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ISLAMIC IDENTITY POLITICS IN GOVERNOR ANWAR HAFID'S LEADERSHIP COMMUNICATION: AN ANALYSIS OF JÜRGEN HABERMAS'S DISCOURSE ETHICS

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan menganalisis representasi identitas Islam dalam komunikasi kepemimpinan Gubernur Sulawesi Tengah Anwar Hafid serta mengevaluasi legitimasi etis argumentasinya melalui etika diskursus Jürgen Habermas. Penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan analisis dokumen dan pembacaan filosofis-kritis. Korpus utama yang dapat diidentifikasi dalam naskah terdiri atas tujuh dokumen berupa publikasi pemerintah, dokumentasi kelembagaan, dan pemberitaan media yang terbit pada 2025–2026; pemilihannya didasarkan pada relevansi, identitas sumber, dan keterlacakan dokumen. Temuan menunjukkan tiga representasi utama identitas Islam, yakni ekspresi spiritual, legitimasi moral pembangunan, dan bahasa solidaritas sosial lintas agama. Perbandingan narasi pemerintah dan pemberitaan media juga memperlihatkan pentingnya membedakan legitimasi simbolik dari pertanggungjawaban kebijakan. Melalui klaim kebenaran, ketepatan normatif, ketulusan, dan keterpahaman, analisis menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan nilai keagamaan perlu disertai informasi yang dapat diverifikasi, pengakuan atas kesetaraan warga, dan keterbukaan terhadap kritik. Penelitian menawarkan tiga dimensi literasi diskursif: tanggung jawab informasi, kesetaraan diskursif, dan orientasi kemaslahatan publik. Kesimpulan dibatasi pada representasi yang terdokumentasi, bukan pembuktian efektivitas kebijakan atau motif pribadi pemimpin.

***Kata kunci**: Politik identitas Islam; komunikasi kepemimpinan; Anwar Hafid; etika diskursus; literasi diskursif.*

ABSTRACT

This article examines representations of Islamic identity in the public communication of Central Sulawesi Governor Anwar Hafid and evaluates the ethical legitimacy of such communication through Jürgen Habermas's discourse ethics. It adopts a qualitative approach combining document analysis with critical philosophical interpretation. The identifiable core corpus comprises seven documents drawn from government publications, institutional records, and news reports issued in 2025–2026, selected for relevance, traceable provenance, and substantive content. The findings identify three recurring representations of Islamic identity: spiritual expression, moral legitimacy for

development, and a language of interreligious social solidarity. A comparison of official and media accounts further demonstrates why symbolic legitimacy must be distinguished from policy accountability. Applying the dimensions of truth, normative rightness, sincerity, and comprehensibility, the study argues that religiously framed public communication must remain open to factual verification, civic equality, and reasoned criticism. It proposes three dimensions of discursive literacy: informational responsibility, discursive equality, and an orientation toward the public good. The conclusions concern documented narratives and arguments rather than verified policy effectiveness or the governor's personal motives.

Keywords: Islamic identity politics; leadership communication; Anwar Hafid; discourse ethics; discursive literacy.

INTRODUCTION

The transformation of political communication in the digital era has altered the relationship between power, identity, and the formation of public legitimacy. Social media enables political actors to convey ideas, cultivate a leadership image, and articulate particular values to a wider public. However, these developments also raise questions about the quality of political communication, particularly when the dissemination of information, the cultivation of support, and the use of identity symbols occur within an increasingly fragmented public sphere. Staab and Thiel explain that the development of social media has transformed the structure of the public sphere through the interplay of political participation, the commercial interests of platforms, and the management of users' attention.[1] Similarly, in A New Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere and Deliberative Politics, Jürgen Habermas highlights the challenges facing deliberative democracy as changes in digital communication structures may weaken the formation of public opinion through the exchange of rational arguments.[2] These concerns become more pertinent when social media functions not only as a means of communication but also as an instrument for constructing political legitimacy through the circulation of narratives, symbols, and

[1] Philipp Staab and Thorsten Thiel, "Social Media and the Digital Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere," *Theory, Culture & Society* 39, no. 4 (2022): 129–143, https://doi.org/10.1177/02632764221103527.

[2] Jürgen Habermas, *A New Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere and Deliberative Politics*, trans. Ciaran Cronin (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2023).

collective identities. Patberg maintains that social media's contribution to democracy should be assessed not merely in terms of opportunities for participation, but also in terms of its capacity to strengthen citizens' influence over political decision-making processes.[3]

In Indonesia, the relationship between political communication and religious identity is a phenomenon with deep social and historical roots. Islamic identity frequently appears in political communication through religious symbols, moral language, Islamic activities, and an emphasis on the values of trustworthiness (amanah), justice, unity, and the public good (maslahah). Such identity can serve as a source of moral legitimacy while fostering closeness between leaders and the public. Rohid and colleagues demonstrate that social media plays an important role in the development of Islamic political activism through the formation of collective identities, the expansion of networks, and the mobilization of political support.[4] Meanwhile, Faizin and colleagues show that religious issues discussed on Indonesian social media are associated with political polarization and public perceptions of the potential for social conflict.[5] Together, these studies indicate the complex character of religious identity in political communication: it may foster social solidarity, yet it may also become an instrument for drawing boundaries between groups when used exclusively.

This issue can be explored further through studies of the commodification of religious identity in political communication. Karman, Hamad, and Rusadi find that Islamic piety can be constructed as a political communication instrument to enhance candidates' appeal

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[3] Markus Patberg, "What Is Social Media's Place in Democracy?," *The Review of Politics* 87, no. 2 (2025): 236–257, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034670524000706.

[4] Nibrosu Rohid et al., "Digital Activism in Contemporary Islamic Politics: A Critical Analysis of Social Media's Impact on Islamic Movements," *MILRev: Metro Islamic Law Review* 4, no. 1 (2025): 208–233, https://doi.org/10.32332/milrev.v4i1.10159.

[5] Barzan Faizin et al., "Polarization of Religious Issues in Indonesia's Social Media Society and Its Impact on Social Conflict," *Journal of Applied Data Sciences* 6, no. 1 (2025): 426–442, https://doi.org/10.47738/jads.v6i1.447.

and political value in Indonesian electoral contests.[6] Similar findings are reported by Hariyanto and colleagues, who examine the hyperreality of identity politics on social media and demonstrate how religious symbols and narratives may be used to shape political representations and intergroup antagonism.[7] Nevertheless, the use of Islamic symbols in leadership communication cannot automatically be interpreted as the manipulation of religion or as exclusive identity politics. Religious values can also provide an ethical foundation for promoting governmental responsibility, social justice, and public service. Accordingly, the more fundamental question is not simply whether Islamic identity is present in political communication, but how that identity is used, justified, and connected to the interests of people from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds.

These dynamics take on a particularly relevant context in the leadership of Anwar Hafid, Governor of Central Sulawesi, who took office in February 2025. Religious values have featured prominently in his administration's communication through the BERANI Berkah, Sulteng Mengaji, and Sulteng Berjamaah programs and various religious activities conducted with local communities. According to documentation published by the Central Sulawesi Provincial Government, during a Ramadan Safari event at Banawa Grand Mosque, Donggala Regency, on March 7, 2025, Anwar Hafid introduced the BERANI Cerdas and BERANI Sehat programs while also encouraging stronger spiritual life through BERANI Berkah and Sulteng Mengaji.[8] This documentation shows that education and health policies were

[6] Karman, Ibnu Hamad, and Udi Rusadi, "Commodification of Instrumental Islamic Piety in Indonesian Political Contestation 2019," *Asian Journal of Communication* 34, no. 3 (2024): 265–283, https://doi.org/10.1080/01292986.2023.2295871.

[7] Didik Hariyanto et al., "The Hyperreality of Identity Politics on Social Media," *Communicatus: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi* 8, no. 1 (2024): 19–38, https://doi.org/10.15575/cjik.v8i1.28356.

[8] Pemerintah Provinsi Sulawesi Tengah, "Safari Ramadhan ke Donggala, Gubernur Anwar Hafid Sampaikan Program Unggulan BERANI," March 8, 2025, https://sultengprov.go.id/daerah/safari-ramadhan-ke-donggala-gubernur-anwar-hafid-sampaikan-program-unggulan-berani/.

communicated alongside religious values within a single narrative framework. This connection is significant for the study of political communication because religious language appears not only in the context of worship and spiritual development but also as a means of explaining development priorities and the government's responsibilities to the public.

Religious representation in Anwar Hafid's leadership is also apparent in his emphasis on harmony among communities with different religious backgrounds. At the provincial-level Qur'an and Hadith Recitation Selection event in Poso Regency on June 24, 2025, Anwar Hafid underscored the importance of strengthening Qur'anic values, Islamic brotherhood (ukhuwah Islamiyah), and the spiritual life of the community. On that occasion, the Sulteng Berkah program was also linked to efforts to revitalize religious activities in various places of worship, including mosques, churches, and temples.[9] A similar orientation appears in documentation from the Central Sulawesi Interfaith Harmony Forum concerning its Ngopi Kerukunan gathering on May 15, 2026, which discussed the relationship between religious moderation, BERANI Berkah, and regional development.[10] These two accounts suggest that Islamic symbols and values in leadership communication are not invariably directed toward solidarity solely among Muslims; they are also articulated through discourses of unity and coexistence within a plural society. Nevertheless, statements about harmony and inclusivity in government communication must be

[9] ANTARA News Sulawesi Tengah, "Gubernur Sulteng: STQH Momentum Perkuat Ukhuwah Islamiyah," June 24, 2025, https://sulteng.antaranews.com/berita/351197/gubernur-sulteng-stqh-momentum-perkuat-ukhuwah-islamiyah.

[10] Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama Sulawesi Tengah, "Ngopi Kerukunan FKUB Sulteng Bersama Gubernur dan Tokoh Lintas Agama, Bahas Moderasi Beragama dan Berani Berkah Menuju Sulteng Nambaso," May 15, 2026, https://fkubsulteng.org/news/ngopi-kerukunan-fkub-sulteng-bersama-gubernur-dan-tokoh-lintas-agama-bahas-moderasi-beragama-dan-berani-berkah-menuju-sulteng-nambaso.

distinguished from evidence of how such principles are implemented in public policy.

At the same time, documentation of Anwar Hafid's leadership communication reveals different emphases between the government's official narrative and independent media reporting. For example, a Central Sulawesi Provincial Government publication on the first 100 days of the Anwar–Reny administration, dated June 2, 2025, highlights several positive public responses to the BERANI Cerdas and BERANI Sehat programs and to the governor's leadership style.[11] By contrast, a Lengaru.id report published on May 2, 2026, features an interview with Anwar Hafid about the use of influencers, criticism of government programs, and communication problems between the government and the media. In that report, the media outlet describes hostile responses to its criticism, while Anwar Hafid explains government policies and expresses openness to evaluation.[12] The differences between these types of documents raise questions about how leadership legitimacy is constructed, how criticism is articulated, and how government communication can be assessed according to principles of public accountability. However, these documents do not in themselves establish the manipulation of public opinion, government involvement in digital attacks, or the use of Islamic identity to restrict criticism. The relationship between religious narratives and communication ethics must therefore be critically examined by distinguishing documented facts, the statements of the respective parties, and the researchers' philosophical interpretations.

Previous studies have laid the groundwork for understanding digital political communication, particularly in Central Sulawesi.

[11] Pemerintah Provinsi Sulawesi Tengah, "100 Hari Kerja Anwar-Reny Tuai Tanggapan Positif Warga Sulteng," June 2, 2025, https://ppid.sultengprov.go.id/2025/06/02/100-hari-kerja-anwar-reny-tuai-tanggapan-positif-warga-sulteng/.

[12] Fandy, "Anwar Hafid: Kami Sudah Tidak Perlu Influencer," *Lengaru.id*, May 2, 2026, https://lengaru.id/homepage/readmore/anwar-hafid-kami-sudah-tidak-perlu-influencer-1777645439.

Achmad Herman's study of 144 respondents in Palu found that political participation through social media largely took the form of receiving, following, and sharing political news or issues.[13] Although the study describes local patterns of political participation, it does not specifically address the ethical quality of political arguments produced by government actors. Meanwhile, Kamindang and Amijaya's study of TikTok as a political communication medium for political party actors in Palu found that its use remained limited and had not been fully oriented toward substantive political communication.[14] That research contributes to an understanding of local political actors' digital media strategies, but it does not specifically take the use of Islamic identity and discourse ethics as its central objects of analysis. At the national level, Rohid and colleagues examine Islamic political activism; Faizin and colleagues study polarization around religious issues; and Karman and colleagues as well as Hariyanto and colleagues focus on the commodification and representation of religious identity in political contests. These studies have therefore addressed participation, mobilization, communication strategies, polarization, and identity representation, while leaving room to explore the relationship between religious legitimacy, post-electoral government communication, and ethical accountability in public communication documents.

From the perspective of political philosophy, discussions of the digital public sphere have developed through critiques of changes in democratic communication structures. Susen argues that the transformation of the public sphere described by Habermas must be critically understood in relation to technological change, power, and the social conditions that shape public opinion.[15] Patberg, meanwhile,

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[13] Achmad Herman, "Penyebaran Berita Politik dan Partisipasi Politik Masyarakat Kota Palu di Media Sosial," *KOMUNIKATIF: Jurnal Ilmiah Komunikasi* 12, no. 1 (2023): 51–62, https://doi.org/10.33508/jk.v12i1.4772.

[14] Irwansyah Kamindang and Meldi Amijaya, "TikTok sebagai Media Komunikasi Politik Aktor Partai Politik di Kota Palu," *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi UHO* 9, no. 1 (2024): 1–15, https://doi.org/10.52423/jikuho.v9i1.151.

[15] Simon Susen, "A New Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere? With, against, and beyond Habermas," *Society* 60 (2023): 842–867, https://doi.org/10.1007/s12115-023-00908-y

explores the role of social media in democracy by emphasizing the empowerment of civic actors so that public communication is not dominated by centers of power.[3] Within Islamic philosophy, Lahambu, Ardiansyah, and Rafli develop the concept of maslahah-oriented deliberation, bringing together procedural legitimacy through rational communication and a substantive moral orientation toward the public good.[16] This idea makes an important contribution to developing discourse ethics from the perspective of Islamic philosophy. However, their study is primarily concerned with a conceptual reconstruction of the relationship between Habermas's discourse ethics and the value of maslahah; it does not specifically apply this framework to tensions between religious identity, the legitimacy of power, and accountability in government communication as represented in local political documents.

On the basis of previous research, the gap addressed by this study lies in the limited analysis of representations of Islamic identity in regional leadership communication documents through the lens of Habermas's discourse ethics. Studies of identity politics have largely examined mobilization, polarization, and religious symbols in political contests, while studies of local political communication emphasize media use and public participation. Normative studies of discourse ethics and maslahah, meanwhile, have not specifically been applied to the relationship between religious narratives, policy legitimacy, and accountability in Anwar Hafid's government communication. This study therefore does not presume that representations of Islam are necessarily inclusive or exclusive; rather, it assesses whether religiously framed communication claims are accompanied by reasons open to scrutiny, recognition of civic equality, and openness to criticism.

[16] Fahiza Awalia Lahambu, Rio Ardiansyah, and Rafli, "Dari Konsensus Rasional Menuju Kemaslahatan: Rekonstruksi Etika Diskursus Jürgen Habermas dalam Perspektif Filsafat Islam," *Mahiyah: Journal of Islamic Thought and Philosophy* 2, no. 1 (2025): 74–98, https://doi.org/10.24239/jrptdv77.

Jürgen Habermas's thought provides a relevant philosophical foundation for addressing this issue by distinguishing communicative action from strategic action. Communicative action seeks mutual understanding through the exchange of reasons, whereas strategic action places greater emphasis on successfully influencing the actions of others. In discourse ethics, communication can be evaluated through four validity claims—truth, normative rightness, sincerity, and comprehensibility—while also considering equal participation and freedom from domination. Habermas also acknowledges the potential of religion to make a moral contribution to the democratic public sphere, provided that arguments concerning collective decisions can be justified to citizens with different beliefs.[17] In the context of Central Sulawesi's government communication, this framework enables an assessment of whether religious values are connected to verifiable policy information, whether claims of harmony recognize civic equality, and whether government explanations offer reasons that can be openly evaluated. Assessments of a communicator's sincerity, however, must be limited to consistency among documented statements and must not extend to unsubstantiated judgments about private psychological motives.

The novelty of this study lies in its shift from examining Islamic identity as an instrument of mobilization to ethically evaluating the legitimacy of post-electoral leadership communication. Islamic identity is understood as a communicative construction linked to policy justification, recognition of a multicultural society, and opportunities to scrutinize the government's reasons. Unlike the concept of maslahah-oriented deliberation, which emphasizes a normative synthesis of rational consensus and the public good, this study applies Habermas's framework to government communication documents and media reports from Central Sulawesi. Discursive literacy is positioned as an analytical implication—the capacity to examine claims, assess reasons, and

[17] Jürgen Habermas, "Religion in the Public Sphere," *European Journal of Philosophy* 14, no. 1 (2006): 1–25, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0378.2006.00241.x.

distinguish symbolic legitimacy from policy accountability—rather than as an entirely new or empirically validated concept.

This study aims to (1) analyze representations of Islamic identity in Governor Anwar Hafid's leadership communication documents, (2) explain the relationship between religious symbols and the construction of policy legitimacy, and (3) evaluate the ethical quality of arguments through Jürgen Habermas's discourse ethics. Theoretically, it brings together the discourses of political communication, Islamic political philosophy, and communicative rationality. At a practical-conceptual level, it offers critical criteria for government communication that invokes religious values while remaining open to evidence, criticism, and respect for all citizens.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative approach using document analysis combined with a critical-philosophical perspective to examine Islamic identity politics in the leadership communication of Anwar Hafid, Governor of Central Sulawesi. A qualitative approach is appropriate because the research seeks to understand meaning, the construction of political legitimacy, and the ethical dimensions of using religious identity in government communication. Document analysis was selected because the primary sources consist of official government publications, policy documents, news coverage, and institutional records concerning Anwar Hafid's leadership communication. Bowen describes document analysis as a systematic procedure for examining and interpreting documents to gain understanding and develop empirical knowledge about a social phenomenon.[18] Morgan emphasizes that qualitative document analysis enables researchers to understand an issue through the selection of relevant documents, critical reading, and interpretation of the context in

[18] Glenn A. Bowen, "Document Analysis as a Qualitative Research Method," *Qualitative Research Journal* 9, no. 2 (2009): 27–40, https://doi.org/10.3316/QRJ0902027.

which information is produced.[19] Thus, this study does not directly observe social media users' behavior; instead, it analyzes representations of Islamic identity and political-religious arguments documented in government public communication.

The material object of this study comprises Governor Anwar Hafid's leadership communication documents involving Islamic symbols, values, and arguments in policy communication and the construction of governmental legitimacy. Its formal object is the ethical quality of political communication as assessed through Jürgen Habermas's theory of discourse ethics. The document period extends from February 20, 2025, to September 30, 2026, covering the governor's inauguration and subsequent developments in government communication. The primary sources include Central Sulawesi Provincial Government publications about the BERANI Berkah, Sulteng Mengaji, and Sulteng Berjamaah programs and Ramadan Safari activities; documentation from the Central Sulawesi Interfaith Harmony Forum; and media reports from ANTARA News, RRI, and Lengaru.id containing statements by the governor, policy narratives, or criticism of government communication. These documents are used to understand both official government representations and media perspectives on leadership communication. Academic literature on identity politics, digital political communication, Islamic political philosophy, and Habermas's discourse ethics serves as a conceptual resource supporting philosophical interpretation.

To make the sources traceable, Table 1 summarizes the seven primary documents explicitly used as the basis for examining the case. Theoretical literature and previous research articles are treated as secondary sources rather than as part of these seven case documents.

Table 1. Summary of the study's principal documents

[19] Hani Morgan, "Conducting a Qualitative Document Analysis," *The Qualitative Report* 27, no. 1 (2022): 64–77, https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2022.5044.

Code	Document and publication date	Information examined
D1	Central Sulawesi Provincial Government (March 5, 2025): Ramadan Safari, Baiturrahim Grand Mosque	Sulteng Berjamaah, Sulteng Mengaji, and social togetherness
D2	Central Sulawesi Provincial Government (March 8, 2025): Ramadan Safari in Donggala	BERANI Cerdas, BERANI Sehat, and BERANI Berkah
D3	Central Sulawesi Provincial Government PPID (June 2, 2025): Anwar–Reny's first 100 days	Representation of program achievements and positive public responses
D4	ANTARA Central Sulawesi (June 24, 2025): provincial-level STQH	Ukhuwah Islamiyah and discourse on interfaith harmony
D5	Lengaru.id (May 2, 2026): interview with Anwar Hafid	Media criticism, influencers, and communicative accountability
D6	Central Sulawesi Interfaith Harmony Forum (May 15, 2026): Ngopi Kerukunan	Religious moderation, BERANI Berkah, and interfaith participation
D7	RRI Palu (June 21, 2026): BERANI Berkah program	Spiritual narratives, character, and regional development

Documents were selected purposively on the basis of their relevance to the research focus. The inclusion criteria were that (1) the document was published within the study period; (2) it was directly related to Anwar Hafid's leadership and representations of Islamic values or identity; (3) it contained statements, policy narratives, arguments, or communication issues amenable to philosophical analysis; and (4) its publisher, publication date, and source could be identified and traced. Documents unrelated to the research focus, duplicating information without adding substance, or lacking accountable sources were excluded from the analytical corpus. The suitability of each document was assessed in terms of authenticity, credibility, representativeness, and meaning, following Scott's discussion of documentary sources in social research.[20] This assessment is necessary because official government documents and media reports do not necessarily share the same communicative orientation. Government documents may emphasize program achievements and policy legitimacy, whereas media coverage may focus on criticism, implementation issues, and governmental accountability. Each document is therefore treated as a representation that must be interpreted in light of its institutional context, publication purpose, and informational content.

[20] John Scott, *A Matter of Record: Documentary Sources in Social Research* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990).

Document collection and processing followed a systematic procedure adapted from the READ approach (Ready, Extract, Analyse, and Distil) developed by Dalglish, Khalid, and McMahon.[21] The first stage involved defining the research focus, locating sources, and identifying documents that met the selection criteria. The second stage consisted of extracting key information, including publisher identity, publication date, document type, event context, relevant statements, and links between religious values and policy communication. This information was organized in a documentation matrix to facilitate comparisons across sources. The third stage involved thematic and philosophical analysis of document content to identify constructions of Islamic identity, patterns of leadership legitimacy, and issues in public communication ethics. The fourth stage synthesized the analytical findings to formulate arguments about the relationships among religious identity, communicative rationality, and governmental accountability. This procedure allows the links among documents, analytical categories, and research conclusions to be traced systematically.

Data were analyzed through qualitative thematic analysis combined with critical-philosophical interpretation. Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring patterns of meaning in the documents, while philosophical analysis served to evaluate the arguments and ethical orientation of leadership communication. Schreier explains that qualitative content analysis allows researchers to organize information through categories developed in relation to the research questions and characteristics of the data.[22] Braun and Clarke emphasize the importance of repeated reading, code development, theme construction, theme review, and reflexive interpretation.[23] Following the principles of qualitative coding outlined by Saldaña, the analysis combined initial

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[21] Sarah L. Dalglish, Hina Khalid, and Shannon A. McMahon, "Document Analysis in Health Policy Research: The READ Approach," *Health Policy and Planning* 35, no. 10 (2020): 1424–1431, https://doi.org/10.1093/heapol/czaa064.

[22] Margrit Schreier, *Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice* (London: SAGE Publications, 2012), https://doi.org/10.4135/9781529682571.

[23] Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, *Thematic Analysis: A Practical Guide* (London: SAGE Publications, 2022).

theory-driven categories with categories emerging from the documents.[24] The initial categories included representations of Islamic identity, religious legitimation of leadership, relationships between religious values and public policy, arguments about harmony, openness to criticism, and governmental accountability. These categories were not treated as predetermined conclusions but as analytical tools that could be adjusted in response to the information encountered.

Philosophical interpretation employed Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action and discourse ethics as an evaluative framework. Habermas distinguishes communicative action, oriented toward achieving mutual understanding, from strategic action, oriented toward successfully influencing others.[25] In this study, the quality of leadership communication is analyzed through four validity claims—truth, normative rightness, sincerity, and comprehensibility—while taking into account equal participation and freedom from domination.[26] The truth claim is used to evaluate whether statements about government programs have a verifiable informational basis. Normative rightness is used to assess whether religious arguments respect justice, equal rights, and social diversity. Sincerity is examined only through the consistency of statements in the available documents, without inferring the leader's private psychological motives. Comprehensibility, meanwhile, is used to assess the clarity of the connections among religious symbols, policy justifications, and public interests. Equal participation and freedom from domination are used to evaluate how the documents represent opportunities for criticism and open argumentation, not to claim without additional evidence that equitable communication practices have in fact occurred.

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[24] Johnny Saldaña, *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*, 4th ed. (London: SAGE Publications, 2021).

[25] JJürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 1, *Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984).

[26] Jürgen Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, trans. Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990).

The analysis also considers Habermas's reflections on the role of religion in the democratic public sphere. Habermas recognizes that religious values may make a moral contribution to public life, but arguments involving shared interests must be justifiable to all citizens.[27] Here, this perspective helps distinguish the use of Islamic identity as a source of moral orientation in leadership from its possible use as an instrument of political legitimation that constricts critical policy evaluation. The philosophical reading connects the documentary findings with the Islamic concepts of amanah (trustworthiness), justice, musyawarah (consultation), and maslahah (the public good). However, the relationship between these Islamic principles and Habermas's discourse ethics is understood as a dialogue between normative frameworks, rather than as a direct equation of the two. In this way, the study develops an interpretation of the ethical quality of religious-political communication by relating documentary representations to philosophical argumentation.

The credibility of the interpretation is strengthened by comparing official government documents, media reports, and institutional records, with attention to publication context and consistency of statements. The analysis distinguishes three levels of claims: facts stated in the documents, the researchers' interpretations of their meanings, and normative evaluations based on Habermas's theory. All sources are publicly accessible, and irrelevant personal information is not reproduced. The findings are limited to documented representations and the quality of documented arguments; the study does not measure public opinion across the population, establish private motives, or evaluate the actual effects of government programs.

[27] Jürgen Habermas, "Religion in the Public Sphere," *European Journal of Philosophy* 14, no. 1 (2006): 1–25, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0378.2006.00241.x.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Representation of Islamic Identity in Anwar Hafid's Leadership Communication

Islamic identity is a prominent element in documents recording the leadership communication of Anwar Hafid, Governor of Central Sulawesi. Government publications and media reports from 2025–2026 show that religious identity appears not only in worship activities but also in the communication of development programs, the construction of moral legitimacy for leadership, and the reinforcement of narratives of social togetherness. Islamic identity is represented through religious terminology, spiritual activities, and the positioning of religious values within the orientation of regional development. These representations are particularly evident in the BERANI Berkah, Sulteng Berjamaah, and Sulteng Mengaji programs and in a series of Ramadan Safari activities forming part of the Anwar Hafid administration's public communication**.**

Central Sulawesi Provincial Government documentation of a Ramadan Safari event at Baiturrahim Grand Mosque in Palu on March 5, 2025, illustrates the connection between Islamic identity and the construction of a narrative of togetherness. At the event, the government promoted the themes of Sulteng Berjamaah and Sulteng Mengaji by associating them with unity, mutual cooperation, and harmony in diversity.[28] The term berjamaah refers not only to performing communal prayers, but is also developed into a moral language describing togetherness and cooperation in social life. In the context of leadership communication, this extension of meaning demonstrates how religious symbols may be translated into representations of broader social values. However, these representations must be distinguished from empirical evidence that social cooperation and civic equality have actually been achieved. The document establishes that the government articulated

[28] Pemerintah Provinsi Sulawesi Tengah, "Gubernur Anwar Hafid Awali Safari Ramadhan di Masjid Agung Baiturrahim Kota Palu," March 5, 2025, https://sultengprov.go.id/daerah/gubernur-anwar-hafid-awali-safari-ramadhan-di-masjid-agung-baiturrahim-kota-palu/.

values of togetherness in its communication; it does not, by itself, prove that social solidarity was successfully created.

A similar pattern appears in documentation of the Ramadan Safari event at Banawa Grand Mosque, Donggala Regency, on March 7, 2025. At that event, Anwar Hafid presented the BERANI Cerdas and BERANI Sehat programs while encouraging the strengthening of spiritual life through BERANI Berkah and Sulteng Mengaji.[29] Linking education and health programs with religious activities shows that the development narrative is situated within a moral framework familiar to the public's religious experience. Education and health are communicated as forms of government service, while religious values reinforce the moral orientation of development. The document thus reveals an integration of religious language with the language of public policy. This integration can be understood as a communication strategy connecting moral legitimacy with governmental responsibility, although the evidence does not establish whether this relationship generated broad public acceptance.

From the perspective of identity politics, the use of Islamic symbols in leadership communication cannot be understood solely as exclusive political mobilization. In their study of the commodification of Islamic piety in Indonesian political contests, Karman, Hamad, and Rusadi demonstrate that religious symbols can be constructed to enhance candidates' political appeal.[30] Hariyanto and colleagues, meanwhile, find that religious identity representations on social media may create political hyperreality, reinforcing divisions and antagonism between

[29] Pemerintah Provinsi Sulawesi Tengah, "Safari Ramadhan ke Donggala, Gubernur Anwar Hafid Sampaikan Program Unggulan BERANI," March 8, 2025, https://sultengprov.go.id/daerah/safari-ramadhan-ke-donggala-gubernur-anwar-hafid-sampaikan-program-unggulan-berani/.

[30] Karman, Ibnu Hamad, and Udi Rusadi, "Commodification of Instrumental Islamic Piety in Indonesian Political Contestation 2019," *Asian Journal of Communication* 34, no. 3 (2024): 265–283, https://doi.org/10.1080/01292986.2023.2295871.

groups.[31] These studies provide a critical basis for considering the possible instrumentalization of religious identity. However, findings concerning electoral contests cannot be generalized directly to all post-electoral government communication. In Anwar Hafid's case, the documents analyzed reveal connections between religious symbols and policy communication, but they do not establish that every representation of Islam serves electoral interests or creates exclusive boundaries between groups.

Another dimension identified in the documents is the extension of religious identity into a discourse of interfaith harmony. ANTARA's coverage of the provincial Qur'an and Hadith Recitation Selection event on June 24, 2025, indicates that Anwar Hafid linked Islamic activities with the strengthening of spiritual life and interreligious harmony. The report also connects the idea of Sulteng Berkah with efforts to revive religious activities in different places of worship, including mosques, churches, and temples.[32] These statements indicate a broader orientation, moving from nurturing Muslim religious life toward acknowledging the spiritual lives of diverse communities. Thus, Islamic identity in leadership communication is presented not merely as a group marker but also as part of a narrative of shared life in a multicultural society.

This representation is reinforced by documentation from the Central Sulawesi Interfaith Harmony Forum concerning the Ngopi Kerukunan gathering on May 15, 2026. During the event, the BERANI Berkah program was discussed with interfaith leaders in relation to religious moderation and regional development. The Forum's Central Sulawesi chair, Zainal Abidin, interpreted the Sulteng Berjamaah movement in terms of social togetherness and unity despite differences

[31] Didik Hariyanto et al., "The Hyperreality of Identity Politics on Social Media," *Communicatus: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi* 8, no. 1 (2024): 19–38, https://doi.org/10.15575/cjik.v8i1.28356.

[32] ANTARA News Sulawesi Tengah, "Gubernur Sulteng: STQH Momentum Perkuat Ukhuwah Islamiyah," June 24, 2025, https://sulteng.antaranews.com/berita/351197/gubernur-sulteng-stqh-momentum-perkuat-ukhuwah-islamiyah.

in practices and beliefs. At the same forum, Anwar Hafid presented the strengthening of spiritual life as a development priority not limited to Muslims.[33] This documentation illustrates the expansion of religious language in government communication, from the worship practices of the majority group toward a more inclusive representation of public morality.

This development is also reflected in an RRI report dated June 21, 2026, concerning the implementation of BERANI Berkah through the Jumat Subuh Berkah, Sulteng Berjamaah, and Sulteng Mengaji activities. The report emphasizes links among spiritual life, character development, social unity, and regional development.[34] However, the document primarily describes activities and program orientations as presented in the published narrative. It does not provide sufficient evidence to conclude comprehensively that increased religious activity has improved the quality of public services or social harmony. In document analysis, statements about program objectives must be distinguished from information about implementation and impact.

The documents as a whole reveal three patterns in the representation of Islamic identity in Anwar Hafid's leadership communication. First, Islamic identity functions as spiritual expression, visible in worship and religious development activities. Second, it functions as a source of moral legitimacy for development, when religious values are connected to governmental responsibility for education, health, and public welfare. Third, it functions as a language

[33] Forum Kerukunan Umat Beragama Sulawesi Tengah, "Ngopi Kerukunan FKUB Sulteng Bersama Gubernur dan Tokoh Lintas Agama, Bahas Moderasi Beragama dan Berani Berkah Menuju Sulteng Nambaso," May 15, 2026, https://fkubsulteng.org/news/ngopi-kerukunan-fkub-sulteng-bersama-gubernur-dan-tokoh-lintas-agama-bahas-moderasi-beragama-dan-berani-berkah-menuju-sulteng-nambaso.

[34] Umi Kalsum, "Program Berani Berkah Perkuat Fondasi Spiritual Pembangunan Sulawesi Tengah," *RRI Palu*, June 21, 2026, https://rri.co.id/palu/info-pemda/2504659/program-berani-berkah-perkuat-fondasi-spiritual-pembangunan-sulawesi-tengah.

of social solidarity, when religious symbols are extended to convey unity, harmony, and life in a multicultural society.

These patterns of representation are related to how political legitimacy is constructed and scrutinized. Table 2 summarizes the documentary findings while indicating the limits of their interpretation within Habermas's framework.

Table 2. Main patterns of findings and their interpretation through discourse ethics

Pattern/theme	Documentary basis	Interpretation and limitations
Spiritual expression	Ramadan Safari and Sulteng Mengaji/Berjamaah programs (D1, D2, D7)	Religious representations are identified; changes in social behavior have not been demonstrated.
Moral policy legitimacy	BERANI Cerdas/Sehat/Berkah and the first 100 days publication (D2, D3)	Truth claims must be tested using information about program achievements and targets.
Interfaith solidarity	STQH and the Forum's harmony dialogue (D4, D6)	Normative rightness requires equal recognition; statements do not establish implementation.
Criticism and accountability	Official publications compared with a media interview (D3, D5)	The quality of deliberation depends on openness about reasons and opportunities to scrutinize policy.
Discursive literacy	Synthesis of all seven documents through Habermas's ethics	Conceptual implications: informational responsibility, discursive equality, and the public good.

These three patterns show that representations of Islamic identity in leadership communication documents serve diverse functions. The use of religious symbols does not necessarily indicate political exclusivism, but neither does it automatically prove that government communication has been inclusive. This finding is consistent with Rohid and colleagues' research showing that Islamic political communication in digital spaces can construct collective identities, broaden support, and develop religious discourses with sociopolitical consequences that vary by context.[35] The ethical function of religious identity should therefore be evaluated on the basis of the content of arguments, their links to policy, and recognition of the rights of different communities, rather than merely the frequency of Islamic symbols.

Islamic Identity, Political Legitimacy, and Criticism of Leadership

[35] Nibrosu Rohid et al., "Digital Activism in Contemporary Islamic Politics: A Critical Analysis of Social Media's Impact on Islamic Movements," *MILRev: Metro Islamic Law Review* 4, no. 1 (2025): 208–233, https://doi.org/10.32332/milrev.v4i1.10159.

The legitimacy of leadership rests not only on formal authority but also on moral narratives and policy explanations accepted by the public. In documents concerning Anwar Hafid, Islamic identity can function as a language of trustworthiness (amanah), care, and social closeness. Yet the symbolic legitimacy arising from religious language must be distinguished from policy legitimacy, which requires evidence of program implementation, transparency in the use of public resources, and respect for citizens' rights.

The Central Sulawesi Provincial Government's publication on the first 100 days of the Anwar–Reny administration, dated June 2, 2025, illustrates how leadership legitimacy is represented through narratives of policy success and public appreciation. The document presents positive responses from several Instagram users regarding education and health programs and Anwar Hafid's leadership qualities.[36] As documentary evidence, this publication shows that the government uses public appreciation as part of its representation of acceptance of the leadership. However, the comments included in the publication were selected before being presented to readers. The published comments therefore cannot be regarded as representing the views of the entire Central Sulawesi population or as providing a statistical measure of actual support.

Public appreciation included in government documents can help explain how the government constructs legitimacy, but it cannot substitute for policy evaluation. Claims of success must remain open to scrutiny through information on program indicators, targets, and implementation outcomes. Publishing government achievements is therefore a legitimate part of institutional communication, provided that it remains open to criticism and empirical verification.

A critical dimension of Anwar Hafid's leadership communication can be found in a Lengaru.id report dated May 2, 2026. The report presents an interview concerning the BERANI Cerdas and BERANI

[36] Pemerintah Provinsi Sulawesi Tengah, "100 Hari Kerja Anwar-Reny Tuai Tanggapan Positif Warga Sulteng," June 2, 2025, https://ppid.sultengprov.go.id/2025/06/02/100-hari-kerja-anwar-reny-tuai-tanggapan-positif-warga-sulteng/.

Sehat programs, the strategy of using influencers, and criticisms directed at the government. In that interview, Anwar Hafid explains that influencers were initially used to extend the reach of information about government programs. He also states that policy criticism can serve as material for evaluation. Meanwhile, Lengaru.id reports that its journalists faced verbal attacks in connection with their critical coverage of the government.[37]

The difference between the government documentation and this media report reveals two communicative orientations. Government publications emphasize program achievements and public support, whereas Lengaru.id focuses on policy accountability, communication strategies, and the relationship between power and media criticism. This difference need not be construed as a conflict between one wholly accurate source and another wholly inaccurate source. Every document is shaped by its institutional context, informational purpose, and the perspective of those who produce it. A critical reading must therefore consider whether the information can be verified and the extent to which each document makes different viewpoints intelligible.

Reports on the use of influencers are insufficient to establish manipulation of public opinion or instrumentalization of Islamic identity. Influencers may legitimately be used to publicize programs provided that the communication is not misleading and its information can be verified. Similarly, reports of hostile comments against the media do not establish that the governor directed those attacks. On the evidence of the available documents, the findings concern only differences in how criticism, publicity strategies, and governmental accountability are narrated.

This issue relates to Michael Hoffman's study of the relationship between political deliberation and image-building in the digital public sphere. Hoffman shows that the development of digital communication generates tension between political communication as an exchange of

[37] Fandy, "Anwar Hafid: Kami Sudah Tidak Perlu Influencer," *Lengaru.id*, May 2, 2026, https://lengaru.id/homepage/readmore/anwar-hafid-kami-sudah-tidak-perlu-influencer-1777645439.

arguments and political communication as a means of cultivating public appeal and influence.[38] In regional leadership, this tension emerges when governments use various channels to promote policies while citizens need opportunities to question their foundations, implementation, and consequences. The ethical issue therefore lies not in the use of communication technology or publicity strategies as such, but in the possibility that image-building becomes more important than the obligation to provide information open to critical scrutiny.

In his research on the place of social media in democracy, Markus Patberg emphasizes strengthening civic actors' capacity to participate in political communication rather than treating them merely as information recipients.[39] This perspective is relevant for evaluating government communication because democratic legitimacy requires more than the one-way dissemination of messages. Governments must not only communicate program successes; they must also provide information enabling citizens to raise objections and assess the reasons underlying public decisions. In this context, policy criticism is essential to democratic oversight, rather than merely an activity that disrupts a leader's image.

The relationship between Islamic identity and political legitimacy must also be situated within Central Sulawesi's religiously and culturally diverse society. The Forum's documentation on BERANI Berkah shows an attempt to connect spiritual values with interfaith harmony. Yet the moral legitimacy conveyed by the language of harmony cannot replace scrutiny of equality in public service provision. Recognition of diversity must be distinguished from evidence concerning people's access to government programs, opportunities to

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[38] Michael Hoffman, "Political Deliberation vs. Social Media Branding in Crisis-Prone Capitalist Democracies: A Discussion of Habermas's New Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere," *Journal of Political Sociology* 2, no. 1 (2024): 111–134, https://doi.org/10.54195/jps.18504.

[39] Markus Patberg, "What Is Social Media's Place in Democracy?," *The Review of Politics* 87, no. 2 (2025): 236–257, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0034670524000706.

object, and protections for groups with different identities. Saumantri and colleagues' 2026 study of harmony governance amid digital identity polarization shows that harmony requires participatory and collaborative approaches, rather than merely normative messages of tolerance.[40]

Comparison of the documents indicates that legitimacy in Anwar Hafid's leadership communication is constructed through public-service narratives, moral representations, and publications highlighting program achievements. Islamic identity provides one source of this language, but it cannot explain legitimacy in its entirety. Ethically, the strengthening of public trust must be accompanied by evidence of policy implementation and opportunities for citizens to question the government's reasons.

Habermas's Discourse Ethics in Anwar Hafid's Leadership Communication

Jürgen Habermas's thought provides a philosophical basis for evaluating the quality of political communication that uses religious identity to help construct leadership legitimacy. In The Theory of Communicative Action, Habermas distinguishes communicative action, oriented toward mutual understanding, from strategic action, oriented toward successfully influencing others.[41] This distinction does not imply that all political communication intended to gain support is unethical. Ethical problems arise primarily when communication leaves no room for participants to question reasons, test statements, or form judgments through free deliberation. This study uses discourse ethics to assess the quality of arguments in documents concerning Anwar Hafid's leadership communication, not to judge the leader's personality or hidden motives.

The first dimension is the truth claim. In government communication, statements about education, health, infrastructure, and

[40] Theguh Saumantri et al., "Post-Tolerance Era: Repositioning Religious Harmony Governance amid Digital Identity Polarization in Indonesia," *Harmoni* 25, no. 1 (2026): 98–127, https://doi.org/10.32488/harmoni.v25i1.1030.

[41] Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, vol. 1, *Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984).

public welfare policies contain factual claims that must be open to verification. Documentation of the Ramadan Safari event in Donggala shows that the BERANI Cerdas and BERANI Sehat programs were presented alongside calls to strengthen spiritual life. This indicates that arguments about public service were connected with religious values. However, the presence of religious values in policy communication cannot substitute for checking factual information about programs. In Habermas's framework, policy claims still require verifiable reasons and information, such as beneficiary eligibility rules, service delivery mechanisms, and actual program implementation. The truth of communication is therefore not determined by symbolic authority or emotional receptiveness to a message, but by the possibility of testing its statements against available evidence.

The publication on the Anwar–Reny administration's first 100 days presents selected claims of achievement and expressions of appreciation to the public. Positive assessments in the document, however, cannot be used to measure overall program outcomes or public support. Through Habermas's truth claim, these representations must be distinguished from independent verification of policy implementation and impact.

The second dimension is normative rightness. In discourse ethics, a norm does not acquire sufficient legitimacy merely because it is supported by those in power; the interests of those affected must also be considered. In Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action, Habermas treats the testing of norms through argumentation as central to the formation of moral legitimacy.[42] This principle is relevant when governments invoke Islamic values to communicate policies addressed to a multicultural society. The use of religious language familiar to the majority does not automatically conflict with civic equality, but it must

[42] Jürgen Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, trans. Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990).

be evaluated according to whether the accompanying arguments continue to respect the rights of people with different beliefs.

The Forum's documentation of BERANI Berkah employs a language of harmony that acknowledges religious life across communities. Normatively, this is relevant to the principle of civic equality in discourse ethics. However, inclusive statements in the documents do not demonstrate equal access to services in practice. The documents provide a basis for identifying normative claims, not for concluding that the principle of justice has been comprehensively fulfilled.

The third dimension is the sincerity claim. In political communication, sincerity concerns the relationship between a communicator's statements and the intentions they seek to express. Sincerity, however, is difficult to examine through documents alone because it relates to an individual's subjective state. This study therefore interprets neither Anwar Hafid's religious activities as direct evidence of personal piety nor as deliberately orchestrated image-building. The analysis is limited to examining consistency in communicative representations over time. Documentation of the 2025 Ramadan Safari events and 2026 BERANI Berkah activities, for instance, indicates the continuing use of spiritual narratives in government communication. Such continuity demonstrates only the thematic consistency of the documents, not the personal motives underlying it.

Document analysis cannot establish a leader's personal sincerity or insincerity. The continuation of spiritual themes can be observed as communicative consistency, but this is not equivalent to proof of motive. Evaluation is therefore restricted to coherence among statements, documented arguments, and transparency about communicative interests.

The fourth dimension is comprehensibility. Political communication using religious symbols should enable people to understand the relationship between the moral values expressed and the policies explained. Terms such as BERANI Berkah, Sulteng Mengaji,

and Sulteng Berjamaah have communicative resonance because they relate to the religious experiences of Muslim communities. Comprehensibility, however, does not simply mean recognizing the terms used. It also requires clear explanations of policy rationales, program targets, implementation mechanisms, and consequences for the public. Religious language may thus enhance the reception of an idea, but it may also obscure policy questions if it is not accompanied by adequate information.

Zaimina's 2025 study of religious moderation communication through Indonesian government social media shows that overly normative, one-way institutional communication has limitations in fostering dialogic engagement. The study stresses the importance of communication responsive to people's experiences and offering room for public participation.[43] This perspective reinforces the need to assess whether religious language in government communication is accompanied by explanations that citizens can understand and question. In the present study, BERANI Berkah documents reveal a strong symbolic representation of spiritual values, whereas documents concerning BERANI Cerdas and BERANI Sehat offer a context for understanding the relationship between moral language and specific programs. Both must be read together so that religious symbolism is not separated from policy substance.

Beyond the four validity claims, discourse ethics requires equal participation and freedom from domination. Governments hold greater authority and have greater access to communication channels than citizens. Accordingly, the presence of independent media and opportunities to test policy rationales are important to ensure that government communication does not remain a one-way transmission of messages.

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[43] Ach Barocky Zaimina, "Addressing Digital Religious Polarization: Policy Analysis of Religious Moderation Narratives on Indonesian Government Social Media," *Al'Adalah* 28, no. 1 (2025): 21–44, https://doi.org/10.35719/aladalah.v28i1.572.

Lengaru.id's interview with Anwar Hafid provides a documented example of an encounter between criticism and communicative accountability. In the interview, the government had an opportunity to explain policies, while the media asked questions about program implementation and communication strategies. The interview demonstrates that the documents contain a form of exchange of reasons between a public official and the media. Nevertheless, a single interview cannot establish that government communication overall has been deliberative or free from domination. Such an assessment requires broader evidence about participatory mechanisms, responses to criticism, and protections for freedom of expression.

Simon Susen argues that transformations of the public sphere in modern democracies must be critically understood in relation to technology, power, and citizens' capacity to make rational judgments.[44] Staab and Thiel, meanwhile, demonstrate that social media development is intertwined with platform interests and structures governing the distribution of public attention.[45] Both perspectives indicate that opportunities for digital communication do not automatically produce equal relations. The quality of government communication therefore cannot be measured solely by the reach of information or the number of favorable reactions displayed, but also by citizens' ability to access relevant reasons and question policies without pressure.

In his discussion of religion in the public sphere, Habermas acknowledges that religious values may contribute morally to democratic life. Yet when matters concern all citizens, the reasons invoked must be publicly justifiable within a plural society.[46] This

[44] Simon Susen, "A New Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere? With, against, and beyond Habermas," *Society* 60, no. 6 (2023): 842–867, https://doi.org/10.1007/s12115-023-00908-y.

[45] Philipp Staab and Thorsten Thiel, "Social Media and the Digital Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere," *Theory, Culture & Society* 39, no. 4 (2022): 129–143, https://doi.org/10.1177/02632764221103527.

[46] Jürgen Habermas, "Religion in the Public Sphere," *European Journal of Philosophy* 14, no. 1 (2006): 1–25, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-0378.2006.00241.x.

perspective provides a basis for understanding that the use of Islamic identity in leadership communication need not be separated from democratic principles. Amanah may be translated into a demand for government accountability, justice into the protection of citizens' rights, and maslahah into an orientation toward public welfare. Such translation, however, requires open and testable arguments rather than merely the use of religious terms that command symbolic acceptance.

The document analysis shows that Anwar Hafid's communication articulates religious values as a source of moral legitimacy and a language of policy. Several documents express commitments to harmony and openness to criticism. Nevertheless, this evidence is insufficient to establish that all principles of discourse ethics have been fulfilled in practice. Habermas's framework is employed here to distinguish the government's normative claims from the argumentative conditions that must be met for communicative legitimacy to be justified. The study therefore avoids concluding that government communication is either wholly communicative or wholly strategic.

Reconstructing Islamic Political Communication Ethics and Discursive Literacy

The relationship between Islamic identity and political ethics requires a framework linking religious values with public rationality. Anwar Hafid's communication documents show that the principal issue is not the presence of Islamic symbols themselves, but whether they are accompanied by policy reasons open to examination, recognition of differences, and opportunities for the public to make judgments freely.

Amanah (trustworthiness), justice, musyawarah (consultation), and maslahah (the public good) are important values in Islamic leadership ethics. These values can enter into dialogue with the requirements of argumentation, equal participation, and the justification of norms in Habermas's discourse ethics. However, the two frameworks cannot simply be equated because they have different normative foundations. Their convergence in this study is evaluative: moral values

provide direction, while the testing of arguments ensures that public decisions remain accountable.

The study by Lahambu, Ardiansyah, and Rafli provides an important foundation for this interpretation. They develop the concept of maslahah-oriented deliberation, integrating procedural legitimacy through rational communication with a substantive moral orientation toward the public good.[47] This idea emphasizes that consensus formed through communication must not merely satisfy procedures for exchanging arguments but must also consider justice, the protection of rights, and the common good. This perspective matters because communication that appears open may still generate decisions that harm particular groups if social inequalities and substantive interests are not adequately considered.

Nevertheless, the present study has a different orientation from the reconstruction of maslahah-oriented deliberation. Whereas that concept primarily offers a normative synthesis of discourse ethics and the public good, this study uses an analysis of leadership communication documents to identify how religious values are represented and how the quality of their arguments can be assessed. On this basis, the contribution developed here is an emphasis on the need for discursive literacy in religious-political communication: the critical ability to examine claims, evaluate policy reasons, distinguish symbolic from argumentative legitimacy, and respect differences of opinion in the public sphere.

Discursive literacy is not presented here as an entirely new term in the philosophy of communication. The contribution lies in applying and developing the concept to interpret the relationship between Islamic identity, regional leadership communication, and democratic responsibility. Unlike digital literacy, which often emphasizes technological skills and information verification, discursive literacy

[47] Fahiza Awalia Lahambu, Rio Ardiansyah, and Rafli, "Dari Konsensus Rasional Menuju Kemaslahatan: Rekonstruksi Etika Diskursus Jürgen Habermas dalam Perspektif Filsafat Islam," *Mahiyah: Journal of Islamic Thought and Philosophy* 2, no. 1 (2025): 74–98, https://doi.org/10.24239/jrptdv77

attends to the quality of argumentative relationships among participants in communication. From this perspective, the ability to determine whether information is true or false must be complemented by the ability to explain the grounds of that judgment, listen to objections, and revise one's views in light of stronger arguments.

Based on the document analysis, three dimensions can be developed as an initial framework for discursive literacy in Islamic political communication.

The first dimension is informational responsibility. It requires government communication to provide information open to public scrutiny, particularly when making claims about policy success. In the context of BERANI Cerdas, BERANI Sehat, and BERANI Berkah, religious values may reinforce the moral orientation of policy, but they cannot replace the need for information about program objectives, implementation, beneficiaries, and outcomes. Informational responsibility thus connects the value of amanah in Islamic ethics with the truth claim in Habermas's discourse ethics.

The second dimension is discursive equality. It requires leadership communication to recognize social diversity and opportunities to voice criticism. The Forum's documentation of BERANI Berkah provides a representation of interfaith harmony, while Lengaru.id's reporting highlights the importance of spaces in which government policy can be questioned. Together, these documents provide a context for developing discursive equality: the principle that communicative legitimacy cannot be constructed through narratives of unity alone, but must also recognize differences in people's experiences, interests, and judgments.

The third dimension is an orientation toward the public good. This dimension treats justice, the protection of rights, and public welfare as substantive criteria for government communication. Religious values must not remain merely moral exhortations but should be linked to the state's responsibilities toward all citizens. In Central Sulawesi, an orientation toward maslahah requires that programs communicated in

Islamic language remain justifiable to people from different religious and cultural backgrounds. Thus, the public good is not understood as a unilateral claim that a policy is beneficial, but as a social objective that must be examined through argumentation and the interests of affected communities.

The three dimensions of discursive literacy complement one another. Accurate information without an opportunity to object produces one-way communication; an arena for criticism without adequate data makes rational evaluation difficult; and participation without an orientation toward the public good can overlook policy consequences for affected groups. Ethical religious-political communication therefore requires informational openness, equality in argumentation, and attention to social justice.

This argument is supported by developments in research on digital religious communication in Indonesia. Zaimina demonstrates that government communication about religious moderation requires approaches that are more dialogic and responsive to the public.[48] Saumantri and colleagues, in their 2026 study, emphasize that governing religious harmony amid digital identity polarization requires collaboration, trust-building, and the involvement of various social actors.[49] Both studies reinforce the argument that ethical religious-political communication cannot be built through symbolic representations of tolerance and unity alone; it requires communicative practices that enable people to participate in forming meanings and evaluating public issues.

Within Habermas's thought, this need relates to a transformation of the digital public sphere increasingly shaped by communication strategies, attention distribution, and unequal capacities among participants. Patberg reminds us that renewing the digital public sphere requires attention to empowering citizens as democratic actors.[50]

[48] Zaimina, "Addressing Digital Religious Polarization."
[49] Saumantri et al., "Post-Tolerance Era."
[50] Patberg, "What Is Social Media's Place in Democracy?"

Discursive literacy should therefore not be understood as an obligation for citizens to accept government explanations more effectively; it also places demands on governments to provide testable information and respond to objections through argumentation. Such a relationship enables leadership communication to move beyond the delivery of messages toward a more open process of developing public understanding.

On the basis of this synthesis, the study proposes a framework for Islamic political communication ethics that brings together informational responsibility, discursive equality, and an orientation toward the public good. This framework is a conceptual contribution developed through a critical reading of documents concerning Anwar Hafid's leadership communication and a dialogue between Islamic political philosophy and Habermas's discourse ethics. It is not intended to claim that all principles of discursive literacy have been implemented in government communication. Rather, the framework offers tools for assessing the quality of arguments and identifying the boundary between the use of Islamic identity as a source of public ethics and symbolic legitimation unsupported by policy accountability.

Islamic identity in leadership communication therefore need not be placed in opposition to deliberative democracy. Religious values can serve as a source of trustworthiness and public service when translated into testable policy reasons, acceptance of criticism, and equal protection for all citizens. For multicultural Central Sulawesi, discursive literacy offers an initial framework for assessing whether religious-political communication moves from symbolic legitimacy toward transparent and inclusive accountability.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Islamic identity in the leadership communication of Anwar Hafid, Governor of Central Sulawesi, is represented in three main ways: as spiritual expression, as a source of moral legitimacy for development, and as a language of social solidarity in a multicultural society. Analysis of government documents, news

reports, and institutional records shows that the BERANI Berkah, Sulteng Mengaji, and Sulteng Berjamaah programs connect religious values with public policy communication. The use of Islamic identity cannot automatically be characterized as exclusive identity politics, since several documents also express an orientation toward harmony and recognition of social diversity. Nevertheless, these religious representations do not in themselves prove policy success or the achievement of inclusive government communication. The moral legitimacy constructed through religious values must therefore be distinguished from policy legitimacy, which requires informational transparency and public accountability.

From the perspective of Jürgen Habermas's discourse ethics, the quality of religious-political communication is determined neither by the frequency of Islamic symbols nor by representations of support for a leader, but by the extent to which arguments satisfy the validity claims of truth, normative rightness, sincerity, and comprehensibility, while respecting equal participation and freedom from domination. The document analysis identifies articulations of spiritual values connected with public service, harmony, and declarations of openness to criticism. The available documents, however, are insufficient to establish that all principles of deliberative communication have been implemented in governmental practice. This finding underscores that religious identity can provide a foundation for leadership ethics as long as it does not replace rational argumentation, policy scrutiny, or respect for differing viewpoints.

The philosophical contribution of this study lies in developing a framework for Islamic political communication ethics through three interrelated dimensions: informational responsibility, discursive equality, and an orientation toward the public good. Unlike maslahah-oriented deliberation, which emphasizes a synthesis of rational communication procedures and the pursuit of the public good, this study treats discursive literacy as the critical capacity to examine claims, assess policy arguments, accept criticism, and distinguish symbolic legitimacy from political accountability. The framework shows that amanah, justice,

musyawarah, and maslahah in Islamic thought can enter into critical dialogue with Habermas's communicative rationality without erasing the differences between their philosophical foundations. Nevertheless, because this research relies on document analysis, its conclusions are confined to documented representations and arguments, not the full range of public experiences or the effectiveness of policy implementation. Further research using interviews or observation of public communication is needed to test the application of the discursive literacy framework in practice. The study thus contributes to the development of Islamic political philosophy by emphasizing the importance of leadership communication grounded in religious values, open to criticism, rationally accountable, and respectful of the equality of all citizens.

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