them for being virtuous wife and mother according to Islamic teaching.

Second, the idea of promoting Islamic teaching can be embodied with the accentuation of religious symbols. Accounts like @GaulFresh, @GaulFreshHijab, @GaulFreshCloth, @GaulFreshWalimahan and @aksesorisindonesiatanpapacaran are aimed to be *da'wa* channels in spite of strong commercial nuances. Carrying slogan “*berdakwah dengan*

*aksesoris*” or propagating Islam with accessories, these accounts are obviously seen like digital catalogue for any kind products produced by #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran movement, for example books, veils, T-shirts and other accessories.

In terms of network, this movement does not only develop broad network in online space but also in offline space. Based on interview with the founder, to date there are 80 #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran regionals (offshoots) made up of men (*Ikhwan*) and (*Akhwat*) group throughout cities and regencies in Indonesia.<sup>10</sup> The “offshoot opening” system or which I think similar to franchise model, makes this movement legion with efficient force and cost. Since those regional movements are managed under different structure and people. Additionally, this system helps to infiltrate the ideology of this movement to the target in a closed group. since #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran regionals are regularly conducting face-to-face meetings and giving benefits that online spaces cannot provide.

From this explanation, I acknowledge this movement accelerate the flows of communication by highly optimizing online media but not really leave offline space. This movement creates ‘spider net’ in social media and uses its rich features in transmitting daily *da’wa*. This movement also intentionally creates some accounts for business activities. Other than that, this movement also uses this platform to recruit members. By mentioning this, I find social media hold remarkable contribution in making this movement prominent, creating social and economic interaction. Yet, the #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran does not really abandon the use of offline space in providing resource availability and intimacy among members. The strategy illuminates that both online and offline space for contemporary Islamic movement are not only complementing each other, but also co-

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<sup>10</sup> Interview with La Ode Munafar on September 25<sup>th</sup> 2018. Even though, the organization does not allow me to have the listing of #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran regionals, based on my tracing on Instagram there are sixty-one #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran regionals.

constituting each other as they are integral parts of *da'wa* strategy (Hew 2018).

### **Anti-Dating Movement: Between Making Money and Fighting for Caliphate in Indonesia.**

In previous part, I have briefly mentioned that this movement is commodifying religion by, one of example, creating some social media accounts to sell merchandises. It is commonly found that Islamic movements are raising money from public given the funding is important factor that can support the social movement (Wiktorowicz 2004). Thus, in this part I will elaborate the way this movement makes money through the anti-dating campaign.

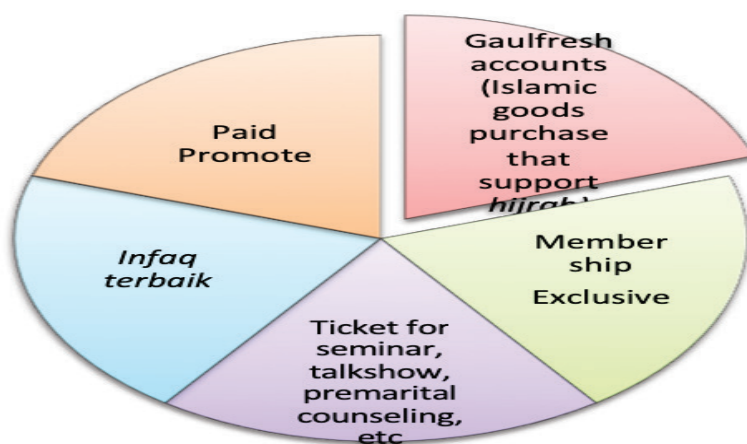


Figure 3. Economic circuits found in the #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran movement

The first economic activity can be clearly seen on Gaul Fresh accounts, which are created as online marketplace. At the outset in 2011, Gaul Fresh is a business unit belong to La Ode which has been publishing La Ode's books and advertising those books through social media platforms. With the passage of time, Gaul Fresh also sells assorted

goods ranging from book, veil, T-shirt, Jacket, wedding dress and so forth in support of #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran. The founder acknowledged that Gaul Fresh accounts are created to support operationalization. Hence, on this account this movement employs strategic business model to boost the revenue, one of the example is by offering its followers to be reseller.<sup>11</sup> However, not less important these stuffs are aimed to trigger public awareness about the anti-dating campaign, since most of the stuffs are embellished with the logo of #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran and provocative wordings to stay away from dating.



Figure 4. Veil and T-shirt sold on Gaul Fresh account

Second economic source is gained from paid membership. The paid membership is only applied for exclusive membership. Based on my field observation, the membership is classified into three types namely exclusive, regional and passive. The exclusive member is one who pays around 200.000 Rupiah and registered under #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran *pusat* or national. Second is regional member who is registered and managed under the branches of #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran in local levels. While passive member is one who only follows #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran social media accounts. In exchange of enrollment fee, the exclusive member will be

<sup>11</sup> On the interview on November 8<sup>th</sup> 2018 with Marketing Manager of *Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran*, Yuni, she told me that there is profit sharing for being reseller; even though she didn't mention the percentage.

given starter pack of *hijrah* that comprises La Ode's book and membership card that applies also as discount card for buying merchandise and event ticket. Meanwhile, both exclusive and regional members deserve to be given counsels on closed Whatsapp group. The counsel stresses mostly on the *hijrah* and relationship related theme. Interestingly, as updated per September 2019, this movement no longer applies exclusive membership. The partnership system allows youth to join the closed Whatsapp group, have e-book and enjoy the counsels by paying lesser than exclusive membership namely 78.000 Rupiah. This changing strategy is likely to attract young people joining #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran in spite of accusations from social media followers due to pricy paid membership.

Seeing the membership system, I argue that it becomes an epitome of religious commodification. By giving consumer products in return e.g. membership card, book and online counsels, #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran redefines *hijrah* by possessing certain products or belong to certain religious community. #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran re-contextualizes religious values through a religious aesthetic to consumer products. In using term commodification, I borrow Ornella's (2013) notion that commodification can be recognized as process of re-contextualization of religious symbols, language, and ideas from their original religious context to the media and consumer culture. It is clear that online counseling, seminar, and other paid offline events are endeavors in making religious ideas to be readily consumed in modern fashion.

The third economic source is obtained from the ticket for offline activities like seminar, talk show, meet and greet and premarital short course. The entrance ticket is vary starting from 20.000 IDR up to 300.000 IDR. It is true that in many occasions, #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran does not charge any entrance ticket for offline events mostly happen at regional level. But as I scrutinized electronic posters in which they advertised certain event particularly for free, I find many posters encourage the participant

to “prepare the best alms” (siapkan infaq terbaik).<sup>12</sup> Commonly, the encouragement to give the best alms is a conventional strategy to collect money in order to support the operationalization of the organization.

The strategy to collect money in such manner recalls me to the notion of prosperity Islam. Commonly, there is a strong conviction that giving good alms will be rewarded in hundred folds of merits according to Qur’an.<sup>55</sup> According to Kailani prosperity Islam is defined as the performance of Islamic devotional acts with a strong expectation for material wealth in return (Kailani 2018). Devotional acts are not only about to give the alms, but also to perform optional prayer like *dhuba*, an optional bright time prayer that is designed to ask God for prosperity in worldly affair. In addition to that, I find the command to perform the best alms indirectly inculcates Muslim youngsters to not bifurcate religious and economic ethics. It also urges the Muslim youngsters for being a total Muslim (kaffah) who are pious and generous on the same side.

Last but not least is the paid promote Instagram. Paid promote Instagram is a sale service launched by #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran in this year to endorse or promote certain products sold. The tariff for onetime promotion on #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran account started from 80.000 IDR, 120.000 IDR and 200.000 IDR. While the price for the paid promote package as follows 2,5 Million Rupiah, 5 Million Rupiah and 10 Million Rupiah.

As promised in the introduction, I will also prove that the emergence of this movement is not solely to gain economic profit but also to resist political situation in Indonesia. I delved more into the political motivation by looking at his *da’wa* trajectory, interviewed the founder and several key persons in #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran team, read La Ode books and

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12 See for instance <https://www.instagram.com/p/BtXfouwnvUI/>, <https://www.instagram.com/p/Bsfx2meA7NH/>, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BtplGeMhTyF/> and many others. Accessed on February 10th 2019, 22.18 PM.

observed discursive practice on social media and offline activities with using frames and framing study. I develop an understanding that his *da'wa* activism against dating is continuous effort to suppress the prevalence of secularism or what he considers as un-Islamic (*kufr*) system.

La Ode and allies, namely staffs and leader of #Indonesia Tanpa Pacaran Pondok Kelapa branch whom I interviewed, regard secularism and other western ideologies as constraints to pursue an Islamic society and scapegoat for many disarrays in Indonesia. Secularism is simply defined as a separation or exclusion of religion and state. Therefore, La Ode himself consistently suggests to implement Islamic laws ruling under the Caliph in Indonesia as an attempt to curb secularism. Inevitably, such attitude may reflect his affiliation with anti-democratic organization i.e. Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI).<sup>13</sup>

La Ode's robust connection to HTI began since in the senior high school. It goes deeper since he studied at the Institute of Islamic Economic Science (STEI) Hamfara in Bantul, Yogyakarta. Speaking of STEI Hamfara, this college is headed by former HTI spokesperson namely Ismail Yusanto. Even though La Ode did not finish the study due to economic difficulty, but during the college he was intensively trained as activist and writer. According to him, his leadership and management skills were obtained as he enthroned as president at the executive student organization (*Badan Eksekutif Mahasiswa*) for 2011- 2012 period. Besides, he was active as editor in chief and writer to the magazine issued by *El-*

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13 In few social media posts, both Facebook and Twitter, La Ode acknowledged that he has been active since 2008 as member of HTI. The acknowledgment can be found in following links. [https://www.facebook.com/LaOdeMunafar/posts/520534534659517?hc\\_location=ufi](https://www.facebook.com/LaOdeMunafar/posts/520534534659517?hc_location=ufi), Accessed on September 18th, 10.18 AM. <https://www.facebook.com/LaOdeMunafar/photos/01menyambut-muktamar-khilafah-mk-dengan-tema-perubahan-besar-menuju-khilafah-ber/519826981396939/>. Accessed on September 18th, 13.09 PM. and <http://hamfara-1953.blogspot.com/2013/03/refleksi-runtuhnya-khilafah-3-maret-1924.html> Accessed on September 18th 2018, 15.20 PM.



*Faruq*.<sup>14</sup> His first book *Apa Salahku Sayang?* also was published when he was student.

Noteworthy, he also shaped his political stance during the college. It can be seen from experiences in committing some mass demonstrations. As the leader of student organization, he often participated in demonstrations against government policy. He moreover few times stood in the frontline as an orator. He explained to me that the demonstrations were generally to response economic and political issues for instance the rising prices of fuel, staple food, the issue of Freeport and elite corruption. To justify his explanation, I found some images were posted by him on his personal social media.



Figure 5. La Ode Munafar spearheaded a demonstration in Yogyakarta against the increase of fuel price.<sup>15</sup>

Intriguingly, while this demonstration is recognizable as political resistance, he instead finds this as religious obligation. In the above example,

<sup>14</sup> El-Faruq press was actually established by himself with the help of few friends at El-Faruq circle study. This independent publisher latter changed name into Gaul Fresh in December 2013. See <http://www.laodemunafar.com/setelah-re-launching-kini-gaul-fresh-lebih-menyegarkan-dan-mencerahkan>, accessed on January 15th 2019, 22.18 PM.

<sup>15</sup> Posted on his personal *Facebook* account on July 18th 2018. <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=2174496552579669&set=a.196483530380991&type=3&theater>. Retrieved on December 19<sup>th</sup> 2018, 13.33 PM.

La Ode used two Islamic terms such as *da'wa* (Islamic propagation) and *ummah* (Moslem community). Commonly *da'wa* describes proselytization to convert non-Moslem to Moslem or non-conformist Moslem to pious Moslem, but he instead used *da'wa* to address issues like economic injustice and neo capitalism. In his account, *da'wa* is raising public awareness (to make people care) about political and economic situations that impoverish *ummah*. While, in the name of *ummah*, he urged government responsibility to take care of people's needs. In a like manner, I find him using the pro-people rhetoric that similar to the notion of Islamic populism (Albertazzi and McDonnell 2007). I borrow the notion of Islamic Populism to explain the struggle of collection of people, who feel impoverished and or marginalized by state elites or dangerous others.

Scholars have identified that populism in Indonesia is often used by Islamic conservative groups. In the name of protecting Moslem community, they blame the un-Islamic system (*keufir*) or government, which is accused of perpetually causing disarray in the country. Islamic populism is not a new phenomenon. It first emerged in Indonesia at the dawn of the post-colonial era, marked by the Darul Islam movement which insisted Indonesia should be ruled based on an Islamic state (Van Bruinessen 2013; Hadiz 2016). Characteristically, Islamic conservative groups profess Islam as the cultural resource to solve any kind of grievances against social conditions (Hadiz 2016). In other words, Islamic populism theory is solely perceived as a class struggle over power and material resources in the context of neoliberal system. In such manner, Islamic populism overlooks the significance of religious doctrine. However, I argue that in the La Ode's motivation, the religious edict to fight against government remains paramount factor.

To prove that, I can see from his religious basis in the repertoire of contention against the injustice. La Ode often carries out a doctrine that says "the world is corrupt without Islam". His rhetoric exemplifies that

Islam is complete system that guides the followers to solve any problems overarching social, economic and political aspects and also moral erosion. Therefore, he blames on *kufr* system like capitalism and secular democracy for economic crisis, corruption, moral crisis and so on. He explained to me that his *da'wa* mission is rooted from religious duty to embody *amr bil ma'ruf wal-nabi 'al-munkar*. This Arabic term can be defined as to enjoin others in doing right and the forbidding of evil or wrong. I find such principle remains the cornerstone of his *da'wa* activism, when addressing the issue of morality among Moslem youngsters through the discourse of anti-dating.

After he left the university, La Ode decided to focus on carrying out *da'wa* against dating. He himself established the #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran to save youth from western invasion as the embodiment of *amr bil ma'ruf wal-nabi 'al-munkar*. Consequently, many books of him are dedicated to urge Muslim youngster to avoid dating, covering *aurat* with *syar'i* hijab for Muslim women (waist length veil covering hairs and breast), and to instilling strong leadership characters for young men by avoiding futile deeds.<sup>16</sup> The battle against the west through cultural approach like morality, dress and behaviour is considered as the battle against true and falsehood. By citing Quranic verses and hadith this movement constructs frame that the wickedness of the west is religiously justified. He referred to the interpretation that the west identity is Jews, Christians and including Islam liberal lately.

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16 To give instances "*Calon Umi Solehab*" (Virtuous Wife or Mother) sets out teaching of how to prepare woman in becoming pious wife and mother. "Born to be Leader", "*Pejuang-Pejuang Kehidupan*" (Life Fighters) and "*Materi Dasar Islam untuk Pemuda*" (Basic Material for Youth) are examples of motivational books for having champion mentality composed in Islamic fundamental interpretation, aims to Moslem men.

(...) The West does not want to let Islam advance. In the Qur'an, Allah SWT has warned, "Jews and Christians will not be happy with you until you follow their religion" (QS Al Baqarah: 120).<sup>17</sup>

(...) From Abu Sa'id Al Khudri, he said: "The Messenger of Allah said: 'Indeed you will follow in the footsteps of the people before you, inch by inch, so that if they enter the lizard's hole, surely you will enter into it.' (the friends) asked: 'O Messenger of Allah, are Jews and Christians?' He said: 'Who else?'" (Bukhari and Muslim)<sup>18</sup>

The disagreement against the west also has been much found in the #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran social media account. To give instance, during 2017- 2019 I found no less than 30 Facebook posts overtly containing message about anti secularism, liberalism, individualism, feminism, and other Western ideologies. Obtrusively, I also found the rejection against Western ideologies in the declaration passages, which must be loudly spoken in every offline event. The declaration reads:

After we saw, looked at, observed the damaging impact of courtship, then for the sake of Allah, we testified that

1. Indeed, dating, LGBT, alcohol and drugs are harmful and cause moral damage for young generation from any side.
2. We will stay away from the harmful dating culture, LGBT, alcohol, drugs and any other kind that is unlawful in Islam
3. We will fight together to liberate Indonesian Moslem youth from dating culture, LGBT, alcohol and drugs.
4. We realize that the damaging impact of courtship, LGBT, alcohol, drugs are caused by the freedom of expression accommodated by

<sup>17</sup> Interview with La Ode Munafar on September 25<sup>th</sup> 2018. There are also some Facebook posts cite this surah to emphasize the wickedness of the west (Jews, Christianity and Islam Liberal).

<sup>18</sup> Facebook post January 27<sup>th</sup> 2018 <https://www.facebook.com/LaOdeMunafar/photos/p.1739209576125334/1739209576125334/?type=1&theater>  
Retrieved on March 19<sup>th</sup> 2019, 21.11 PM.

*sepilis* (secularism, pluralism and liberalism) and human rights.

5. We promise to implement Islamic law to accomplish Indonesia without Courtship.<sup>19</sup>

From all of the explanation in this part, I clearly see that the contention for fighting against dating is overshadowed by religious and political motivation. Dating is regarded as an epitome of secular culture that principally does not fit Islamic teaching since this practice leads someone into adultery sin.<sup>20</sup> In line with La Ode's previous *da'wa* activism against government policy, the #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran movement is established to curb the prevalence of secularism in Indonesia.

### **'Strategic Ambiguity': Taking Advantage of Secular Democracy and (Western) Social Media.**

Despite the disagreement against secularism, this movement intriguingly takes advantage from it. To say this, I used the theory of Political Opportunity Structure (POS) that sheds light on the context that can provide movement actors opportunity to gather public force. By highlighting two dimensions namely the timing of the collective action and the openness or closure of the institutionalized political system, wherein this movement emerges (McAdam et al. 2008, 10-12), I find secular democracy and the rapid development of western technology i.e. social media makes the collective action possible. In other words, this movement ambivalently treat secular democracy and western invention as constraint and opportunity of the same coin.

<sup>19</sup> Transcribed from declaration of #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran Pondok Gede Chapter, January 6th 2019.

<sup>20</sup> #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran often cites Qur'an Surah Al-Isra: 32 to emphasize the command to avoid fornication. The verse says "do not approach unlawful sexual intercourse. Indeed, it is ever an immorality and is evil as a way". See also Facebook post on November 8<sup>th</sup> 2018 that reads "Adultery is a bad, cruel, filthy, dirty and corrupt moral behavior. Adultery will bring humiliation, cause damage, and bring azab or torment in the world, in the grave, and in the hereafter." <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1781499412108314/permalink/2511680862423495/>. Retrieved on February 10<sup>th</sup> 2019, 13.45 PM.

It is striking that the emergence of Islamic activism remarked the freedom and autonomy given in the democratic milieu after the repressive authoritarian era (Lim 2005; Meyer and Moors 2006; Ardhianto 2014; Epafras 2016). It has known that the new order regime put efforts to marginalize Islam as a force of political opposition (Hwang 2009). Under this democratic condition, Islamic movements can act out in public spaces including to response social political context (Fealy and White 2008; Ardhianto 2018).

Following this logic, democracy becomes an opportunity for the emergence of this movement, considering some strands. First, ideas in a democratic space should not be limited, so that the movement finds government's censorship and control of citizens must be unrestrained. I find the government in the democratic era welcome any kind of criticisms and provides space to exchange discourses from the opposition, every citizen and Islamic groups. There is no longer repressive control in media such as media co-optation for those who criticize government's work.

Second, the government is tied with the commitment to uphold the rights to assemble, to associate as well as religious freedom like entitled in few articles in the 1945 constitution. Thus, rather than a threat, the emergence of political social media activism is perceived as the participatory politics in democratic sphere (Lim 2013).

Some may think that the emergence of this movement may put democracy at stake. However, I argue this movement somehow invigorates democratic milieu. To give a concrete explanation, in creating discourse surrounding anti-dating and Islamization, this movement is actually practicing its own rights to religious freedom, assembly and expression that are covered by secular legal framework. It means that this movement cherishes the freedom and autonomy in democratic system and this demand is in reverse accommodated by the state. It may contravene the ideological root of this movement namely against secular ideologies; hence I find this attitude depicts what so-called 'strategic ambiguity' (Ahnaf 2017).

Not least important, the emergence of the #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran movement is underpinned by the sophistication of western technology in particular social media. Identifiably, social movements including Islamic conservative ones in 21<sup>st</sup> century have incorporated technology in order to pursue their goal and to mobilize people (Tilly 2019). Due to multifarious advantages of social media, La Ode utilizes it to disseminate his ideology, to stream his *da'wa*, to criticize government's handling of the state, and to create Islamic marketplace as well.

Open internet access in the democracy is even more perceived as an opportunity for Islamic movement. To date, no strict regulation can halt the circulation of text or discourse through information technology. Unlike the new order era which would have controlled any kind of media circulation or discursive practice among society, the reformation era protects rights to opinion and assembly as long as it is not contradictory with constitution, one of the examples is the law of Electronic Information and Transaction laws (UU ITE).

Indeed, the enactment of Law No. 19 of 2016, and new provisions to Law 11 of 2008, pertaining to Electronic Information and Transaction in Indonesia (UU ITE) privileges the government to terminate access of technology. However, the blockage is only aimed to abolish the dissemination of content that violates applicable laws and regulations, such as immoral content, hate speech, insult or defamation. Obviously, this UU ITE is not a hindrance for Islamic *hijrah* movements to circulate their ideology and mobilization. Since they mainly circulate normative *da'wa* in social media, even the propaganda is furtively replete with political motivation. Some experts argue this law is still operationalized under vague mechanisms. Added with privacy feature like encrypted messages on social media, this law has lack of supremacy in practice. It affirms the notion in the study of new social movement that it remains difficult to control the circulation of certain ideologies and mobilization in cyberspace (Tilly

2019). Considering this condition, social media are well taken into account by many contemporary Islamic groups to gather force or mobilize people.

In order to avoid reductionistic perspective, I am aware that the rapid development of information technology and media intersect with other combination of events for instance religious fragmentation, neo capitalism and the revival of commercial Islam. In this part, I will not elaborate in detail those conjunctures but seek to underline the complex situations where the movement arises. Admittedly, the advance technology development has sparked the reliance of Indonesian people on social media including religious figures. Such condition allows them to provoke new emerging social networking groups based on political, regional, and/or religious affiliation. Scholars identify this phenomenon as religious fragmentation (Wheeler 2001). It has proven that social media become channel for religious figures to contesting Islamic interpretation including conservative ones. Reciprocally, it also provides Indonesian Muslim preference that may distinct from the largest Muslim organization in Indonesia as Nadhlatul Ulama (NU) or Muhammadiyah. (Ardhianto 2018)

Other than that, the advantage of social media platform is also intertwined with the context of the rise of consumer Islam. It has been identified that in recent years, the Indonesian Muslim middle class has stimulated the consuming Islam (Fealy and White 2008; Weng 2014). The revival of commercial Islam can be seen from marketplaces that drives Indonesian Muslim to accentuate their piety by consuming certain goods such as veil, halal food, Islamic books, cassettes, music, film, lifestyle etc. By observing the Gaul Fresh accounts, I find this movement also takes the chance to gain economic advantage from its *da'wa* activism under this condition.

Intriguingly, while this movement often narrates anti-capitalism, I see that the emergence of this movement evidently shows the intersection between Islamic activism and global capitalism. The movement argues that



the trade is part of *da'wa* and to some extent to weaken western capitalism over market economy in social media. However, such paradigm is instead showing the replication of capitalist economic system. As a matter of fact, this movement crystalizes the meaning of religious symbols by using attractive media and intensive promotion. This movement requires a consumptive behaviour along the concept of *hijrah*. Not to mention, such strategy aims to trigger consumers' temptation for economic profit. It sums that instead of getting rid of capitalism, this movement instead freerides in the global capital flows of late capitalism to endorse commercial Islam.

## Conclusion

To conclude, the research on this anti-dating movement in social media becomes important since online Islamic activism cannot be treated sceptically against the political vacuity and deemed as superficial activism. This study has shown that by constructing *hijrah* without dating, this movement tries to destruct western cultural practice that perceivably born from secularism. The rejection against dating is actually rooted from the ultimate goal of this movement namely to implement Islamic laws or *shari'a* in Indonesia. I find that the disagreement on secularism has a common ground with the ideology of a prohibited Islamic organization called *Hizbut Tabrir Indonesia*. However, I do not mean to make generalization that this movement is new face or part of HTI, but the similar ideology and La Ode Munafar's robust affiliation to this organization, provides explanation why the *#IndonesiaTanpaPacaran* strongly opposes secularism and other Western ideologies in their repertoire of contention.

Not only leading to political engagement, online activism can also shape new culture like Islamic consumerism. The explanation of its five economic nodes has shown how this movement commoditize symbols of piety along with the *hijrah* campaign. To this extent, the concept of *hijrah* also made up of Islamic ideology that has readily consumed in forms of book, counsel, seminar and other materials.

Eventually, the theory of political opportunity structure has helped me to identify factors that underpin the movement viability. #IndonesiaTanpaPacaran movement is situated in a promising political opportunity structure namely secular democracy and the social media era. Ambivalently, secular democracy and social media as un-Islamic (*kufti*) inventions are treated as constraint and opportunity of the same coin. This movement cherishes secular democracy since the government allows the movement to proselytize (to transmit *da'wa*) people and contest interpretation about religion, social, political and economic issues in liberating ways. In a democratic context, media technology is also no longer co-opted by central power but open for everyone. It can be seen today how social media become arenas for everyone including the conservative ones, to express his or her aspirations.

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