

## Considering the Symbiotic Relationship Between Religion, Digital Media, and Social Movement Leadership – A Systematic Review Using PRISMA

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### ABSTRACT

The study of leadership has been long explicitly debated, specifically in social movements. While the discussion of social movement leadership has increasingly made its presence in digital media studies, it falls short of understanding religious socio-political action and in the nexus of religion. Moreover, the role of religion has continually been confined in the contexts of conflict, terrorism, and extremism. Based on the said argument, this article develops a systematic review of religion, digital media, and social movement leadership. The present paper follows the PRISMA systematic review protocol as a guideline for data collection and reporting. Data of articles were obtained from the Scopus database between 2010 and 2021. Findings indicate that religion is used both as an explanatory component to either rationalise conflict or to empower social movements. Religion plays a significant role in social movements that are mediated through digital media. Relevant studies have increasingly examined religion concerning online practices and in the context of social movements. The paper highlights that religiously embedded social movements can be examined using social movement and digital media perspectives. Nonetheless, it must extend the religious analytical lens to thoroughly comprehend the religious components, particularly when it involves religious social movement actors.

**Keywords:** *Religion, digital media, social movement leadership, socio-political, PRISMA.*

### INTRODUCTION

The discussion on religion has been constantly associated with ethno-religious study and conflict theory. Over decades, religion has been used as an explanatory component to rationalise the involvement of religious elements in conflicts including those that overlap with identity, social, cultural, political, and economic issues (Fox, 2002, Karatzogianni, 2006, 2015; Kadayifci-Orellana, 2009; Abu Nemir, 2014). Moreover, a considerable number of studies that examine religion are exclusively concerned with religion as the catalyst for violence and conflict which outnumbered the scholarship that examines the positive and functional roles of religion specifically in the context of social movements.

Ever since the major incidents of terrorist attacks such as September 11, 2001, in New York and July 7, 2005, in London, related scholars have focused extensively on the role of religion (specifically Islam as religion and Muslims as a religious group) that are restricted to theologically themed terrorism, radical Islam and Muslims' involvement in extremism and radicalism (Briggs & Birdwell, 2009; Emerson, 2009). These are followed by various issues such as the Rushdie Affair in 1989 (Begum & Eade, 2005; Geaves, 2005; Peace, 2013; Falkenhayner, 2014), Salafi-jihadists and Islamist extremism in the 1990s (Akhtar, 2005; Briggs & Birdwell, 2009; Emerson, 2009; Steed, 2016), Islamist terrorist attacks and the rise of Islamophobia (Bagguley & Hussain, 2005; Poole, 2011; Hamid, 2017) and the rise of Daesh and Muslim radicalisation (Ingram, 2016; Steed, 2016; Griffin, 2016).

All the said issues have consequently contributed to the growing number of works of literature that highlight Islamist extremists and militants' movements including their leadership that sparked ethno-religious conflicts (Glazzard et al., 2017; Wibisono, Louis &

Jetten, 2019; Kadivar, 2022). This includes the studies on the said groups' involvement, tactics, and strategy for recruitment and mobilisation (Glazzard et al., 2017; Svensson & Nilsson, 2022; Wahab et al., 2022).

A preliminary study also concluded that information communication technologies (ICTs) were mostly used by those groups to present their organisations, communicate and propagate their ideologies (Bunt, 1999). Conventional websites were employed for re-establishing *Khilafah* (Islamic caliphate), to produce provocative information against the West, and to promote youngsters to join a military-style of activities. In the modern context, extremists such as Daesh utilise messenger applications and online forums to recruit people to join their groups (Griffin, 2016; Ingram, 2016) and manipulate social media platforms such as Twitter to publicise their activities and to attract potential members to join extremist camps (Griffin, 2016; Fishman, 2016).

While leadership is one of the most important aspects covered in social movement studies, very little attention has been given to the role of religion as a major factor in social movements. As shown in the earlier discussion, the study of religious groups and religion is limited to conflict and ethno-religious tension. The formation of leadership among the religious groups as well as how religion may influence the use of digital media to peacefully achieve socio-political goals should be examined further. This is to broaden the scope of study from being confined to a particular area. With this in mind, a broad perspective about social movement leadership, digital media, and religion are considered by taking into account the following perspectives:

1. Social movements leadership refers to the role of organisations and charismatic leaders and the importance of interactions between leaders and/or organisations (McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Schiffbeck, 2022).
2. People involved in social movements show and share solidarity or collective identity (Melucci, 1985; Petrini & Wettergren, 2022).
3. The role of leadership in the online context of social movements is fading in which individuals can come together without leaders (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012).
4. The role of leadership in the online context of social movement is increasing with a distributed type of leadership enabling individuals or groups to rotate movement leadership (Treré, 2015; Poon & Kohlberger, 2022).
5. The role of leadership in social movement aims at bridging the members to achieve shared aims while acting according to God's law (Gilliat-Ray & Timol, 2020).
6. The intertwining of religion, online practices, and social action may rely on the aspects of digital religion comprising of networked communities, storied identities, shifting authorities, convergent practices, or multi-site reality (Campbell & Evolvi, 2019).

Therefore, the perspectives about social movement leadership, digital media, and religion underlie the aim of this study to develop a systematic review and to understand the aforementioned relationship. To attain the goal, the article questions; (i) whether religion is used as an explanatory component to rationalise conflict to empower social movements, (ii) in what ways religion is brought into the digital media environment in the context of social movements, and; (iii) what is the connection of religion and social movement leadership in regards to online practices.

## METHODOLOGY

This paper followed the Transparent Reporting of Systematic Reviews (PRISMA) guidelines to produce the review. Reviewing processes often present a lack of awareness of a shared guideline to make the said process replicable (Abelha et al., 2020). The implementation of PRISMA serves as evidence for reporting the systematic reviews conducted in this paper to enhance the quality of the paper and to make it replicable.

The eligibility criteria for this study are specified based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The selection of the reviewed articles was conducted in three (3) phases. The first phase includes the screening process of the title and abstract. The second phase involves the analysis of the articles and the results of the analysis were organised in a table using Excel. The analysis does not include studies without full text and those that cannot be downloaded from the main source. The third phase involves extensive reading in which the selected articles were retrieved to conduct a comprehensive reading and examination to help decide the inclusion in the study. The study excluded articles that do not match the research criteria on religion, digital media, and social movement leadership.

The data for the systematic review was systematically searched using Scopus electronic database between the years 2010 and 2021. The sources were searched using advanced search and query string consisting of the terms (religion) AND (digital AND media) AND (social AND movement AND leadership). The search strategy was limited to document types containing articles and reviews, the subject area was limited to social sciences, and the language was limited to English. The terms (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "ar")) OR (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "re")) AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, "SOCI")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, "English")) was used as the search strategy.

The selection process involved reviewing titles and abstracts of the articles to help determine which articles are eligible to be included in the reviewing process. Full texts of the potentially relevant articles were retrieved to be included in the reviewing process. This followed with extensive reading in which the selected articles were retrieved to conduct a comprehensive reading and examination to be included in the analysis.

Data extracted from each article were recorded in an evidence table. All articles were collected from primary studies. The articles were coded with a number and content of the articles were thematically analysed. The search based on the inclusion criteria comprises a total of 36 articles. Implementing the exclusion criteria, the study narrowed the number to a total of 15 relevant articles to proceed with a systematic review. The articles which were not found relevant to the criteria were therefore excluded (n=21). The codification, for example, S1, is used to refer to the source (Scopus) and number 1 to indicate numbering (article number 1). This identification is important as it will be used in presenting results of the analysis.

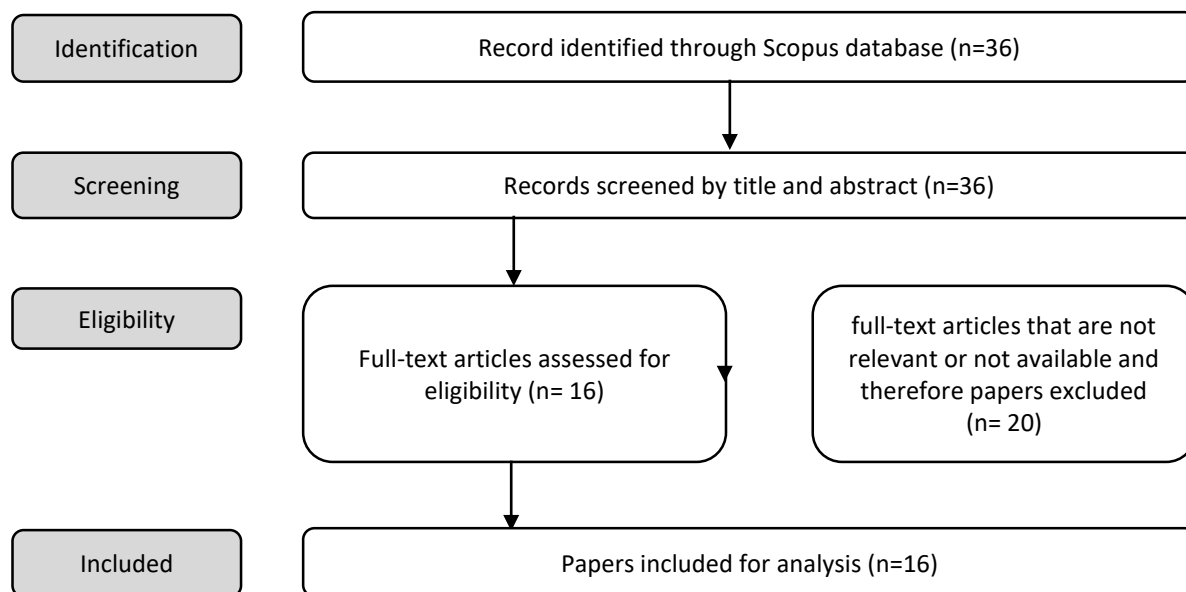


Figure 1: Reporting items for the systematic review

Figure 1 shows a total of 36 papers (n=36) were identified from the Scopus database and followed with a screening process to review the titles and abstract of the 36 (n=36) papers to include in the systematic review. Only 16 papers were eligible to further with analysis, whereas, the remaining papers were excluded because they were not relevant (13) and were not available to retrieve (7).

Based on the reviewing process, the year with more studies included in the search process is 2020, as depicted in Table 1. The results show that although there was only one paper published in 2010, 2011, and 2012 in the relevant area, nonetheless, there is a significant increase in the number of published studies in the last four years.

Table 1: Frequency of publication per year

| Year of Publication | Frequency of Publication (N) |
|---------------------|------------------------------|
| 2021                | 7                            |
| 2020                | 9                            |
| 2019                | 3                            |
| 2018                | 6                            |
| 2017                | 2                            |
| 2016                | 3                            |
| 2015                | 3                            |
| 2012                | 1                            |
| 2011                | 1                            |
| 2010                | 1                            |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>36</b>                    |

The main field of knowledge focused upon by the published studies is those in social sciences with 36 articles. Other fields of knowledge are such as arts and humanities, psychology, business, management and accounting, computer science, economics, econometrics and finance, engineering, environmental science, and medicine.

Table 2: Number of papers by field of knowledge

| Field of knowledge                   | N         |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|
| Social sciences                      | N=36      |
| Arts and Humanities                  | N=16      |
| Psychology                           | N=6       |
| Business, Management, and Accounting | N=2       |
| Computer Science                     | N=2       |
| Economics, Econometrics, and Finance | N=2       |
| Engineering                          | N=1       |
| Environmental Science                | N=1       |
| Medicine                             | N=1       |
| <b>Total</b>                         | <b>67</b> |

This study is guided by PRISMA methodology and the criteria of inclusion were made very specific that is limited to religion, digital media, and social movement leadership. The study is also limited to one reviewer and database from Scopus considering the quality and contribution in the field of social sciences as this helps ensure the rigor and quality of the studies included in the reviewing process. So arguably, this study prioritised the quality assurance of the selected articles over the breadth of the analysis. This led to a selection of only 36 articles representing 15 from the United States, 4 Israel, 3 Australia, 3 Russia, and 2 Brazil. In addition to that, the study acknowledges the limitation of not including other databases and a broader selection of countries.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### *i) Religion as an Explanatory Component to Rationalize Conflict or to Empower Social Movements*

[(S11), (S13), (S15), (S17), (S22), (S26), (S34), (S35) (S36)]

In this section, the study presents the results found using the systematic review and is organised according to the research question that guided the search analysis: *Whether religion is used as an explanatory component to rationalise conflict or to empower social movements?*

Among the important findings found in the systematic review is that religion is used both as an explanatory component to rationalise conflict or to empower social movements. In the aspect of rationalising religion to initiate conflict, article S13 argues that Islamic State intermixes violence and religion within its propaganda to legitimise the said group, to intimidate its opponents and to recruit people, and ultimately to inspire international terrorist attacks.

Article S22 examined ISIS and al-Qaeda's use of Islam with different purposes and levels of authoritarianism and religiousness despite that both groups are established upon the selective literal interpretation of the religious source. For example, the article stated that the followers of ISIS have a higher degree of religiousness and authoritarianism compared to al-Qaeda's to justify the religious sources to conduct violence.

In article S17, the author demonstrated how the National Rifle Association (NRA) increased its use of religious language to voice its political debate about gun rights through a religious-nationalist lens. The NRA has capitalised on the religious nationalism that arose in the late 1970s alongside the Moral Majority and has increasingly used religious language to shape the discourse surrounding the Second Amendment and to make meaning on the

meaning of guns for American identity. The article shows the increase of civic religion in the use of religious rhetoric.

On the other hand, article S26 identified that religion may be used by individuals or groups of people to either stabilise or destabilise the political process and situation. In the context of the Russian environment, the authors stated that the current religious situation such as the rise of new religious movements, radical Islam, and religious terrorism has added new factors to the religious arena in Russia. In particular, religious ideology and instrumentation may lead to ideological and psychological distortions of existing values and the rule of law of the said country.

In regards to the use of religion to empower social action or social movements, article S11 used the case of Pope Francis' official Instagram account to highlight the rise of alternative religious leadership to compete in religious primacy. The article found out that online religious leadership serves as a way to foster charismatic religious leadership although it may challenge the conventional leadership religious organisation.

Through the analysis of news content, article S12 highlighted the importance of the religious identity of Muslims (such as Muslim women and hijab) to empower Muslim voice and to influence the narrative in news content despite the still existing of structural discrimination and oppression towards Muslims in New Zealand. Article S34 discussed how powerful technologies can either be used in oppressive conditions and ideological war (including religion and politics), but also can be appropriated to initiate protest through the peaceful and democratic mechanism. Using the case of Egyptian protests in 2011, the authors highlighted that information and communication technologies can be used to transform conflict into peaceful protests.

Article S35 explored the aspects of religion and the Internet against the backdrop of the Israeli context discussing how Orthodox Jewish groups have appropriated and responded to the Internet. Although the Internet is available for the use of the said religious group, such activity is still viewed with suspicion due to fear of expression. Therefore, religious leaders of the Orthodox groups will aim to minimise the threat that may impact religious social norms including the religious authority and structure.

In general, findings of the review pointed out that different religious groups rationalise religion in different ways that are to either initiate a conflict or to empower for social change. Reflecting on the aspect of religion, the systematic review shows that religious groups are no exception. As shown in the analysis, it is also visible that the interpretation of religion influences the patterns of group life and/or practice. Religion is used as an explanatory component to rationalise the involvement of religious elements in conflict and as the catalyst to conduct violence. The systematic review also shows that there is an increasing role of religion as a factor to contribute to social movements and how religion influences the use of digital media to peacefully achieve socio-political goals.

## ii) Religion, Digital Media, and Social Movement Leadership

[(S3), (S4), (S6), (S11), (S12), (S21), (S26), (S29), (S34), (S35) (S36)]

This section presents the results found using the systematic review based on the research question: *In what ways religion is brought into the digital media environment in the context of social movements?* The analysis found out that religion is conveyed through digital media for various aspects. In addition for interaction cultivation, specifically, religious identity is brought online to empower and/or to undermine social movements' engagement and

participation. Religion is also conveyed via digital platforms to construct solidarity, inclusivity and exclusivity, and shared moral values. Religion is also carried online to provide religious awareness and to form online communities.

In particular, article S3 showed that there are common characteristics of Internet usage among the officials of Chinese religious organisations. The first one indicated that the Internet serves as an online expression platform that is used to enhance their online visibility. In addition, the Internet was also used to share religious information, to allow interaction among users, and to help people familiarise themselves with religious activities. In this sense, the Internet is used for both, online-to-many and many-to-many.

Article S4 analysed the role of the Black Church and Black religion in empowering or undermining socio-political activism among African-American. The identities of Black culture and Black churches have been identified as a crucial force to motivate and encourage participation in the Black Lives Matter (BLM). Through the review of the literature and in the context of 'opiate' and 'inspiration', the author highlighted there are possible dominating trends and shifts in the debate in the field of study. In the context of 'opiate', the view highlighted that religion is the opium of people in which the conservative perspective tends to prevent social change and encourage no resistance, whereas, in the context of 'inspiration' the perspective highlights the radical force in the society to indicate voices for changes.

Article S6 analysed a female figure leader known as Aminata Kane Koné, a highly educated Ivorian Muslim woman cum an activist of the Association des Élèves et Étudiants Musulmans de Côte d'Ivoire in the 2000s. The article examined how Aminata overcame social constraints and established herself as a highly influential and mediated Muslim public intellectual through media and social initiatives not just among the Muslim community, but within broader society. The element of identity, specifically on the aspect of gender and religion are two crucial forces used by Aminata to empower participation and engagement among the Ivorian society in West Africa to get involved in religious and social entrepreneurship activities.

Article 11 investigated how religious leaders and/or organisations construct, re-affirm and implement online religious identity and authority. Based on the analysis of Pope Francis' official Instagram account, the article highlighted that the religious leader used Instagram to construct a public image to foster charismatic authority, to build distance leadership, and to build an effective relationship among Instagram followers. Much of the charismatic image and religious identity of Pope Francis was shown through visual images on Instagram in which he is fulfilling his papal duties such as heading to Vatican ceremonies, leading apostolic visits, and conducting interfaith meetings.

Article S12 discussed news about Muslims against the backdrop of the Christchurch tragedy. Based on the contents of news stories that are relevant to the tragedy, the author analysed the Muslims' identity. The representation of Muslim voice and the identity of Muslim women and hijab are among the factors that empower Muslims to uphold social justice and to collectively act to address the concerns on the issue of oppression and discrimination among Muslim minority groups in New Zealand.

Article S21 examined the underpinning psychological processes of online activism enacted by racist groups. The authors argued that racist groups can be seen as activist groups who aim at promoting collective goals in similar ways to other activist groups, although the goals they are fostering are about inequality and exclusion. In the article, the authors highlight that consciousness of the racist groups is identified based on group identification, group

efficacy, and anger. The racist groups also demonstrate a strong focus on collective identity with their members to indicate what they stand for. They also show moral values that are underpinned with religion such as the word 'purity' and 'respect for authority' when describing their beliefs online.

Article S26 examined how the rise of new religious movements, radical Islamist movements, and ethno-religious terrorists have impacted the socio-political dynamics in Russia affecting the informational and communicative Russian environment. The article suggested that the mass consciousness and political behavior of the Russian people should change accordingly, adapting to the new environment, values, and behaviour. This is particular because religious factors can become a drying agent that may either stabilise or destabilise a political situation. Therefore, the article indicates that the mechanism and practices used to politicise religion should be identified in line with social stability and national security.

Article S29 examined how webmasters from Chabad, a Jewish ultra-Orthodox movement, appropriated websites to distribute religious knowledge. The analysis comprised over 30 Chabad webmasters and an ethnographic study outline. The Chabad used websites to distribute religious knowledge between core members and potential followers. The analysis also highlighted that websites have been used as a strategy to foster solidarity in the Chabad community. In addition, websites were used to create spaces of interest for devoted members of the Chabad, to emphasise cardinal concerns of the community, to provide access to the users as repositories of religious knowledge, and as catalyst for religious awareness.

Article S34 analysed the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the Egyptian Revolution of 2011 as a catalyst for conflict transformation against the oppressive condition and war for ideology (religion and politics) in Egypt. ICTs were used by the protesters to collaboratively raise consciousness about the said issues by creating a shared identity and dissemination of information, political mobilisation, dialogue and meaning-making, and reconciliation and renewal for creating a democratic government through transparent communication. Article S35 highlighted how Orthodox Jewish groups have appropriated the Internet as a platform to provide new ways to explore religious beliefs and in which religious community can experience digital religion through websites, chat rooms, and email discussion groups, to gather religious information online, to conduct online worship and ritual, to recruit people and conduct missionary activities, and to form an online religious community.

Article S36 explored how information and communication technologies were used as a catalyst for conflict transformation against the backdrop of Chinese cyber Islamic environments in response to the Danish Cartoon Affair. The websites serve as the negotiating space between sovereign boundary states to fight against separatist movements. The Sino-Muslims have appropriated the online platforms as an imagined realm to connect and to develop solidarity with the global ummah. The article also suggests that the use of websites by the Sino-Muslims demonstrates the exercise of soft power while projecting the status of Islamic authority.

Findings from the systematic review highlight that the Internet has not only been used for religious education or promoting religious awareness and/or information, but it also encourages the process of religious expression, negotiation of identity, and identity claims. Such a situation occurs when religious groups rise to make a distinction on their identity (whether in the context of religious beliefs, practices, traditions, and/or ideologies) or to



make a claim, for an instant, 'us' versus 'them'. Such a process may consequently influence the organisation and coordination as well as leadership in social movements. The Internet has also been used to achieve collective goals through the development of solidarity within the internal religious members and the external public.

The papers reviewed have also shown that study on religion, digital media, and social movement leadership need to consider the examination of how religious groups use online platforms. In particular, relevant study of religion and digital media has considered how religious groups use online platforms for religiously based expression and beliefs and religious expression, indicating the changes of trend in regards to traditional religiosity through online adaptation.

*iii) Religion, Social Movement Leadership and Its Connection to Online Practices*  
[(S3, S11, S15, S17, S27, S35)]

This section presents the results found using the systematic review based on the research question: *What is the connection between religion and social movement leadership in regards to online practices?* The findings from the systematic review identified that there is a connection between religion and social movement leadership in relation to online practices. Digital media are used to enhance the existence of social movement groups in online platforms, re-enact the authority from the offline environment, and to steer online discourse and meaning-making.

Specifically, article S3 aided the understanding on the aspect of digital religion practices in contemporary Mainland China, and how religious groups including the National Committee of the Three-self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Churches in China use and respond to the Internet. It also investigated the online presence of the Buddhist Association of China and the Internet provides religious engagement to help clarify the broader trends of religious internet usage in the Chinese context. For example, the said religious groups use the Internet for online presence, to provide more interaction, and ultimately to denote that offline and online religious activities are closely connected.

Article S11 showed that religious authority can be mediated online, and in fact, connected through the nexus of offline and online environments. The article specifically discusses how religious authority can be constructed, reaffirmed, and implemented in an online environment to enact the offline environment. The offline image of Pope Francis is mediated through online means to project his charismatic leadership as a religious leader on Instagram. The findings of the study also demonstrated that the use of Instagram allows the construction of 'image-mediated-charisma' in the context of the online religious realm.

Article S15 discussed the aspects of meaning-making concerning religion and digital media considering that religious identity and offline religious practices have expanded in virtual spaces. The discussion adds an argument regarding the relationship between media technologies, aesthetics, affect, identity, and religious expression.

Article S17 examined how the National Rifle Association (NRA) uses religious-nationalist discourse to advance the Second Amendment beyond the reach of the state by investigating the cultural meaning and interpretation of religious language in the American Rifleman Publication, for example, the word 'God'. The said publication has had a prominent existence since 1923 even in today's digital environment. The NRA serves as a social movement organisation and uses various motivational levels including religion to mobilise its members and to protect gun rights to engage in violence. Article S27 discusses the case of

Muslim martyrdom, the deaths of a Tunisian fruit seller Mohammed Bouazizi and a young Egyptian man Khaled Saeed, as multi-layered communicative practices in which give rise to the construction of digital solidarities where users circulate and remediate martyr narratives.

Article S35 highlighted five areas to understand the current study of religion online by including the aspects of the history of religious use of the Internet (the first networked forum for discussions on the religious), online groups, increasing numbers of religious groups, and mailing lists that began to emerge online. It then discussed the forms of religion online as new ways to explore religious beliefs and experiences such as through websites, chat rooms, and email discussion groups either to gather religious information, as a platform for online worship and ritual, to recruit people for missionary activities or to develop online religious communities.

The systematic review on religion, social movement leadership, and its connection to online practices has pointed out the important connection of offline religious environments to online religious practices. A growing interest in digital religion can be seen as it aids understanding of the extent to which offline religious practices are being adapted to digital environments and how aspects of digital culture are informing the life and patterns of religious groups. The argument highlights online practices of a particular religious group are connected to their offline practices simultaneously and that the technological aspect has consequently blurred the offline and online spheres. The findings from the systematic review outlined how religious individuals or groups articulate their identities, form communities, and negotiate power or authorities through the nexus of offline and online spheres.

## DISCUSSION

This paper provides insight into the symbiotic relationship between religion, digital media, and social movement leadership. It began by identifying the main research issues concerning the increasing study on social movement leadership, nonetheless, the area of study falls short of understanding religious socio-political action in the nexus of religion. Findings from the systematic review highlighted that different religious groups may employ religion and a particular technology in different ways. For that reason, the distinctive use of religion and the appropriation of technology can form the leadership style. Arguably, it can either strengthen or obstruct certain patterns of group life or practice.

As shown in the analysis, for example, articles S13 and S22 highlight that religion is used by Islamic State to rationalise conflict by instilling religious resources in their propaganda to conduct violence. Other studies, such as articles S11, S12, S34, and S35 show that religion is used as a motivating factor to empower peaceful activism despite constraints such as internal religious hierarchy and external factors such as oppression and discrimination.

While the aspect of social movements is found helpful to inform social movement analysis concerning economic inequalities (McCarthy & Zald, 1977) and cultural changes (Melucci, 1985), the systematic review found out that there is increasing attention to include the element of religion as the main unit of analysis for social movements. Findings from the systematic review found that the role of religion such as religious texts, religious organisation, and religious charismatic leaders as among the main parameters for leadership formation (for example S11, S17, S26, S34, S35).

The systematic review also highlighted that relevant studies have brought religion into the analysis of digital media in the context of social movements. Religious-based organisations have increasingly appropriated the Internet for online expression and to

increase their visibility in the virtual environment (S3, S29, S35). Moreover, religious organisations, individuals, and communities have utilised online platforms to boost participation in addition to negotiate identity as well as to construct a collective sense of identity and shared belonging (for example S4, S6, S11, S12, S21, S29, S34, S36). Findings also found out that digital media aid social movement processes in which leaders including movement participants can utilise online platforms for internal and external discussions, motivating and encouraging each other as well as for planning and organising movement activities.

Despite that, it also highlighted the role of social movement leaders in the online arena is blurring and that social movement leadership is becoming horizontal due to the nature of the Internet which allows everyone to act together without the need for a specific leader. For that reason, the finding from the systematic review also highlights the rise of soft distributed leadership following the logic of new media such as social media influence based on followers and online activity contributions.

Analysis on religion, social movement leadership, and its connection to online practices show that each religious group and/or individual in social movements are guided by their interpretation and understanding of the religious beliefs and practices. All the said elements have the potential to inform and shape the characteristics of social movement, leadership, and online practices. Ultimately, it helps differentiate why similar religious groups may act differently such as in social movements and with those who are involved in a conflict. Regarding digital media, the systematic review points out the increasing attention to the perspective on digital religion which explains that media technology is indeed negotiable in which users shape the technology to their ends (S3, S11, S15, S17, S27, S35). Findings from systematic review propose that the study of religion and digital media requires a multi-faceted understanding of religion as to how it is manifested and expressed online by religious groups (Campbell & Evolvi, 2019). This further argues that each religious group may not only have a different understanding of their religious beliefs and/or practices but also in terms of how digital media is used and for a variety of purposes.

The situation also explained how the development of new media technologies may affect the religious dimension that also consists of the cultural elements of religious groups which in turn, can become political. Linking to the context of social movements, religious actors are not exempted in the process of negotiating their religious beliefs as it guides on how they should act and function in a particular social condition including in an online environment. This also means that the use of digital media may also impact their religious beliefs, practices, and values. Given a context when religious actors are involved in social movements, the lens of digital religion is essential to assist understanding of how digital media may impact a particular religious group and how different religious groups negotiate their uses or practices of a particular technology.

## CONCLUSION

This paper aimed to develop a systematic review of religion, digital media, and social movement leadership. The paper highlighted the relevance of religion, digital media, and social movement leadership from the database chosen for the impact and quality assurance in conducting the systematic review. Taking this into consideration, it is suggested that future research may include other databases to add more sources for heterogeneity. Findings from the systematic review highlight that social sciences are the field where most of the research

in the reviewing process originated. Although there were limited number of publications in 2010, 2011, and 2012 in the relevant area, findings from the systematic review indicate that there is a significant increase in the number of published papers in the last four years.

Findings from the systematic review highlight that religious actors who are involved in social movements utilise the said platforms to express their opinion, organise activities, establish a relationship with people outside of congregational members, and engage with an audience beyond restriction of a particular organisation. When appropriating digital media, religious movement actors also reflect their religious beliefs, values, and elements to help form their identity online. Having said that, they are also involved in the process of negotiation such as by elevating the original function of social media for socialising to performing social action or social change.

Furthermore, digital media has also enabled religious social movement actors in addition to prominent religious leaders to act and take lead in conducting social movements as well as to address social conditions. This reflects the condition of shifting authority, explaining that despite the differences in social ranking and status, anyone may rotate and take on leadership with the help of the loose and fluid nature of the online environment.

Religious actors also tend to reflect on religious sources which they learned in an offline setting. This is no exception in the context of online social movement and leadership in which religious content can be transmitted to online platforms such as providing religious texts on websites or when communicating with social movement members using online platforms to inform about religious information and activities. This also reflects the aspect of convergent practices in which religious actors may draw from traditional and new sources simultaneously. This allows them to perform and translocate certain religious practices and/or interpretations online and outside of institutional religions.

Finally, similar to offline, religious movement actors also carry their social background when using online platforms. So arguably, the online arena becomes the extension of the offline world in which they may also reflect on their offline core beliefs, principles, identity, and values all of which shape their interaction with particular media technology.

#### BIODATA

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## Appendix A

Table A1: Codification of articles included in the systematic review

| Code | Year | Authors   | Journal  | Title  | Reference                               |
|------|------|---|--|--|---|
| S1   | 2021 | Arabaghatta Basavaraj K., Saikia P., Varughese A., Semetko H.A., Kumar A. | Political Psychology                                 | The COVID-19–Social Identity–Digital Media Nexus in India: Polarization and Blame  | REMOVED<br>(Not relevant)               |
| S2   | 2021 | Pérez E.  | Hypatia  | The Black Atlantic Metaphysics of Azealia Banks: Brujx Womanism at the Kongo Crossroads  | REMOVED<br>(Not relevant)               |
| S3   | 2021 | Xu S., Campbell H.A.  | Human Behavior and Emerging Technologies             | The internet usage of religious organizations in Mainland China: Case analysis of the Buddhist Association of China                            | INCLUDED                                |
| S4   | 2021 | Napierała P.  | British and American Studies                         | Black churches and African American social activism. The 'opiate view' and the 'inspiration view' of black religion in the selected literature | INCLUDED                                |
| S5   | 2021 | Obregon S.L., Lopes L.F.D., Kaczam F., da Veiga C.P., da Silva W.V.       | Journal of Business Ethics                           | Religiosity, Spirituality and Work: A Systematic Literature Review and Research Directions   | REMOVED<br>(Not relevant)               |
| S6   | 2021 | Madore F.   | Africa Today   | Muslim feminist, media sensation, and religious entrepreneur: Aminata Kane koné as a figure of success in côte d'Ivoire                        | INCLUDED                                |
| S7   | 2021 | Miller J.H.   | Women's Studies in Communication                     | Coalitional Fronting and Shared Ethos Cultivation in the Case of the Council on Religion and the Homosexual                                    | REMOVED<br>(Unable to retrieve article) |
| S8   | 2020 | Reinhardt B.  | Anthropological Quarterly                            | Atmospheric presence: reflections on “mediation” in the anthropology of religion and technology  | REMOVED<br>(Not relevant)               |
| S9   | 2020 | Micó-Sanz J.-L., Diez-Bosch M., Sabaté-Gauxachs A., Israel-Turim V.       | Tripodos   | Mapping global youth and religion. big data as lens to envision a sustainable development future   | REMOVED<br>(Not relevant)               |
| S10  | 2020 | Rifat M.R., Toriq T., Ahmed S.I.  | Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction | Religion and Sustainability: Lessons of Sustainable Computing from Islamic Religious Communities   | REMOVED<br>(No relevant)                |
| S11  | 2020 | Golan O., Martini M.  | Information Communication and Society                | The Making of contemporary papacy: manufactured charisma and Instagram   | INCLUDED                                |



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|-----|------|--|---|--|---|
| S12 | 2020 | Rahman, K. A.  | Kotuitui  | News media and the Muslim identity after the Christchurch mosque massacres   | INCLUDED                                |
| S13 | 2020 | Sweeney, M. M., & Kubit, M.                                | Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict: Pathways toward Terrorism and Genocide | Blood and scripture: how the Islamic State frames religion in violent video propaganda   | INCLUDED                                |
| S14 | 2020 | Hardy, M., Skirbekk, V., & Stonawski, M.                   | Sociological Quarterly  | The Religiously Unaffiliated in Germany, 1949–2013: Contrasting Patterns of Social Change in East and West   | REMOVED<br>(Not relevant)               |
| S15 | 2020 | Peterson, K. M.  | Sociology Compass   | Pushing boundaries and blurring categories in digital media and religion research  | INCLUDED                                |
| S16 | 2020 | Golan, O., & Martini, M.                                   | International Journal of Communication                                  | Sacred Sites for Global Publics: New Media Strategies for the Re-Enchantment of the Holy Land  | REMOVED<br>(Unable to retrieve article) |
| S17 | 2019 | Dawson, J.   | Palgrave Communications   | Shall not be infringed: how the NRA used religious language to transform the meaning of the Second Amendment   | INCLUDED                                |
| S18 | 2019 | Ferrucci, P., & Nelson, J. L.                              | Journal of Media and Religion   | Lessons from the Megachurch: Understanding Journalism's Turn to Membership   | REMOVED<br>(Not relevant)               |
| S19 | 2019 | Raitskaya, L., & Tikhonova, E.                             | Journal of Language and Education                                       | The top 100 cited discourse studies: An update   | REMOVED<br>(Not relevant)               |
| S20 | 2018 | Cohen, S. J., Holt, T. J., Chermak, S. M., Freilich, J. D. | Violence and Gender   | Invisible Empire of Hate: Gender Differences in the Ku Klux Klan's Online Justifications for Violence  | REMOVED<br>(Unable to retrieve arti     |
| S21 | 2018 | Faulkner, N., & Bliuc, A.-M.                               | Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy                             | Breaking Down the Language of Online Racism: A Comparison of the Psychological Dimensions of Communication in Racist, Anti-Racist, and Non-Activist Groups | INCLUDED                                |
| S22 | 2018 | Vergani, M., & Bliuc, A.-M.                                | Journal of Language and Social Psychology                               | The Language of New Terrorism: Differences in Psychological Dimensions of Communication in Dabiq and Inspire   | INCLUDED                                |

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|-----|------|---|---|--|---|
| S23 | 2018 | Zelenina, G.                                  | Contemporary Jewry  | “Our Community is the Coolest in the World”:<br>Chabad and Jewish Nation-Building in Contemporary Russia               | REMOVED<br>(Unable to retrieve article) |
| S24 | 2018 | Bräuchler, B.                                 | Sojourn   | Diverging ecologies on Bali  | REMOVED<br>(Unable to retrieve article) |
| S25 | 2018 | Gardner, V., Mayes, E. C., & Hameed, S.       | Welt des Islams   | Preaching science and Islam: Dr. Zakir Naik and discourses of science and Islam in internet videos                     | REMOVED<br>(Unable to retrieve article) |
| S26 | 2017 | Karabulatova, I., Galiullina, S., & Kotik, K. | Central Asia and the Caucasus                                       | Terrorist threat in Russia: Transformation of confessional relationships   | INCLUDED                                |
| S27 | 2017 | Sumiala, J., & Korpiola, L.                   | New Media and Society   | Mediated Muslim martyrdom: Rethinking digital solidarity in the “Arab Spring”  | INCLUDED                                |
| S28 | 2016 | Chau, A. Y.                                   | Handbook of Oriental Studies. Section 4, China                      | The commodification of religion in Chinese societies   | REMOVED<br>(Not relevant article)       |
| S29 | 2016 | Golan, O., & Stadler, N.                      | Media, Culture and Society  | Building the sacred community online: the dual use of the Internet by Chabad   | INCLUDED                                |
| S30 | 2016 | Blondheim, M., & Katz, E.                     | Media, Culture and Society  | Religion, communications, and Judaism: the case of digital Chabad  | REMOVED<br>(Unable to retrieve)         |
| S31 | 2015 | Ward, M.                                      | Journal of Media and Religion                                       | The PowerPoint and the Glory: An Ethnography of Pulpit Media and Its Organizational Impacts                            | REMOVED<br>(Not relevant)               |
| S32 | 2015 | Mitra, D.                                     | Journal of Punjab Studies   | The boundaries between "home" and "diaspora": American Sikhs and the construction of place                             | REMOVED<br>(Not relevant)               |
| S33 | 2015 | Fong, Y. L., & Ishak M. S. A.                 | SEARCH Journal of Media and Communication Research                  | Gatekeeping in the coverage of interethnic conflicts: An analysis of mainstream and alternative newspapers in Malaysia | REMOVED<br>(Not relevant)               |
| S34 | 2012 | Richardson, J. W., & Brantmeier, E. J.        | Education, Business and Society: Contemporary Middle Eastern Issues | The role of ICTs in conflict transformation in Egypt   | INCLUDED                                |

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|-----|------|--------------|------------------------------------|---|----------|
| S35 | 2011 | Campbell, H. | Israel Affairs                     | Religion and the internet in the Israeli orthodox context   | INCLUDED |
| S36 | 2010 | Ho, W.-Y.    | Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs | Islam, China and the internet: Negotiating residual cyberspace between hegemonic patriotism and connectivity to the ummah | INCLUDED |

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