

Uniting Through Humour: Navigating Interreligious Dialogue in Indonesia's Cyberspace During Elections

Yuri Nabila Saifatunnisa¹, Ulfah Wafa Almubarokah², Raihan Aqhsal Arighi³,
Muhammad Salman Abidin^{4*}

¹⁻⁴Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, Indonesia

Email: muhsaldin@gmail.com

Abstract

Purpose: This study explores the role of humour in fostering interreligious dialogue and cooperation within Indonesia's digital spaces, particularly during the politically charged atmosphere of the 2024 general election. **Methodology:** Employing netnography, this research focuses on the 'Garis Lucu' (GL) cyberculture, analysing interactions on platforms like Twitter and Instagram to understand how humour mediates religious and political discourse. **Findings:** The study identifies three main themes: political engagement, political communication, and religious humour. Humour was found to significantly enhance civic engagement and function as a bridge in interreligious communication, easing tensions and fostering a culture of mutual respect and understanding. **Research Implications:** The findings suggest that digital platforms can serve as effective forums for promoting societal harmony and tolerance through humour, particularly in diverse societies facing political and religious tensions. **Originality/Value:** This research contributes to the understanding of cyberculture and interreligious dialogue by illustrating how humour can transform potentially divisive political interactions into opportunities for constructive and harmonious exchanges.

Keywords: Cyberculture; Humour; Interreligious Dialogue; Netnography; Political Communication.

Abstrak

Tujuan: Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi peran humor dalam memfasilitasi dialog antaragama dan kerjasama dalam ruang digital Indonesia, terutama selama atmosfer politik yang memanas pada pemilihan umum 2024. **Metodologi:** Menggunakan netnografi, penelitian ini berfokus pada budaya siber 'Garis Lucu' (GL), menganalisis interaksi di platform seperti Twitter dan Instagram untuk memahami bagaimana humor memediasi wacana agama dan politik. **Temuan:** Studi ini mengidentifikasi tiga tema utama: keterlibatan politik, komunikasi politik, dan humor antaragama. Humor ditemukan secara signifikan meningkatkan keterlibatan sipil dan berfungsi sebagai jembatan dalam komunikasi antaragama, meredakan ketegangan dan mempromosikan budaya saling menghormati dan memahami. **Implikasi Penelitian:** Temuan menunjukkan bahwa platform digital dapat berfungsi sebagai forum yang efektif untuk mempromosikan harmoni dan toleransi masyarakat melalui humor, terutama di masyarakat yang beragam yang menghadapi ketegangan politik dan agama. **Orisinalitas/Nilai:** Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi pada pemahaman tentang cyberculture dan dialog antaragama dengan mengilustrasikan bagaimana humor dapat mengubah interaksi politik yang berpotensi memecah belah menjadi peluang untuk pertukaran yang konstruktif dan harmonis.

Kata Kunci: Cyberculture; Dialog Antaragama; Humor; Komunikasi Politik; Netnografi.

INTRODUCTION

We are living in an era where society is more connected than ever. Today, we are not only citizens of the world—cosmopolitans—but also netizens: citizens of the internet. The internet facilitates interaction with previously isolated communities, fostering interreligious dialogue and igniting power struggles within religious authorities (Tsuria, 2020). This technological advancement not only shapes the way we communicate but also influences our lives in a religiously diverse society. Campbell (2007, p. 1044) highlights that online religious engagement involves layers of authority, power, policy, ideology, and

*Corresponding Author

Received: February 21, 2024; Revised: May 19, 2024; Accepted: July 09, 2024

rhetoric. As a result, religious identities and organisations can uniquely generate or transform political conflicts (Brubaker, 2015). Thus, promoting interreligious dialogue within the internet framework is essential, as its primary goal is to catalyse social change and clarify religious misunderstandings (Cavanaugh, 2011).

However, interreligious dialogue facilitated by the internet does not always proceed smoothly. In the 2000s, a significant case of interreligious conflict related to the internet arose in the Indonesian city of Maluku. Brigit Bräuchler (2003, p. 124) described the news from this period as a "report from hell." The conflict extended into cyberspace, where mailing lists represented the opposing sides: *Masariku* (Christian) and *Laskar Jihad* (Muslim). Each group interpreted and presented events differently. Christians accused the national media of favouring Muslims and fabricating lies to discredit Christians, while Muslims believed that both local and international media supported Christians, ignoring Muslim suffering (Bräuchler, 2003). In her conclusion, Bräuchler (2003) suggested that the internet could facilitate peace-making by establishing solidarity groups, reuniting Moluccans in the diaspora, and equalising the discourse arena. The connection between cyberspace and real life has thus become a significant element in both the perpetuation and resolution of religious conflicts.

In cyberspace, where interreligious harmony is fragile, humour serves as a potent tool with multifaceted impacts. Employing humour for interreligious harmony online involves celebrating diversity while fostering respect and understanding. Internet memes, which blend stimulating images with humorous commentary, have intensified debates on religion and politics, enhancing communication effectiveness (Campbell, Arredondo, Dundas, & Wolf, 2018).

In Indonesia's cyberculture, humour-based discourse is a unique phenomenon. Rather than adopting a hardline stance, some youth from *Nadhlatul Ulama* (henceforth, NU) have embraced "garis lucu" (funny lines) to counter the splinter group "garis lurus" (straight path), which aims to purify *Nadhlatul Ulama*. By transforming 'straight-line' into 'funny lines,' the @NUgarislucu account promotes moderate Islamic teachings with humour, inspired by Gus Dur. This *Garis Lucu* (henceforth, GL) approach has sparked similar accounts from other groups, reflecting a trend of using memes to convey messages (Rohmatulloh, 2019). Despite their humorous approach, GL's political influence is significant. By employing humanitarian politics, GL can rally mass support for religious tolerance in Indonesia (Ghozali, 2022b). Ghozali (2022a) also shows that GL creates a political network called "silaturahmi politik" (political fellowship). However, this interesting cyberculture lacks specific research on the interreligious dialogue initiated by the GL during political events.

Current studies predominantly recognise the interreligious dialogue between GL accounts in cyberspace. Rohmatulloh (2019) finds that the Islamic GL account forms intra- and interreligious networks, interacting with the Catholic GL account (@katolikG). Al Ayya (2022) suggests that @katolikG often represents Indonesian minorities, engaging with various religious GL accounts. Research by Taufiq and Alkholid (2022) shows that interactions between @NUgarislucu and @katolikG can ease interreligious discussions. Studying GL culture can promote peace and harmony between religious groups. Campbell et al. (2018) highlight that understanding religious-political memes helps identify popular assumptions, the value of language in discourse, and the relationship between religion and politics.

Various studies highlight that the diverse GL movement in cyberspace encourages positive societal development. Ghozali (2022b) shows that NU GL maintains interreligious harmony by humorously criticising intolerant groups or the government. Alfian and Halim (2022) found that the *Cadar GL* movement combats the stigma against *niqabi* women, promoting an understanding of religion as an expression of love (Dwifatma & Beta, 2024). During crises, GL movements collaborate to maintain

interreligious moderation. For instance, *Katolik GL* and *NU GL* soothed the masses during the 2021 Makassar bombing (Romadhon & Saputra, 2021).

The aim of this paper is to explore the interreligious discourse initiated by *Garis Lucu* (GL) cyberculture, seeking to understand the role of humour as a social bond within the interreligious society of the internet during significant political events in a country. It focuses on how humour can negotiate and bridge differences within such a society, highlighting its potential to influence and unify diverse groups during critical societal moments.

This research draws on Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action, which views discourse as a morally significant endeavour that demands sincere engagement and mutual respect (Habermas, 1984; Stahl, 2004). Online religious interactions, while holding potential for open dialogue, often devolve into hostility and superficiality (McKee, 2002; Theobald, 2009; Tsuria, 2013). To address this, our study adopts the framework by Campbell et al. (2018), which categorises memetic religious-political discourse into four roles: critical reaction, offence to religious engagement with politics, politicization of religion, and *religification* of politics. These memes serve to communicate widely held opinions in a concise, memorable, and often satirical manner. We posit that within the *Garis Lucu* (GL) cyberculture, religious representatives promote values that diffuse uniquely within political and religious discourses through humorous language, highlighting a distinct relationship and co-dependence between religion and politics mediated by humour. Our propositions are as follows: (1) There is an intrinsic value promoted within the GL cyberculture; (2) this value disseminates in a distinctive pattern within political and religious discourses; (3) these values underscore a unique interdependence between religion and politics, facilitated through humour.

RESEARCH METHOD

We employ netnography to explore the interplay of humour, religion, and politics, a method proven effective in analysing the political impact of humorous content on social media and online forums (Davis, Love, & Killen, 2018; Okun & Nimrod, 2017). This research adopts a descriptive netnography approach, applying ethnographic principles to understand cultures through systematic observations, digital footprints, and participant interactions. It focuses on ethical involvement and situational relevance (Kozinets & Gretzel, 2024), whilst addressing limitations related to generalisability and validity through longitudinal and iterative methods (Sadovykh & Sundaram, 2017). This methodology allows for a nuanced analysis of online social experiences, ensuring objectivity and depth in studying the unique dynamics within GL cyberculture.

The first step in netnography involves defining research questions and selecting social sites or topics for investigation. Our study examines the GL cyberculture within Indonesia's moderately religious online communities, primarily engaging on Twitter (now X) and occasionally on Instagram. The research questions, adapted from Campbell et al. (2018), have already been presented in the form of propositions in earlier sections.

The second step concerns the identification and selection of communities relevant to the research topic to ensure data richness and cultural understanding. The research commenced on 1 January 2024 as Indonesia prepared for the general election in February. According to Rohmatulloh (2019), the GL cyberculture originated with the @NUGarislucu account, noted for its early adoption of Twitter and significant following. In this study, two Islamic representations in political discourse, NU and Muhammadiyah, were prominent within the GL cyberculture. Despite numerous Christian denominations in Indonesia creating GL accounts (e.g., Protestant GL, HKBP GL), they were not found to engage in political

issues in an interreligious manner during the research period. Therefore, we included five GL Twitter accounts in the study, each representing different religious communities: "NU Garis Lucu" (NUGL), which joined in March 2015, with 970.8 thousand followers (@NUgarislucu); "Komunitas Katolik Garis Lucu" (KTGL), active since April 2019, with 161.7 thousand followers (@KatolikG); "Muhammadiyah Garis Lucu" (MUGL), which started in May 2018, with 112.6 thousand followers (@MuhammadiyahGL); "Hindu Garis Lucu" (HNGL), initiated in April 2019, with 92.5 thousand followers (@GHIHindu); and "Buddhis Garis Lucu" (BDGL), since May 2019, with 77.4 thousand followers (@BuddhisGL). It is assumed that earlier join dates contribute directly to higher follower counts.

The third step involves conducting community participant observation and collecting data on interactions among GL accounts. Kozinets and Gretzel (2024) identify three types of data collection: investigation, immersion, and interaction. Investigative data comprises online posts, comments, likes, shares, photos, videos, and more, reflecting digital traces and user experiences. Immersive data is gathered from the researcher's digital experience, providing a deep cultural understanding of social media phenomena. Interactive data results from dialogues with relevant social actors, involving participant observation and analysis of current digital interactions. Data collection in netnography varies, with immersive data reflecting the cyberculture gathered through exploration, starting with @NUgarislucu. Investigative data, discursive in nature, is collected by selecting relevant actors connected to @NUgarislucu. Interactive data, dialogic in nature, is gathered by identifying key interactions that support the research proposition. The interactions within the GL cyberculture on Twitter may follow the pattern of verbal humour—baseline, setup, incongruity, and resolution (Vaid, Hull, Heredia, Gerken, & Martinez, 2003, p. 1436).

The fourth step involves data analysis and interpretation, where the researcher acts as the main instrument using various methods of data analysis. Immersive data is analysed introspectively, investigative data as discourse, and interaction data as conversation, involving deep inquiry into the data (Kozinets & Gretzel, 2024). Validity and reliability are crucial in qualitative research. Data is considered valid if there is a converging theme (triangulation) and reliable if there is concrete documentation (Creswell & Creswell, 2022, pp. 213–215).

The final step of netnography research involves reporting findings and discussing theoretical and policy implications. This includes recounting observations and experiences, explaining their underlying causes, and unpacking the social, technological, economic, and other forces behind them (Kozinets & Gretzel, 2024).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Dynamics of Interreligious Engagement and Political Discourse in Social Media

Our findings are categorised into three themes: political engagement, political communication, and religious humour. Initially, we explore political engagement both within and across various groups. This engagement encompasses cognitive, behavioural, and emotional aspects that stimulate participation in political issues. It is vital for a healthy democracy as it amplifies citizens' voices and legitimises democratic institutions (Kerr & Hoskins, 2023). Political interest is manifested not only through physical marches or demonstrations but also via online platforms. Participation in mock elections, for example, enhances political knowledge and interest, thereby boosting civic competence, particularly among digital natives (Lundberg, 2024).

A significant instance of interreligious dialogue was observed on 26 January 2024, involving @NUgarislucu (NUGL) and @katolikg (KTGL). They engaged in a discussion about the results of a mock election. KTGL boasted about having more participants in their poll compared to NUGL's and humorously warned about the potential overtaking of the Indonesian Muslim population by Catholicism. In response, NUGL expressed intentions to retake the poll in the future. This interaction, as depicted in Figure 1, serves as both immersive data for introspection and interaction data that highlights the interreligious discourse within the GL cyberculture.

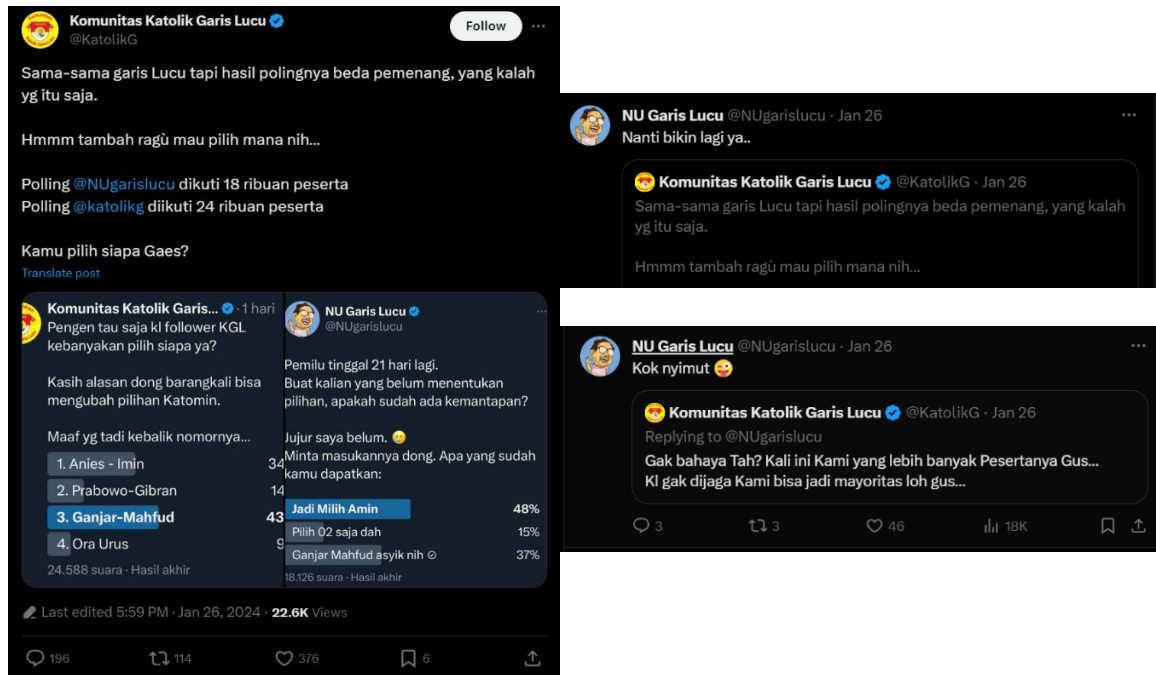


Figure 1 Samples that highlighted the political engagement theme

Table 1 explains the development and outcomes of a poll initiated by KTGL on 25 January, aimed at gauging followers' preferences, prompting NUGL to conduct a similar poll. This disparity led to humorous and competitive exchanges between KTGL and NUGL, showcasing their playful rivalry and the evolving uncertainty regarding voter preferences.

Table 1 The reiteration of the political engagement theme

Baseline	Setup	Incongruity	Resolution
The initiation of the poll	(1) The conversation in the form of a poll initiated by KTGL on 25 th January with the statement follows: <i>Pengen tau saja kl follower KGL kebanyakan pilih siapa ya? Kasih</i>	(3) The result of the poll came out differently, as Candidate 03 won in the KTGL poll and Candidate 01 won in the NUGL poll. The similarity of these polls was that candidate 02 lost by a landslide. As such, KTGL states:	(4) Addressing the confusion, NUGL responded: <i>Nanti bikin lagi ya</i> Let's make (the poll) again.

	<p><i>alasan dong barangkali bisa mengubah pilihan Katomin...</i></p> <p>Just want to know, who do most KGL followers choose? Give me a reason, maybe it can change Katomin's choice...</p>	<p><i>Sama-sama garis lucu tapi hasil polingnya beda pemenang, yang kalah yg itu saja. Hmmm tambah ragu mau pilih mana nih...</i></p> <p>We are both <i>garis lucu</i> but the winner is different in the polling, the loser is still that one (candidate 02). Hmmm (I'm increasingly unsure which one to choose...</p>	
The poll result difference	<p>(2) Few moments later, NUGL was also conducting the polls with the narration as follows: <i>Pemilu tinggal 21 hari lagi. Buat kalian yang belum menentukan pilihan, apakah sudah ada kemantapan? Jujur saya belum 🙄 Minta masukannya dong. Apa yang sudah kamu dapatkan....</i></p> <p>The election is only 21 days away. For those of you who haven't made a choice yet, is there any firm (choice) yet? Honestly, I haven't. 🙄 Please give (me a) suggestion. What have you got....</p>	<p>(5) Rather than assured, KTGL is feeling challenged, thus responds: <i>Ga bahaya Tah? Kali ini Kami yang lebih banyak pesertanya Gus... Kl gak di jaga Kami bisa jadi mayoritas loh Gus...</i></p> <p>Isn't that dangerous? This time we got more participants, Gus... If not cautious, we can be the majority, Gus...</p>	<p>(6) Unwary about the challenge, NUGL responded teasingly: <i>Kok nyimut (Bahasa Madura) 🙄 interesting 🙄</i></p>

This conversation revealed several key points at the intersection of religion, humour, and political engagement: political leadership, pride, equality, cooperation, taunts, and de-escalation.

Next, we examine the theme of political communication. Political communication involves interactions among politicians, the media, and the public, flowing downward from institutions, horizontally among actors, and upward from public opinion to authorities (Norris, 2015). Figure 2 illustrates interactions between *Garis Lucu* actors and a politician.



Figure 2 Samples that highlighted the political communication theme

Table 3 explains the theme for having evolving discourse and rivalry among NUGL and MUGL, provocation by HNGL, and intervention by a political figure. This showcases the playful yet competitive dynamics among these groups.

Table 2 The explanation of the political communication theme

Baseline	Setup	Incongruity	Resolution
Relationship between NUGL and a political figure	(1) This discourse was initiated on 9 th January 2024 by NUGL which states that:	(2) This tweet was then reposted by Hindu Garis Lucu's account while mentioning the candidate's account:	(3) The presidential candidate then responded:

	<p><i>Saya umumkan saya tidak ikut pak Ganjar Pranowo. Tapi beliaulah yang ikut saya. 😏😏 Apa lagi pak Prabowo 😏</i></p> <p>I declare that we are not following Mr Ganjar Pranowo, but he was the one following me. 😏😏 Let alone Mr Prabowo 😏</p>	<p><i>Somboonggg... somboongggg... berani gitu sama capressss... Lihat nih Pak @ganjarpranowo 😏</i></p> <p>Big-head... big-head... how could you be so bold to a presidential candidate? Look at this sir @ganjarpranowo 😏</p>	<p><i>Itu Contoh santri yg kurang Tawadhu 🙏</i></p> <p>This is one example of a <i>santri</i> that is less humble 🙏</p> <p>(4) Mentioning the statement, HNGI provokes NUGL: <i>Wekekeke... kapok Gus @NUgarislucu</i> 😏😏😏😏</p> <p>Hahahahaa... Embarrassed now Gus @NUgarislucu 😏😏😏😏</p>
<p>Rivalry between NUGL and MUGL</p>	<p>(5) The next day (10 January 2024), the same prideful behaviour was shown by NUGL peer, @MuhammadiyahGL (MUGL). They are tweeting a similar screenshot about Mr Pranowo that also follows MUGL, which MUGL states: <i>Nggak usah shommbhongg</i> 😏</p> <p>Don't be a big head 😏</p>	<p>(6) Pranowo responded, <i>Ini juga tidak Tawadhu</i> This is also not humble.</p>	<p>(7) Disappointed by the short response, MUGL replied by: <i>Udah gitu doang?</i> That's it?</p>

This finding challenges the conventional theory of internet-mediated political communication. Traditionally, politicians and parties have used social media primarily for the one-way dissemination of information, news, images, and political messages to enhance visibility. However, the interactions observed in this study highlight a more dynamic, reciprocal engagement (Ktoridou, Epaminonda, & Charalambous, 2018; Ross & Bürger, 2014). In the *Garis Lucu* cyberculture, political communication manifests in two distinct ways, underpinned by taunting behaviour (1, 2, 4, 5), equality (3, 6), and de-escalation (7), enriching the interactive landscape.

Finally, we explore the last theme of our research: interreligious humour. Humour not only facilitates communication but also strengthens relationships and fosters the development of relational identities (Moalla, 2015). This is exemplified by *Komunitas Katolik Garis Lucu* (KTGL) as depicted in Figure 3.



Figure 3 Samples that highlighted the political communication theme

The theme, as detailed in Table 3, outlines a complex interaction involving political symbolism and religious perspectives. However, HNGL's cynical responses to KTGL and BDGL illustrate the heightened tensions of the election period.

Table 3 The reiteration of the political interreligious humour theme

Baseline	Setup	Incongruity	Resolution
The Pope	(1) KTGL sharing the picture features Pope Francis and Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, both making the "I love you" sign in American Sign Language (ASL) taken by AP journalist Wally Santana. This gesture is a combination of the letters I, L, and Y, meaning "I love you." The photo was taken during Pope Francis' visit to the Philippines in January 2015, specifically at the Encounter with Families event in the Mall of Asia Arena in Manila (Giangravé, 2022).	(2) This tweet was deemed provocative, as this metal hand sign was often used by certain political parties (PDI-P), and as the sign for supporting certain presidential candidates (03, Ganjar-Mahfud). HNGL responded to the tweet of KTGL by stating: <i>Oooo jadi gitu cara maennya? Dahlah ngaa ada yang bisa dipercaya netral. Mindu sama @JombloKG aja 😊</i> Oh, this is how you play? Alas, there is no one can be trusted of their neutrality. Mindu will (together with) @JombloKG then 😊	(3) @JombloKG was a splinter account of KTGL to matchmake single followers of KTGL. The joke is, that HDGL think that it's better to find a love rather than favouring a political candidate.
Buddhism Tenet	(4) The 2024 Indonesian general election was indeed a tiresome event. As such, some people are fatigued. For example, as seen in Figure 3, Buddhis Garis Lucu (BDGL) on 30 th January 2024 tweeted; Tinggal 15 hari lagi keriuhan Pemilu ini seleai. Semoga setelah itu semua akur lagi. <i>Only 15 days until this election fanfare finished. Hopefully, after that event, everybody can get along together again.</i>	(5) The general election had three candidates, and if no clear winner emerged, a second round was possible. Candidates used all means to secure a first-round victory. Some critics speculated about possible under-the-table transactions between candidates and supporters. As such, HNGL suspiciously stated: <i>Yakin banget ngga ada putaran kedua Budd? Ato sdh terima transferan? 🤔 🙏 🙏 🙏 🙏 🙏 🙏</i> <i>Are you sure there won't be a second round Budd? Or did</i>	(6) HNGL suspected BDGL's confidence in a single-round election, assuming BDGL received covert donations, missing the nuance of BDGL's Buddhist-themed tweet.

The statement of BDGL can be traced to Buddhist tenets of *Sabbe Satta Bhavantu Sukhitattā*, may all sentient beings be happy (Mahadewi, Surachman, Hadiwidjojo, & Indrawati, 2022).

someone already wire (some money to you)? 🙄 🙄 🙄 🙄 🙄

The key findings demonstrate that public discourse during elections is highly variable and significantly influenced by specific audiences, as evidenced by the divergent poll results between *Komunitas Katolik Garis Lucu* (KTGL) and *Nahdlatul Ulama Garis Lucu* (NUGL). Humour plays a crucial role in political commentary, blending serious statements with playful banter, as exemplified by the exchanges between NUGL and *Hindu Garis Lucu* (HNGL). Additionally, religious and cultural symbols are often co-opted for political purposes, leading to misinterpretations and controversies, as shown by the reactions to KTGL's sharing of the Pope's image. Both KTGL and *Buddhis Garis Lucu* (BDGL) in Figure 3 subtly promote their religious values through the *Garis Lucu* cyberculture, merging humour and religion. These findings highlight the complex interplay between audience perceptions, humour, and the politicization of cultural symbols in shaping election narratives.

The Role of Humour in Interreligious Engagement and Political Communication

Our discussion begins with the authorisation right of the religious representative in the *Garis Lucu* (GL) cyberculture, blending the internet and traditional authority. "Katomin" (*Katolik Admin*) refers to KTGL, and "Mindu" (*Admin Hindu*) to HDGL. Similarly, NUGL is known as "Gus" and BDGL as "Bud," each nickname bearing cultural significance. Admins regulate, manage, and influence group norms and dynamics (Kolozaridi, 2019). Nicknames like "Bud" foster belonging and facilitate communication (Palsson, 2014). However, "Gus" was a special case because it was traditionally used for heirs of religious elites in *pesantren* (Azizah, Nkwede, & Armoyu, 2021). Gus, as a descendant of *Kiai*, holds significant societal importance. Geertz (1960, p. 242) describes *Kiai* as "cultural brokers" responsible for maintaining pious civilization and filtering negative outside influences. Conversely, *Kiai* can bridge their community to support political power nationally (Geertz, 1960). This suggests that actors within the GL cyberculture possess a degree of authority both online and offline, supporting Proposition 1, which indicates that religious representatives with high authority can direct their followers towards specific values.

Studies suggest that all the candidates in the 2024 presidential election are seeking support from *Nahdlatul Ulama* (NU) due to its significant influence (Dalle, 2023; Muhtadi & Muslim, 2023). This is attributable to the value the organisation integrates local customs for peaceful cultural acculturation (Aminuddin, 2020). The NU ideology instils values such as *Tawasuth & I'tidal* (fairness), *Tasamuh* (tolerance), *Tawazun* (balance), and *Amar Ma'ruf Nahi Munkar* (promoting good and preventing evil) (Yenuri, Islamy, Aziz, & Muhandy, 2021). These values are embraced and promoted within the GL cyberculture, emphasising coexistence. Fairness fosters justice and peaceful coexistence (Al-Karboly, 2023), reciprocity encourages cooperation (Calvo, 2018), and promoting good and preventing evil cultivates positive community relationships (Marta, Marzana, Aresi, & Pozzi, 2016). By nurturing a culture of tolerance, these principles help mitigate polarisation, discrimination, and violence (Yilmaz, 2021). Thus,

coexistence is the essence of the values disseminated within the GL cyberculture, central to our synthesis in Figure 4.

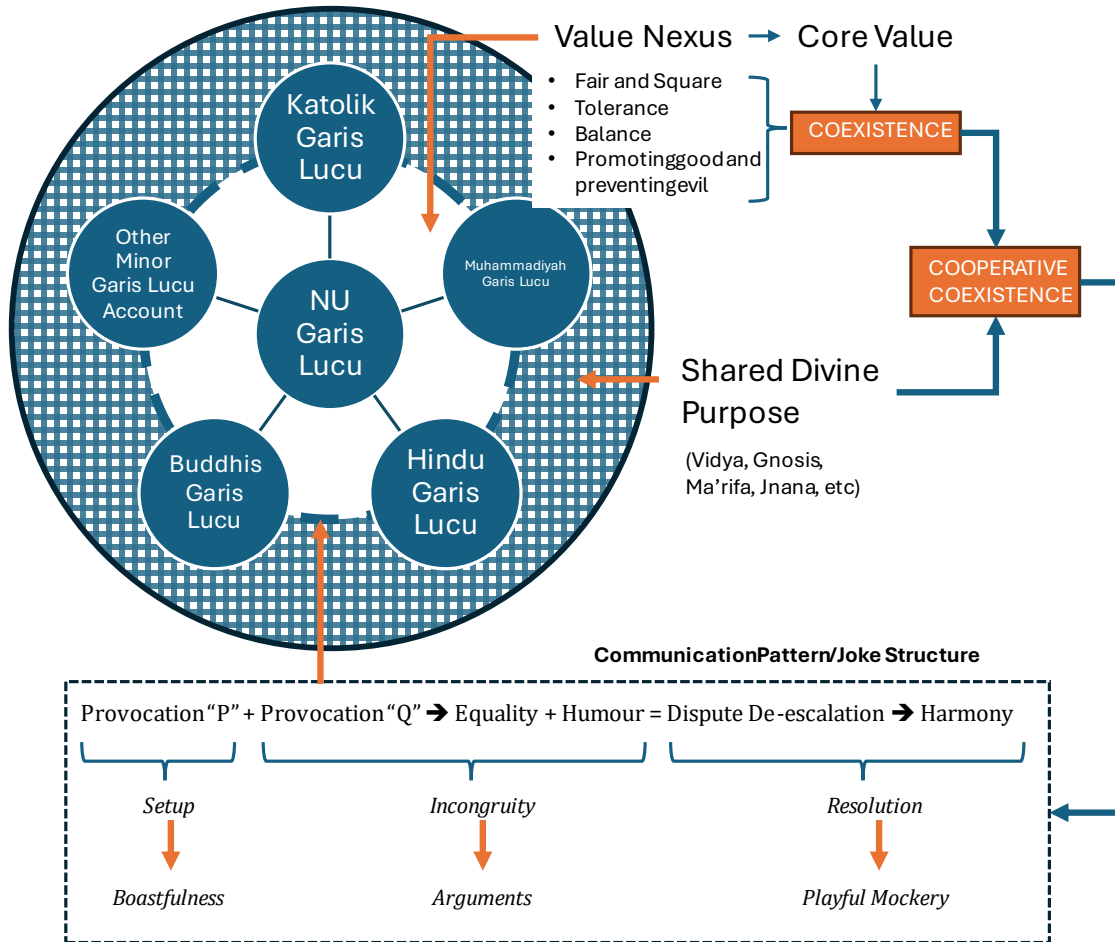


Figure 4 The synthesis of the interaction within the garis lucu cyberculture

Vaid et al. (2003) suggest that verbal humour follows a structure of baseline, setup, incongruity, and resolution. Regarding Proposition 2, discussions about political issues in the GL cyberculture often follow a similar communication pattern. This synthesis of joke structure and communication pattern is encapsulated in the flow shown in the Figure 4.

The GL cyberculture leverages equality and humour to maintain civility and harmony in political discussions. Initially, an actor makes a provocative statement (Setup), leading to mutual provocations (Q) that establish equality among participants without referencing their societal significance. Introducing humour transforms these provocations, diffusing potential conflicts and making the conversation more pleasant (Incongruity). This humorous approach de-escalates disputes, replacing hostility with laughter. Thus, the cycle of provocation balanced by humour fosters a harmonious environment for political discussions (Resolution).

The themes can be seen converging into an essential pattern. For political engagement, members boast mock election results (setup), highlight voter discrepancies (incongruity), and tease about redoing

the poll (resolution). In political communication, members flaunt a political figure following NUGL (setup), face disapproval (incongruity), and get playful jabs (resolution). Religious humor involves members showcasing their identity (setup), provoking false accusations (incongruity), and responding with blunt misinterpretations (resolution). Overall, convergence is seen in boastfulness (setup), arguments (incongruity), and playful mockery (resolution).

Regarding Proposition 3, coexistence explains the co-dependence between religion, politics, and humour. Coexistence involves diverse groups maintaining traditions and autonomy while living together peacefully, based on equality, participation, exchange, and mutual respect (Munson & Chetkow-Yanoov, 1999). Nechansky (2016, p. 372), identifies four coexistence models: conflict, hierarchy, independence, and cooperation. In the GL cyberculture, NUGL does not force others to follow its views, avoiding conflict and hierarchy, as humour serves as the social foundation. There is no independence, as humour bonds them, despite differences. Thus, GL cyberculture achieves cooperative coexistence by realizing shared goals and values.

Cooperative coexistence is a concept found in cybernetics, psychology, and religion (Nechansky, 2016). Psychologically, it aligns with Berne's (1972), specifically the "I+U+" matrix, where individuals recognize their worth and that of others, leading to a realistic and problem-solving approach to life. Nechansky (2016) links this to the Buddhist tenet of Vidya. Similar concepts exist in other religions: Gnosis in Christianity (Horsley, 1980), Ma'rifa in Islam (Sevim, 2016), and Jnana in Hinduism (Tripathi & Ghildyal, 2013). These spiritual insights across religions promote cooperative coexistence by emphasizing unity and shared divine purpose.

A shared divine purpose underscores the belief that, despite theological differences, many religions seek similar outcomes: peace, compassion, justice, and the betterment of humanity (Kriger & Seng, 2005). When humour is rooted in these common goals, it can help to humanize the 'other,' making it easier to find common ground (Barber, 2017). For instance, jokes that play on shared religious experiences or common ethical teachings –as seen in Figure 3— can resonate across different faiths, creating a sense of camaraderie and mutual respect. This shared laughter can deter conflict by diffusing tension and breaking down stereotypes. In politically charged environments, where religious differences are often exploited to fuel division, humour can act as a counterbalance (Kurtzberg, Naquin, & Belkin, 2009). It can show that beneath political rhetoric, there is a fundamental human connection that transcends religious boundaries. By laughing together at our shared humanity and divine aspirations (Gilhus, 2013), we can see each other less as opponents and more as fellow travellers on a similar spiritual journey (Frederiks, 2012). Moreover, interreligious humour can serve as a tool for introspection and humility (Strahovnik, 2022), encouraging a more inclusive and compassionate approach to political discourse. When political leaders and influencers engage in or endorse such humour –as seen in Figure 2, it signals a commitment to unity and peace, reinforcing the idea that our shared divine purpose is stronger than our political differences.

To summarise, the value promoted within the GL cyberculture is coexistence (Proposition 1). The pattern for disseminating coexistence akin to a joke structure, sewn collectively with distinct elements of provocation, equality, and harmony (Proposition 2). This interaction is possible because all members of GL cyberculture have a shared divine purpose (Proposition 3), which enables them to cooperatively coexist amidst religious differences and political tension. As such, This research supported the Theory of Communicative Action (Habermas, 1984), as the GL's interact with each other with equality and respect without taking account of their followership and seniority. GL serves as a societal mender amidst political divisions, contrasting with instances where religion is exploited for political gain (Campbell et al., 2018). It embodies a form of "civil religion," interpreting politics through a nationalist lens. However, being civil

extends beyond social conduct; humour is a vital tool in infra-politics, subtly challenging power structures (Obadare, 2009, p. 261). The movement aligns with the memetic religious-political discourse framework (Campbell et al., 2018). The politicization of religion is evident in Figure 1's mock election, reflecting religious adherent's involvement in politics. Figures 2 and 3 illustrate critical reactions to the religious-political intersection, making fun of political engagement and encouraging discussion.

Our findings show how the GL cyberculture fosters coexistence and transcends religious differences through humour. Humour binds diverse online communities, integrating stimulation, equality, and harmony to create a respectful digital environment. This promotes cooperative interactions and highlights the potential of digital platforms for interfaith dialogue rooted in mutual respect and shared spiritual goals. Incorporating humour into political discourse defuses tensions and encourages inclusive discussion. Policymakers can learn from this approach to design initiatives that foster social harmony and reduce polarization. Religious leaders can bridge divides by emphasizing shared values and humour. Digital platform moderators can create guidelines promoting humour to maintain a supportive online community.

CONCLUSION

The study of GL cyberculture offers profound insights into the potential of humour to enhance coexistence in digital spaces. By promoting values of coexistence and an attitude of cooperative coexistence within the framework of shared divine purpose, this cyberculture provides a template for addressing religious and political differences constructively.

The communication pattern within the GL cyberculture reflects the values of fairness, tolerance, balance, and promoting good while preventing evil. These values promote coexistence, attracting diverse religious backgrounds and mitigating potential conflicts. The concept of a Shared Divine Purpose fosters cooperative coexistence, aiding harmonious interactions and unity amidst political tension in Indonesia's 2024 election. Research on the GL cyberculture reveals humour's role in digital religion and politics. Humour acts as a spiritual bridge, connecting different religious backgrounds and shaping political opinions. These insights inform strategies for fostering inclusive, cohesive, and constructive online communities, benefiting policymakers, religious leaders, and digital platform moderators.

We encountered several challenges in this study and offer insights for future research. First, due to the brief netnography timeframe, we recommend longitudinal studies to fully understand the evolution of GL cyberculture. Including conversations from the past five years, especially between the 2019 and 2024 elections, would provide valuable insights. Second, while our study focused on Twitter, GL also uses Instagram and Facebook. Exploring these platforms could reveal distinct communication patterns. To address the limitations of artifactual data and lack of direct human interaction, we suggest supplementing netnography with interviews to understand the motivations and experiences of the individuals behind these accounts. Future studies could explore similar cultural phenomena in different regions and investigate the long-term impacts of movements like GL on political engagement and societal cohesion, offering valuable insights into broader social dynamics.

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