

A CRITICAL NARRATIVE OF SALAFI-WAHHABI DISCOURSE ON SOCIAL MEDIA

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Abstract

This article aims to explore the evolving narrative of discourse among Salafi-Wahhabi scholars regarding Kalam (Islamic theology), including how this discourse is produced and disseminated. What was once an issue confined to a limited circle has now become a public issue accessible to anyone from a diverse background. Thus, the discursive battleground within Islamic thought has shifted its battleground, given the very different circumstances compared to its development in the past. This research is a media study using content analysis. It explores in-depth issues circulating on social media related to Salafi-Wahhabi da'wah regarding Kalam (Islamic theology). The article's findings reveal two main aspects of Salafi-Wahhabi discourse. First, they reject theological propaganda (Kalam) and philosophy, emphasize a literal textual understanding of the Qur'an and Hadith, and view rational theology as potentially confusing the creed. Second, this group has successfully utilized social media with financial support to disseminate their religious narratives broadly and deeply, a strategy that strengthens their views but also raises challenges related to media literacy and religious tolerance.

Keywords: Salafi-Wahhabi, Kalam Discourse, Social Media

Abstrak

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi narasi wacana yang berkembang dari para ulama Salafi-Wahhabi mengenai Kalam (teologi Islam), termasuk bagaimana wacana ini dihasilkan dan disebarluaskan. Apa yang dulunya merupakan isu yang terbatas pada kalangan terbatas kini telah menjadi isu publik yang dapat diakses oleh siapa pun dari beragam latar belakang. Dengan demikian, pertarungan wacana dalam pemikiran Islam telah bergeser medan pertempurannya, mengingat keadaan yang sangat berbeda dibandingkan dengan perkembangannya di masa lalu. Penelitian ini termasuk dalam studi media yang menggunakan analisis konten. Penelitian ini menggali secara mendalam isu-isu yang beredar di media sosial terkait dengan dakwah Salafi-Wahhabi tentang Kalam (Teologi Islam). Temuan artikel ini mengungkap dua aspek utama diskursus Salafi-Wahhabi. Pertama, mereka menolak spekulasi teologis (Kalam) dan filsafat, menekankan pemahaman tekstual literal Al-Qur'an dan Hadis, serta memandang teologi rasional berpotensi membingungkan akidah. Kedua, kelompok ini sangat berhasil memanfaatkan media sosial dengan dukungan finansial untuk menyebarkan narasi keagamaan mereka secara luas dan mendalam, sebuah strategi yang memperkuat pandangan mereka namun juga memunculkan tantangan terkait literasi media dan toleransi beragama.

Kata Kunci: Salafi-Wahhabi, Diskursus Kalam, Media Sosial



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INTRODUCTION

The Salafi-Wahabi, who in the treasures of Islamic thought are known as the puritans of Islam, who intend to return to pure Islam as practiced by the first three generations of Islamic salafs. The Salafi group as they call itself is also known by the public by the word Wahabi. The name refers to an Islamic political movement that stood in the Najed area of the Arabian Peninsula in the 18th century AD, founded by Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab (1703-1792) and Muhammad bin Saud (w. 1765 M).¹

As a group that carries Islamic puritanism, and invites salaf thought, it is certain that the battle of religious discourse that in the past has occurred will be revived. Criticism of the main discourses in Islamic thought, namely kalam, philosophy, and tawasuf have become issues that have resurfaced today. At the same time, the development in Islamic thought is very dynamic, so it is not uncommon for the perception of the salaf period to be built on the three basic sciences (ushuluddin), very irrelevant to the current context. The problem is, in the current era there is an era of social media, where everyone can speak directly to the public without any more filters that limit it, including in this case the production of religious discourse by Salafi-Wahhabi circles.

The Salafi-Wahhabi group is known to be very rigid and tough and unwilling to compromise in upholding the principles of Salafi doctrine. They do not hesitate to "judge" other groups, who have different views or sects from them by accusing them of heresy, shirk, and infidelity. This movement is guided by textuality, the Qur'an and Hadith. In their understanding, the Salafi-Wahhabis use literal interpretations based on the text and avoid logical interpretation.²

Later, on many social media platforms, several Islamic disciplines have become the center of attention among Salafi-Wahabi, both from the Salafi scholars themselves and the people who adhere to the school. These disciplines are Sufism, Kalam and Islamic Philosophy, which are the main parts of the ushuluddin sciences. These sciences are narrated and displayed very nicely so that they look interesting, such as packaged in short question and answer sessions, short lectures and in the form of review writing.

The narrative that develops in the discipline is that the law of studying Philosophy and Kalam is haram, then quotes from the words of Imam Shafi'i that studying philosophy and kalam is an act of sin, which is still better than committing sins other than shirk. Imam Shafi'i punished

¹ Besnik Sinani, *Post-Salafism: Religious Revisionism in Contemporary Saudi Arabia*, MDPI AG, 2022, 340, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13040340>.

² Ahmad Buyan Wahid, "Dakwah Salafi: Dari Teologi Puritan Sampai Anti Politik," *Media Syari'ah: Wahana Kajian Hukum Islam Dan Pranata Sosial* 13, no. 2 (2017): 2, <https://doi.org/10.22373/jms.v13i2.1783>.

people who studied philosophy by being paraded around the village and beaten with date fronds. In addition, they also say that Sufism is ahl bid'ah and damages the beliefs of Muslims.³

Narratives like this develop on various social media platforms, such as Youtube, Facebook, Instagram, and also in the form of web sites that are packed with interesting writing, such as the science of Philosophy that destroys the religion of Islam ⁴ Don't Take Knowledge from Ahl Bid'ah ⁵ and the Sufi School rejected by Imam Shafi'i ⁶ Narratives like this continue to be reproduced and become public consumption to the point of causing a negative stigma against those who study Sufism, Kalam and Islamic Philosophy. In fact, these sciences are the *core* of the study of Islamic science both on the al Azhar campus in Egypt and in various Islamic universities in Indonesia.

Departing from the context that is happening now and what happened in the past, there are differences. The situation of the light age departs from the tradition of textuality and mutual criticism that is actualized in a book (book) and only some Muslims are able to consume it, such as the intellectual elite. Mutual criticism between sciences has even become the trigger for the birth of great works from previous intellectuals. Meanwhile, today, with the help of science and technology, all information is widely open and its spread is so fast. The form of the narrative and the packaging are also made more attractive and concise, so that they can be consumed by all groups.

In addition to the transformation in the use of media and methodology, seen in terms of issues, the discourse of contemporary Islamic thought cannot be separated from two main issues, namely: *turats* and *hadatsah*. *Turats* is related to the treasures (heritage) of science obtained from our predecessors, the scholars of the past, in the heyday phase of Islamic science, *the golden age of Islam*. Meanwhile, *hadatsah* is related to modernity, modern human science, which has developed rapidly in the last few centuries in the West, and is increasingly finding its momentum with the increasingly rapid technological advances in the current global era.

Each type of science, whether derived from *turats* (inheritance) or *hadatsah* (modernity), has advantages and disadvantages with criticisms directed at both. Criticism of *turats*-based scientific products, for example, lies in their relevance which is considered minimal to the needs of the global community. The classical sciences of Islam are seen as "busy" with their own world and have little correlation with the chaos of modern human problems with all their dynamics. Meanwhile, modern sciences, although considered "relevant" to the needs of modern humans,

³ "Ajaran Tasawuf Merusak Aqidah Islam | Almanhaj," July 26, 2013, <https://almanhaj.or.id/3681-ajaran-tasawuf-merusak-aqidah-islam.html>.

⁴ "Ilmu Filsafat, Perusak Aqidah Islam | Almanhaj," December 16, 2012, <https://almanhaj.or.id/3453-ilmu-filsafat-perusak-aqidah-islam.html>.

⁵ "Jangan Mengambil Ilmu Dari Ahli Bid'ah | Almanhaj," December 19, 2009, <https://almanhaj.or.id/2602-jangan-mengambil-ilmu-dari-ahli-bidah.html>.

⁶ "Aliran Sufi Diingkari Imam Syâfi'i Rahimahullah | Almanhaj," May 9, 2014, <https://almanhaj.or.id/3917-aliran-sufi-diingkari-imam-syafii-rahimahullah.html>.

because they are produced by non-Muslims, are seen as not based on Islamic values, as criticized by Nasr⁷ al Attas⁸ al Faruqi⁹ Sardar¹⁰ and others.

Kalam studies or ushuluddin studies as part of *turats*, including those that have received harsh criticism from Islamic modernists, as part of a science that has undergone sacralization, stagnation and tends to only repeat itself. The Islamic sciences that are developing today, Rahman criticizes, have produced very few original thoughts. Most of them are only in the form of lectures or *hasyiah* on the works of their predecessors. Criticism of *turats* is also echoed by other contemporary thinkers such as Al Jabiri with the criticism of Arabic reason,¹¹ Arkoun with the criticism of Islamic reason¹² Abu Zayd with the criticism of *nash*,¹³ Syahrur with the criticism of the tyranny of knowledge,¹⁴ Hassan Hanafi with the criticism of *turats*¹⁵ and so on.

In the Indonesian context, the Faculty of Ushuluddin in the Faculty of Ushuluddin Islamic Religious Universities (PTKI) which provides a special space for the study of kalam is often associated with a faculty that is not interested in it, and has even been considered a "nest" of liberal Islamic thought. In the realm of social media, ushuluddin science such as kalam, Sufism and Islamic philosophy is often narrated as stepchildren, illiterates, and even illegitimate children of Islamic science, which must be shunned, even eliminated, instead of studied seriously and deeply.

At this point, there are a number of problems faced by kalam studies. *First*, as part of *turats*, *kalam studies* is seen as stagnant and less adaptive to the development of the times. *Second*, institutionally, *kalam studies* is less in demand and is seen as part of the discourse of liberal Islamic thought. *Third*, in the realm of social media, there is a strong current from Salafi-Wahhabis who narrate that ushuluddin studies in general, and kalam studies in particular, are part of the science that is heretical to be studied, even some to the extent that it is haram to study it.

The Salafi-Wahhabi issue is another interesting part of the discourse of contemporary Muslim thought. This group is seen as having a tendency towards textualist thinking, radicalism, and is seen as intolerant of different thoughts. This group is often attached to the official ideology held by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

⁷ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Knowledge and the Sacred* (State University of New York Press, 1989).

⁸ Syed Muhammad Naquib Al-Attas, *Islam and Secularism* (ABIM, 1978).

⁹ Ismail Raji Al-Faruqi, *Islamization of Knowledge: General Principle and Workplan* (International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1982).

¹⁰ Ziauddin Sardar, *Explorations in Islamic Science* (Mansell, 1989).

¹¹ Al-Jabiri 'Abid Muhammad, *Takwin Al-'Aql al-'Arabi*, (Beirut: Al-Markaz al-Tsaqafi al-Arabi (al-Markaz al-Tsaqafi al-Arabi, 1991).

¹² Arkoun, Mohammed, *Al-Fikr al-Islamiy Naqd Wa Ijtihad* (Dar as-Saqi, 1987).

¹³ Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd, *Al-Nash: Al-Sultah al-Haqiqah* (Markaz al-Thaqafi al-'Arabî, 1995).

¹⁴ Muhammad Syahrur, *Al-Kitâb Wa al-Qur'ân: Qirâ'ah Mu'âshirah* (Al-Ahâly Lithibâ'ah wa al-Nasyr wa al- Tauzi', 1990).

¹⁵ Hassan Hanafi, *Min Al-'Aqidah Ilâ Al-Thawrah: Al-Muqaddimât Al-Nazariyyah* (Al-Maktabatu al-Madbûly, 1989).

RESEARCH METHODS

This type of research is media research using a content analysis approach, where this research explores in depth the issues that develop on social media related to Salafi-Wahhabi da'wah on the issue of Kalam (Islamic Theology). Using this approach, this study seeks not only to unravel the narrative around Kalam circulating on social media but also to test the narrative conveyed by Salafi-Wahabi. To strengthen this research, critical discourse analysis is also used, namely that narratives that appear on social media have the purpose of presenting, building, and shaping entities and relationships between fellow humans. The basic understanding in critical discourse analysis is that a discourse is not only understood as an object in language studies, but also looks at the use of spoken and written language as a social practice.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Narrative Kalam of Salafi-Wahhabi

From a number of Salafi-Wahhabi narratives related to the Science of Kalam, as stated above, through various social media, it can be summarized as follows:

1. Rejection of Kalam Science

In general, Salafi-Wahhabis do have a special view related to Kalam. Generally, their views tend to be "negative" towards this science. Ibn Taymiyyah as the role model scholar in this group stated that the Grace of Allah to his servants is that the imams who are role models such as the imams of the fourth school and others, they deny the scholars of kalam such as the Jahmiyah group in the matter of the Qur'an and about believing in the attributes of Allah.

Muhammad Abdurrahman al Khumais in his *Aqidah al Aimmah al Arba'ah* (The Faith of the Four Imams) stated that the four imams of the fiqh school referred to by the ummah all rejected the existence of kalam, starting from Imam Hanifah (80-150 H), Imam Malik (90-179 H), Imam Shafi'i (150-204 H), Imam Ahmad bin Hambal (164-241 H).

In a book published by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia through the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Walaf, Da'wah and Counseling, Muhammad Abdurrahman al Khumais mentioned the views of 4 imams of the sect who are the reference for Indonesian Muslims in Indonesia. These views then became the basis for the arguments and references conveyed by Salaf-Wahhabi preachers in Indonesia.

First, regarding the views of Imam Abu Hanifah, the author of the book quotes several statements addressed to the Imam such as his statement that the Imam had studied the Science of Kalam until I was classified as a rare human being in knowledge, only then he moved to the science of jurisprudence because of his inability to answer a simple question about talaq from

a woman.¹⁶ Imam Abu Hanifah is also called a writer who once said: May Allah curse Amr bin Abu Ubaid for paving the way for those who study the Science of Kalam, even though this knowledge is of no use to them. He also asked his son, Hammad, to abandon the Kalam Sciences on the grounds that those who argued in the Kalam Science at first were of one opinion and their religion was one. But the devil disturbed them so that they were hostile and dissenting. Furthermore, to his disciple Abu Yusuf, the Imam said not to speak to the common people on the matter of ushluddin by taking the opinion of the Kalam Science, because they will follow you and trouble you.¹⁷

Second, regarding Imam Malik's views, al-Khumais quoted a number of statements from the Imam such as: I do not like the Science of Kalam in religious matters, the citizens of this country do not like it either, and prohibit it such as talking about the opinion of Jahm bin Shafwan. Quoting the narration of Imam Abu Nu'aim, Imam Malik said that if a person commits a major sin, apart from becoming a polytheist, then he breaks away from the heresies of the Science of Kalam, he will enter Paradise. Imam al-Harawi narrated that Imam Malik also said: whoever seeks religion through the Science of Kalam will become a kafir zindiq, whoever seeks wealth through Chemistry will be bankrupt, and whoever seeks a rare language in the hadith, he will be lying. Imam Malik is also called to curse Amr bi Ubaid because he is seen as making a heresy of the Science of Kalam. If Kalam were a science, surely the Companions and tabi'in would have talked about it, just as they talked about the panda of law (fiqh) and shari'ah. Another statement is as narrated by Imam ibn 'Abdil Bar that it is not permissible to distribute books written by people who in religion only follow their tastes, bid'ah and clenik, and the books of kalam adherents such as the Mu'tazilah group and so on.¹⁸

Third, related to the view of Imam Shafi'i, and this is the most popular conveyed in Indonesia, that as narrated by Imam al-Harawi, that Imam Shafi'i is said to have said that if someone makes a will to others to take books that contain Islamic knowledge, then the book of kalam is not included in the will, because it is not Islamic science. Imam Shafi'i also said that if Allah gives a trial (test) to a person so that he performs the prohibitions of Allah other than shirk, it is still better than he gets a trial (test) by being mired in the knowledge of Kalam.¹⁹

¹⁶ Muhammad bin Abdurrahman al Khumais, *Aqidah Empat Imam: Imam Abu Hanifah, Malik, Syafi'i, & Ahmad Bin Hambal*, trans. Ali Mustafa Ya'qub (Kantor Atase Agama Kedutaan Besar Saudi Arabia di Jakarta, 2003), 30–31.

¹⁷ Khumais, *Aqidah Empat Imam: Imam Abu Hanifah, Malik, Syafi'i, & Ahmad Bin Hambal*, 31–34.

¹⁸ Khumais, *Aqidah Empat Imam: Imam Abu Hanifah, Malik, Syafi'i, & Ahmad Bin Hambal*, 52–56.

¹⁹ Khumais, *Aqidah Empat Imam: Imam Abu Hanifah, Malik, Syafi'i, & Ahmad Bin Hambal*, 101–3.

Fourth, related to Imam Ahmad bin Hambal's view of the Science of Kalam, it is stated that Imam Ahmad stated that whoever studies the Science of Kalam will not be lucky, and he will not be separated from following the Jahmiyah group. It is also mentioned that Imam Ahmad forbade people to sit with the members of the Kalam, even though he seems to be defending the Sunnah of the Prophet PBUH. Imam Ahmad also said, hold fast to the Sunnah of the Prophet PBUH, Allah will benefit you. And avoid debates in religious matters, because people who like the science of Kalam will not be so lucky. The person who makes a debate in Kalam, the end is to make a bid'ah, because the knowledge of Kalam does not lead to good. "I don't like the science of Kalam, let alone participate in debates". Beware of people who like the Science of Kalam, said Imam Ahmad.²⁰

Linguistically, 'kalam' describes an expression or conversation. In the context of religion, 'kalam' refers to the discussion and discussion of theological and faith issues in Islam, such as the attributes of Allah, destiny, justice, and similar topics. The science of kalam involves the use of logical arguments, philosophical approaches, and analysis of religious beliefs to strengthen and explain the principles of religion in Islam.

The science of kalam, or kalam in the context of Islamic science, has undergone significant evolution and development throughout its history. Initially, kalam developed in response to the philosophical and theological thought challenges faced by Islamic scholars in an effort to explain religious teachings to a society that was beginning to be influenced by Greek philosophical thought and other theological doctrines.

The early generation of Islamic scholars had diverse attitudes towards kalam. Some see it as a tool to defend their religious beliefs against evolving philosophical thoughts, while others are skeptical of this philosophical approach because it is thought to lead to speculation that is contrary to pure religious teachings.

Over time, kalam science continues to develop and undergo transformation. Muslim scholars and scholars continue to expand the scope of discussion and deepen the understanding of religious teachings through kalam. This includes refinement of the method of argument, the expansion of the topics discussed, and adaptation to evolving philosophical debate and thought.

Currently, the definition of kalam science is not always the same as what was understood by scholars in the early days of its development. Developments in the context of history, social change, and scientific exploration have brought kalam science in a more dynamic direction. Ever-evolving thoughts, a more complex understanding of theological issues, and integration with other disciplines have formed a new face of kalam today. Therefore, the

²⁰ Khumais, *Aqidah Empat Imam: Imam Abu Hanifah, Malik, Syafi'i, & Ahmad Bin Hambal*, 117–20.

definition and scope of kalam science today can be different from the understanding held by scholars in its early days.

2. The Roots of the Quran and Hadith

The Salafi-Wahhabi narrative often emphasizes the use of the Quran and Hadith as the only source of reference in theological matters. They argue that no one knows more about God, about what is obligatory for Him and what should be purified from Him than God Himself. Furthermore, there is no one after Allah who knows better than the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him). Therefore, manjah salaf shalih and its followers in taking the creed on the Qur'an and as Sunnah.²¹

For the Salafi-Wahhabi circles, the Quran and Hadith are sufficient as a source in religion, and do not require the knowledge of kalam. For the Salafi-Wahhabi community, Islamic teachings emphasize simplicity in the understanding and practice of Islam. The Quran and Hadith have provided clear and simple guidelines for Muslims. Therefore, the science of kalam, which is often complex and philosophical, is unnecessary. The concepts of kalam do not have a solid foundation in the major Islamic texts.

For the Salafi-Wahhabi circle, Muslims should focus more on steadfastness in the basic aqidah (belief), especially tauhid (the oneness of Allah). The Quran and Hadith already provide a sufficient understanding of the concept of monotheism, and the science of kalam often only confuses Muslims with complex philosophical concepts. The Salafi-Wahhabi community is of the view that kalam often leads to the interpretation and analysis of texts, which can obscure a direct understanding of the Qur'an and Hadith.

An Indonesian Salafi-Wahhabi figure, Yazid bin Abdul Qadir Jawas said that in this description of monotheism, there is one book that is the most important and good in its discussion, namely the writings of Imam Mujaddid Muhammad bin Abdul Wahhab, who is seen as the founder of Salafi-Wahhab. This book is entitled *Kitab at Tauhid alladzi huwa haqqullah 'ala al abid* (The Book of Tawheed which is the right of Allah (which must be fulfilled) over a slave. This book of monotheism has received great attention from scholars, as evidenced by the number of shari'a written by them about the book.²²

Another problem is that in principle the Salafi-Wahhabis are very anti-bid'ah (innovation) in Islam. Abdullah bin Abdul Hamid al Atsari said that there are two types of heresy on the side of Ahlus Sunnah wal Jamaah: 1) shirk and kufr and 2) vices that deny the perfection of monotheism. Bid'ah in this case is one of the means of shirk, namely worshipping

²¹ Shalih bin Fauzan al Fauzan, *Kitab Tauhid*, trans. Syahirul Alim al Adib (Ummul Qura, 2021), 20.

²² Yazid bin Abdul Qadir Jawas, *Syarah Kitab Tauhid: Memahami Dan Merealisasikan Tauhid Dalam Kehidupan* (Pustaka Imam Asy-Syafi'i, 2021), 3.

Allah, but not in the way that He has decreed.²³ In relation to this, they consider kalam science as something that emerged later and did not exist in early Islamic teachings. Thus, they consider kalam science as a form of heresy that must be avoided. Aqidah Islamiyah for them is synonymous with at tauhid, as Sunnah, ushuluddin, al fiqhul ak bar, asy syari'ah, al iman.²⁴ In this context, kalam science is not included in the synonym in question.

Salafi-Wahhabis also tend to avoid theological debates and disagreements. They argue that such debates only result in divisions within Muslims, whereas understanding religion based on the Quran and Hadith is literally a safer and simpler approach.

There are several special characteristics of aqidah according to the Salaf-Wahhabis as mentioned by Abdullah bin Abdul Hamid al Atsari, namely: First, the only way to prevent various disputes and the emergence of factions. Second, uniting and strengthening the ranks of Muslims. Third, connecting a Muslim directly to Allah. Fourth, easy, practical, and clear, there is no ambiguity and difficulty in it and it is not long-winded. Fifth, the greatest factor to get closer to Allah and get His pleasure.²⁵

This Salafi-Wahhabi view reflects a highly textual approach to religious understanding and an emphasis on simplicity in religion. They think that the science of kalam often leads to complex thinking and can deviate from the pure understanding of monotheism. Therefore, they prefer to rely on the Quran and Hadith as the main source in religion.

3. Simple, Anti-Philosophical and Theological Debate.

The Salafi-Wahhabi narrative often emphasizes moderation and rejection of philosophy and theological speculation. They view kalam as an exaggerated intellectual endeavor and prefer to hold a simple and direct theological understanding of sacred texts.

Murtadha Muthahhari in his work *Getting to Know the Science of Kalam* said that the followers of Ahmad bin Hanbal (hanbaliah) who strongly opposed kalam, kalam Mu'tazilah or Ash'ariah, let alone the Shia, were actually due to their opposition to logic and philosophy.²⁶

The Salafi-Wahhabis are of the opinion that the pure and original teachings of Islam can be found in the practice and understanding of Muslims in the early days, especially during the time of the Companions of the Prophet. They believed that the Companions were exemplary in understanding and practicing Islam, and that these Companions did not engage in theological or philosophical speculation.

²³ Abdullah bin Abdul Hamid al Atsari, *Intisari Akidah Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jama'ah*, trans. Farid bin Muhammad Bathathy (Pustaka Imam Asy-Syafi'i, 2019), 201.

²⁴ Atsari, *Intisari Akidah Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jama'ah*, 12.

²⁵ Atsari, *Intisari Akidah Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jama'ah*, 56–58.

²⁶ Murtadha Muthahhari, *Mengenal Ilmu Kalam: Cara Mudah Menembus Kebuntuan Berpikir* (Pustaka Zahra, 2002), 31.

The Salafi-Wahhabi view of monotheism (the oneness of Allah) is very firm. They argue that the teachings of monotheism should be understood simply and directly from the Qur'an and Hadith, without the need to engage in complex theological speculation. Shaykh Muhammad at Tamimi, quoting the Hadith al-Bukahri and Muslim stated that Allah has forbidden the anjakan of those who say La ilaha illallah for seeking the face of Allah alone.²⁷

The Salafi-Wahhabis strongly reject bid'ah (innovation) in religion. They consider philosophy and theological speculation to be forms of innovation that did not exist in early Islamic teachings. Therefore, they seek to distance themselves from any form of innovation in religion. Yazid bin Abdul Qadir Jawas said that the science of Kalam is a new thing that has been made up and has the principle of taqawwul (saying something) in the name of Allah without being based on knowledge. The prohibition of using this name is because it is contrary to the methodology of salaf scholars in determining the issues of aqidah.²⁸

In addition, the Salafi-Wahhabis avoid theological disputes and debates that can result in divisions within Muslims. They believe that theological speculation often gives rise to unnecessary differences of opinion and can disrupt the unity of Muslims. This view is also as called Jawas which makes philosophy not used in aqidah, because it is delusional, rationality, fictitious, and supernatural views about supernatural things.²⁹

The Salafi-Wahhabis prefer to focus the followers of Islam on the simple and direct understanding of monotheism from the sacred texts. They believe that theological speculation will only obscure this understanding and lead to complex understandings. This view also makes Sufism not allowed to be used in aqidah, because it is a new name that is being made up, which contains igauan, claims, and confessions of superstition that are used as references in aqidah.³⁰

The Salafi-Wahhabi view of rejection of philosophy and theological speculation reflects their efforts to maintain simplicity in religious understanding and to steer clear of innovation in Islam. They are more likely to rely on a direct understanding of the Qur'an and Hadith, and view philosophy and theological speculation as unnecessary and potentially disruptive to a pure understanding of monotheism. For Salafi-Wahabi, monotheism is to impress Allah with something special for him, in the form of *rububiyyah*, *uluhiyyah* and *asma wa shifat*.³¹

²⁷ Syaikh Muhammad at Tamimi and Muhammad Yusuf Harun, *Kitab Tauhid: Pemurnian Ibadah Kepada Allah* (Darul Haq, 1442), 9.

²⁸ Yazid bin Abdul Qadir Jawas, *Syarah Aqidah Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jama'ah* (Pustaka Imam Asy-Syafi'i, 2018), 31.

²⁹ Jawas, *Syarah Aqidah Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jama'ah*, 31.

³⁰ Jawas, *Syarah Aqidah Ahlus Sunnah Wal Jama'ah*, 31.

³¹ Jawas, *Syarah Kitab Tauhid: Memahami Dan Merealisasikan Tauhid Dalam Kehidupan*, 5.

Salafi-Wahhabis emphasize the importance of maintaining simplicity in religious understanding and practice. They argue that Islam should be understood in a simple and direct way from the sacred texts, namely the Qur'an and Hadith. Theological debates often bring up complex concepts that are not present in these texts.

Salafi-Wahhabis argue that firmness in aqidah, especially in the belief in monotheism (the oneness of Allah), is more important than engaging in complex theological debates. They believe that the Quran and Hadith have provided sufficient guidance on the concept of monotheism.

4. Rejection of Ta'wil

Salafi-Wahhabis often reject the practice of ta'wil (allegorical interpretation) in kalam and prefer a literal interpretation of sacred texts. They believe that the texts should be understood clearly and without complicated interpretations.

Ta'wil itself as called the Indonesian Salafi-Wahhabi figure Yazid bin Abdul Qadis Jawas can be understood in several meanings. First, the actual essence or reality of a word or news. Second, interpretation, as the commentators say: ta'wil from the word of Allah means the interpretation of the word of Allah. Third, the deviation of a word from its true meaning to another meaning. This meaning is meant by ta'wil which is often mentioned in the discussion of aqidah.³²

They also emphasized the importance of following the sacred texts literally and not adopting interpretations or ta'wil that were thought to alter the original meaning. They believe that the Quran and Hadith already provide clear guidelines and do not require additional interpretation.

As a group that is very anti-bid'ah (innovation) in religion, the Salafi-Wahhabis consider that the use of ta'wil in religious understanding is a form of innovation that does not exist in early Islamic teachings. Therefore, they try to distance themselves from ta'wil which is considered as innovation. They are of the view that ta'wil often gives rise to unnecessary debates and can disturb the simplicity of faith. They tend to avoid complex theological debates and prefer to understand the teachings of Islam simply.

The implications of the rejection of ta'wil on their theological understanding are: First, literalism in understanding. Salafi-Wahhabis tend to hold fast to the literal or zahir meanings of religious texts. This often results in a rigid and restrictive approach to religion, with little room for broader or contextual interpretation.

³² Jawas, *Syarah Kitab Tauhid: Memahami Dan Merealisasikan Tauhid Dalam Kehidupan*, 550.

5. Emphasis on Tawhid and Anti-Bid'ah

This narrative emphasizes the teaching of tawhid (the oneness of Allah) as the main focus of Islamic theology. They try to maintain the simplicity of theological concepts so that they are in harmony with the concept of monotheism.

Salafi circles pay great attention to the issue of monotheism, in fact it is an important concern for them. The differences that arise between Salafi groups and other Islamic groups are caused by the interpretation of the concept of monotheism. In general, monotheism is divided into three categories: monotheism rububiyyah, monotheism uluhiyyah, and monotheism of asthma and nature.

First, tawhid rububiyyah is a true recognition that Allah SWT is the Rabb of all things and the king of all things, the creator and sustainer of all things, who has the right to regulate all things and has no partners in His power.³³ Tawhid rububiyyah seeks to unite Allah in His actions, because He is Allah, the Creator, the Giver of sustenance, He is the one who regulates all of His creation and He is also the one who takes care of them with what He has given in the form of pleasure and faith in all the actions of Allah SWT.³⁴

Second, monotheism uluhiyyah, namely uniting with Allah SWT, with all forms of worship externally and spiritually, in the form of words and deeds, then rejecting all forms of worship other than Allah SWT.³⁵ No one may be worshiped, except the One (Rabb) who is able to carry out the things mentioned in the monotheism of the rububiyyah. So it is not permissible to perform prayers, pray and slaughter sacrifices that are not addressed to Him. There is no tawaf except in His house, you cannot ask for help from the dead or from people who are not there, you cannot put your trust except in the One (Rabb) who owns creation and command.³⁶ According to Salafi-Wahabi circles, tawhid uluhiyyah is widely distorted and even rejected, even though this type of tawhid is the most important thing to maintain and practice. This type of monotheism is denied by disbelievers and it is also the source of feuds and contradictions between previous communities and the apostles, from Prophet Nuh AS to Prophet Muhammad SAW.³⁷

Third, monotheism and the attributes of Allah, namely believing in all the attributes described by Allah SWT. for Himself in His book, or something described by His Messenger

³³ Syaikh Hafizh bin Ahmad al Hakami, *Akidah Golongan Selamat*, trans. Amin Ulwi (Pustaka Imam Bonjol, 2015), 55.

³⁴ 'Abdul Malik Ramadhani, *6 Landasan Utama Dakwah Salafiyah*, trans. Mubarak Bamualim (Pustaka Imam Syafii, 2015), 39.

³⁵ Hakami, *Akidah Golongan Selamat*, 47.

³⁶ Ramadhani, *6 Landasan Utama Dakwah Salafiyah*, 41.

³⁷ Syaikh Muhammad Bin Jamil Zainu, *Jalan Golongan Yang Selamat*, trans. Ainul Haris Umar Arifin (Darul Haq, 2016), 20.

in the hadith, namely in the form of *asmâul husna* and *ash shifât al ulâ*.³⁸ With this monotheism, we believe in every attribute and name with which Allah characterizes and names Himself, believing that no one compares to Allah in these attributes and names. Purify Him from all despicable traits, because Allah is Almighty with all traits of greatness and perfection. Purified from all shortcomings and similarities with His creatures.³⁹

The Formation and Spread of the Salafi-Wahhabi Narrative of Kalam

The formation and dissemination of the Salafi-Wahhabi narrative about Kalam on social media is an interesting phenomenon that has occurred in recent years, along with the increasing prevalence of religious studies on social media. They have their own interpretation of this problem, which is then spread in the realm of social media.

The important things that need to be explored in this aspect are: First, what is the basis for the formation of narratives around Kalam by Salafi-Wahhabis on social media, who is the reference in this aspect, and how Salafi-Wahhabis understand this issue. Second, how this narrative was then spread by the Salafi-Wahhabi circles.

1. Narrative Formation

The Salafi-Wahhabi circles as explained earlier do have a distinctive approach to the science of kalam. They tend to emphasize the use of primary texts such as the Quran and hadith, as well as quotations that they believe are representations of the teachings of Salaf (the early generation of Islam). However, there is a tendency in their narrative formation to separate these texts from their historical and cultural contexts.

In their approach to kalam, there is a tendency not to pay enough attention to the historical, social, or cultural context in which the texts are expressed. This can lead to an incomplete or limited understanding of the true meaning of religious texts.

The narrative of Salafi-Wahhabi groups tends to maintain a strong separation between their understanding of religious teachings and the cultural and social context of today's society. This can result in a mismatch between the understanding of religious texts and social reality and the contemporary context.

In analyzing the formation of the Salafi-Wahhabi narrative of kalam, it is important to point out that the Salafi-Wahhabis sought to reconstruct the meaning of classical texts and Quranic verses to support their views.

Salafi-Wahhabis often attempt to reconstruct and reinterpret the meaning of classical texts and verses of the Qur'an to support their views. They tend to adopt a literal view of

³⁸ Hakami, *Akidah Golongan Selamat*, 61.

³⁹ Ramadhani, *6 Landasan Utama Dakwah Salafiyah*, 47.

religious texts, including the Quran and hadith. This approach causes them to try to interpret texts according to their literal or spiritual meaning without paying attention to the broader historical or linguistic context.

Salafi-Wahhabis often reconstruct the meaning of classical texts to strengthen their views on religious teachings. They seek an understanding that is in line with the principles of Salaf (the early generation of Islam), and this can lead to interpretations that may deviate from traditional views.

They tend to choose quotes that support their views and ignore other contexts that may contradict the views they hold. This can lead to biased or less thorough interpretations of religious texts.

The Salafi-Wahhabis place primary texts such as the Quran and hadith as the supreme authority in their religious views. This encourages them to seek to interpret these texts exclusively, without considering or acknowledging any other possible interpretations or approaches.

The textualist or literalist Salafi-Wahhabi ideology accompanied by manhaj of thought that "only" accepts the early generation as a reference in thought, making all forms of interpretation in the formation of the narrative of kalam science tend to be adapted to this view. Including, the opportunity to accept the view that kalam science as a study, is not static and continues to undergo development and change along with the development and change of time and space in which kalam science is narrated.

The Salafi-Wahhabi view tends to emphasize a strong separation between religious teachings and the social, political, or cultural context that exists in contemporary times. They often lead to a more literal and literal understanding of religion, without considering or adapting religious teachings to the social or cultural developments that occur in modern society.

When it comes to kalam science, which often involves the interpretation of religious texts or philosophical discussions related to religious beliefs, Salafi-Wahhabis tend to have more conservative views. They may label a more open approach to interpretation as contrary to Islamic values or principles that they consider to be more "pure" or original.

This strong separation between religion and contemporary social, political, or cultural contexts can lead to the view that a more flexible or open approach to interpretation is an undesirable innovation or change in Islamic teachings. This can lead to stereotypes or stigmatism towards interpretive methods that are not in line with the views that have been established in Salafi-Wahhabi circles.

Salafi-Wahhabi views often reject innovation in religion, and in the context of kalam science, this can lead to stigmatization of interpretations that are not in line with established

views. They may label more open interpretations as "heresy" or an unwanted innovation in religion.

Salafi-Wahhabi ideology often emphasizes the rejection of innovation (*bid'ah*) in religion. In the context of kalam science, they may see some interpretive concepts or developing thinking as an undesirable form of innovation in religious understanding.

Salafi-Wahhabis tend to emphasize conformity or consistency with the understanding of the teachings of Salaf (the early generation of Islam). In the context of kalam science, this view can influence their views on thinkers and theories that are not in line with the Salafi view.

Salafi-Wahhabi ideology elevates major texts such as the Quran and hadith as the most dominant authority on religious understanding. This approach signifies that they tend to prioritize the literal interpretation of the texts and claim that their views correspond to the understanding that is considered the most authentic and pure in Islam.

As a result, the influence of this ideology is evident in their views on kalam science and the interpretation of religious texts. They tend to interpret the texts according to their literal meaning without leaving much room for broader or contextual interpretation. In the context of kalam science, the Salafi-Wahhabi approach tends to reject interpretations that go beyond the boundaries of the literality of the text, preferring to rely on interpretations that are directly sourced from those primary texts.

Because of this tendency, they may reject or be skeptical of interpretive methods that involve philosophical or contextual approaches to religious texts. For them, interpretation must be in line with the literal understanding of primary texts, and this view can influence rejection of concepts that are considered to be contrary to the established views of Salafi-Wahhabi ideology.

2. Narrative Spread

a. Dissemination of Salafi-Wahhabi Kalam Narrative and Narrative

Information Dissemination Theory, also known as information diffusion theory, is a theoretical framework used to explain how information, news, or narratives spread through populations or communities. This theory includes a number of concepts and principles that help understand the process of disseminating information, including on social media.

The diffusion of information related to the spread of the Salafi-Wahhabi narrative refers to the process of spreading beliefs, thoughts, and views supported by the Salafi-Wahhabi ideology. This often involves disseminating messages, arguments, or interpretations of religion that conform to Salafi-Wahhabi views through various communication channels and media.

The internet and social media have a huge role in the diffusion of Salafi-Wahhabi information. Through these platforms, narratives, writings, video recordings, and other content that support Salafi-Wahhabi views can spread widely and quickly to various circles.

The spread of the Salafi-Wahhabi Kalam narrative is often related to trust in religious authorities and scholars who represent this view. Trust in religious authority that is seen as having an authentic understanding of Islamic teachings is the main driver of the spread of this view.

The dissemination of information related to this narrative is closely related to the use of modern media and communication platforms. Social media and the internet play an important role in spreading the Salafi-Wahhabi view widely to different walks of life.

The spread of the Salafi-Wahhabi narrative is also related to social influences within the community or environment that accepts these views. Support from groups or communities that identify with Salafi-Wahhabi views can accelerate the spread of this ideology.

Interactions between individuals in the community or environment also play an important role in the spread of this view. Discussions, lectures, or religious gatherings facilitate the exchange of ideas and beliefs that support Salafi-Wahhabi views.

b. Utilization of Social Media

In the context of social media, the theory of information dissemination is very relevant. Social media has changed the way information spreads, and this theory helps us understand the mechanisms behind the virality of content, the spread of trends, and the spread of information that occur on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and others. Analysis of the dissemination of information on social media can help certain parties in planning campaigns, predicting trends, or measuring the impact of a narrative or news.

In the context of the spread of the Salafi-Wahhabi kalam narrative as explained in the theory of the propagation of narrative/information above, that social media such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and other platforms, allows Salafi-Wahhabi leaders and followers to spread their narrative effectively. They can upload lectures, articles, and videos that support their views.

The Salaf-Wahhabi group is generally among those who have good literacy towards the development of information and communication technology (ICT). With access to this field, Salafi-Wahhabi people actively use social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, to spread religious messages, teachings, and da'wah. They create and share content that supports the understanding of the Salafi-Wahhabi religion.

Salafi-Wahhabi groups are also often referred to as "noisy minorities", because although they are still small in number, their activism on social media can be said to be the majority with a number of narratives they have.

One of the main goals of the Salafi-Wahhabis on social media is to spread their version of Islam. They shared quotes from the Quran and Hadith, religious studies, and lectures that supported their understanding of Islam.

Salafi-Wahhabis often use social media to criticize and reject innovations (*bid'ah*) in religion. They strive to maintain simplicity in worship and belief, and social media is a means of reminding people to avoid practices that are considered heretical.

Salafi-Wahhabis are often active in anti-Sufism campaigns on social media. They criticized Sufi practices as deviations from pure Islam. They are also active in criticizing alternative religious understandings, such as Islamic liberalism, feminist understanding, or interfaith dialogue, which are perceived as a threat to their understanding of Islam.

Salafi-Wahhabis use social media to provide online religious teaching and study. They often hold classes, lectures, and Q&A sessions to assist individuals in understanding religion more deeply.

The principle of monotheism, or the oneness of Allah, is the main focus in the Salafi-Wahhabi understanding of religion. They use social media to campaign for the correct understanding of monotheism and invite people to avoid all forms of shirk (associating with Allah). Salafi-Wahhabis often share articles and e-books that support their understanding of religion. They encourage people to read and understand religious texts in a Salafi-Wahhabi context. In addition to religious activities, they also use social media to raise funds for various humanitarian and charitable projects. This could include assistance for victims of natural disasters, food aid deliveries, and other social projects.

Beyond all that, the *kalam* narrative as explained earlier is also one of the serious concerns of this group. Moreover, that the issue of *kalam* concerns the most basic thing in religion, which can be related to the issue of monotheism and also heresy in religion, which is the central issue of the existence of Salafi-Wahhabis itself.

In general, there are a number of impacts found related to the narrative of this *kalam* among the Salafi-Wahhabi community on social media as follows: *First*, the emergence of Polarization of Religious Understanding. The spread of this narrative can lead to polarization in the understanding of religion among Muslims. There is a split between those who accept the Salafi-Wahhabi view of *kalam* and those who have a diverse view.

Indeed, the presence of social media has provided a strong platform to campaign for certain ideologies. The Salafi-Wahhabi followers have very well managed to use social media to expand their network and influence the thinking of many.

The Salafi-Wahhabi narrative can in some cases challenge traditional religious authority and replace it as a source of reference in religious understanding. The Salafi-Wahhabi narrative often rejects local practices and traditions that are not in accordance with their version of the understanding of monotheism (oneness of Allah). This can trigger tensions with religious authorities that defend local traditions that are considered to be contrary to Salafi-Wahhabi teachings.

Salafi-Wahhabis openly criticize alternative religious understandings, including Sufism and practices that are considered heretical (innovations in religion). This criticism can challenge religious authorities that may practice or support such practices. Salafi-Wahhabis use social media to spread their religious messages directly to the public. This can reduce reliance on local religious authorities as the primary source of religious teaching.

The Salafi-Wahhabi understanding is often seen as firm and closed in religious interpretation. This can spark disagreement with the more flexible or inclusive approach taken by traditional religious authorities. Salafi-Wahhabis encourage individuals to understand religion independently through authentic sources such as the Quran and Hadith, without the intermediary of religious authority. This can reduce the need to follow fatwas or the views of local scholars.

The Salafi-Wahhabi narrative often has an appeal to the younger generation who are looking for clarity in religious understanding. They may be more interested in a more rigorous and easy-to-understand understanding, thus being able to ignore traditional religious authority. In relation to the critical theory of religious discourse, it can be explained that the Salafi-Wahhabi narrative presents the construction of certain meanings related to the understanding of Islam, such as the emphasis on strict monotheism, the rejection of bid'ah, and criticism of alternative practices. This narrative will certainly change the way people understand the teachings of Islam and offer different interpretations.

In addition, the Salafi-Wahhabi narrative can create hegemony or dominance over religious understanding in a community. This can shake traditional religious authorities who may have different understandings or different practices.

Through the use of social media and independent educational approaches, Salafi-Wahhabi narratives can reinforce the reproduction of their own power. They define themselves what is true in religion and influence the thinking of the surrounding community. The Salafi-Wahhabi narrative contains deep ideological elements. They create

certain norms and values that encourage people to follow their understanding. It reflects how narratives can be ideologies that influence social and political actions.

The emergence of social media has allowed Salafi-Wahhabi followers to spread their narrative quickly and effectively. They can upload lectures, articles, and videos that support their views, and take advantage of sharing and social networking features.

Social media allows users to easily share information, including text, images, videos, and links to religious sources. Salafi-Wahhabi followers can quickly spread messages, Quranic quotes, and lectures that support their understanding of their religion. Social media has the potential to make content go viral. Strong or controversial religious messages can spread quickly, reaching a wider audience than expected. When a message goes viral, it can have a significant impact on the spread of religious narratives.

Social media drives user engagement. Salafi-Wahhabi followers can actively comment, like, or share content that they find relevant. These kinds of discussions and interactions reinforce religious narratives and create a strong community around that understanding.

The use of visual content, such as video lectures and infographics, makes it easier to convey religious messages. Social media supports video sharing through platforms like YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook, which can be more effective in reaching younger, visual audiences.

Salafi-Wahhabi followers can use religion-related keywords and hashtags to make their content more discoverable by those looking for specific information. This helps in reaching a larger target audience. Social media allows Salafi-Wahhabi followers to reach audiences around the world. They are not limited by geographical restrictions and can communicate with individuals from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Social media empowers individuals to become their own "dai" or spreader of their own religious message. This allowed widely unknown Salafi-Wahhabi followers to have significant influence in the dissemination of their narratives.

Furthermore, significant financial support allows Salafi-Wahhabi groups to produce high-quality content, hire media experts, and invest resources in promotional campaigns on social media. This allows them to reach a larger audience and effectively reinforce their religious narrative.

Financial support enables the production of high-quality multimedia content, such as videos, podcasts, websites, or printed materials. This includes the use of advanced technology, expensive production equipment, and a team of experts to ensure the content is visually and audio-intensive. Financial support enables the development of responsive,

accessible, and functional websites. In some cases, it can even support the development of custom apps that provide content, classes, or resources to followers.

With strong financial support, Salafi-Wahhabi groups can maximize their presence in the digital space and social media, expand the reach of content, and influence the thoughts and views of many. This provides an opportunity for them to expand their influence and spread the religious views they hold

The understanding of religion emphasized by the Salafi-Wahhabis is one that is centered on fundamental beliefs and literalism. It can appeal to individuals who seek a simple and assertive religious view in complex social or political situations.

Social solidarity and membership in religious or social groups that support Salafi-Wahhabi can reinforce narratives and support their dissemination on social media. This combination of social and political factors can create an environment that favors the spread of the Salafi-Wahhabi Kalam narrative on social media, especially in the midst of increasing political or social instability.

CONCLUSION

First, in relation to what discourse the Salafi-Wahhabi group discusses in the thought around Kalam, it can be explained that the Salafi-Wahhabi group often expresses discourses that emphasize the rejection of the use of theological and philosophical speculation in religious understanding. They argue that the Qur'an and Hadith as the main source of Islam are sufficient as a guide in religion. They tend to reject rational and philosophical approaches to understanding Islamic teachings, and prefer literal textual understanding. Salafi-Wahhabis emphasize literalism in religious understanding, and they often see the understanding of kalam (rational theology) as having the potential to confuse the faith and bring about concepts not found in sacred texts. Therefore, their discourse tends to favor a very conservative and textual approach to understanding religion, emphasizing a simple creed and detaching itself from complex theological discussions.

Second, related to the formation and dissemination of the Salafi-Wahhabi Kalam Narrative on social media, it can be explained that the Salafi-Wahhabi group has used social media effectively to spread their religious narratives. They have significant financial backing for the production of quality religious content. Technological developments have allowed them to reach a wider and deeper audience with their narratives. Social media has become an important tool in strengthening their understanding of religion and views, while also creating challenges in terms of social media literacy and religious tolerance.

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