Social media and the birth of an Islamic social movement: ODOJ (One Day One Juz) in contemporary Indonesia

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ABSTRACT
The Indonesian democratic transition, which occurred after the collapse of the New Order, was a significant moment that enabled diverse Islamic groups to use media for their own interests. However, little has been discussed regarding the use of media in dakwah (Islamic proselytising) performed by Muslim activists who are not inclined to participate in radical activities. This article focuses on the use of social media in dakwah by One Day One Juz (ODOJ), which endeavours to encourage Muslims to revive the spirit of reading the Qur’an through the mobile application WhatsApp. Given that ODOJ has successfully recruited more than 140,000 followers in Indonesia and abroad, this article investigates the key actors of ODOJ and the extent to which it has mobilised religious sentiments among Muslims from diverse affiliations. It argues that WhatsApp has enabled the birth of a semi-virtual Qur’anic movement, which is rooted in the Tarbiyah movement. Unlike well established Islamic movements in Indonesia that harness global computer networks to strengthen their influence, ODOJ has been dependant on technology since its inception. It demonstrates the capacity of technology in generating and crafting this new semi-virtual socio-religious movement. ODOJ has painted new colour onto the contemporary Islamic public and its presence is imperative to understanding the transformation of the religious media-scape in Indonesia.

KEYWORDS
Indonesia; Islam; middle-class Muslims; One Day One Juz; social media; youth

Introduction

In Indonesia, media technologies, particularly online media, are often the subject of significant concerns. The online world is frequently associated with decadence, consumerism, and loose morals. Parents, for example, continuously raise concerns relating to the possibility of their children gaining exposure to inappropriate websites and associated unsuitable materials. In contrast, the Internet has also been used by practising Muslims in Indonesia to enhance their religious practices and conduct dakwah (proselytisation).¹ The Internet has, in turn, contributed to spreading diverse interpretations of Islam,

¹There have been many studies on the impact of the Internet on the development of religions; see, for example, O’Leary (1996), Anderson (1999), Bunt (2003), Gräf and Skovgaard-Petersen (2009), Nisa (2013).
including exclusive, conservative understandings of Islam (see Bräuchler 2003, 2004; Hui 2010; Lim 2005). The most extreme Muslim groups also employ the Internet to appeal for jihad against non-believers.

The presence of online dakwh movements can be regarded as a reaction against both trends: cyber-porn and terrorist propaganda, including hate propaganda. These dakwh movements are certainly more active in positioning themselves as moral guardians that strive to introduce Islamic morality and combat moral decay. One Day One Juz, widely known as ODOJ is one of the products of these proselytisation efforts in Indonesia. ODOJ introduces its members to diverse activities relating to dakwh, specifically by encouraging them to read one section (juz) of the Qur’an every day. The Qur’an consists of 30 sections and 114 chapters (surah). Each section is about 20 pages,² while the length of each chapter is between three to 286 verses (ayat). This means if members read daily one section of the Qur’an, they will be able to finish reading the whole Qur’an in one month’s time.

Many in Indonesia, in particular its youth, have made the transition from print media to online media users (see also Muslim 2017: 33).³ This generally began after the introduction of smart phones and tablets, which are currently being used as the main devices for online activity. Sophisticated media technology has given birth to instant messaging mobile applications, such as WhatsApp, which allow mobile users to send text messages to individuals or groups of friends. The presence of WhatsApp has resulted in the traditional short message service (texting or SMS) losing its popularity amongst mobile users. In recent times, WhatsApp has increased in popularity amongst Indonesians and has been incorporated into their daily lives, including amongst Muslims who use the application as a means of dakwh. Following Barendregt (2008: 161), one can say that the use of WhatsApp for dakwh is an example of how a global mobile phone practice becomes ‘domesticated, Indonesianized, and Islamized’. In his study of Indonesian mobile technology, Barendregt (2008) argues that Indonesians have Islamised mobile media, which is evidenced in the products offered through mobile technology relating to Islam, such as Al Quran Seluler (a mobile application consisting of the Qur’an, its translation and recitation) and Mobile Syariah Banking (a mobile banking application for Islamic banks).

Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork conducted in three Indonesian cities, Jakarta, Bekasi, and Makassar, this article focuses on the use of social media by ODOJ for dakwh which encourages Muslims to revive the spirit of reading the Qur’an. During the fieldwork, I interviewed both ODOJers – this is how the members of this movement call themselves – and non-ODOJers.⁴ Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format. Online and offline research was completed in order to observe the dynamics of online and offline interactions among ODOJ members. As a social media ethnographer, to borrow Postill and Pink’s concept, I actively followed and participated in diverse online and offline ODOJ activities. Postill and Pink (2012: 128) use the phrase ‘everyday routines of digital ethnography practice’, which refers to the five routines of a social media

²Publishers might have different arrangements, leading to variant page numbers for the same section.
³Television, however, is still the most highly consumed media in Indonesia. Rakhmani (2016: 20), for example, says ‘Among all types of media in Indonesia, such as radio, newspapers, magazines, pay television, cinema, Internet, mobile phones, free-to-air television was the most highly consumed media, with the highest market share of information and entertainment compared to any other type of media’.
⁴During my research between August 2014 and January 2016, I interviewed 79 active WhatsApp users consisting of 49 women and 30 men.
ethnographer, namely ‘catching up, sharing, exploring, interacting, and archiving’. These practices form an important framework that enables the researcher to not only produce knowledge but also create ‘elements of her or his research environment, or ethnographic place’ (Postill and Pink 2012: 128). Similarly, this research has led me to follow the diverse forms of sociality, both online and offline, of ODOJ members.5

ODOJ invites Muslims to remind each other to read one section of the Qur’an a day through the use of social media, especially the application WhatsApp. Given that ODOJ has successfully recruited more than 140,000 followers in Indonesia and abroad (Kelana and Fizriyani 2015), this article investigates the key actors of ODOJ and the extent to which ODOJ has mobilised religious sentiments among Muslims from diverse religious affiliations in Indonesia. In addition, this article analyses the ideology that has guided the dakwah of ODOJ.

In comparison to the numerous studies on Internet usage that focus on its effectiveness in the transformation and production of Islamic knowledge (Becker 2009; Gräf 2007, 2009; Mariani 2011), the views of conservative and reformist ulama on the latest information and communication technologies in general (Larsson 2011), and the role of the Internet in democratising religious knowledge (Anderson 1999; Bunt 2003; Piela 2012), this study focuses on the role of social media in forming a new socio-religious movement – what I call a semi-virtual Qur’anic movement. This article introduces those who are interested in a broader understanding of Islam in contemporary Indonesia to a socio-religious movement which emerges through the assistance of social media and Internet-based connections. To date, studies on Islam and socio-religious movements in Indonesia mostly focus on well established Muslim organisations. These range from those belonging to the moderate currents, such as the two biggest Indonesian Muslim mass organisations – Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, and Islamist ones, such as the Tarbiyah movement (or Jamaah Tarbiyah) and Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia,6 to those with a conservative and radical direction, including diverse Salafi7 groups in Indonesia. The presence of ODOJ, a semi-virtual socio-religious movement, that was born and grows through the assistance of social media platforms and does not follow the conventional trajectory formation of earlier socio-religious movements in Indonesia, has not been well studied.8

This Qur’anic movement connects certain groups of Muslims who desire closer understanding of the Qur’an under the ODOJ umbrella. The movement is semi-virtual because it focuses its activities both online and offline. It is a Qur’anic movement which can be regarded as a type of social movement, and which was born of the emotional connection

5Postill and Pink (2012: 132) emphasise that various approaches are needed for the social media ethnographer and argue that: ‘A plural concept of sociality that allows us to focus on the qualities of relatedness in online and offline relationships offers a better way of understanding how social media practices are implicated in the constitution of social groups, and the practices in which they engage together…’.
6Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (Indonesian Party of Liberation) was banned in July 2017. It is a branch of the transnational Islamist movement, Hizb ut-Tahrir (Liberation Party), which has an agenda to restore an Islamic caliphate.
7Salafi movement refers to diverse Islamic reform groups. The term salafi originates from the word salaf (Ar.) meaning ‘predecessors’. This term mainly refers to the first three generations of the Muslim community (salaf al-sālih): the companions of the Prophet Muhammad (sahāba), the followers of the Prophet’s companions (tābi’un), and the followers of the followers of the Prophet’s companions (tabi‘i’in). The main characteristic of diverse Salafi movements is their effort to reform and purify Islam by emulating the understandings and practices of the Prophet Muhammad and those of the salaf al-sālih.
8With the exception of Muslim (2017), on the social and technological dimensions of ODOJ, and my short piece, Nisa (2017).
among the founders of ODOJ in their aim to make the Qur'an accessible to the lives of Muslims. In his study on the 2011 contemporary movements and revolutions, Castells (2012) argues the importance of the communication process in the formation of a social movement. Similarly, ODOJ elites have successfully facilitated the communication process, enabling them to create and maintain their movement.

It is worth noting, that the emphasis by Castells (2012: 229) on the Internet’s capacities to mobilise street protests in the 2011 revolutions and rebellions has been criticised by Fuchs (2012: 781). Fuchs (2012) maintains that ‘Formulations such as the ones that the Internet resulted in the emergence of movements, … that protested [sic] were conveyed by the Internet … convey a logic that is based on overt technological determinism …’.9 Despite this criticism, however, the phenomenon of ODOJ fits Castells’ argument as to how this semi-virtual Qur’anic movement, born from its objective conditions which were the problems of society, was shaped and developed within social media Castells (2012: 15) asserts that:

… a condition for individual experiences to link up and form a movement is the existence of a communication process that propagates the events and the emotions attached to it. … This is why the networked social movements of the digital age represent a new species of social movement.

This phenomenon is resonant with that of ODOJ. This new Qur’anic movement has built an imagined group of religious and/or Qur’anic devotees through the digital networks of communication. In general, ODOJ activists have played a significant role in transforming the religious media-scape of Indonesia.

The birth of ODOJ and its development

The establishment of ODOJ can be traced back to early 2004, when Bhayu Subrata, a student from Universitas Jendral Soedirman in Central Java, became concerned about his environment where he saw that reciting the Qur’an was not a priority for Muslims. Bhayu created the programme of reciting one section of the Qur’an in one day (ODOJ) for himself. In 2007, he introduced his method to his friends through SMS and a blog.10

The practice continued, and in 2009 Pratama Widodo, a member of Bhayu Subrata’s circle and a student at the State University of Semarang (Universitas Negeri Semarang), created a Facebook account for ODOJ. Further in its development, when ODOJ was still a relatively small group, many activists of the Tarbiyah movement – a dakwah movement which started gaining ground in Indonesia in the 1970s and 1980s, particularly on state university campuses11 – began to adopt WhatsApp to report their progress in reciting

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9However, during an interview, Castells also mentioned that, ‘Obviously communication technologies did not give birth to the insurgency. The rebellion was born from the poverty, social exclusion that afflict much of the population in this fake democracy …’ (quoted in Khondker 2011: 678).

10Bhayu is currently a teacher at Pondok Pesantren Darul Qur’an of Yusuf Mansur, a celebrity preacher. Since its establishment in 2003, Mansur has produced a generation of huffaz (individuals who have memorised the Qur’an). He is also known as a ‘tele-dai’ focusing on sedekah (alms-giving) and popularised the programme ‘the power of giving’ (see also Barker et al. 2009). The term ‘tele-dai’ coined by Hoesterey (2008: 97 fn. 6; 2015) refers to popular Muslim televangelists. Hoesterey (2008: 97 fn. 6) avoids using ‘televangelist’ to disassociate the term from ‘images and assumptions of American Protestant televangelists of the 1980s’. Dā’ī is an Arabic word used in Indonesia mainly to refer to a Muslim preacher.

11I will discuss this movement associated with the Muslim Brotherhood in more detail below. Notably, Bhayu and Pratama are also active in the Tarbiyah movement.
the Qur’an. This was initiated by Nurkholifa, an alumna of ITS (Institut Teknologi Sepuluh Nopember/Tenth November Institute of Technology) and a devoted activist of the Tarbiyah movement, after Ramadhan in 2013. Nurkholifa began to use WhatsApp to report to her murabbiyah (religious mentor) about her daily recitations of the Qur’an (tilawah yaumiyah). Within the tradition of the Tarbiyah movement, a pupil or mutarabbi (m)/ mutarabbiyah (f) of a halaqah (religious study circle), who is supervised by a murabbi or murabbiyah, has to report his or her weekly performances of acts of devotion – including reciting the Qur’an daily. Tarbiyah mentors utilise a checklist to monitor the progress of daily religious activities conducted by their members. Tilawah or reciting the Qur’an is one of the activities listed in each individualised programme, otherwise known as mutaba’ah yaumiyah (see Figure 1, number 17). This means that each member of the Tarbiyah movement should recite the Qur’an. Thus, ODOJ initially served as an important means of strengthening the identity and fellowship of cadres and activists of the Tarbiyah movement, such as those of Bhayu Subrata, Pratama Widodo and Nurkholifa.

The aim of establishing ODOJ was to encourage Muslims to read one section of the Qur’an each day. Members of ODOJ are enlisted in a group, ideally consisting of 30 people. The number 30 was chosen because it is expected that group members will finish one section of the Qur’an daily. This creates the impression for members that every day their group can finish reading the whole Qur’an, which consists of 30 sections. According to the first and current chairperson of ODOJ, Ustadz Ricky Adrinaldi, the basis of ODOJ activities is a Hadith recorded by al-Tirmidhi which states ‘Recite the whole Qur’an within one month’s time.’ This means that Muslims are duty-bound to read one section of the Qur’an daily.

The success of ODOJ can also be attributed to Ustadz Ricky Adrinaldi, who enthusiastically explained the early days of ODOJ:

I joined ODOJ on 14 October 2013. My sister-in-law, Fatmawati, introduced me to ODOJ. I created the group, and it did not happen automatically. I could not easily gather 30 people in one group. If we compare it to today, it is very fast to gather 30 people in one group. It would only take 10 minutes, and we would be there! So my group only started running on 2 November.

Following his successful efforts to form an ODOJ group, Ustadz Ricky and a colleague, Ustadz Fatah Yasin, who worked at the Ministry of Education and Culture, began to seriously consider developing ODOJ as a movement (Adrinaldi 2014: 264). While initially

12 Murabbi or murabbiyah is a term used within the Tarbiyah movement to refer to a mentor or teacher who is responsible for supervising the transformation of religious knowledge and controlling the acts of devotion performed by his or her pupils.

13 A halaqah usually consists of five to ten pupils (see also Machmudi 2008: 150).

14 Mutaba’ah yaumiyah is a daily note to mark the progress of members’ religious activities. This is created to remind members that their daily priority should be devotional acts.

15 Ustadz (male religious teacher) is used as an honorific title for a man with religious knowledge. ODOJ members know Ricky by this title.

16 The most popular Hadith with almost the same content came from al-Bukhari. The Hadith was narrated by Abdullah b. ‘Amr: ‘Allah’s Apostle said to me, “Recite the whole Qur’an within one month’s time.” I said, “But I have power (to do more than that).” He said, “Then finish the recitation of the Qur’an in seven days and do not finish it in less than this period” (al-Bukhari 2009: 1129).

17 Ustadz Ricky, impressed with Fatmawati’s diligence in reciting the Qur’an after joining ODOJ (Adrinaldi 2014: 264).

18 Interview with Ustadz Ricky Adrinaldi, 24 October 2014, at Rappan, Cilandak Town Square, South Jakarta.
the group served as a means to help Tarbiyah movement activists become more diligent in reading the Qur’an, the movement expanded its influence to larger segments of Indonesian society.

It is important to note that although most of the founding members are male, today the number of women exceeds men. According to Ustadz Ricky, 70% of ODOJ members are women. This fact is in line with the trend in women’s participation in diverse religious activities (for example, on majelis taklim [gatherings for learning Islam] see Millie 2011; Nisa 2012; on the Tarbiyah movement see Rinaldo 2013). Most ODOJ members are in the age range of 20–35 years,19 and this aligns with the age range of Internet users positioned among the highest percentages, who are around the age of 20–29 years (25.8%) and 30–34 years (22.7%) (Yuswohady and Gani 2015).20

On 4 November 2013, with the assistance of Ustadz Fatah, Ustadz Ricky formed the ODOJ Support Team in preparation for officially launching ODOJ as a Qur’anic movement. On 11 November 2013, ODOJ held a soft launch of its programmes in Baituttolibin Mosque in Jakarta. Through the assistance of advocates and notaries, ODOJ successfully legalised its status before it was officially inaugurated during its grand launch on 4 May 2014 in Istiqlal Mosque (Adrinaldi 2014: 267). Ustadz Ricky and his team have successfully transformed ODOJ into a structured Qur’anic movement. Today, ODOJ has an executive board; 10 bureaus, including Bureau of ODOJ’s Regular Advice (Biro Tausiyah

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19However, ODOJ also has ODOL KIDS or One Day One Lembar (One Day One Page [of the Qur’an]) for children. This programme is designed to encourage children to recite one page of the Qur’an daily.

20For a discussion on the role of the Internet in the life of young people in Indonesia, see also Slama (2010).
Rutin ODOJ); 19 departments, such as the Department of Information and Technology (Departemen Informasi dan Teknologi) and Department of Promotion (Departemen Promosi); and 28 divisions, such as Division of Enrolments, and Division of Training of Administrators. In November 2014, ODOJ had successfully formed 3,124 female WhatsApp groups and 979 male WhatsApp groups. The total number of ODOJ members at the time of its first *milad* (anniversary) was 123,090 (93,720 female and 29,370 male members).  

Further along in its development, ODOJ heavily relied on the use of WhatsApp. WhatsApp – acquired by Facebook in 2014 – is a product of MIM (Mobile Instant Messaging), which is considered to be a new wave of mobile communication services (Church and de Oliveira 2013). In his discussion of the common characteristics of social movements, Castells (2012: 221) states that, ‘The use of Internet and mobile communication networks is essential.’ ODOJ elites have positioned WhatsApp as their central means of expanding the Qur’anic movement and the scale of its influence. Unlike Castells’ networks of social movements which have a decentralised structure by nature, ODOJ is tightly centralised. Castells (2012) emphasises that these networks of social movements ‘do not need a formal leadership, command and control centre, or a vertical organization to distribute information or instructions’. ODOJ, however, as mentioned, has a chairman and a clear structure. Fuchs (2012: 783) has also criticised Castells’ position regarding the Internet and its leaderless movements.

WhatsApp also became popular amongst its users due to its low cost. Most of the informants argued that cost was their primary reason for using WhatsApp rather than SMS. For example, 21 year old university student Ika said:

I do not use SMS anymore Sister Eva, because it is quite expensive. WhatsApp is free as long as we have an Internet connection. For students like us, WhatsApp can be regarded as student-pocket friendly.

Considering that WhatsApp requires a mobile Internet connection to function, WhatsApp is not completely free to use. However, compared to the cost of traditional SMS, WhatsApp is far more economical.

Maintaining the Tarbiyah movement’s tradition of segregated space between males and females in various forms of their activities, ODOJ also separates male and female in different WhatsApp groups. Each group has a leader, called an admin (for administrator). Within each group one member is responsible for the daily summary of the progress of the other members in finalising their share of reading the Qur’an. This responsibility circulates among the group members on a daily basis and the person is called PJH/Penanggung Jawab Harian (Person Responsible for the Day). Each member of ODOJ is required to report their progress through WhatsApp to the person in charge for the day. To maintain the commitment of its members, ODOJ has set up strict rules and a ranking system which it uploads regularly. The ranking system is as follows: 5 stars or first place for members who complete their reading before 08:00; 4 stars for those who finish

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21 Interview with Ustadz Ricky Adrinaldi, 4 December 2015, in Cikarang.
22 The admin has the authority to remove ‘lazy’ members from the WhatsApp group.
23 This kind of ranking is used to encourage all members to strive for their best performance. Different emojis are used daily, such as stars, smiles, gifts, and the like. The rules from one group to another can vary slightly. Each group can modify the rules based on the context of their members.
between 8:00 and 12:00; 3 stars for those who finish between 12:00 and 16:00; 2 stars for those who finish between 16:00 and 20:00; and 1 star for those who finish between 20:00 and 24:00. The PJH updates the tally several times a day.

The online traffic of ODOJ members on WhatsApp fits in with arguments made by Yuswohady and Gani (2015), who conducted research on the behaviour of the Indonesian middle-class when accessing the Internet. They both found that online traffic started from 02:00 and reached its peak time at 20:00. Some ODOJ members do start participating online at 02:00, mainly because they are active in inviting their members to pray *tahajjud*, the recommended night prayer which can be conducted anytime before dawn. Yuswohady and Gani (2015) mention that their respondents were mainly using the Internet for browsing, accessing social media, chatting/messaging, watching videos, checking emails, and the like. ODOJ members, though, are mainly busy with ODOJ activities. They receive ODOJ reports and postings on their WhatsApp accounts, including religious advice from the central board. Therefore, many ODOJ members are online for far longer than the one to three hours of other Internet users (Yuswohady and Gani 2015). In this way, it can be said that ODOJ has successfully married *dakwah* and social media. This phenomenon resonates with with the argument by Barendregt (2008) on the use of mobile technology in Indonesia. ODOJ has not only successfully domesticated WhatsApp but also Islamised WhatsApp. As a new Qur’anic movement, ODOJ is clearly performative in nature – its membership is monitored and strengthened through the systems and rules set up by ODOJ elites.

**Being pious and modern within the ODOJ Qur’anic movement**

The birth and development of this new Qur’anic movement cannot be separated from the fact that Indonesia is witnessing a phenomenon by which many Muslims are becoming more modern, more educated, more religious and more consumptive at the same time. As noted by Rinaldo (2013), Muslims in Indonesia understand that Islam can be equated with modernity given its prevalent presence and expansion in the public sphere, particularly through educational institutions (see Azra et al. 2007) and media. Azra (1999), in his study on the rise of elite Muslim schools, also highlights the occurrence of what he calls *‘santri-ization’*\(^{24}\) of the Muslim middle class.\(^{25}\) The presence of the new Qur’anic movement initiated by ODOJ members is one of the manifestations of the presence of modern middle-class Muslims. Contemporary Indonesia has witnessed this expansion of middle-class Muslims, in particular since the 1990s (see Rakhmani 2016: 25).

Although not all ODOJ members come from middle-class backgrounds, middle-class Muslims are particularly important agents in ensuring that the movement’s daily agenda of reminding Muslims to recite and be close to the Qur’an is fulfilled. In addition, although an Internet connection is inexpensive, daily activities of ODOJ still incur costs. Ukht (Sister) Aminah, a PJH of one of the ODOJ groups, for example, explained that financial concern is often one of the reasons its members leave the group. Aminah says:

\(^{24}\) *Santri-ization* in this regards refers to Islamisation. *Santri* literally means student of an Islamic boarding school. In this context, however, it refers to ‘those who devoutly follow Islamic teachings’ (Azra 1999: 69).

\(^{25}\) The middle class is one of the most talkative segments within social media. Yuswohady and Gani (2015) have argued that middle-class Muslims are voracious Internet users. Therefore, it is not surprising that Indonesia is positioned as the nation with the third largest number of Facebook users, the fourth largest number of Twitter users, and the twelfth largest number of LinkedIn users (Yuswohady and Gani 2015).
One of the main drivers for some ODOJers who finally stop from being active is not because they are getting bored reading the Qur’an, but it is often because they do not have credits to report their progress of finishing one section of the Qur’an every day. We can understand that, because getting online every day also requires money.26

Middle-class Muslims who are active in ODOJ give evidence of how they celebrate their modernity by being tech-savvy users of media technologies who play a significant role in the development of dakwah. These middle-class Muslims seek to build meaningful ways of life by returning to the essence of Islamic teachings. They make Islam the centre of their modern lives. Scholars of Islam in Indonesia have often emphasised the way middle-class Muslims have benefited and engaged with media and technologies, including social media, to redefine and strengthen their identities (Beta 2014: 385; Her-yanto 2014: 32; Rakhmani 2016: 26; Slama 2017: 95). Barendregt (2012: 317) in his study of Nasyid music in Malaysia also argues that:

the growth of this Muslim middle class in Malaysia and neighboring countries, such as Indonesia, coincides with the shift from a previous Islamic revival in the early 1970s, in which religion was largely seen as the antidote to Western colonial values.

The phenomenon of middle-class ODOJ is particularly resonant with Rinaldo’s (2013) work on middle-class pious Muslims because the main cadres of ODOJ have the same background as the women in Rinaldo’s study, namely the Tarbiyah movement, in particular PKS (Partai Keadilan Sejahtera or Prosperous Justice Party) – the political vehicle of the Tarbiyah movement which was founded in 1998. PKS is an Islamist political party focusing on making Islam the sole ideological source for governing Indonesia. One manifestation of modernity for ODOJ in this regard relates to the skill of a believer in balancing their piety with worldly affairs. Therefore, ODOJ members believe that reading the Qur’an is one possible way of being pious while being occupied with the troubles of daily life.

**ODOJ and the Tarbiyah movement: key actors**

The onset of ODOJ coincided with that of a new wave of Islamic revival in Indonesia. As mentioned, the key actors of ODOJ are activists from the Tarbiyah movement. The characteristics of ODOJ members are indeed quite similar to the activists of the Tarbiyah movement.27 One of the most important traits is their attention to education and systematic ways of gaining knowledge. The Tarbiyah movement has been inspired by the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, especially in terms of its attention to education28 and youth. The Tarbiyah movement has also been considered the Indonesian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt (Permata 2016: 29). Initially, however, the activists of the Tarbiyah movement came from diverse Muslim organisations, ranging from those with Salafi characteristics, such as DDII (Dewan Dakwah Islamiyah Indonesia), to the two biggest Indonesian Muslim mass organisations, Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) (see also Permata 2016: 29–30).

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26 Interview with Aminah, 8 February 2015, at Mosque Abu Bakar Ash Shiddiq, East Jakarta.
27 On the characteristics of activists and cadres of the Tarbiyah movement, see Rinaldo (2013).
28 On the Muslim Brotherhood’s models of education, see Hatina (2006).
Hasan al-Banna (1906–1949), the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, was a school teacher. Herrera and Lotfy (2012) assert that al-Banna ‘understood very well the concept that whoever captures the youth captures the nation’. They also highlight that ‘the Brotherhood has consistently concentrated its efforts in the domains of education and media …’ (Herrera and Lotfy 2012). Therefore, it is unsurprising if one of the preferences of PKS’s ministerial posts is that of the Ministry of Youth and Sport (Permata 2016: 73). This echoes Morsi, who also place the Ministry of Youth with the Muslim Brotherhood (Herrera and Lotfy 2012). Additionally, the Tarbiyah movement has achieved a strong foothold in Indonesian campus life and begun to flourish in Indonesian state campuses, in particular after the birth of KAMMI (Indonesian Muslim Student Action Union) on 29 March 1998. The educational systems and strategies which were introduced by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt have been adopted by the Tarbiyah movement in Indonesia. The Muslim Brotherhood introduced a small cell or family unit (usra) programme, ‘based on three foundations: familiarity with one another, mutual understanding and solidarity’ (Hatina 2006). The usra model was then adopted by the Tarbiyah movement.29

ODOJ’s adoption of social media as their main infrastructure also aligns with the way the Muslim Brotherhood has used the media infrastructure pervasively to propagate their messages, circulate their agendas to challenge the secular regime, and recruit supporters, in particular through their websites ikhwanonline.com (Arabic), ikhwanweb.com (English), Facebook and Twitter accounts (see Herrera and Lotfy 2012; Srinivasan 2014). They have also created their own social media sphere, such as ikhwantube.com, ikhwanbook.com and ikhwanwikitube.com (see Howard et al. 2011). The difference lies in the focus of their main agenda. ODOJ’s agenda is mainly related to their ‘Closer to the Qur’an’ campaign, while the Muslim Brotherhood focuses more on their struggle to gain power in the Egyptian political scene.30 However, ODOJ’s board has also been active in voicing their support for the former Egyptian president Mohammed Morsi, who is the leading member of the Muslim Brotherhood. In 2015, for example, ODOJ’s Division of Islamic Culture (Divisi Tsaqafah Islamiyah) posted an article that praised Morsi’s contribution to Muslims in Palestine by opening the border crossing at Rafah which enabled aid to reach the Gaza Strip. The article adds: ‘Unfortunately Morsi’s period was not long, he was overthrown on 3 July 2013, so after that all the Rafah’s doors were closed again. Barbarically, Sisi’s regime destroyed the tunnel into the Gaza Strip’ (Ondedaynejuz 2015).

During the ODOJ anniversary celebrations, the elites mentioned that prior to ODOJ, some Tarbiyah activists had experienced futur – reduced enthusiasm towards attending halaqah. Amidst the condition of futur within the Tarbiyah movement and competition with other Islamist movements in recruiting newcomers, especially Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia within university campuses,31 ODOJ appeared as a fresh breeze for many activists. It can be regarded as a continuous effort of the Tarbiyah movement to maintain and expand its influence by inviting Muslims from more diverse backgrounds. In addition, through ODOJ, these activists are able to sustain their educational approach and

29However, the Tarbiyah movement did not use the term usra because of its negative connotation. Machmudi (2008) mentions that, ‘During the mid-1980s the Indonesian government often referred to certain radical movements in Indonesia that were associated with violent activities by the term usrah.’ Instead the Tarbiyah adherents preferred to use the term halaqah (lit. circle) and liqa (meeting) for their religious gatherings (see also Machmudi 2008).
30See Herrera and Lotfy (2012) for how the Muslim Brotherhood operates its social media and showcases its presence.
31Tarbiyah activists in Indonesia are known for their engagement in the religious education sections of universities and schools, in particular state universities and state schools (see Machmudi 2008; Hasan 2012)
ideological platform, namely to mould the morality and purity of Muslims, as well as to strengthen their sense of religious belonging. In contrast to the use of social media and the Internet in general by many fashionable Internet users (see, for example, Lim 2013a), often seen as responsible for the degradation of national morality, ODOJ guides its members to always be within the boundaries of Islamic morality by being close to the Qur’an.

Although there have been efforts from ODOJ board members to play down their connections to the Tarbiyah movement and PKS, it cannot be denied, as mentioned earlier, that the spirit of ODOJ elites is rooted in the movement. During its major events, ODOJ often invites PKS elites to their programmes (see Figure 2), such as the presence of two senior PKS politicians, Hidayat Nur Wahid and Ahmad Heryawan, during Olimpiade Pencinta Quran (Olympiad of the Lovers of the Qur’an) in 2016. The majority of ODOJ’s central and local board members are Tarbiyah activists.32 The following statement from one of informants for this study is pertinent: ‘It is wrong to identify ODOJ with a certain ideology, because ODOJers come from different ideological backgrounds.’ This assertion from an ODOJ board member, and similar statements were often repeated by other board members during this study despite the contradiction when viewing its top leaders as they are from heavily Tarbiyah-influenced backgrounds. However, it holds true when referring to the backgrounds of broader members of ODOJ that are more diverse.

The requirement of ODOJ groups to gather 30 people in each group to remind each other to read the Qur’an and to be more religious can be regarded as an extension of the system

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32 Interview with Mas Fazrin, 21 December 2014, WAMY building, South Jakarta.

Figure 2. The Mayor of Depok (West Java), Nur Mahmudi Ismail, who was the first PKS chairman, with Ustadz Ricky at ODOJ’s first anniversary, 23 November 2014, UI Depok Mosque. Photo by Eva F. Nisa.
applied in *halaqah* groups of the Tarbiyah movement in which the mentor needs to prompts its pupils to observe their religious commitments. The online ODOJ *halaqah* is organised meticulously to monitor the progress of its members’ recitations of the Qur’an. This is resonant with the practice of monitoring the devotional acts of juniors by seniors within the Tarbiyah movement. The difference lies in the intensity of control. While Tarbiyah *halaqah* is performed weekly including its related monitoring, ODOJ’s control is conducted daily. This form of sociability is celebrated by all members of ODOJ.

The daily presence of ODOJ in the life of its followers indicates a new form of sociability introduced by ODOJ, which differs from that of other earlier well established Islamic movements using the Internet, including that of the Tarbiyah movement. The Tarbiyah movement does not have intense sociability of the ODOJ. Although the Tarbiyah movement has an online presence, its elites do not engage with their constituents the way ODOJ interacts with its own followers. Sociability maintained by ODOJ and ODOJ members is part of the ‘peaceable acts of relating’ (Rapport 2015: 185), an approach that suits their need to work together as Muslims who are eager to redefine what it means to be the generation of the Qur’an. Rapport (2015: 185) says:

> Commonsensically, sociability can be understood as the tendency to seek the company of others, to be friendly, especially with non-kin and semi-intimate others (friends, acquaintances, work-mates), extending to civil encounters with less familiar people beyond personal and professional circles.

The Tarbiyah’s regular *halaqah* led by senior students have strengthened the sense of rapport and solidarity among members of the Tarbiyah movement. As a result, members feel that they belong to one family. This type of feeling is similar to the feelings created within the ODOJ groups. Usually, an admin will greet newcomers with language appropriate for family members. For example, the admin of ODOJ 1431, the group in which I participated, greeted a newcomer by saying: ‘*Ahlan wa sahlan* (Welcome), hopefully you will feel at home in our family house.’ Yulya, one of the members, responded by saying: ‘Welcome to the *shalihah* (pious) jungle … Welcome to the house full of love. The house of the dwellers of heaven, Insha Allah (God willing).’

**ODOJ and pious emotions**

ODOJ has a remarkably high level of popularity in Indonesia (see Figure 3). Its massive achievement can be seen from its success in entering the Indonesian Record Museum (Museum Rekor Indonesia) for the largest number of Qur’an reciters (50,000) on 4 May 2014, the day of its grand launch.

Since then they have expanded their membership. Another key to its success, besides the use of WhatsApp, is the way they galvanise the emotions of their prospective members. This resonates with the analysis by Castells (2012: 220) who states: ‘They require an emotional mobilization triggered by outrage against blatant injustice, and by hope of a possible change.’ However, the crises mentioned by ODOJ elites for emotional kindling differ from those mentioned by Castel (2012) which includes poverty and political despair. The ODOJ movement mainly focuses on the crises of morality connected to

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33 *Halaqah* also play a significant role in recruiting new cadres, including mobilisation (Hairgrove and Mcleod 2008: 400).

34 Author’s observation 5 November 2014.
the failure of Muslims to make the Qur’an the centre of their lives. They argue that such negligence has created diverse crises in the life of Muslims.

In addition, ODOJ mobilises the sentiment of being closer to the Qur’an by emphasising the role of the Qur’an as life guidance, pronouncing the benefits of reading it. One of the most often mentioned benefits is that a reader will achieve happiness in this world and definite happiness in the Hereafter (see, for example, Malik 2014: 20). ODOJ members often mention that the Qur’an has helped them face multiple crises in their lives. By reading the Qur’an, Muslims will be able to feel peace, tranquillity, and soften their hearts (Malik 2014: 32). The peace that comes from reading the Qur’an has been emphasised as a shield protecting its readers from committing sins (Malik 2014: 59). Lelawati, from ODOJ Group #2,207, asserted:

The lessons (hikmah) and miracles after joining this ODOJ community do not only relate to the possibility of meeting Muslim brothers and sisters who love the Qur’an, but also the possibility of building friendships in Islam, which is amazing. [to share] love, do’a [supplication] and motivation. I also feel incredible inner peace.

(Quoted in Malik 2014: 140)
By emphasising this kind of sentiment and sharing the hope that being close to the Qur’an will generate better, stronger and more optimistic Muslims, ODOJ members have successfully initiated a semi-virtual Qur’anic movement.

Castells (2012: 13), in his discussion of the early phase of collective action leading to the formation of social movements, states that:

At the individual level, social movements are emotional movements. Insurgency does not start with a program or political strategy. This may come later, as leadership emerges, from inside or from outside the movement, to foster political, ideological and personal agendas that may or may not relate to the origins and motivations of participants in the movements. But the big bang of a social movement starts with the transformation of emotion into action.

This can also be observed with regard to the early days of ODOJ when the desire of the founding fathers of being closer to the Qur’an was prevalent. Castells (2012: 13–14) mentions the theory of affective intelligence when he discusses two of the most relevant emotions in social mobilisation and political behaviour, namely fear and enthusiasm. Both emotions were present during the formation and development of ODOJ, the fear of neglecting the Qur’an (reading, understanding, and implementing its teachings) and the enthusiasm for making the Qur’an grounded in ‘the soil of Indonesia’ (bumi Indonesia), as expressed by Ustadz Ricky.35

Religious sentiment within ODOJ is distributed and maintained through the efforts of the board by posting tausiyah (religious advice). ODOJ has a special bureau called Biro Tausiyah Rutin ODOJ (Bureau of ODOJ Regular Advice). This bureau strives to maintain the emotions and spirit of ODOJ members to not only be committed to ODOJ but also to a particular Islamic lifestyle. The themes of the tausiyah range from how to follow the true path of Islam and maintain one’s piety (taqwa), to how to show strong commitment towards becoming closer to the Qur’an. ODOJ members are also welcome to share their emotions and feelings of inspiration with their group members. Ambar, a 19 year old university student, shared her story:

I really enjoy being part of ODOJ. The postings that I get are so inspirational to remind me about the beauty of being close to the Qur’an. I really enjoy when the members share their stories of why they joined ODOJ. One of the ODOJers, for example, mentioned that she joined ODOJ because she wants people to read Qur’an and pray for her when she dies, especially ODOJers.36

Although ODOJ, as a Qur’anic movement, began on the Internet and mainly operates on Internet social networks, offline meetings are also important. This is resonant with the trajectory of new social movements in which ‘occupying urban space on a blind date’, to borrow Castells’s concept (2012: 2), is imperative in the process of making history. In his analysis on movements emerging in 2011 in Egypt, Tunisia, Iceland, Spain and the United States, Castells (2012) emphasises the power of social media in organising and mobilising the masses through ‘blind dates’ in public spaces for social change. He argues (Castells 2012: 2, emphasis added):

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35 Interview with Ustadz Ricky Adrinaldi, 4 December 2015, in Cikarang.
36 Interview with Ambar, 10 December 2014, at IDB Building, Universitas Negeri Jakarta.
From the safety of cyberspace, people from all ages and conditions moved towards occupying urban space, on a blind date with each other and with the destiny they wanted to forge, as they claimed their right to make history – their history – in a display of the self-awareness that has always characterized major social movements.

ODOJ popularises the trend of 'blind dates' by organising diverse activities with its virtual followers to maintain their commitment and attachment to ODOJ and ‘unite their minds and hearts’ (talif al-qulub). During their offline activities, some ODOJ board members often mentioned the term talif al-qulub, referring to their effort to maintain members’ emotions, especially love and strong feelings, for ODOJ.

The offline ‘blind date’37 activities offered by ODOJ vary from NGAOS (Ngaji on the Street) in which they ask their members to recite the Qur’an (ngaji) on street pavements (see Figure 4); KalQulus (Kajian al Qur’an Ala Ustadz or Study the Qur’an with a Religious Teacher); Silatbar (Silaturrahim Akbar or Big Gathering) and Kopdar (Kopi Darat meaning offline meeting); ODOJ collaborative activities with humanitarian organisations; Nobar film (Nonton Bareng or watching films together), and ODOJ Adventure which usually involves organised mountain climbing, hiking and touring on motorbikes. The largest event in 2016 was the Olimpiade Pencinta Quran (Olympiad of the Lovers of the Qur’an) at the Islamic Centre and Patriot Stadium in Bekasi (West Java), which was attended by 75,000 Muslims (see Figure 5).

For many members, online and offline activities have successfully allowed them to feel closer to Islam, to participate meaningfully within the domain of dakwah, and strengthen their minds and hearts in their relationship to the Qur’an.

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37 A 'blind date' in this context does not refer to a romantic social meeting with potential romantic partners.
Through its offline ‘blind date’ activities, ODOJ maintains the emotional attachment of its members. The parallels between offline ‘blind date’ activities and online activities are evidence of how netizens using social media are concerned with creating a sustainable continuum of networks (see also Campbell and Vitullo 2016). ODOJ elites are aware of the nature of social media activism which tends to be loose. The phenomenon that Merlyna Lim describes as ‘many clicks, but little sticks’ (Lim 2013b: 646). Therefore, ODOJ elites emphasise the offline ‘blind date’ to hone in on what should ‘stick’ and strengthen the realisation of ta’līf al-qlūb of its constituents.

**Conclusion**

This article traces the birth of a new Qur’anic movement within the context of wireless communication networks. ODOJ adds a new dynamic to the broader picture of middle-class Muslim media worlds in Indonesia. Its elites, in particular, demonstrate innovative efforts of young middle-class Indonesian Muslims to ‘vernacularise’ social media and utilise it to for the expansion of public Islam in Indonesia. One important feature of ODOJ is in its emotional mobilisation and taking on the role of offline ‘blind dates’, which make ODOJ similar to the social movements described by Castells (2012). However, in contrast to other networked social movements which usually mobilise emotions regarding poverty, injustice and political despair, ODOJ emphasises emotional relations to the Qur’an and crises of morality that are seen as being rooted in the failure of Muslims to make the Qur’an close to their hearts. Its online and offline dynamics serve as the channel to maintain these affective relationships to the Qur’an and the commitment to reading the Qur’an daily.
ODOJ elites attempt to connect with Muslims who feel that their distance to the Qur’an has been the main source of crises in their lives. They believe that being close to the Qur’an can lead them to become better Muslims and to enjoy their lives. This is a common story when investigating the journey of ODOJ members towards becoming part of this movement. WhatsApp, in this context, plays a significant role in channelling these aspirations. The ability of ODOJ members, especially its elite, to be creative in localising and Islamising social media – serves as effective *dakwah* communication channels – has enabled them to transform the enthusiasm of these pious Muslims into collective action, online and offline, giving rise to a new Qur’an reading movement.

Originating from the initiatives of activists of the Islamist Tarbiyah movement who are known for their zeal and their well structured method of learning Islam, especially within campus mosques through their *halaqah* system, ODOJ can be understood as the expansion of the *dakwah* field of these activists. Moreover, their ability to evoke emotional registers have enabled them to initiate a well organised semi-virtual Qur’anic movement that is able to cut across ideologies, since ODOJ members do not necessarily share the ideological background of the movement’s founders. ODOJ can be regarded as the most successful effort of young Tarbiyah activists to develop a strong foothold in the Indonesian *dakwah* scene. The success of ODOJ, however, cannot be separated from recent religious developments in Indonesia, a country that has witnessed an increase in the number of middle-class Muslims who are tech-savvy and at the same time show significant zeal towards being pious. The new Qur’anic movement propagated by ODOJ thus coincide with a particularly favourable moment when middle-class Muslims are striving to find a spiritual sanctuary to cope with multiple life crises.

There have been some criticisms against techno-determinism in the study of diverse movements, including those in contemporary public Islam in Indonesia. It is, however, not an overstatement to say that in the case of ODOJ, the techno-social system has indeed produced an innovative semi-virtual Qur’anic movement. ODOJ was established and matured due to the assistance of the Internet and mobile communication. Before the presence of ODOJ, contemporary public Islam in Indonesia witnessed the presence of Islam on the Internet and its platforms. Various Islamic movements in Indonesia have developed their online presence to spread their influence. However, ODOJ differs in providing unconventional colour to the nature of the sociability of the Islamic movements in Indonesia. Although it organises offline meetings, its main activity happens mainly online, which demonstrates how the digital space has shaped and expanded the interaction of its members. The presence of ODOJ in the daily life of its members also adds to the unique characteristics which differ from other socio-religious movements that do not intervene in the daily life of its followers with such intensity. ODOJ enters the lives of its members from dawn to dawn. Therefore, it has added to the diversity in the nature of sociability of Islamic movements in Indonesia, and other parts of the world.

ODOJ has inspired hundreds of ODOJ-like movements, simultaneously giving rise to new dynamics within contemporary Islam in Indonesia. It is important to note that similar to ODOJ, the main players of these kinds of Islamic semi-virtual movements are mostly youths with Islamist movement backgrounds. This demonstrates the contemporary face of Islamist movements in Indonesia, which has often been neglected in current studies of Islam in Indonesia.
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