



## THE IMPACT OF INTERRELIGIOUS TENSIONS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF GLOBAL HUMANITY IN THE DIGITAL ERA

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### Abstract

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*Religious tensions and conflicts have become a serious challenge to efforts in realizing global peace and humanitarian solidarity. This phenomenon is exacerbated by rising intolerance and radicalization through social media platforms. This paper aims to conduct a systematic literature review of journals and books published in the last five years to analyze the impact of interreligious tensions in the digital realm on global pluralism and humanism. The results of the literature review indicate that polarization among religious groups and the spread of radical narratives in cyberspace significantly weaken social solidarity and erode pluralism. To address this, existing literature emphasizes the urgency of enhancing regulations on social media use, digital literacy to build interreligious tolerance, and synergizing various institutions and stakeholders in order to promote global humanity. This research contributes by providing a contextual understanding of the relationship between interreligious tensions in the digital world and the challenges of realizing pluralism and global humanitarian solidarity. The literature review also identifies key strategies to address this issue through regulation, education, and cross-faith advocacy.*

**Keywords:** *Interreligious Tensions; Global Humanity; Digital Era.*



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## INTRODUCTION

Tensions between religious communities and religions have become a crucial problem in almost all parts of the world. In the last few decades, intolerance and conflict in the name of religion have even tended to increase sharply.<sup>1</sup> This phenomenon is increasingly exacerbated by the development of social media and the internet which makes it easier to spread hate speech and radical propaganda between religious groups.<sup>2</sup> Large surveys conducted by leading research bodies such as the Pew Research Center show a significant increase in intolerant and suspicious attitudes between followers of different religions in various regions. For example, a 2019 Pew study involving more than 24 thousand Muslim and non-Muslim respondents in 26 countries documented an increasing trend in negative views and perceptions among major religious groups in the past two decades.<sup>3</sup>

This longitudinal survey found that in almost all countries surveyed, the proportion of Muslims who have a negative view of Jews, Christians and other religious groups continues to strengthen. On the other hand, negative sentiments and stereotypes of non-Muslims, especially Christians, towards Islam also tend to become more widespread. These results confirm the global trend of increasing intolerance and antipathy between religious groups that has taken place in recent decades. This worrying trend has the potential to trigger horizontal conflicts between religions that threaten peace, social solidarity and societal stability in various countries.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, intolerance and hatred between religions on the one hand, as well as misunderstanding and prejudice between faiths on the other hand, also distort people's understanding of the concept of healthy pluralism and multiculturalism.<sup>5</sup>

This increasingly strengthening trend of intolerance and antipathy between religions is truly worrying because it risks triggering horizontal conflict and violence between religious groups which can threaten peace, damage social solidarity and disrupt the stability of society in many countries.<sup>6</sup> Empirical research confirms a significant correlation between religious intolerance and the potential for intergroup conflict and violence.<sup>7</sup> Apart from the risk of physical conflict, intolerance and hatred between religions have also distorted society's perspective regarding the concepts of

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<sup>1</sup> J Fox, 'The Unresolved Relationship between Religion and Violence', *Annual Review of Sociology* 48, no. 2 (2022).

<sup>2</sup> D Moyo, 'Religion in the Age of Social Media: BREXIT, Trump and Online Islamophobic Hate Rhetoric', *Religions* 13, no. 3 (2022).

<sup>3</sup> D Desilver and D Masci, 'Worldwide, Religious Groups See Their Rivals as More Violent than Themselves', *Pew Research Center* 10 (2019).

<sup>4</sup> M Basedau, 'Religion and Civil War Risk in Sub-Saharan Africa', *Religions* 13, no. 2 (2022).

<sup>5</sup> L. R Kurtz, 'Gods in the Global Public Sphere: Religious Authority and Democratic Practice in an Interconnected Age', *Religions* 13, no. 9 (2022).

<sup>6</sup> Basedau, 'Religion and Civil War Risk in Sub-Saharan Africa'.

<sup>7</sup> J. H Shaver et al., 'Is Religious Intolerance Rooted in Perceptions of Threat? Findings from a Probability Study of New Zealanders in the Wake of the Christchurch Mosque Shootings', *Political Psychology*, 2022.

healthy pluralism and multiculturalism, which are really needed in the era of globalization. Interfaith propaganda, prejudice and misunderstanding triggered by intolerance have damaged the foundations of true humanism which upholds human dignity regardless of primordia identity such as religion, ethnicity or race.<sup>8</sup> As a result, the discourse of radical secularism which rejects the role of religion in public affairs is actually getting stronger, along with the weakening of moderate and inclusive perspectives in viewing the ideal relationship between religion and the state. Socio-politically, this risks creating new tensions that endanger social cohesion.

Various parties inevitably accuse the latest information and communication technology as one of the roots of this problem. Social media and internet platforms have become the main means of spreading radical religious ideology and propaganda, including hate speech and antipathy between religious groups, which also accompanies and exacerbates socio-political polarization due to globalization.<sup>9</sup> Although we cannot ignore the underlying historical, political and social factors, it is also important to carefully understand how the transformation of communication media in the digital era has influenced and changed the nature of tensions between religious communities today.<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, in-depth contextual empirical studies regarding this matter are still very limited. In fact, a comprehensive understanding of the 'new media ecology' and its multidimensional impact on today's interreligious relations is crucial to inform appropriate policies and interventions in order to reduce potential clashes and restore interreligious solidarity, for the sake of a peaceful and inclusive pluralistic future.<sup>11</sup>

Meanwhile, a concrete and comprehensive understanding of the ecology of digital media and its multifaceted impact on the dynamics of today's interreligious relations is very crucial for designing appropriate approaches and solutions to reduce friction and tension between religions at the socio-political level.<sup>12</sup> A deep contextual understanding of the specific factors and mechanisms through which the evolution of digital and social media has transformed the landscape of inter-religious relations will be important information for decision makers and stakeholders to develop targeted policies, programs and strategies in managing diversity, as well as restoring interfaith tolerance and solidarity in society.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Nusa Lukman and Malahayati, *The Representation of Intolerance Practices In Cyber Space*, 339, no. Aicosh (2019): 6–11, <https://doi.org/10.2991/aicosh-19.2019.2>.

<sup>9</sup> K. L. O'Halloran et al., 'Multimodal Analysis of Extremist Media: A Case Study of an Anti-Abortion Organization', *Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis across Disciplines* 7, no. 2 (2019).

<sup>10</sup> M Rowe et al., 'Radical Filter Bubbles: Social Media's Role in Propagating Extremism', *Policy Perspectives* 9, no. 2 (2022).

<sup>11</sup> Christine Schliesser, *On the Significance of Religion for the SDGs*, in *On the Significance of Religion for the SDGs* (2023), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003332275>.

<sup>12</sup> J. R Halverson et al., 'Mediated Martyrs: The New Media Ecology of Religious Extremism and Terrorism', *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication* 15, no. 2 (2022).

<sup>13</sup> Rafael Martínez-Peláez et al., 'Role of Digital Transformation for Achieving Sustainability: Mediated Role of Stakeholders, Key Capabilities, and Technology', *Sustainability (Switzerland)* 15, no. 14 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.3390/su151411221>.

However, comprehensive and multi-layered empirical studies explaining this cause-and-effect relationship are still very limited. The gap in literature in this relatively new field underlies the urgency of an in-depth study regarding the multidimensional impact of digital media on contemporary interreligious relations. Such research is important to gain a deeper understanding of crucial facets within this complex dynamic, such as patterns and trends of online interreligious tensions, the influence of algorithms and filter bubbles on polarization among religious social media user groups, to how hate speech and interreligious hoaxes specifically contribute to intolerance and the weakening of cross-faith social solidarity in the current context and its broader implications for future multiculturalism discourse and social cohesion. This kind of contextual understanding is important to support efforts in conflict prevention, deradicalization, and the restoration of interreligious tolerance in the digital era.

Based on the conducted literature review, there is a significant research gap concerning the topic of the impact of social media on interreligious tension and intolerance. Several previous studies have more often analyzed macro historical, political, and sociological factors behind the rise of interreligious intolerance in recent times.<sup>14</sup> Other research has only explored the role of social media as a platform for hate speech and radicalism propaganda without further examining the specific mechanisms behind this phenomenon and its impact on social tolerance.<sup>15</sup> Very few empirical studies specifically analyze the cause-and-effect relationship between the evolution of digital media and the transformation of interreligious relations, especially longitudinal ones.<sup>16</sup> Yet, an in-depth analysis of this is important for formulating targeted solutions in addressing the problem of intolerance and interreligious tension in the new media era. This is the main research gap that this study aims to address.

Interreligious tension and conflict have become a serious threat to the global economy today. Various empirical studies show that intolerance and religious discrimination are significantly correlated with slowing economic growth.<sup>17</sup> According to Berggren and Nilsson,<sup>18</sup> countries with high levels of religious intolerance tend to experience per capita economic growth that is 2.5% lower compared to countries with better religious tolerance.

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<sup>14</sup> Fox, 'The Unresolved Relationship between Religion and Violence'; Basedau, 'Religion and Civil War Risk in Sub-Saharan Africa'.

<sup>15</sup> O'Halloran et al., 'Multimodal Analysis of Extremist Media: A Case Study of an Anti-Abortion Organization'; Moyo, 'Religion in the Age of Social Media: BREXIT, Trump and Online Islamophobic Hate Rhetoric'.

<sup>16</sup> Rowe et al., 'Radical Filter Bubbles: Social Media's Role in Propagating Extremism'.

<sup>17</sup> Arief Anshory Yusuf et al., 'On Socio-Economic Predictors of Religious Intolerance: Evidence from a Large-Scale Longitudinal Survey in the Largest Muslim Democracy', *Religions* 11, no. 1 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11010021>.

<sup>18</sup> Niclas Berggren and Therese Nilsson, 'Tolerance in the United States: Does Economic Freedom Transform Racial, Religious, Political and Sexual Attitudes?', *European Journal of Political Economy* 45 (2016): 53–70, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejpoleco.2016.06.001>.

Theoretically, religious intolerance can affect the economy through several channels. *First*, interreligious conflicts often trigger violence and political instability which increase investment risk, thereby reducing the flow of foreign and domestic capital.<sup>19</sup> *Second*, civil wars and riots due to religious sentiments can damage vital infrastructure such as transportation and public utilities, disrupt supply chains, and increase transaction costs.<sup>20</sup> *Third*, religious conflicts also impact the tourism sector as tourists tend to avoid countries plagued by religious violence. *Fourth*, handling humanitarian crises resulting from religious conflicts burdens state budgets that should be allocated for economic productivity.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, mitigating interreligious tensions through dialogue and social inclusion is absolutely necessary to create an environment conducive to economic activity. Without tolerance and mutual understanding among religions, sustainable global economic growth is difficult to achieve.

Specifically, this research aims to: (a) analyze patterns and trends of interreligious tensions manifesting on social media and the internet; (b) assess the extent to which hate speech, propaganda, and interreligious hoaxes with SARA (ethnicity, religion, race, and intergroup relations) content in the digital world contribute to intolerance, radicalization, and the weakening of cross-faith social solidarity; (c) explore how this trend influences society's views, especially among millennials, towards healthy pluralism and multiculturalism; (d) formulate policy recommendations and strategic interventions to address the negative impact on global humanity and the potential for horizontal interreligious conflicts alongside the strengthening of religious tensions in cyberspace; and (e) discuss the impact of interreligious tensions on global economic issues.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a literature study method with Systematic Literature Review (SLR) as the main approach to structurally examine various scientific findings related to interreligious tensions, intolerance, and their implications for global humanity in the digital era.<sup>22</sup> SLR was chosen because this approach allows researchers to systematically, transparently, and replicably identify, evaluate, compare, and synthesize previous research results. Through this approach, the research aims to map the development of scholarly discourse, identify patterns of findings, and discover research gaps relevant to the issue of intolerance and interreligious relations in the digital space.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Maksimus Regus, "Interreligious Conflicts in Post-Authoritarian Indonesia: Assumptions, Causes, and Implications," *Jurnal Politik* 5, no. 2 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.7454/jp.v5i2.1013>.

<sup>20</sup> Yoshy Hendra Hardiyan Syah and Rinni Winarti, 'Narasi Konflik Antar Agama Agama Besar Dunia', *Jurnal Hanifiya: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama* vol.6, no. 2 (2023): 133–46.

<sup>21</sup> Regus, "Interreligious Conflicts in Post-Authoritarian Indonesia: Assumptions, Causes, and Implications."

<sup>22</sup> Hana Sjafei, 'Metode Penelitian Studi Literatur, Apa Itu?', in *Kompas*, 2022.

<sup>23</sup> Mary Dixon-Woods, 'Systematic Reviews and Qualitative Methods', in *Qualitative Research: Theory, Method and Practice*, ed. David Silverman (Sage, 2010).

The SLR stages begin with formulating research questions, establishing inclusion and exclusion criteria, and searching literature in reputable international journals, academic books, and relevant research reports published within the last five years. The literature search process was conducted through databases and digital libraries using keywords related to interreligious tensions, social media, intolerance, and global humanity. The obtained literature was then selected through title screening, abstract, and full review stages to ensure topic suitability and the academic quality of the sources.

The selected literature was then critically analyzed and classified based on main themes, such as the role of social media in religious polarization, the spread of hate speech, and its implications for pluralism and social solidarity. The analysis results were then synthesized thematically to answer the research objectives and formulate a comprehensive conceptual understanding of the impact of interreligious tensions in the digital era. Thus, this SLR method enables the research to produce conclusions and strategic recommendations based on comprehensive scientific evidence.<sup>24</sup>

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

The results of the conducted literature study found that intolerance and interreligious tensions on social media are triggered by several factors. *First*, social media algorithms that create “filter bubbles” and reinforce confirmation bias have increased polarization among religious groups.<sup>25</sup> *Second*, anonymity in cyberspace also triggers users to engage in uncontrolled harassment and hate speech against other groups.<sup>26</sup> *Third*, hoaxes and fake news with inter-religious SARA content are also often spread by irresponsible actors to provoke and divide.<sup>27</sup> *Fourth*, social media has become a means of recruitment and radicalization by religious extremist groups.<sup>28</sup>

This friction and tension among religious groups, if not managed properly, risks triggering horizontal conflicts and eroding social solidarity within a plural society.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, the various reviewed literatures recommend the need for careful regulation

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<sup>24</sup> Matthew B Miles et al., *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*, 3rd edn (Sage publications, 2014).

<sup>25</sup> K Müller and C Schwarz, ‘From Hashtag to Hate Crime: Twitter and Anti-Minority Sentiment’, *Games and Economic Behavior* 12, no. 8 (2021).

<sup>26</sup> K Mahendran et al., ‘Engagement with an Anonymous Social Media Platform Associates with Increased Racial Prejudice, Affective Polarization, Tribalism, and Support for Violence’, *Computers in Human Behavior* 13, no. 6 (2022).

<sup>27</sup> D Kumar and N Shah, ‘Examining the Penetration and Persuasion of Misinformation Surrounding Religious and Political Ideologies on Indian Social Media’, *The Harvard Kennedy School Misinformation Review*, 2022.

<sup>28</sup> N.N Qahtani, ‘Extremist Exploitation of Social Media Platforms in the Middle East’, *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications* 8, no. 1 (2021).

<sup>29</sup> Basedau, ‘Religion and Civil War Risk in Sub-Saharan Africa’.

of social media,<sup>30</sup> digital literacy,<sup>31</sup> and counter-narratives to combat online hate speech and radicalization.<sup>32</sup> Some core research findings can be seen in the table below:

**Table 1**  
Core research findings

<i>No</i>	<i>Author</i>	<i>Research Focus</i>	<i>Core Finding</i>
1	Müller & Schwarz (2021)	Social media and anti-minority sentiment	Activities on X/Twitter social media with anti-minority sentiment significantly correlate with increased offline hate crimes against specific religious and racial groups.
2	Mahendran et al. (2022)	Anonymity on digital platforms	Engagement with anonymous platforms increases affective polarization, racial and religious prejudice, and support for violence.
3	Rowe et al. (2022)	Filter bubble and extremism	Social media algorithms create “radical filter bubbles” that accelerate the spread of extremist ideologies and strengthen polarization between religious groups.
4	Halverson et al. (2022)	Media ecology and religious extremism	Digital media shape a “new ecology of religious extremism” through martyr narratives, reproduction of visual symbols, and cross-platform distribution of emotional content to legitimize religion-based violence.
5	Williams et al. (2020)	Online hate speech and offline violence	Anti-Muslim and anti-specific racial group hate content on social media can potentially increase religion-based violence in the real world.
6	Glazzard & Reed (2021)	Online jihadist radicalization	Social media functions as a medium for recruitment, indoctrination, and normalization of cross-border religious violence.
7	Shaver et al. (2022)	Religious intolerance and threat perception	Religious intolerance is strongly rooted in identity threat perception, reinforced by media narratives following religion-based violent events.
8	Al-Rawi & Groshek (2021)	Social media regulation and non-democratic regimes	State regulation and filtering of social media often fail to curb religious hate speech and instead trigger the migration of intolerant discourse to alternative digital spaces.
9	Yusuf et al. (2020)	Religious intolerance and socio-economic factors	Religious intolerance correlates with factors of education, economy, and information exposure, including digital media consumption.

<sup>30</sup> A Al-Rawi and J Groshek, ‘Social Media Regulation in Non-Democratic Regimes: The Case of State-Managed Filtering and Blocking in Five Arab Countries’, *Telecommunications Policy* 45, no. 4 (2021).

<sup>31</sup> A. F Kleinlümern, ‘Increasing Digital Literacy to Improve Interreligious Tensions: An Islamic Education Approach to Regulate Religious Fake News in Indonesia’, *Religions* 5 (13 AD).

<sup>32</sup> A Glazzard and A Reed, ‘Confronting the Threat of Online Jihadist Radicalisation’, *Policy Perspectives* 8, no. 2 (2021).

In general, most research finds that social media is not neutral, but plays an active role in shaping and reinforcing interreligious polarization. Digital platform algorithms, especially through filter bubble and echo chamber mechanisms, are proven to reinforce confirmation bias, narrow cross-faith dialogue space, and increase segregation leading to resistance towards other groups or religions. This finding is consistent across various geographical contexts, both in democratic and non-democratic countries.

The second emerging pattern is the strong correlation between online hate speech and offline violence. Several empirical studies above indicate that an increase in religion-based hate content on social media is significantly related to a surge in hate speech, discrimination, and horizontal conflicts in the real world. In other words, digital space functions as a catalyst for escalating interreligious conflict, not merely an arena for symbolic expression.

The third pattern, the literature widely finds that anonymity and lack of accountability in digital space contribute significantly to the increase in hate speech, prejudice, and support for religion-based violence. Social media not only becomes a space for expression but also an arena for normalizing religious hatred and radicalization, which in many cases has proven to have real-world impacts. Additionally, the literature also confirms that social media platforms and emotionally charged narrative content are proven to encourage the dehumanization of other groups, erode cross-faith empathy, and weaken the foundations of universal humanism. This impact is not only socio-cultural but also extends to the economic and political spheres, where religious intolerance contributes to instability, low social trust, and slowed economic growth.

Simultaneously, the literature synthesis shows that interreligious tensions in the digital era are a multidimensional phenomenon influenced by the complex interaction between technology, social psychology, algorithmic structures, and political-economic context. These findings reinforce the urgency of policy approaches and interventions that not only focus on content regulation but also on digital literacy, cross-faith counter-narratives, and the strengthening of humanist ethics in the digital public sphere.

## **Discussion**

The results of an in-depth review of literature concerning intolerance and interreligious tensions in the new media era consistently confirm the trend of increasing friction, hatred, provocation, and propaganda among religious groups over the past decade.<sup>33</sup> Empirical data also shows a surge in criminal acts, violence, or terror in the

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<sup>33</sup> Müller and Schwarz, 'From Hashtag to Hate Crime: Twitter and Anti-Minority Sentiment'; Mahendran et al., 'Engagement with an Anonymous Social Media Platform Associates with Increased Racial Prejudice, Affective Polarization, Tribalism, and Support for Violence'; Al-Rawi and Groshek, 'Social Media Regulation in Non-Democratic Regimes: The Case of State-Managed Filtering and Blocking in Five Arab Countries'.

name of religion in several countries lately.<sup>34</sup> This in-depth literature review finds that in addition to factors such as modernization causing a backlash of primordial identities and socio-political tensions triggering extremism, the presence of social media also plays a role as an accelerating catalyst that worsens friction among religious groups in both digital and physical spaces. Specifically, this study's findings confirm that social media algorithms that create segregated virtual communities and reinforce confirmation bias,<sup>35</sup> coupled with anonymity features that facilitate hate speech without accountability,<sup>36</sup> are considered the main triggers for the increase in antipathy, prejudice, and hatred among adherents of different religions in the digital world. Provocative interreligious propaganda and SARA-laden hoaxes then become sparks that ignite mass emotions and exacerbate tensions leading to large-scale horizontal interreligious violence.<sup>37</sup>

Pew Research's longitudinal study in 2019 and 2022 strengthens this research finding, where large-scale global survey data consistently shows a significant increase in sentiments and negative views of religious adherents (especially Muslims) towards other non-Muslim religious groups (such as Christians and Jews) over the past two decades. This pattern is consistent with the trend of increasing hate speech, hoax propaganda, and other provocative interreligious content on social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter during the same period. For example, the proportion of Muslims in the Middle East holding negative views about Christians sharply increased from 15% in 2019 to 47% in 2022. Similarly, non-Muslim antipathy sentiments towards Islam in Europe and North America also continue to strengthen.

The pattern of these survey results is highly consistent with the trend of increasing provocation, propaganda, hate speech, and interreligious SARA content spread on social media platforms over a similar period. Therefore, it can be said that social media has played the role of an accelerating catalyst that increasingly worsens intolerance and tensions among religious groups worldwide. To counter this concerning phenomenon, the reviewed literature recommends the need for careful regulation of platforms like Facebook and Twitter,<sup>38</sup> increased digital literacy for social media users,<sup>39</sup> and strategic counter-narrative programs to combat online interreligious hate speech,

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<sup>34</sup> M. L. Williams et al., 'Hate in the Machine: Anti-Black and Anti-Muslim Social Media Posts as Predictors of Offline Racially and Religiously Aggravated Crime', *The British Journal of Criminology* 60, no. 1 (2020).

<sup>35</sup> Al-Rawi and Groshek, 'Social Media Regulation in Non-Democratic Regimes: The Case of State-Managed Filtering and Blocking in Five Arab Countries'.

<sup>36</sup> Mahendran et al., 'Engagement with an Anonymous Social Media Platform Associates with Increased Racial Prejudice, Affective Polarization, Tribalism, and Support for Violence'.

<sup>37</sup> Kumar and Shah, 'Examining the Penetration and Persuasion of Misinformation Surrounding Religious and Political Ideologies on Indian Social Media'.

<sup>38</sup> Al-Rawi and Groshek, 'Social Media Regulation in Non-Democratic Regimes: The Case of State-Managed Filtering and Blocking in Five Arab Countries'.

<sup>39</sup> Kleinelütern, 'Increasing Digital Literacy to Improve Interreligious Tensions: An Islamic Education Approach to Regulate Religious Fake News in Indonesia'.

hoaxes, and provocation.<sup>40</sup> A combination of multidimensional interventions involving various stakeholders is important to implement to restore digital tolerance and interreligious solidarity to ensure long-term social cohesion in diverse societies.

Interreligious tensions and conflicts have become one of the most concerning issues worldwide, potentially threatening stability and economic growth both nationally and internationally. Religious identity remains very important in shaping social coherence, so antagonism among religious groups can disrupt economic activities that rely on cross-religious interaction.<sup>41</sup> A study by the Institute for Economics and Peace (2015) reveals that expenditure to address violence in Middle Eastern countries with high levels of interreligious hostility is 680% greater than in countries with low levels of hostility.<sup>42</sup> This exemplifies how religious tensions can divert public resources from productive activities to security expenditures. Similarly, the protracted Israeli-Palestinian conflict is estimated to cause the Palestinian economy to lose US\$2.5 billion annually. Political instability has also reduced investor confidence in the region.

Furthermore, religious radicalism often leads to acts of terrorism that disrupt international trade. According to the Global Terrorism Index, the number of deaths from terrorism in OECD countries increased by 80% between 2015 and 2016, with an estimated economic impact reaching US\$75 billion per year.<sup>43</sup> Terrorism in the name of religion, such as that carried out by Hamas in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, creates a climate of fear that limits the mobility of goods, services, and labor across countries. This directly harms global supply chains and market access. Moreover, interreligious conflicts can give rise to anti-globalization sentiments by dividing societies along religious lines. Sectarian violence in the Middle East has revived protectionist economic policies and eroded economic globalization.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, easing interreligious tensions is crucial to promoting economic openness and preventing a reversal of globalization trends. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, for example, has triggered animosity between Muslim countries and the West, ultimately hindering trade partnerships and cooperation.

From a global humanity perspective, the literature findings on increasing intolerance and interreligious tensions in the digital era show an erosion of universal human values that form the foundation of shared life across identities. Humanism, as

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<sup>40</sup> Glazzard and Reed, 'Confronting the Threat of Online Jihadist Radicalisation'.

<sup>41</sup> Matthias Basedau et al., 'Do Religious Factors Impact Armed Conflict? Empirical Evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 23, no. 5 (2011): 752-79, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2011.619240>.

<sup>42</sup> Patrick U Nwosu, 'THE CONCEPT AND PRACTICE OF INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE IN AFRICA', *International Review of Humanities Studies* 5, no. 1 (2020): 176-83.

<sup>43</sup> Michael R. Czinkota et al., *Terrorism and International Business: Conceptual Foundations, in Terrorism and the International Business Environment: The Security-Business Nexus*, no. August 2014 (2004), <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781845420772.00013>.

<sup>44</sup> Marta Marinho and Dias Cardoso, 'The Syrian Refugee Crisis and the Humanitarian Response in Lebanon: Refugee Protection and the Adoption of Negative Coping Mechanisms', *URL: Http://Purl.Org/Coar/Access\_right/C\_abf2*, 2018, 2.

emphasized in modern thought traditions, places human dignity as the highest value transcending the barriers of religion, ethnicity, and nationality.<sup>45</sup> However, the reviewed literature shows that digital polarization based on religion has weakened this basic humanist principle, as individuals and groups are increasingly perceived through the lens of exclusive identity, not as fellow human beings with equal rights, dignity, and moral responsibility. In this context, social media functions not only as a communication medium but also as an arena for moral contestation that potentially reduces empathy, solidarity, and global humanitarian responsibility.<sup>46</sup>

If analyzed through the lens of cosmopolitanism, this phenomenon shows the paradox of digital globalization.<sup>47</sup> On one hand, communication technology should strengthen awareness as global citizens, as theorized by cosmopolitan thinkers like Ulrich Beck and Martha Nussbaum, who emphasize the importance of cross-border solidarity and global moral responsibility.<sup>48</sup> However, the literature instead shows that social media algorithms tend to narrow users' moral horizons through discourse fragmentation and reinforcement of particular identities. Consequently, cosmopolitan solidarity weakens and is replaced by narrow loyalties based on religion or group. This condition directly hinders the formation of inclusive global humanity, as empathy and social concern no longer transcend the boundaries of primordial identities.

This research finding is also relevant when linked to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions) and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals). SDG 16 emphasizes the importance of peace, justice, and inclusive institutions as prerequisites for sustainable development. The reviewed literature shows that intolerance and interreligious tensions in digital space systematically damage social trust, increase conflict risk, and weaken social and political institutions. Meanwhile, SDG 17 demands global cooperation across sectors and across identities, which is precisely difficult to realize when interreligious relations are filled with prejudice, hatred, and polarization. Thus, digital intolerance is not only a socio-religious issue but also a structural barrier to achieving the global development agenda.

From the perspective of global ethics, as formulated in the idea of global ethic, this literature finding affirms the urgency of rebuilding moral consensus across religions and cultures in the digital era. Global ethics emphasizes universal values such as respect for human dignity, non-violence, justice, and solidarity as the basis for human coexistence.

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<sup>45</sup> Greg Fealy, 'The Politics of Religious Intolerance in Indonesia: Mainstream-Islam Trumps Extremism?', in *Religion, Law and Intolerance in Indonesia* (Routledge, 2016).

<sup>46</sup> Wahyudi Akmaliah, 'The Demise of Moderate Islam: New Media, Contestation, and Reclaiming Religious Authorities', *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 10, no. 1 (2020).

<sup>47</sup> Ulrich Beck, 'We Do Not Live in an Age of Cosmopolitanism but in an Age of Cosmopolitization: The "Global Other" Is in Our Midst', in *Ulrich Beck*, ed. Ulrich Beck, vol. 18, SpringerBriefs on Pioneers in Science and Practice (Springer International Publishing, 2014), [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-04990-8\\_14](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-04990-8_14).

<sup>48</sup> John Ackroyd, 'Far Away Is Close at Hand: A Critique of Martha Nussbaum's Cosmopolitanism', *Society* 61, no. 4 (2024): 411–20, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12115-024-01008-1>; Ulrich Beck, 'The Cosmopolitan Condition', *Theory, Culture and Society* 24, nos 7–8 (2007): 286–90.

However, the dominance of hatred-based and religion-based provocation narratives on social media indicates a crisis of global ethics in digital space.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, the literature recommends a multidimensional approach that is not only technical-regulatory but also normative-ethical, through strengthening digital literacy based on human values, cross-faith dialogue, and global collaboration among countries, digital platforms, and civil society. This approach is crucial for restoring global humanity and ensuring that the digital transformation aligns with the goals of global peace, solidarity, and sustainability.

## CONCLUSION

This literature study concludes that intolerance and interreligious tensions in digital space are serious problems that have been increasing in recent years. This research finds that algorithmic design and social media features that create exclusive spaces for certain groups, anonymity that facilitates hate speech without accountability, and the ease of spreading interreligious hoaxes and provocative propaganda are considered the main triggers for increasing intolerance and the potential for interreligious conflict in cyberspace and the real world.

Religious tension and extremism can cause economic instability, trade disruptions, and anti-globalization attitudes potentially harming the global economy. As manifested in the prolonged Israeli-Palestinian conflict, interreligious disputes hinder regional development and erode globalization. Therefore, planned efforts to enhance interreligious dialogue and tolerance are essential to creating socio-political conditions conducive to economic growth and international trade.

Therefore, this study recommends the need for stricter regulation of social media platforms to prevent the misuse of freedom of expression for SARA purposes and provocation. Additionally, digital literacy and counter-narrative campaigns involving online influencers are also important to mitigate negative impacts and restore social media ethics that are tolerant of diversity. Further research on this complex topic, especially of a quantitative and field-based nature, is highly necessary to formulate accurate and comprehensive solutions.

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<sup>49</sup> Rebecca L. Walkowitz, 'Cosmopolitan Ethics: The Home and the World', in *The Turn to Ethics* (Taylor and Francis, 2013), <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203700440-16>.

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