



Hate Speech, Buzzers, and Islamic Groups: Power Plays in Indonesia 2024

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Abstract: This study aims to analyze the shifting causes of hate speech on social media during Indonesia's 2024 political year, from individual motivations to structural factors involving economic and political interests, particularly in the context of religion and culture-based hate speech. It also examines how Islamic mass organizations—such as the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI), Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), and Muhammadiyah—respond to the phenomenon of buzzers spreading hate through religious narratives and political identity. This research uses a qualitative approach, employing online observation, in-depth interviews, and literature review. The main findings reveal that hate speech does not solely stem from ideological fanaticism but also from economic pressures and a well-organized digital political architecture. Buzzers operate as paid agents within a content-production system that profits from hate, rather than acting on personal or ideological impulses. Meanwhile, the responses of Islamic organizations remain largely normative and moralistic. However, groups like NU have begun to adopt more structural interpretations of the issue. Despite this shift, the absence of systematic digital strategies and economic empowerment efforts has prevented these responses from addressing the root causes. This research offers an original contribution by connecting the economic dimensions of hate speech production with the socio-religious responses to it—an intersection that has received limited attention in studies of media and digital politics in Indonesia.

Keywords: digital era; Indonesian politics; Islamic mass organizations; minority group; social media.

Introduction

The phenomenon of hate speech targeting religion and culture on social media has increasingly become a complex social issue, particularly in today's fast-paced and dynamic digital era. While social media was initially designed as a space to share information and ideas constructively, many users have misused it to spread hatred (Daherman et al., 2024). Although freedom of expression is upheld in many legal systems, certain actors—especially buzzers—often exploit this right under the veil of anonymity to attack minority groups or those perceived as different (Gupta & Sandhane, 2022). Data from Monash University and the Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI) Indonesia reported 182,118 hate speech-related posts during the 2024 election campaign (Paramadina & Mafindo, 2023). These incidents did not just target individuals; they also affected marginalized communities such as Chinese Indonesians, Jews, people with disabilities, and religious groups like Christians and Ahmadis, exacerbating social polarization in Indonesia's multicultural society.

During the 2024 elections, hate speech incidents significantly heightened social tensions. The Election Supervisory Body (BAWASLU) recorded 397 cyber content violations, 74 percent of which

were related to hate speech. These cases occurred across various regions—including Bandung (West Java), North Maluku, Banten, and Lampung—and often used platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and X (formerly Twitter) as dissemination tools (Priambodo & Hasbiansyah, 2025).

Beyond cases of personal hostility, a growing number of incidents reveal a shift in the underlying motivations behind hate speech, toward more structured and systemic drivers. One such case occurred in Jember, East Java, where an individual identified as HS launched hate speech attacks on Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) through social media, driven by economic motives. Similarly, hate narratives linking ethnicity to political issues, such as accusations involving Chinese descendants and Chinese oligarchy, demonstrate that hate speech has evolved from a personal expression of prejudice into a strategic tool that combines political and economic interests. Another case in Jakarta involved an individual identified as AB who used TikTok to target supporters of specific political figures, further highlighting the instrumental use of hate speech in political and cultural dynamics.

In the midst of this increasingly complex landscape, the response of Indonesia's religious mass organizations becomes a crucial area of inquiry. Institutions such as the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI), Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), and Muhammadiyah already possess normative frameworks, through MUI fatwas and official statements, designed to combat hate speech. However, these responses have yet to demonstrate an effective mass impact, allowing hate-spreading buzzers to operate freely without substantial consequences. This situation raises a strategic question: why have not mass organizations, despite their strong normative foundations, been able to tackle the widespread dissemination of hate in digital spaces?

Moreover, social media's boundless capacity continues to facilitate the spread of hate speech in the absence of adequate regulation. Here, structural factors—such as economic inequality, sociopolitical tensions, and power dynamics—play a crucial role in shaping the patterns and intensity of hate speech (Castells, 1996). Previous studies have examined various aspects of hate speech, including its dissemination patterns (Castaño-Pulgarin et al., 2021), detection challenges (Mullah & Zainon, 2021; Röttger et al., 2020), and the dilemma of content moderation in balancing freedom of expression with protection from hate (Howard, 2019; Wilson & Land, 2020). While these studies offer relevant theoretical frameworks, they rarely explore the economic motivations driving buzzers or the religious organizations' responses to structurally embedded patterns of hate speech in depth.

Given this context, this study aims to analyze the shift in the drivers of hate speech—from individual motives to structural factors, particularly those tied to economic interests—and to examine the responses of Islamic mass organizations such as MUI, NU, and Muhammadiyah. By focusing on the interaction between economic dimensions in hate speech production and the insufficient socio-religious responses, this research seeks to fill a gap in media and digital politics scholarship in Indonesia and to offer a new approach to countering the spread and impact of hate in digital spaces.

Method

This study focuses on the phenomenon of hate speech targeting religion and culture on social media during Indonesia's 2024 political year, particularly amid the rising intensity of hate speech during the 2024 regional election campaign. The research primarily investigates the shift in the motives behind the dissemination of hate speech, from previously individual-driven motivations to structural reasons, such as economic interests and political agendas. Additionally, the study critically examines how Islamic mass organizations such as Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI), and Muhammadiyah have responded to the dynamics of religion- and culture-based hate speech in digital spaces, particularly on social media platforms.

The research employs a qualitative approach with an exploratory method to gain a deep understanding of the sociopolitical and religious dynamics underpinning the spread of hate speech and the various forms of social response to it. Data collection draws from three main techniques: online observation (virtual ethnography), in-depth interviews, and literature review (Hine, 2020; Lune & Berg, 2017).

The study collects both primary and secondary data. Primary data comes from in-depth interviews with identified hate speech actors (buzzers) operating in West Java, aiming to uncover the

economic motivations behind their activities, the content production strategies they employ, and their connections to specific religious and political networks. The researchers also conducted interviews with leaders and key figures from the three major Islamic organizations—NU, MUI, and Muhammadiyah—to understand how these institutions have responded to the proliferation of hate speech on social media, what concrete actions they have taken, and the obstacles they face in countering digital hate propaganda.

Secondary data includes a wide range of sources, such as content analysis of hate speech across various social media platforms—Instagram, X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, YouTube, and TikTok—focusing on content that reflects religious, cultural, and identity-based political issues during the 2024 political year. The researchers also collected official documents, including MUI fatwas, digital media guidelines, public policy statements from the three mass organizations, and press releases or public statements issued through their websites and social media channels. Academic literature and reports from research institutions further enrich the contextual understanding of hate speech, digital politics, and the role of religious organizations in Indonesia's digital democracy.

The research process followed several stages. The first stage involved online observation to map the patterns and types of hate speech while identifying active buzzer accounts engaged in spreading hate-based narratives. The next stage consisted of in-depth interviews with five individuals involved in hate speech dissemination (buzzers) and stakeholders from the Islamic mass organizations, aiming to uncover the narratives behind hate speech production and to explore institutional responses to it. The final stage involved a document review to support the analysis of normative responses, public policy positions, and the religious values promoted by each organization in addressing the challenges of hate speech in the digital public sphere.

The researchers analyzed the data using the framework developed by Miles and Huberman (Miles & Huberman, 1994), which includes three key steps: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved selecting and organizing data that were relevant and meaningful to the research focus, whether derived from interviews or online observation. Data display was conducted through narrative explanation and visual aids such as charts and direct quotations to present the patterns of hate speech and the organizational responses in a structured manner. Finally, the researchers drew conclusions inductively by linking field findings with theoretical and conceptual frameworks, particularly those related to the role of sociopolitical and economic structures in hate speech production, as well as the position of Islamic organizations as strategic actors in the digital public space.

Results and Discussion

The Hate Speech Based on Politics, Religion, and Culture on Social Media

This study identifies several cases of hate speech on social media during Indonesia's 2024 political year, focusing on hate content targeting minority groups, political figures, and specific religious organizations. Based on online data tracking and social media observation across Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, the study found that hate speech appears in various forms, mostly containing ethnic, religious, and racial sentiments (SARA), discrediting political figures, and attacking certain ethnic and religious groups.

One prominent case of hate speech involves Dito Arief Nurakhmadi, a legislative candidate from the NasDem Party, who published a campaign ad reading, "Malang Emergency of LGBT. Let's protect our family. If NasDem Wins, We Will Fight for Anti-LGBT City Regulations in Malang." Through this content, Dito uploaded a video that discredited the LGBTIQ+ community and labelled them as a source of social problems. He also sought support to draft anti-LGBTIQ+ regulations if elected. This content illustrates how hate speech can be driven by political ambitions and ideological goals that aim to deny the rights of sexual minority groups. While such identities are not legally protected in Indonesia, this kind of incitement remains unjustified, as it can provoke public unrest.

Figure 1. Hate Speech Framing LGBT as a Threat by a NasDem Candidate



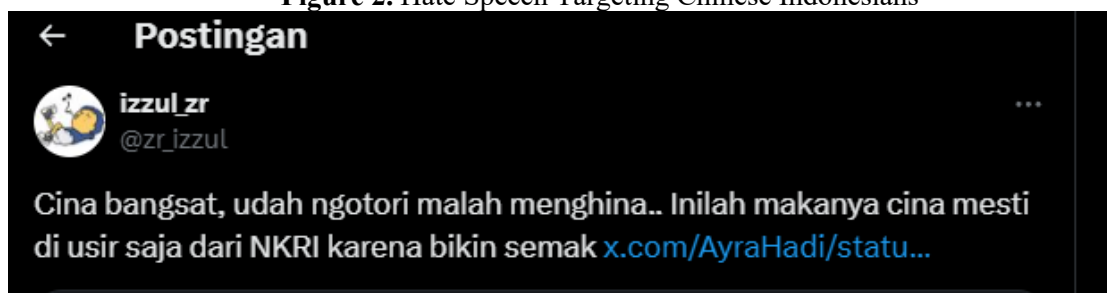
Translation: “Malang Emergency of LGBT. Let's protect our family. If NasDem Wins, We Will Fight for Anti-LGBT City Regulations in Malang.”

Source: Facebook Dito Arief Nurakhmadi, 2024.

According to a report by the Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI), the Journalists' Union for Diversity (Sejuk), and Arus Pelangi, media discrimination against the LGBTIQ+ community spiked ahead of the 2024 political year. Of 113 online media articles analyzed, 100 lacked a gender perspective and discriminated against LGBTIQ+ individuals. This biased reporting was heavily influenced by statements from local officials and stigmatizing terms used in the headlines, such as “deviant behavior” and “violating moral norms” (Rahmasari & Rejeki, 2023). Much of this discriminatory content was amplified by social media buzzers. The situation worsened with the proliferation of anti-LGBT regulations and inflammatory anti-LGBT rhetoric from public officials, all of which fueled stigma, hate, and persecution. Identity politics during the 2024 election cycle further intensified hate toward the LGBTIQ+ community.

The study also uncovered escalating hate speech toward ethnic and religious minorities. For example, on October 31, 2024, the X (formerly Twitter) account @jr_izzul posted, “Kick out the Chinese bastards from Indonesia,” clearly inciting violence against the Chinese-Indonesian community by framing them as a national threat. Scholars have long noted that anti-Chinese sentiment in Indonesia is a legacy of New Order propaganda and the events surrounding the 1998 Reformation (Himawan et al., 2022). The persistent conspiracy theory that former President Joko Widodo is a descendant of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI) has also fueled this hate, especially during political years (Pahrin Wadipalapa, 2023), and the presence of social media has only accelerated the dissemination of such narratives (Wadipalapa, 2021).

Figure 2. Hate Speech Targeting Chinese Indonesians

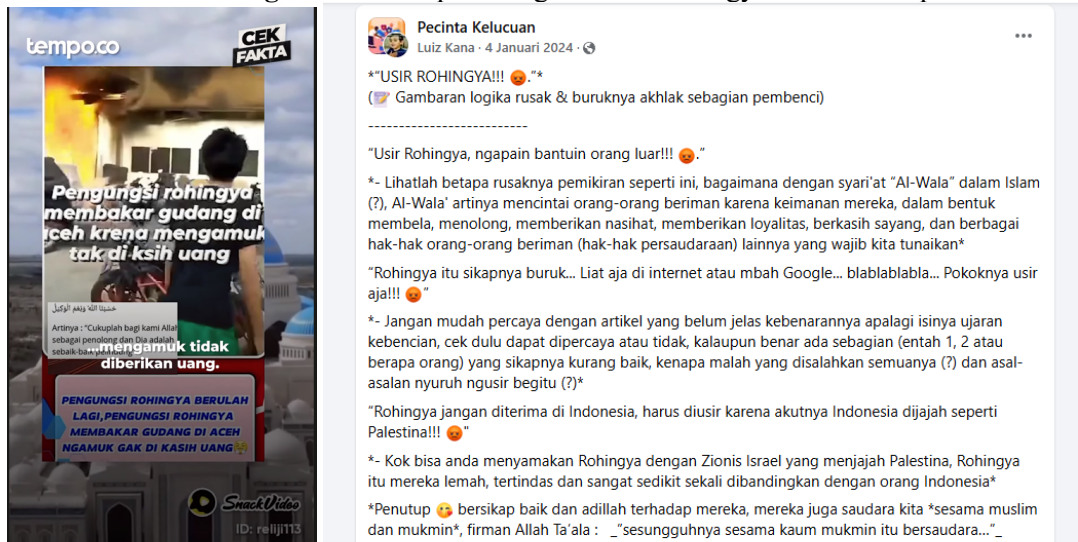


Translation: Post "Chinese ..., they've already made a mess and are insulting [us]... This is why the Chinese should be expelled from the Republic of Indonesia because it's causing a mess."

Source: X @zr_izzul, 2024.

Hate speech also targeted the Rohingya, a stateless Muslim minority, with numerous social media posts calling for their expulsion from Indonesia. This reflects deep-seated racial hatred and social injustice against an already marginalized group. Anti-Rohingya sentiments intensified ahead of the elections, often portraying them as burdens or threats based on their ethnicity and religion. Slogans like “Expel the Rohingya or we will abstain from voting” circulated widely. Hoaxes also emerged, such as a viral claim that Rohingya refugees had burned down a warehouse in Aceh after being denied financial aid. Tempo.co later confirmed this story as false and misleading. Facebook also hosted numerous posts filled with hate against the Rohingya, especially from users with ethnonationalist or xenophobic leanings.

Figure 3. Hate Speech Against the Rohingya Ethnic Group



Source: YouTube Tempo.co, 2024; Facebook Luiz Kana, 2024.

Political figures were not spared from hate speech during the 2024 regional elections. One notable target was Dedi Mulyadi, a West Java gubernatorial candidate, who was frequently accused of being *mushrik* (polytheist) and deviating from Islam. These accusations have followed Dedi since his earlier candidacies. His support for Sundanese traditions and cultural heritage, such as Sunda Wiwitan, led to baseless accusations from conservative figures like Rizieq Shihab and Bahar bin Smith, despite Dedi being a devout Muslim. Leading up to the 2024 elections, a video showing Dedi in white clothing, bowing his head and scattering flower petals, was widely circulated. The video was captioned with claims of “idolatry” and used as black campaign material. West Javan Hoax Clean Sweep Task Force, an official fact-checking body, later declared the video as false content (Fikri et al., 2025).

Figure 4. Doctored Video of Dedi Mulyadi Used to Incite Hate



Source: YouTube Priangan.com, 2024.

These hate speech cases confirm findings by Monash University Indonesia and the Alliance

of Independent Journalists (AJI), who documented a surge in hate speech during the 2024 campaign. Their study analyzed 67 election-related keywords and seven minority groups—Christians, Catholics, Chinese Indonesians, Shia, Ahmadiyah, LGBTIQ+, and people with disabilities. Out of 678,106 social media texts, 26.9 percent (182,118 texts) contained hate speech. The most targeted groups were Jews (90,911 texts), people with disabilities (46,278 texts), Chinese Indonesians (9,563 texts), and the LGBTIQ+ community (7,262 texts). These patterns reflect deep social inequalities and intergroup tensions exacerbated by political competition.

Hate speech also attacked Islamic organizations, particularly Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). In Kendal, Central Java, a man named BP, known as Mbah Bram, posted hate speech about the NU Chairman in a WhatsApp group. His post enraged NU followers, prompting the NU Kendal branch to summon him for a clarification. On July 21, 2024, BP and his family met with NU officials at Graha Aswaja PCNU Kendal, where he issued verbal and written apologies, including a video statement. While BP insisted he acted independently, NU authorities considered taking legal action.

A similar incident occurred in Jember, East Java. A man named HS allegedly defamed NU and its youth wing, GP Ansor, via a fake Facebook account called “Melly Itoe Angie.” He accused NU followers of being “ignorant” and claimed GP Ansor members were involved in corruption. The posts sparked outrage and led to a police report. Authorities later discovered HS operated at least 17 fake social media accounts to spread hate. He was arrested on September 23, 2024, after police identified and tracked him. Investigators revealed that HS sought to discredit NU by linking it to political interests and corruption scandals.

The widespread dissemination of hate speech during the political year is closely linked to the role of hate actors. Numerous studies highlight buzzers as the key drivers behind organized hate campaigns (Budiana, 2024; Lim, 2017). These actors operate systematically, targeting individuals or communities to manipulate public opinion. Buzzers exploit social media algorithms to amplify divisive content, particularly by stirring up ethnic, religious, and sexual identity issues. Their efforts not only accelerate hate speech dissemination but also deepen social fragmentation and discrimination, especially during politically charged moments.

Motivations of Hate Actors Driven by Economic Interests

The rise of hate speech on social media, especially during the 2024 political year, stems in part from the role of hate actors more commonly known as buzzers. In this study, buzzers refer to individuals or groups who intentionally spread political messages, often filled with hate or manipulative information, to influence public opinion and stir political unrest. Karpf (Karpf, 2012) explains that buzzers function to steer discussions on social media by spreading messages that manipulate conversations or generate chaos that benefits certain parties.

As such, buzzers often create and disseminate hate speech on social media. According to AJI Indonesia, buzzers are among the key actors fueling political polarization by spreading content that contains hate speech. Typically, they collect information about political figures and twist the facts to portray them in a negative light. Their content often includes hateful language such as “heretic,” “infidel,” “polytheist,” “stupid,” and other derogatory terms.

This study focuses on how buzzers, who are assumed to act based on personal initiative or ideology, are actually driven more by external factors. Interviews with five sources reveal that their decisions to serve as hate actors were not rooted in personal or ideological reasons but were motivated by economic pressures and outside influence. This finding aligns with Emile Durkheim’s sociological theory of social facts, which argues that individuals’ actions are shaped by social conditions and external forces greater than personal will (Durkheim, 1982).

One interviewee, DR (pseudonym, 38 years old), admitted to spreading hate speech against West Java gubernatorial candidate Dedi Mulyadi—not out of personal dislike—but because he was paid to do so. DR said he was promised IDR 10 million to post hate content targeting Mulyadi for a full month during the 2024 regional election campaign. DR emphasized that money, not ideology, motivated his actions, noting that he felt no guilt because he saw it not as a personal decision but as a job. He says, “At first, I didn’t like Dedi Mulyadi because he often practiced Sunda Wiwitan teachings, which I consider heretical and against Islam. But when the buzzer offer came, I chose the money. I didn’t care anymore—as long as I got paid and could support my family. I don’t feel guilty because it wasn’t really my personal decision; it was a job given to me” (Interview, October

23, 2024).

DR's statement clearly reflects the influence of social facts in shaping his behavior. In Suicide, Durkheim (Durkheim, 2005) explains that individuals disconnected from strong social norms often engage in extreme behavior due to a lack of meaningful social ties. In DR's case, although he had initial ideological objections, the external economic incentive replaced his personal reasoning. More importantly, the social environment surrounding his new "job" directed him toward spreading hate. Here, the buzzer no longer acted purely on personal will but under economic and social pressure.

Another informant, AR (pseudonym, 37 years old), shared a similar story. AR initially had no political views, but when someone with political interests offered him money to work as a buzzer, he accepted. AR said he struggled to support his family with his regular income and saw the buzzer job as an easy way to earn extra cash. He did not care whether the information he spread was true, because what mattered most was the money. As he says, "I don't really care about politics. My job is just to post the messages they give me. That's all. The money matters more—for me and my family—especially during tough times when I can't even earn a decent wage, let alone engage in political debates." (Interview, October 25, 2024).

AR's remarks reveal how external factors—particularly economic incentives—dominate behavioral motivations. According to Durkheim, social conditions like economic hardship explain why people act in ways that may contradict their personal or moral values. Other interviewees—AY (pseudonym, 31), DD (pseudonym, 25), and UR (pseudonym, 35)—echoed similar patterns. They admitted joining in spreading hate speech on social media due to larger external pressures, such as economic hardship and demands from third parties with political agendas. Though none of them personally hated the political figures they targeted, they felt compelled to act in order to meet their financial needs. For instance, AY stated that even though he disagreed with some of the candidate's policies, "money matters more than principles."

In this context, the study concludes that buzzers who spread hate speech on social media do not act solely on personal will. Instead, their behavior reflects broader socio-economic conditions that shape their decisions. This mirrors Durkheim's concept of social facts, where individuals' actions are significantly influenced by external societal forces (Durkheim, 2023).

These findings confirm that political buzzers operate due to structural, not individual, factors. This research supports Seto's (Seto, 2019) study, which found that radical political messaging in Indonesia is driven not merely by ideology but by a systematic, technically mediated campaign on social media. The study also aligns with Loisa (Loisa, 2020), who noted that buzzers during the 2014 Indonesian election evolved into "commercial buzzers"—hired, paid, and directed to fabricate and spread political messages. This shift in the motivation of hate actors stems from broader structural socio-economic inequality. The massive wave of layoffs (PHK) in 2024 has led many citizens to lose their jobs. According to the Ministry of Industry, 14,500 workers were laid off in 2024, including 556 garment and textile factory workers from Bandung Regency, West Java, where one of the hate actors, AY, lives. As a layoff victim, AY accepted a job as a buzzer after struggling to find new work, especially with his specific background in electrical engineering. He said he had worked as an online motorcycle driver and courier before finally accepting the buzzer job. Though conflicted at first, AY ultimately agreed, driven by the need to support his family.

DD, a recent university graduate, also faced job market difficulties and accepted a buzzer offer from a former campus organization senior without much hesitation. Meanwhile, UR, DR, and AR took buzzer jobs as side gigs because their full-time salaries weren't enough to support their families. As he says, "I felt I had to take this job. I mean, when you're struggling, and all you need is a phone and internet data, why not? I thought, 'We need the money, right?' Besides, those politicians probably steal money anyway, so what's wrong if I take this gig?" (UR, Interview, October 2024). UR's case resembles that of hate speech perpetrator HS, who was recently arrested. On social media, HS accused NU followers of being "stupid" and GP Ansor of corruption. However, East Java police stated in a press conference that HS's motive wasn't ideological hatred toward NU, but rather an economic need to support his family. UR's interview also highlights not just economic motives but also structural frustration—specifically, widespread public distrust toward government and political elites. His anger over political corruption suggests that working as a buzzer might also serve as a form of political protest.

Structural dissatisfaction can motivate political activism (Easton, 2024). While protest and

demonstration traditionally express public frustration, social media now allows for digital forms of protest (Cortés-Ramos et al., 2021). Unfortunately, political activism in the digital age often blurs ethical lines, using tactics like hoaxes and hate speech (Karamat & Farooq, 2020; Kofi Frimpong et al., 2022). Thus, this paper argues that the personal motivations behind hate-based buzzer activity, as previously described in Setia (2020) and Seto (Seto, 2019) regarding Islamist buzzers motivated by ideology, or in Jafar (Jafar, 2022) and Handini (Handini & Dunan, 2021) highlighted personal anonymous accounts spreading hate have shifted. Today, buzzers or hate actors act less on personal or ideological grounds and more on structural, economic, industrial, and regional factors.

Therefore, the spread of hate speech by buzzers is not merely the product of personal animosity or political belief but rather a consequence of broader socio-economic structures. As the five interviewees in this study reveal, they are entangled in wider social and economic networks that influence their decision to engage in hate speech as a means of survival.

Responses of Islamic Organizations to the Political Buzzer Phenomenon

After explaining how the motivations of buzzers are largely driven by economic factors and structural pressures, the next crucial question is how Muslims—particularly through their religious organizations—have responded to this phenomenon. In many cases, buzzers disseminate hate speech either by cloaking it in religious narratives or by targeting specific religious groups. Therefore, it is important to examine how Indonesia's three major Islamic organizations—Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, and the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI)—respond to this issue from moral, legal, and potentially structural perspectives.

MUI's Response

The Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) has issued a firm response to buzzer activities, especially those involving hate speech, hoaxes, and slander for political and economic purposes. Through Fatwa No. 24 of 2017 on the Law and Guidelines for Social Media Engagement, MUI declared that working as a buzzer who spreads harmful content for profit is forbidden (*haram*) in Islamic law. The Head of MUI's Fatwa Division, Asrorun Niam Sholeh, emphasized that selling hoaxes, slander, gossip (*ghibah*), malicious rumors (*namimah*), or engaging in online bullying for material or non-material gain violates Islamic teachings. MUI holds not only the perpetrators accountable but also those who hire, facilitate, or benefit from buzzer services as morally and religiously responsible.

This fatwa addresses not just individual actions but also extends moral responsibility to the broader structures that support and finance buzzer activities. Thus, MUI views this issue not merely as a matter of positive law, but as a serious ethical and moral violation. However, MUI's response tends to be normative and spiritual, and it has yet to explicitly address the structural or economic factors that may underlie individuals' involvement as buzzers.

MUI's firm stance shows that buzzers do more than spread misinformation; they also contribute to political polarization and a communication crisis in society (Budiana, 2024; Syahputra et al., 2021). While MUI has established religious ethical norms, its lack of structural analysis regarding the economic motives of buzzers highlights a limited understanding of the digital realm's complex dynamics. In fact, buzzer activity is deeply tied to organized political strategies involving economic motives and elite political pressures (Panatra et al., 2019). Therefore, MUI's response would be stronger if it incorporated an approach that considers the structural and economic roots of the phenomenon.

NU's Response

As Indonesia's largest Islamic organization, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) has often been a primary target of hate speech on social media, particularly from politically affiliated buzzer accounts. NU has responded to such attacks in a reactive and legalistic manner, as seen in the cases of "Mbah Bram" in Kendal and HS in Jember, both of whom used multiple fake accounts to attack NU and its youth wing, GP Ansor. NU, through local chapters (PCNU) and the Legal Aid Institute of GP Ansor, has pursued mediation and legal channels to address these incidents, demonstrating the organization's institutional commitment to protecting its dignity in the digital space.

However, NU's approach has yet to include a preventive strategy based on digital education. There is no evidence of a nationwide digital literacy program specifically designed to equip

Nahdliyin (NU followers) to counter disinformation and hate speech. Nevertheless, NU's strong cultural potential, through its networks of Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) and religious communities, offers a strategic foundation for developing counter-hoax narratives based on Islam *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (Islam as a mercy to all creation) (Heryanto, 2020).

Furthermore, NU has shown structural awareness in addressing this issue. Alissa Wahid, a NU figure from PBNU, urged members not to fall into the trap of hate narratives often driven by political interests. In an interview with NU Online (May 18, 2023), she stressed the importance of assessing political candidates rationally rather than through hate speech. Her statement suggests that NU recognizes that those who spread digital hate are not always ideologically motivated but often driven by structural pressures and economic needs.

Theologically, NU follows the views of classical scholars such as Imam Al-Ghazali, Al-Mawardi, and Abu Bakar Al-Jazairi, who condemned lies and slander as actions that damage the social order. Although NU has not issued a formal fatwa like MUI, it strongly upholds the principle that spreading hate violates both ethics and Islamic law. NU maintains that the role of a buzzer is only permissible in Islam if it upholds honesty, avoids slander, and is not used to spread harm.

NU's response reflects openness to structural analysis, especially in recognizing economic pressures as drivers of buzzer activity. This aligns with studies by Safiullah et al. (Safiullah et al., 2017) and Ding et al. (Ding et al., 2023), which highlight the effectiveness of political influencers and buzzers in shaping public opinion, especially during elections. NU has also started to acknowledge that buzzers are not just a moral threat, but part of a complex digital political architecture. However, the absence of a structured digital literacy program limits the potential for Nahdliyin to mount effective counter-narratives. As Afra et al. (Afra et al., 2024) noted, utilizing classification systems and early detection of buzzer accounts could serve as strategic tools to protect the integrity of the digital public sphere. Thus, NU's response addresses the root of the issue but still needs to be strengthened through more systematic and proactive digital strategies.

Muhammadiyah's Response

Muhammadiyah's stance on buzzers and hate speech combines normative rejection with an educational approach. The Muhammadiyah Central Board has openly condemned buzzer practices, especially those involving hoaxes and slander in political contests. Edy Kuscahyanto, Vice Chair of the Muhammadiyah Information and Library Council, referred to buzzer work as morally problematic and even supported calls for its prohibition. He argued that both the perpetrators and those who hire buzzers bear ethical responsibility. The Youth Wing of Muhammadiyah echoed this view during the 2017 Tanwir assembly, calling for a fatwa declaring political buzzer activity haram due to its role in generating slander and public noise.

However, Muhammadiyah also provides a reflective space through the views of Saptoni, a member of the Tarjih and Tajdid Council. In the *Tarjih Menjawab* program, he stated that being a buzzer is essentially neutral; the issue lies in the content. If used to spread da'wah, moral messages, and good values, buzzer activity can serve as a tool for promoting *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* (enjoining good and forbidding evil) in the digital realm. This view is further reinforced by the *Fiqh al-Information* book published by the same council, which emphasizes *sidq al-ma'lumat* (truthfulness in information), the prohibition of *al-ifk* (spreading false news), and the duty to safeguard media as a public trust. The book underscores that Muslims must uphold information ethics as part of their religious responsibility in the digital era (Bus, 2020).

Although Muhammadiyah has yet to explicitly address economic solutions for buzzers, its approach still fosters community capacity through digital literacy and ethical media engagement. Within this framework, Muhammadiyah not only rejects destructive buzzer practices but also encourages the transformation of digital roles toward more positive and productive ends.

Muhammadiyah's response reflects a relatively balanced understanding of religious norms and the educational potential of social media. Its idea that buzzers can be a force for good if guided by ethical principles aligns with the concept of "information as trust," a theme also found in studies of digital influencers (Ding et al., 2023). Still, Muhammadiyah's lack of engagement with the economic root causes behind buzzer involvement limits its response. As Syahputra (Syahputra et al., 2021) pointed out, many buzzers operate out of economic necessity in an exploitative political landscape. Thus, while Muhammadiyah has a strong conceptual foundation, it should incorporate structural and

economic empowerment dimensions to offer concrete alternatives for buzzer actors.

Responses to the Economic Aspect of Buzzers

In addressing the rise of political buzzers who spread hate speech, the three major Islamic organizations—NU, Muhammadiyah, and MUI—have issued normative responses rooted in moral, educational, and religious legal values. However, only a few of them have acknowledged that many buzzers are not driven solely by ideological hatred, but rather by structural pressure and economic hardship.

NU, through Alissa Wahid's statements, appears more open to a structural-empathy approach. She urged NU members to critically assess political dynamics and not be easily provoked by hate narratives, which are often driven by political and economic interests. Muhammadiyah, although more focused on normative and educational approaches, has opened space for reflecting on the use of social media for da'wah and social reform. MUI, on the other hand, has concentrated more on legal and ethical dimensions without delving into the structural context behind political buzzer activity.

Overall, the responses of these organizations suggest that Indonesian Muslims are beginning to develop a broader understanding of digital disruption and the complex motives behind hate speech. Even so, future responses must become more progressive, such as through community-based digital literacy programs, positive digital skill training, and economic empowerment initiatives. In doing so, society can respond to the buzzer phenomenon not only reactively and moralistically, but also with constructive approaches that address the socioeconomic roots of the problem.

Conclusion

This study produced three main findings that illustrate the complex relationship between political buzzers, hate speech, and the responses of religious organizations in the context of the 2024 political year. First, hate speech on social media is not merely political but often infiltrates through religious narratives and local cultural expressions. This infiltration has created polarization that damages the social cohesion of Muslim communities and degrades the quality of public discourse in digital spaces. Second, the study revealed that many hate speech actors, including political buzzers, act based on economic motives and structural pressures. Their involvement is not solely driven by ideology or political fanaticism but often stems from livelihood needs and power dynamics within the architecture of digital politics. Third, Islamic organizations have tended to respond to this phenomenon through normative and moralistic approaches, focusing on religious ethics and promoting digital literacy. Although Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) has begun to recognize the structural economic roots of buzzer activity, their solutions still lack a broader and more unified agenda that addresses the socio-economic roots of the problem.

Scientifically, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on Islamic digital politics in Indonesia by introducing a structural perspective on the economic motives behind the production of hate speech. Additionally, the comparative approach to analyzing the responses of three major Islamic organizations enables a more critical and contextual examination of the interplay between power, technology, and religious authority. This study also proposes an interpretive framework that helps analyze identity politics in digital media more holistically. However, this research has limitations in terms of data scope and depth. Its focus on the three major Islamic organizations leaves room for further exploration of the responses of local Islamic communities or non-organizational groups that are also active in digital spaces. Furthermore, the qualitative approach has yet to fully capture the algorithmic dynamics and broader distribution networks of hate speech. Therefore, future research should combine digital network analysis and political-economic approaches to formulate more practical strategies for addressing the threat of political disinformation and hate speech.

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