RELIGIOUS IDENTITY REPRESENTATION ON AMERICAN MUSLIM INFLUENCERS' YOUTUBE CHANNELS

THESIS

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THESIS

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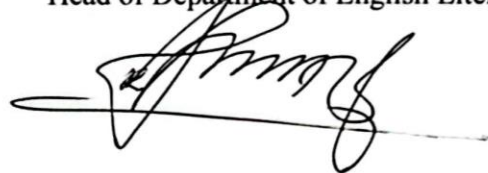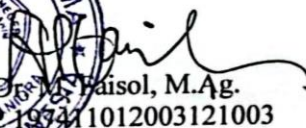
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MOTTO

"O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes so that you may (get to) know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is the All-Knowing, All-Aware."

(QS. Al-Hujurat [49]: 13)

DEDICATION

With profound gratitude, I dedicate this Thesis to:

The Almighty, Allah Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala, the eternal source of strength and solace, whose unwavering support sustains me through every endeavor. May He Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala accept, be pleased with, and bestow blessings upon this work.

My beloved parents, Setiadi Cahyono Putro & Eti Djatiningsih, whose boundless sacrifices I can never adequately repay.

All of my esteemed teachers, from preschool to college, who taught and guided me to live life under the auspices of knowledge.

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All of my Muslim brothers and sisters around the world.

All of human kind who loves and strives for kindness, justice, and peace.

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All praises be to Allah, the Lord of the entire world. With Him we seek assistance in all matters of this world and the hereafter. And shalawat and salam may always be offered upon our prophet Muhammad, his family, his companions, and those who follow his guidance until the Day of Judgement.

I hereby deliver my respects and gratitude to the parties that assisted me in preparing, performing, and completing the thesis writing process, and to individuals who accompany, support, and/or assist me during my prolonged undergraduate thesis journey:

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Finally, as a human being, I am aware that this research would not be an excellent work without the readers' constructive criticism and valuable feedbacks. May its findings serve a practical and beneficial use in the realm of sociolinguistics and religious identity.

The researcher,

Sakinah Asa Lalita

ABSTRACT

Identity is a pivotal part of human being and has emerged as a flourishing research topic in the recent decades. Numerous studies have delved into various facets of identity such as age, gender, race, ethnic, national, and social affiliations. However, research on religious identity, particularly within the realm of sociolinguistics, remains relatively limited. Despite the modern age that largely overlooking religion, it holds profound meaning in the identification of most individuals and groups. Therefore, this study endeavors to scrutinize the representation of religious identity among American Muslim influencers. The American Muslim community is currently growing, striving to navigate life as a minority group while remaining engaged with the broader American society. Furthermore, in this digital era, social media influencers wield considerable influence in shaping societal norms and behaviors. This research employs thematic analysis methodology, drawing upon the identity principles outlined by Omoniyi & White (2006) and the representation theory elucidated by Hall (1997). The data for this study were extracted from three YouTube channels of Social Media Influencers (SMIs) based in the USA. The findings of this study reveal that American Muslim influencers manifest positive representations of religious identity through various ways: (1) using Arabic words and expressions, (2) active engagement with Islamic teachings, (3) mention or discuss religious beliefs and practice, (4) sharing personal religious experiences, and (5) showing community involvement and social responsibility. The findings hold significance not only for non-Muslims but also for Muslims residing outside the USA, offering insights into how American Muslims perceive and enact their religious identity.

مستخلص البحث

لاليتا، سكينة. آسا (٢٠٢٤) تمثيل الهوية الدينية على قنوات يوتيوب للمؤثرين المسلمين الأمريكيين. البحث الجامعي. قسم الأدب الإنجليزي، كلية العلوم الإنسانية، جامعة مولانا مالك إبراهيم الإسلامية الحكومية مالانج. المشرف د. مينارني سوسيلواتي، م. إد.

الكلمات الأساسية: الهوية الدينية، تمثيل الهوية، المسلمين الأمريكيين، مؤثري وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي.

تعد الهوية جزءا مهما من كوننا إنسانا، وقد كانت موضوعا بحثا سريع النمو في العقود الأخيرة. لقد بحثت العديد من الدراسات في جوانب مختلفة من الهوية مثل العمر والجنس والعرق والانتماء العرق والجنسية والانتماء الاجتماعي. ومع ذلك، فإن البحث في الهوية الدينية، وخاصة في مجال علم اللغة الاجتماعي، لا يزال محدودا نسبيا. ورغم أن العصر الحديث قد أهمل الدين، إلا أن للدين معنى عميقا في هوية معظم الأفراد والجماعات. ولذلك يسعى هذا البحث إلى دراسة تمثيل الهوية الدينية لدى المؤثرين المسلمين الأمريكيين. إن المجتمع المسلم الأمريكي ينمو حاليا، ويكافح من أجل التعامل مع الحياة كمجموعة أقلية مع بقاء منخرطا في المجتمع الأمريكي الأكبر. بصرف النظر عن ذلك، في هذا العصر الرقمي، يتمتع المؤثرين على وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي بتأثير كبير في تشكيل الأعراف والسلوك المجتمعي. يستخدم هذا البحث منهجية التحليل الموضوعي التي اقترحها Omoniyi & White (٢٠٠٦) ونظرية التمثيل التي حددها Hall (١٩٩٧). تم أخذ بيانات هذه الدراسات من ثلاث قنوات على اليوتيوب تابعة لمؤثري وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي (SMI) ومقرها الولايات المتحدة. تكشف نتائج هذا البحث أن المؤثرين المسلمين الأمريكيين يجسدون تمثيلات إيجابية للهوية الدينية من خلال وسائل مختلفة: (١) استخدام الكلمات والتعابير العربية، (٢) الانخراط بنشاط مع التعاليم الإسلامية، (٣) ذكر أو مناقشة المعتقدات والممارسات الدينية، (٤) تبادل الخبرات الدينية الشخصية، و (٥) إظهار المشاركة المجتمعية والمسؤولية الاجتماعية. هذه النتائج مهمة ليس فقد لغير المسلمين ولكن أيضا للمسلمين الذين يعيشون خارج الولايات المتحدة، حيث توفر نظرة ثاقبة حول كيفية رؤية المسلمين الأمريكيين لعقيدتهم وممارستها.

ABSTRAK

Lalita, Sakinah. Asa (2024) Religious Identity Representation on American Muslim Influencers' YouTube Channels. Skripsi. Jurusan Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Humaniora, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Pembimbing Dr. Meinarni Susilowati, M. Ed.

Kata kunci: identitas agama, representasi identitas, Muslim Amerika, influencer media sosial

Identitas adalah bagian penting dari manusia dan telah menjadi topik penelitian yang berkembang pesat dalam beberapa dekade terakhir. Sejumlah penelitian telah menyelidiki berbagai aspek identitas seperti usia, jenis kelamin, ras, etnis, kebangsaan, dan afiliasi sosial. Namun, penelitian mengenai identitas keagamaan, khususnya dalam bidang sosiolinguistik, masih relatif terbatas. Meskipun zaman modern sudah banyak mengabaikan agama, namun agama mempunyai makna mendalam dalam identifikasi sebagian besar individu dan kelompok. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini berupaya untuk mencermati representasi identitas agama di kalangan influencer Muslim Amerika. Komunitas Muslim Amerika saat ini sedang berkembang, berjuang untuk menjalani kehidupan sebagai kelompok minoritas sambil tetap terlibat dengan kehidupan masyarakat Amerika yang lebih luas. Selain itu, di era digital ini, influencer media sosial mempunyai pengaruh besar dalam membentuk norma dan perilaku masyarakat. Penelitian ini menggunakan metodologi analisis tematik yang mengacu pada prinsip-prinsip identitas yang dikemukakan oleh Omoniyi & White (2006) dan teori representasi yang diuraikan oleh Hall (1997). Data untuk penelitian ini diambil dari tiga saluran YouTube Social Media Influencer (SMI) yang berbasis di AS. Temuan penelitian ini mengungkapkan bahwa influencer Muslim Amerika mewujudkan representasi positif identitas keagamaan melalui berbagai cara: (1) menggunakan kata-kata dan ungkapan Arab, (2) terlibat secara aktif dengan ajaran Islam, (3) menyebutkan atau mendiskusikan keyakinan dan praktik keagamaan, (4) berbagi pengalaman keagamaan pribadi, dan (5) menunjukkan keterlibatan masyarakat dan tanggung jawab sosial. Temuan ini penting tidak hanya bagi non-Muslim tetapi juga bagi umat Islam yang tinggal di luar AS, memberikan wawasan tentang bagaimana umat Islam Amerika memandang dan mempraktikkan keyakinan mereka.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Islam has been growing in the United States since the beginning of the twentieth century (Chen & Dorairajoo, 2020). Despite the 9/11 event and the continuing islamophobia issue, the institutionalization of western Muslim society can be seen in the flourishing existence of Muslim schools, places of worship, halal food outlets, Western-based Islamic mass media, and even the increasing Muslims political representation (Curtis, 2009; Duderija, 2022). This is influenced by the "progressive Muslim" mindset, where the Muslim society in America considers themselves as "American Muslims," and not only "Muslims living in America" (Simons, 2008). It means they attempt to integrate Islamic values into American context as well as actively engage in social activities.

American Muslims have serious attention in representing the sense of who they are as a Muslim, or in other words, their religious identity. At least, there are two reasons to answer the question of why religious identity representation becomes pivotal for American Muslims. First, they have the importance to combat misinformation and negative framing of Islam and Muslim in the western world (Chen & Dorairajoo, 2020; Trysnes & Synnes, 2022). Negative assumptions toward Islam and Muslim can endanger their lives and disrupt the peace in the American or even global community. Second, they have the necessity to influence their fellow western Muslims to put into practice the true Islamic teachings and build

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community to foster identity confidence (Chen & Dorairajoo, 2020). Therefore, how American Muslims portrayed their religious identity is interesting to be further examined.

Despite century-old predictions that religion would fade away, many people still report that religion is one of the most important parts of their identity (Bell, 2016). Major reviews of identity theory and research have largely overlooked the role of religion in forging identities for individuals and groups (Peek, 2005). Religion often be seen as a hindrance to the progression of science and as a topic no longer applicable to modern times. However, for most people, religious identity gives profound meaning to their identification as individuals and groups. It is because religion mostly bounds up with people's deepest beliefs about life, the universe, and many other things (Joseph, 2004).

Nowadays, identity representation can be shared more widely through various social media platforms which only began to be developed in the first decade of this twenty first century. These internet-based sites, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube and TikTok have the power to regulate information, ideas, values, and anything that is posted by who so-called content creators. These platforms are inseparable from –mainly– the youth, who grew up using social media and hence is considered as "digital natives" (Page, et al. 2014). Obviously, these digital native content creators of social media come from various parts of the world, including America.

Social media users who are actively posting content and having numerous audience beyond family and friends are known as Social Media Influencers (SMIs). Gomez (2019, p. 9) says that SMIs are more or less the "generation's new idols who owe their fame to social media." What makes this kind of "celebrities" different from traditional celebrities is the system of gaining recognition. In principle, the content and the audience of traditional celebrities are provided by the mass media, and then the idols will play their part and loan image. But these new famous people in this era create their own content and build their own audience. They are usually younger users who take part as the social media drivers (Page, et al. 2014). Under this fame, SMIs' behaviors are commonly followed by the public (Rachmad & Rohmah, 2022). Therefore, the researcher considers that SMIs have great role and power in constructing the society.

How these SMIs represent religious identity becomes significant since the product of representation can regulate social behavior. According to Hall (1997, p. 2), representation is "the production of meaning through language." This production of meaning requires the work of representational systems that involve three basic steps: **(1) Conceptual System –** when people have certain concept or mental representation of a thing, an object, or even an idea in their minds, **(2) Language System** – a transfer of concept in mind to language that carry meaning, and **(3) Interpretation** – the language have to be interpreted to get the meaning (Hall, 1997). Under Stuart Hall's framework, "language" refers to both visual and linguistic signs. These signs that carry meaning have social effects and thus are able to regulate social behavior. For example, an audience who first was islamophobic,

may change his/her behavior when meeting a Muslim after receive positive "meaning" of a Muslim in social media. Moreover, positive portrayals can booster Muslims' confidence to show their identity and do Islamic practices publicly.

In the domain of sociolinguistics, language is seen as playing the central role as the marker of identity (Omoniyi & White, 2006). It becomes the instrument for people to reflect and express their identities. Under this view, the way people represent identity is context-dependent. Identity is not seen as fixed and rigid, but constructed within particular situations. Thus, sociolinguistics focuses on how, with the instrumentality of language, "people position or construct themselves and are positioned or constructed by others in socio-cultural situations" (p. 1).

Considering the interesting concept of "American Muslims" and the power of Social Media Influencers, this current research aims to analyze religious identity representation of American Muslim Influencers. The data were taken from three YouTube channels named; Moaaz, Yusuf Truth, and Egypturk. These three individuals are chosen based on purposive sampling technique that will be discussed further in chapter three. YouTube is chosen due to the length of the contents that can be uploaded. With longer videos, the researcher expects to get richer data to be scrutinized since SMIs tend to talk on a topic more deeply and thoroughly. In addition, YouTube takes the first place as a social media platform which mostly accessed (Yahya, et al. 2020). Under sociolinguistic approach, the analysis will be conducted based on Omonoyi & White's (2006) identity theory and Hall's (1997) representation theory, focusing on the linguistic signs from the SMIs utterances.

Many studies have been conducted related to this current research scope. These previous studies can be classified into three areas; (1) Language and Identity, (2) Islam and Muslim (mainly) in western countries, and (3) Language and Social Media. However, most of the studies covered multiple areas of the above-mentioned classifications. First, in the scope of language and Identity, Aisah (2019) investigated identity reflected in politeness strategies used by *Crazy Rich Asians* film's main character, Rachel Chu. She analyzed the politeness strategies based on Brown & Levinson (1987), and examined the identity used Sheldon Stryker's (1980) theory.

Prior researches in Islam and Muslim rooted in diverse focus. Farooqui & Kaushik (2022) conducted a systematic review of studies investigated experiences of Muslim youth growing up in the age of Islamophobia. The findings showed that the majority of those studies took UK, USA, Canada, and Australia as research sites. The discovered experiences are around how Muslim is 'othered' in the west, various identity negotiation strategies, religious bullying by peers or teachers, and stereotypes and discriminations toward Muslim women who wear hijab. In the same sphere, Khan, et al (2019) investigated Muslims' representation in Donald Trump's anti-Muslim statements during the American Presidential Elections of 2016. By employing Critical Discourse Analysis, they showed how Trump's statements portrayed Muslims negatively while representing himself as very patriotic for America.

On the other hand, there are also scholars who did not focus on the anti-Muslim issue, but more to the Muslim community itself. Chen & Dorairajoo (2020)

put forward a topic on how American Muslims' conducting *da'wah* (call to Islam). They did an in-depth fieldwork, including interviewed forty-nine Muslim converts across the USA. Fascinatingly, the result presented that American Muslims do not solely invite people to Islam through direct teaching, but also demonstrated faith by deeds, which then have great influence to attract non-Muslims to convert. Next, Fawzi (2019) explored how Muslim Student Association (MSA) members experiencing Islam in America. He conducted ethnography research and from that he could address the voices of American Muslim youth.

Other earlier investigations can be classified in either two or three of the areas. Sule & Suleiman (2020) highlighted that social media is being a great tool for *da'wah* in this current contemporary world. They mentioned many Muslim individuals and group who are actively using social media to convey the message of Islam, or simply being vocal with their faith. This can be exemplified by Rachmad & Rohmah's (2022) study which investigated expressive act among Indonesian Muslim Influencers on their Instagram captions. Meanwhile, Zaid, et al (2022) examined Muslim Influencers in the Gulf Region. The results showed that these SMIs are creative and innovative in bringing more relatable contents to young Muslims. For example, they address daily activities, leisure activities, traveling vlogs, product reviews, and even humorous contents, while still naturally maintain Islamic values and practices.

Research around the use of social media as a way of self and religious representation also conducted by Yahya, et al (2020), Trysnes & Synnes (2021), Abanoz (2022), and Hasif (2023). In this day and age, YouTube which is easily

accessed is used as an effort to develop positive Islamic representation (Yahya, et al. 2020). Trysnes & Synnes's (2021) research goes in line with this argument. Their findings showed that Muslim youth respondents in Oslo care about confronting and changing negative image of Islam in Norwegian society. On the other hand, instead of concentrating investigation to content creators only, Abanoz (2022) and Hasif (2023) covered analysis of the audience reactions too. Different research sites did play part in affecting the founded responses. In Turkey where Muslim is a majority group, user comments more to showing regret for the lack of Islamic knowledge reflected in the street interview contents (Abanoz, 2023). But in Mexico where Muslim is a minority group, Islam-related contents received warm welcome by the audience (Hasif, 2023). However, this depends too on what, specifically, the contents are about.

There are more earlier studies that variously established under these three areas. Ilahi (2020) and Akmal, et al (2021) concentrated in youth identity reflected in Twitter. One took famous Twitter accounts without any specified locations as the research subject, and one specifically took Acehnese Gen-Z. Both findings highlighting certain language characteristics used by the youth. Haque (2020) examined linguistic practices of Muslim in Netherlands and found that Arabic remains the principal language for them for practicing faith. The analysis of 1st and 2nd generations Muslim women immigrants in Barcelona by Ali (2023) showed code-choice and code-switch practices that remark their identity construction. This study importantly informs that Muslim society in western countries are ethnically diverse. Abidah (2019) scrutinized identity representation of Indonesian public

figures in YouTube video, applied Burke & Stets's (2009) theory. Besides social media, the investigation of Muslim in western world also done in online news (Diana, 2017).

Last, in the context of Muslims in the USA, Wang (2020) and Saleem & Ramasubramanian (2019) explored different things. Wang (2020) revealed how emerging adults respondents making meaning of "being Muslim American." They emphasized community, ethnic diversity, religious practice, and unity as parts of Muslim American experiences and identity. Lastly, Saleem & Ramasubramanian (2019) conducted research on the effects of negative media representations (of Islam) and the experiences of discriminations among Muslim American students. Results showed that Muslim Americans encountered social identity threats which lead to feeling of unacceptance, avoidance from majority members, and many other harmful intergroup consequences.

These studies presented some important findings that need to be addressed. First, language behaviors such as politeness strategies, code-switching, code-mixing and slang words can function as identity markers. Second, Islam and Muslims in the west are mostly represented negatively by mainstream media. The negative representations then become identity threats for Muslims in the west. Third, many Muslims use social media to convey the message of Islam or simply being vocal with their faith. Social media is used as an effort to develop positive Islamic representation.

However, these aforementioned studies are not free from gaps. In summary, none of the researches under the scope of identity representation, western Muslim society, and social media examined American Muslim Influencers, who may tend to construct positive representation of their religious identity despite the identity threats. In addition, research on how western Muslim represent their religious identity is still limited since most of studies focused on how they are represented by the out-group. Furthermore, none of the studies stood on Ominoyi & White's (2006) identity theory and Hall's (1997) representation theory. It becomes a sign that research on religious identity under sociolinguistic scope is still infrequent. Hence, this study aims to scrutinize how these American Muslim influencers represent their religious identity in YouTube videos.

B. Research Question

Following up the elucidated background above, the researcher formulates one research question in leading later findings and discussions:

How do American Muslim influencers represent religious identity through their utterances in their YouTube videos?

C. Theoretical & Practical Significances

1. Theoretical Significance

This study enhances the theoretical framework of identity investigation by focusing mainly religion, nationality, and SMIs as independent variables affecting the way religious identity is linguistically represented in this digital era. It will generate theory on how this kind of

individuals or groups understand themselves and portray to people the sense of who they are. In addition, this current research can add literature in the realm of sociolinguistics.

2. Practical Significance

At least, this study has two contributions for the society. Firstly, for Americans, religious identity investigation of Muslim society can help them to understand better about Muslim as a minority group in the west. The more they know, the more chance islamophobic cases and social tension between the majority and minority groups can be decreased. Secondly, for Muslims around the world, this study can be used as one of references to seek information on how American Muslim represent and adapt their religious identity to American context, as well as what struggle they may face. It moreover can help Muslim to tolerate each other views and practices that are possible to have some differences due to cultural effect, and also build the unity of Muslim society regardless of color, race, and nationality.

D. Scope & Limitations

This study has its detailed scope in terms of data of the study. The researcher does not neglect great potential of visual signs in fostering analysis of identity representation. However, due to the limited time of research, under sociolinguistic approach, this study specifically puts its attention to linguistic features only. In addition, although highly possible to appear in overlapping way, other social

identities beside religious identity are not covered in this research since it is out of the research focus.

E.   Definition of Key Terms

1. Identity representation   **:**   how people represent the sense of who they are and how they are represented by other people.

2. Religious identity   **:**   how a person or group of persons think of themselves as belonging to and representing the values of a particular religion and/or religious sect.

3. American Muslim   **:**   Muslim who lives in America and have the sense of belonging as American citizens.

4. Social Media Influencers :   social media users who are actively posting content and become new idols in this era. They owe their fame to social media. Usually, their behaviors, ideas, and lifestyles are followed by their audience.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW ON RELATED LITERATURE

A. Identity and Representation

Identity is something that is inherent in human lives. Wherever we go, the question of "who am I" or "who are you" will always emerge. The identification then can be varied. People can have different answer depends on particular context. It can be a woman, a father, a doctor, a football player, a European, a Muslim, and many more. Moreover, people also have many ways to represent, construct and negotiate their identities. Only from this probability of various and even multiple answers, we can already spot that identity is an interesting topic of study. Accordingly, it is not surprising that many scholars have tried to define and construct theories and approaches to analyze identity. Identity then has been extensively researched in different fields, including psychology, sociology, anthropology, and others (Susilowati, 2014).

Diana (2017) and Saleem & Ramasubramanian (2017) used the famous Social Identity theory by Tajfel & Turner (1979). This theory lies within the realm of Psychology. They posit that identity is individuals' self-concept (sense of who they are) based on their membership in social groups. The construction stages include Social Categorization, Social Identification, and Social Comparison. The first stage refers to the tendency of people to classify themselves and others into various social groups based on attributes like race, gender, nationality, or religion. Thus, an individual can belong to many different social groups.

Secondly, once people acknowledge in what categories they belong to, they will act the way they believe how that category act. It means they adopt the identity of that group, begin to see themselves in terms of group characteristics, and adopt its norms, values, and behaviors. After categorize and identify their membership, individuals enhance positive self-esteem by comparing their groups and the other groups. From this comparison, the concepts of in-group (us) and out-group (them) were derived. This theory asserts that individuals have natural tendency to perceive their in-group positively while being neutral or even negative towards out-group, which can lead to many implications, such as in-group favoritism, feelings of connection and unity (belonging), intergroup conflict, stereotyping and prejudice, and shifts in group membership.

Within sociolinguistic boundary and using Tajfel & Turner (1979) theory, Diana (2017) analyzed how Muslim represent their social identity in Muslim Blasphemy news published by Washington Post Online News. She argues that "social identity is the stimulus and language behavior is the response" (Diana, 2017, p. 20). The process of social identity mentioned above was appeared in her findings, used as strategy to defend the subjects' social identity as a Muslim from the blasphemy.

Social identity framework was also used in Saleem & Ramasubramanian (2017) who explored the effects of media representations and self-reported experiences of discrimination in influencing Muslim American students' identity management strategies. They highlighted both direct and indirect social identity threats that can negatively influence religious in-group's self-esteem and emotional

responses. For instance, the negative media representations of the students' religious identity as a minority make them avoid the majority member. However, on the other hand, experiences of discrimination were positively and significantly associated with desire for collectively challenge inequalities with behavioral strategies like changing the public perception of the in-group.

Another identity theory was proposed by Burke & Stets (2009) under social psychological perspective, used in Abidah's (2019) study about identity representation of Indonesian public figures in YouTube. Burke & Stets (2009) categorize the basic identity into three types; person identity, role identity, and social identity. Person identity is the uniqueness of someone that make him/her different from the other persons. It is more about characteristics or traits, in which an individual can still have it within his/her role and social identities. Role identity refers to the identity related to one's position in the society; college student, teacher, senior manager, mother, etc. These roles come up with certain expectations, but people can associate different meaning to the roles. For example, one may perceive college student as being very academic, while the other perceives it as having broad relations and being more sociable. Last, social identity means the identification of an individual with a social group(s). More or less this type of identity works in the same way with Tajfel & Turner's (1979) social identity theory.

Although Burke & Stets (2009) divided identity into these three types, it does not mean that person, role, and social identities are fully separated. Actually, they can be represented as multiple identities. Abidah's (2019) findings do inform that Indonesian public figure represent three of these types. However, the analysis

is still limited to categorize what utterance belongs to what identity type, and have not mentioned about the possibility of multiple identities appearance.

Beside Tajfel & Turner (1979) and Burke & Stets (2009), some previous studies applied other different theories in exploring identity. Rachmad & Rohmah (2022) analyzed religious identity of Indonesian influencers on instagram used Thornborrow's (2004) theory that also covers the possible identity construction of in-group and out-group. Ilahi (2020) used Androutsopoulos (2003) theory that focuses on youth identity markers; symbolic assertions, index of affiliations to a relevant group, and the use of vernacular. Aisah (2019) used Stryker's identity (1980) theory. Trysnes & Synnes (2021), focused in self-presentation of young Christians and Muslims used Goffman (1959) theory. Goffman (1959) proposes interesting frontstage and backstage behaviors of self-presentation. Frontstage behavior refers to when people show their best side in front of pubic or other people, while backstage behavior is used to describe hesitation or avoidance to show or share something about themselves.

Within the realm of sociolinguistics, Omoniyi & White (2006, p. 1) define identity as:

"*the ways in which people position or construct themselves and are positioned or constructed by other in socio cultural situations through the instrumentality of language and with reference to all of those variables that are identity markers for each society in the speech of its member.*"

Here, Omoniyi & White (2006) highlighting language as a prominent instrument of identity representation. By the above definition, identity owns these particular features: (1) it is not fixed, (2) it is constructed within established contexts and may

vary from one context to another, (3) that these contexts are moderated and defined by intervening social variables and expressed through language(s), (4) it is a salient factor in every communicative context whether given prominence or not, (5) it informs social relationship and therefore also informs the communicative exchanges that characterize them, (6) more than one identity may be articulated in a given context in which case there will be a dynamic of identities management (Omoniyi & White, 2006, p. 2).

For example, bilinguals or multilinguals may code-switch and/or code-mix their languages to align themselves with certain group or situation (Omoniyi & White, 2006). It is reflected in the study conducted by Ali (2023), who found that informants who are proficient in Spanish and Catalan will code-switch when they are speaking to people who were not from Catalonia. He also found that Pakistani people perceive code-switch between English and Urdu is part of their Pakistani characteristic, and it is said to be fashionable to combine both languages.

This current study acknowledges the diverse meaning of identity proposed by the above scholars, and views it as complementing to each other. But specifically in this study, Omoniyi & White's (2006) identity framework will be referred to lead the data collection and analysis, since it highlights the role of language in portraying identities. Within the realm of 'sociolinguistics of identity,' language is seen as "playing the central role in both interpreting and proclaiming identity (Omoniyi & White, 2006, p. 2).

In addition to Omoniyi & White (2006), Hall's (1997) representation theory will also be used to understand better how religious identity is represented by the American Muslim Influencers. Basically, representation means "the production of meaning through language" (Hall, 1997, p. 2). In simple way, it works within three stages; conceptual system, language system, and interpretation. Firstly, the conceptual system refers to a state where people have certain concept or mental representation of a thing, an object, or even an idea in their minds. Next, in language system, these concepts are transferred to language that carry meaning, so it can be communicated. The language then can be interpreted by the receiver or the other people.

However, representation works in a more complex way than it may seem (see figure 2.1). Representation involves signs as the instrument to produce meaning. Sign can be divided into two; visual sign and written/spoken sign. Sign itself is the product from the union between the forms of expression (signifiers) – something that can be seen, heard, touched or perceived– and the idea, image, or mental concept associated with the form (signified). Together, the signifier and the signified constitute something called a "sign" which carries meaning.

Nevertheless, the connection of a signifier and a signified can only convey understandable meaning when they are fixed by the shared codes, which is highly dependent to socio-cultural context. For example, in traffic lights, red does not naturally mean 'stop' and nor does green mean 'go.' It is the shared code in certain society or culture that fixes the meaning, not the color itself (Hall, 1997). Another example, the word 'sheep' can be associated with the concept of 'the animal with

four legs that can produce wool' because that is how it is fixed in the English language code. Thus, based on constructionist approach, meaning is said to be constructed and not fixed.

Figure 2.1 *How the System of Representation Works to Produce Meaning*
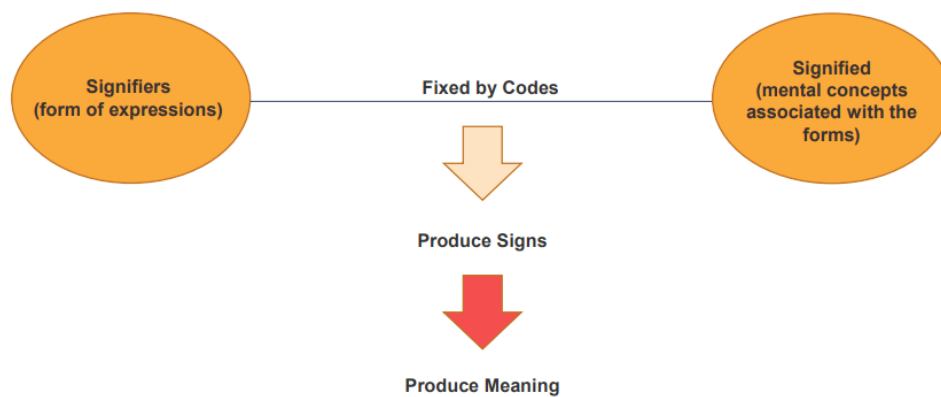
1. **Religious Identity**

   For many individuals, religion remains an important part in the hierarchy of identities that compose the self. Under specific context of Americans, Peek (2005) explained some reasons about why religion may become a significant identity basis. First, the experience of immigration where the first generation moved to a country –which was foreign in the beginning– made them turned to religion and built institutions to re-establish familiar social and cultural activities in the new society. This mostly happens to people who come from religious majority background and move to the society where they become minority.

   Secondly, religious institutions and organizations often offer many "non-religious benefits" for their members. For example, they provide

educational resources, economic opportunities, and peer trust and support. Therefore, as benefits increase, individuals will be more likely to be religiously affiliated. Thirdly, to define themselves first and foremost by their religions can ease the tension caused by incongruent immigrant, ethnic, and American identities. Last, in line with the third reason, religious identity can be functioned to maintain personal and social distinctiveness in the multicultural American context. Hence, as religious identity is still closely embedded in people's lives, it becomes a significant topic worthy of study.

Based on his research about religious identity development of Muslim college students in America, Peek (2005) revealed the three stages of religious identity development; religion as ascribed identity, religion as chosen identity, and religion as declared identity. Religion as ascribed identity means individuals take it for granted from their parents and/or environments. They did not have critical reflections of what is the meaning of being Muslim when they were children. Go to the next stage, as children age, they will have more mature conception of their religious identity. They begin to contemplate more important life questions, including why they choose and consciously decide to be a Muslim/Christian/Jew/etc.

The last stage goes further than only choosing. It is related with the well-known 9/11 tragedy that makes Islam and Muslims are viewed negatively. Under many pressures, they want to introduce the true Islamic teachings, construct positive representation of Islam and Muslims, and declare that "I am Muslim, and I am proud of it" (Peek, 2005, p. 233).

Although this model is not meant to serve as a universal model that applies in all contexts, the stages can be used as a reference to acknowledge whether the religious identity representations in this study reflect religious identity as ascribed, chosen, or declared identity.

B. Islam and Muslims in the USA

1. Muslim Population in the USA

Muslim society in America is highly diverse, in which Simmons (2008, p. 256) argued that "there is no other place in the world with such a diversity of Muslims with the exception of Mecca during the Hajj." This diversity is highly affected by the historical background of how Islam came to America. Scholars have different ways in dividing the various periods of Islamic arrival and growth in the US. The editors of *Muslims' Place in the American Public Square* divide its history into five distinct phases: the pre-Columbian, the antebellum, the postbellum up to World War II, the postwar period up to September 11, 2001 and the post 9/11 (Simmons, 2008). But its main arrival waves signaled mainly through the periods of Muslims immigration, started from nineteenth century (Smith, 1999). Therefore, immigrants constitute the majority of the Muslim population in the US, accounting for 64% of the community, from around 80 different countries in the world.

Simmons (2008) divided Muslims in the US into seven groupings (see figure 2.2). He stated that there are three major groupings among immigrant Muslims in the US; South Asians (32%), Arabs (26%), and

Continental Africans (7%). In addition, smaller groups include Iranian (7%), European (5%), and identified as "other" comprises 6% of the population. On the other hand, 36% of Muslims are indigenous (born in the US); the majority of indigenous Muslims are African Americans (make up 20% from the total Muslims). These percentages portray that Muslims in America have various backgrounds including related to race, ethnicity, and culture.

Figure 2.2 *The Diversity of Muslim Population in the US*
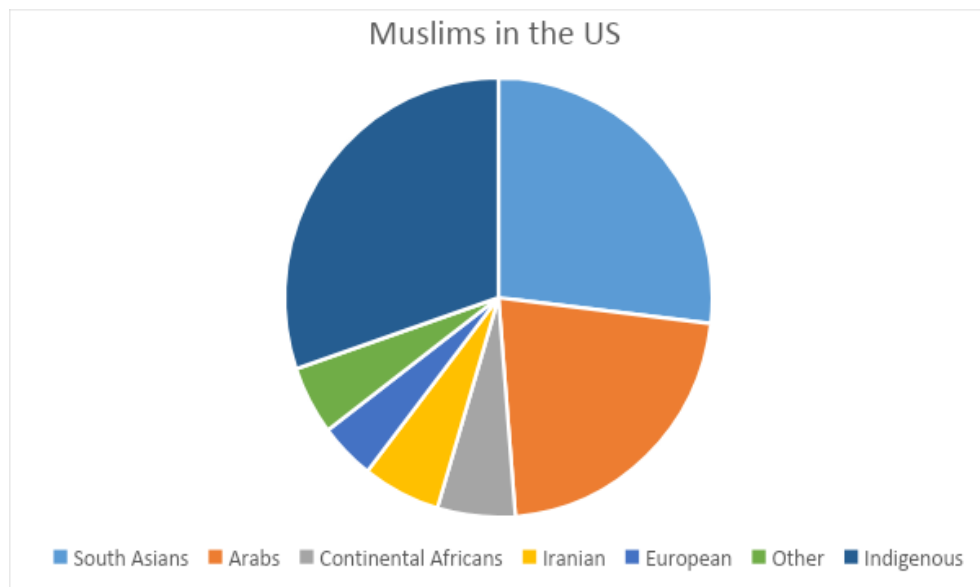
Ironically, the reality that many Muslims in the US have immigrant background often make them being discriminated and oppressed because part of their religious practices is seen as un-matched with the country's 'freedom' value. However, it is important to note that nowadays, there are a lot of Muslim citizens in the US who are the second or even third generations, which means they were born in America and have been living and growing as American citizens.

2. Combating Islamophobia

The term 'islamophobia' has been derived from the word 'Islam' with the suffix 'phobia', which means 'fear of Islam' or 'hatred towards Muslims' (Khan, et al., 2019). In other words, it implies the indiscriminate negative feelings and fear towards Islam and followers of Islam. Many scholars stated that islamophobia issue was booming in the US after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the name of 'Islam' in 2001 (Simmons, 2008; Khan, et al., 2019; Chen & Dorairajoo, 2020; Al-Sardi, 2020; Farooqui & Kaushik, 2022), though prior to that horrific event, negative images of Islam in America were already prevalent, and this attack made the negative portrayal of Islam even more intense (Chen & Dorairajoo, 2020).

Since the aftermath of 9/11, news media, television, film, online communities, and political cartoons represent Muslims generally and Arabs specifically as threatening, dangerous, and entirely foreign (Foody, 2018). Consequently, predominantly in Western and secular areas of the globe, Muslims are often depicted as strangers who are "unassimilable," and as outsiders who do not belong to their countries of residence (Wang, et al., 2020). This was also influenced by the lack information about Islam and Muslims before the attack happened (Simmons, 2008). Anti-Islam and anti-Muslim statements even publicly brought by the US 'person of power', Donald Trump, throughout his elections campaign in 2015/2016 (Khan, et al., 2019).

Negative media representations of Islam and Muslims of course affect the US Muslims' behavior, emotional state, and understanding of their identity. As to how Saleem & Ramasubramanian (2017) analysis of the negative media representation effects to Muslim students in America, who tend to hide their religious identity and avoid the majority member. Wang, et al's (2020, p. 343) interview of second-generation Muslim Americans also showed that they "had to fight against a master narrative that pigeon-holed them as either being "Muslim" or "American," without the possibility of being both."

Nevertheless, this discrimination challenges do not make them hold back and simply accept how the powerful narrative depict them. They have Muslim communities to confront the representation, to strengthen each other, to build more appropriate narrative, and to continuously building their sense of belonging within the country through the development of educational sites, places of worship, halal industries, etc. Moreover, in the western world, Islam and Muslims keep attracting people to convert either by direct and indirect *da'wah* (call to Islam) (Chen & Dorairajoo, 2020).

3. American Muslim Society Nowadays: The Progressive Muslim

In this day and age, there is shifting term from "Muslims living in America" to "American Muslims." The use of the second term is significant to the growing community of Muslims in the US, because "the first term obviously depicts a group still unassimilated into the American social,

political and economic landscape, while the second is an indication of the group having become integrated, if not assimilated, into the nation's fabric." (Simmons, 2008, p. 254). How American Muslims make a move to integrate with the country is called as 'progressive Muslim' (Duderija, 2022). These progressive Muslims are willing to engage and participate with the society without compromising their religious identity.

In addition, the –growing– presence of American Muslims today can be seen from many aspects. The increasing amount of American Muslim converts, the outweighs number of Islamic literatures written in English, the amount of Islamic terminology that is being integrated into western languages (no longer in need of translation), and Fawzi (2019) research on MSAs (Muslim Student Associations) are some examples that can mark the continuous development of Islam in the US.

Moreover, Smith (1999) has elaborated in his book chapters entitled "*Living a Muslim Live in American Society*" and "*The Public Practice of Islam*" about how American Muslims conduct their education, economics, how they deal with dietary needs, holidays, *da'wah* practice, etc. With the massive rising of digital era, a number of American Muslims youth also play their role as a 'Muslim influencer' who usually make contents related to Islamic self-improvement. The representation of religious identity by these in-group Muslims can function to combat negative Islam and Muslims portrayals as well as encourage their fellow Muslims to be confident with their identity.

I would like to close this sub-chapter with a quote from President Obama's speech at the Islamic Society of Baltimore on February 3, 2016, which is cited in Saleem & Ramasubramanian (2017):

> *"And today, there are voices in this world, particularly over the Internet, who are constantly claiming that you have to choose between your identities—as a Muslim, for example, or an American. Do not believe them. If you're ever wondering whether you fit in here, let me say it as clearly as I can, as President of the United States: You fit in here—right here. You're right where you belong. You're part of America, too. You're not Muslim or American. You're Muslim and American".* — President Barack Obama.

C. Social Media and SMIs

Social media has been a blossoming internet-based activity platform start from the first decade of this twenty first century. Its term refers to Internet-based sites and services that promote social interaction between participants (Page, et al., 2014). Some of the current mainstream social media are Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, YouTube, and Line. YouTube placed as the most accessed social media with a percentage of 43%, followed by Facebook 41%, WhatsApp 40%, and Instagram 38% (Yahya, et al., 2020).

Since social media was only significantly developed around two decades ago, Page, et al (2014) argues that the main social media user and even driver, called "digital natives," are the youngsters who grew up with social media. Thus, millennials/Gen-Y (born 1981-1996), Gen-Z (born 1997-2012), and Gen-Alpha (born 2013 and up) might be considered as the digital natives. Meanwhile, the early millenials and the generations before who adopted social media as adults are called 'digital immigrant' or 'digital visitor.'

Anyone who actively use social media, whether they are categorized as digital native or digital visitor, have the potential to gain fame and become Social Media Influencers (SMIs). These social media 'celebrities' are digital content creators who capture the attention of viewers via their own contents (Gomez, 2019). Unlike movie stars and TV celebrity whose self-presentation and persona portrayals are handled by industry or public representation, SMIs usually create their own media identity. They regularly make content about their areas of interest on their preferred social media platforms and engage with their followers.

SMIs are regarded as 'influential' because well-known individuals tend to be followed by the public (Rachmad & Rohmah, 2022), and hence they can intentionally or unintentionally influence people to do or to think as to how they do and think. In addition, they are usually individuals who have interest, knowledge, and expertise in their respective sectors (Zaid, et al., 2022). Hence, it is not surprising that they may attract public attention and admirations.

In the world of social media, Islamic or Muslim influencers is known as influencers who use to share Islamic contents. Their contents can be varied, such as introducing Muslim cultures, Islamic daily reminder, Qur'an recitations, sharing Islamic views or values, promoting Islamic teachings, Islamic motivation, Muslim daily live, making Islamic poetry, even humorous or fun contents, and many more. It is common that Muslim SMIs integrate their interest or expertise into the view of Islam.

These SMIs who use YouTube are called Youtubers. Their value are classified according to YouTube Creator Awards (Silver, Gold, Diamond) –also known as YouTube Play Buttons or YouTube Plaques. This current study analyzes the macro class of influencers, those who earned YouTube Silver Plaques. Below are more detailed classifications of the YouTubers adopted from Gomez (2019):

Table 2.1 *Classification of YouTubers Influencers*

Class	Award	Size of audience (subscribers)
Micro influencers (the largest group of SMIs)	- (but considered to have the highest engagement with followers)	Up to 99k
Macro influencers	Silver plaque	100k to 1 million
Mega influencers	Golden plaque	Over 1 million
Considered social media celebrities	Diamond plaque	Over 10 million

One of the most salient things to be examined from these SMIs are their verbal expressions. The analysis of Muslim Mexican YouTubers' religious identity conducted by Hasif (2023) can exemplify this argument. He called it the 'verbal manifestation of faith,' which can be overtly or covertly expressed. Overt expression is "an attempt to proclaim one's Islamic faith using verbs of possession (e.g. 'to be Muslim') or action (e.g. 'to eat halal'). These expressions commonly include personal pronouns such as 'I' or 'we'" (Hasif, 2023, p. 12). And covert expression involves the use of common Arabic religious phrases in Muslims' daily life, such as *Alhamdulillah* (thank God), *Insha Allah* (if God wills), *bismillah* (in the name of God), and *Assalamu'alaikum* (peace be upon you). Other than verbal expressions, material expression, conduct and graphics were also considered as

additional markers in his study. The above example of linguistic markers informs us that social media has the power to represent social identities.

The internet provides a space and medium where Muslims can share their religious identity (Sule & Suleiman, 2021). It gives a huge opportunity for Muslims to reach out to people who may not know about Islam and never met Muslims before, since YouTube is easily accessible for every person around the world (Ilahi, 2022). Digital media has the power that conventional media lack. Furthermore, Muslims themselves are also able to learn, teach, and build network through social media sites with their fellow Muslims.

Research on how western Muslim represent their religious identity is still limited since most of studies focus on how they are represented by the out-group. Hashmi, et al (2020) conducted a systematic review of the representation of Islam within social media. The collected data were researches between 2010 and 2019, and the findings confirm that most of the studies found Islam is negatively represented in the mainstream media. Negative representation that acts as an identity threat as Saleem & Ramasubramanian's (2017) analysis can cause many unfavorable impacts, affecting many spheres of life, and thus possible to reduce the quality of human resources within the country. And media, are "one of the most significant sources through which minorities learn about their value and standing within the majority culture" (Saleem & Ramasubramanian, 2017, p. 15). Accordingly, how American Muslim Influencers represent their religious identity becomes an interesting field of study.

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH METHOD

A. Research Design

The research design of this paper lies under three key points to analyze the religious identity representation of American SMIs; **constructivist worldview**, **qualitative method**, and **sociolinguistic perspective**. Constructivist worldview matches this research because it highlights participants' subjective meanings of the situation being studied, which usually based on historical or social perspectives (Creswell, 2014). As constructivist has strong attachment to social world, it is typically seen as a paradigm belongs to qualitative research.

Qualitative research focuses in exploring, understanding, and interpreting the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social problem. Generally, the characteristics of qualitative method incudes natural-setting of the data, focus on participants' perspectives, inductive data analysis, open-ended questions, and interpretive inquiry, with the researchers as the main research instrument (Wray & Bloomer, 2006; Creswell, 2009). The nature of qualitative method makes it close to the analysis of non-numerical information, as to how this study examines.

With social factors (religion, geographical location, and SMIs) being underlined, sociolinguistics point of view is best suited this current research. Sociolinguistics allows the researcher to scrutinize subject's language behavior and comprehend identity within its cultural bound (Susilowati, 2014)

B. Data Source

The data are derived from YouTube channels of American Muslim influencers named Moaaz (MZ), Yusuf Truth (YT), and Egypturk (ET). The researcher already knows about the existence of these three channels before conducted this study, and found them appropriate to be taken as data source after some explorations and considerations. Hence, to gain the subject, the researcher directly types the channels' names and chooses some videos to be analyzed as they were uploaded publicly.

These three channels are chosen based on purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling means that the participants are purposively selected based on certain criteria required by the investigator (Creswell, 2014; Akmal, et al. 2021). The criteria of participants in this research include; Americans, Muslims, Muslim social media influencers, young adults –millennial or Gen-Z, and have more than one hundred thousand subscribers in YouTube. It means the participants have, at least, awarded with YouTube silver plaque. The silver plaque or also known as a "play button" is one of the YouTube creator awards that aim to recognize its most popular channels. As for the gender, the researcher did not intend to specify it in the first place.

The above criteria are listed based on several reasons. First, Americans and Muslims are selected according to the research context which analyzes American Muslims. Secondly, Muslim SMIs (not simply SMIs) are preferred since they tend to share Islamic contents and show religious identity more openly, so how religious identity being represented will be more salient. This criterion also assists the

researcher to gain richer and more related data. Third, the researcher chooses millennial or Gen-Z because they are considered as 'digital natives' or social media drivers, the 'main actor' of social media. Last, the SMIs should be at least awarded with YouTube silver plaque because it means their channels and/or contents have reached many audiences and thus are considered as giving wider influence. Channels that received this award also seen as active channels and use to upload contents consistently (more on SMIs see chapter 2-part C).

In order to get fresh up-to-date data, the researcher took 10 videos from each channel that were uploaded throughout 2023 until the first three months of 2024 (total: 30 videos). 30 videos are considered able to provide enough data, and also feasible to be gathered within the provided research time. To sum up, the data source of this research is documented in the table below:

Table 3.1 *Summary of Data Source*

No.	Channel Names	Location	Age	Subscribers	Videos Taken as Data Source
1.	Moaaz	United States	22	245k	10
2.	Yusuf Truth	United States	23	530k	10
3.	Egypturk	United States	25	321k	10

B. Research Instrument

In qualitative method, the inquirer plays a significant role as a key instrument to collect and analyze the data (Creswell, 2009). Hence, in line with this current research design, the instrument of this study is me as the researcher. In this case, I collect the data through documenting transcription from Yusuf Truth, Moaaz, and

Egypturk channels, then examining the document, and analyze and interpret the data to answer the research question.

C. Data Collection and Analysis

This study employs documentation and observation as the data collection techniques. Although the data source is in the form of audio-visual materials, document type is chosen as the main technique due to the focus of the research in analyzing linguistic signs (utterances). Creswell (2009: 180) says that document type "enables a researcher to obtain the language and words of participants." However, observation is also done because the researcher needs to observe the videos to get additional information and become familiar with the speaking context. Observation can also help the researcher to verify the provided automatic video transcription. In other words, observation is vital to complement the documentation process.

Sequentially, the researcher first documents all of the transcripts to the prepared data source folder. Each transcript is labeled with the name of the channel, the title of the video, and time information of when the video was uploaded. Secondly, the researcher watches the video while reading the video transcript. This second step can be done for more than one time to make sure the documented transcriptions are in accordance with the speakers' utterances. After all data are documented, the researcher conducts final check up to confirm that the required data are ready to be examined.

Next after data collection, the researcher establishes data analysis which follows Creswell's (2009) basic stages of qualitative analysis (see figure 3.1), or it can be said thematic analysis. However, the part of "Interrelating Themes/Descriptions" is skipped, because it is considered as a more advanced step in qualitative inquiry. During the first step, the researcher involves the process of re-reading the data, reflecting on the data, and annotating or writing memos about the collected data to obtain a general sense of the information and to reflect on its overall meaning. Secondly, the inquirer starts the coding process. Coding means organizing the material into chunks of text. This process also includes reducing the similar codes or categories, and put them into table. Afterward, these codes will be used to generate themes or the major findings of the study. The major findings are then conveyed (primarily) trough narrative passage, complemented with sample utterances. Lastly, the final step is to interpret the meaning of the findings. This last stage will be covered in the later discussion section.

Figure 3.1 *Data Analysis Stages in Qualitative Research according to Creswell (2009)*

Interpreting the Meaning of Themes/Descriptions

^

Interrelating Themes/Description
(e.g., grounded theory, case study)

^

Themes/Description

^

Coding the Data
(hand or computer)

^

Organizing and Preparing Data for Analysis

^
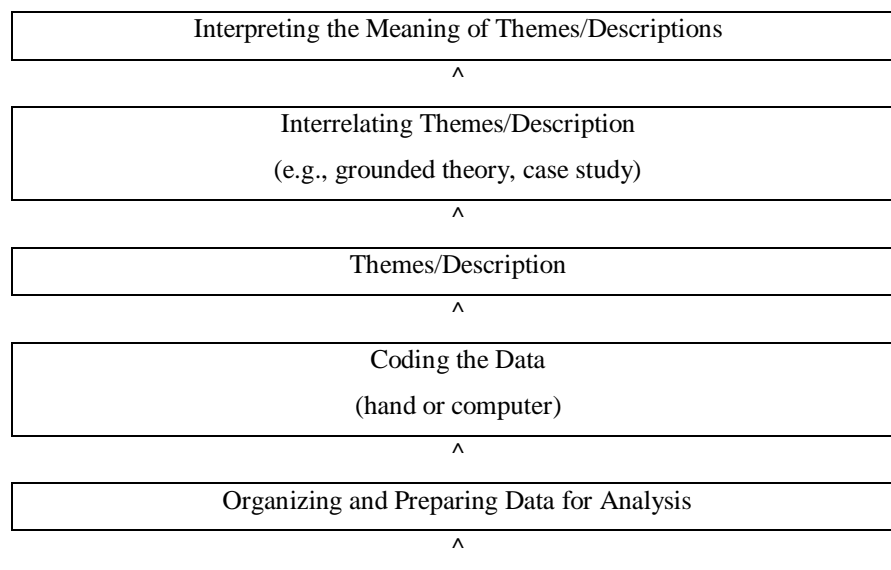
```
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                  Raw Data                     │
│      (transcripts, field notes, images, etc.) │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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The researcher establishes this data collection and analysis under Omoniyi & White's (2006) identity theory and Hall's (1997) representation theory. Omoniyi & White's (2006) view that language is the main instrument to present identity is applied from the very beginning. This affects what type of data needs to be collected (linguistic). The principles of identity proposed by Omoniyi & White (2006) are also observed during the analysis to see whether the data reflect or in accordance with the principle(s). In addition, this study uses Hall's (1997) definition of 'representation' where it means how people 'making meaning through language.' Hence, the data collection and analysis are guided by the system of representation (see chapter 2-part A) which includes; conceptual system, language system, and interpretation. The SMIs must already have the idea of 'a Muslim' in their minds, that affect the way they represent themselves through spoken signs. The spoken signs then can be coded and interpreted as to how the analysis stages above flow.

CHAPTER IV: FINDING & DISCUSSION

A. Finding

The researcher found five major themes from 30 videos in Moaaz (MZ), Yusuf Truth (YT), and Egypturk (ET)'s channels. Those themes are; the use of Arabic words and expressions, engagement with Islamic teachings, mention or discussion of religious practices and beliefs, share personal religious experiences, and show community engagement and social responsibility. The data of each theme are elaborated below:

1. The Use of Arabic Words and Expressions

The use of Arabic is the most identifiable verbal characteristics of a Muslim, including these American Muslim influencers. Generally, Muslim society use various Islamic terms in their daily lives. These terms consist of various part of speech and expressions, such as **noun**; *Allah*, *masjid*, *surah*, **verb**; *tawbah*, *wudu*, *shawm*, **adjective**; *halal*, *sunnah*, *fard*, **greetings**; *Assalamu'alaikum, salam*, **glorifying Allah**; *Allahu akbar*, *Alhamdulillah*, **thanking others**; *syukran*, *jazaakumullah khairan*, and many more. As Islam was firstly spread in Arabic, there is strong connection between Islam and Arabic that make Arabic is considered as an Islamic language. Hence, Muslims around the world, even if they who cannot communicate in Arabic, are used to code-mix and code-switch their language with Arabic when they are uttering Islamic terms or expressing something (Haque, 2020; Rachmad & Rohmah, 2022). Hasif (2023) said that the

use of Islamic terms is part of verbal expression of faith, which is the strongest marker of self-proclamation–even though it can be intentional or unintentional.

Some of Islamic terms contain meaning that express prayers, but these prayers can have various speech acts, as to how MZ uses them in one of his video closings:

> (1.1) *"**Baarakallahufikum**, may Allah make it easy for you guys, I'll catch you in the next one. **Wasallamualaikum**."*

Here MZ says *baarakallahufikum* which means "may Allah bless you" or "may Allah's blessings be upon you," and *wassalamu'alaikum* which means "and peace be upon you." The first one is a form of prayer which is flexible to be used in many contexts. Generally, the speaker does intend to pray for the other person with this term. But the second one is a prayer which functions as an Islamic greeting. Different type of prayer is also said by ET:

> (1.2) *"I've been sitting at home for the past four or five days, so I'm getting really tired of it so I'm gonna try to work out today. And um I'm not expecting obviously the best workout ever but I just want to kind of maintain the muscle. Yeah, so take care of your health and **jazaakumullah khairan** for watching."*

Jazaakumullah khairan means "may Allah reward you with goodness." But this prayer is commonly said to thank others.

Based on the data, these American Muslim influencers also express their gratitude towards Allah with Arabic word:

> (1.3) ET: "*one thing I really took for granted is how, about was actually just eating in general you know. **Alhamdulillah** like the past, the past two days*

> *alhamdulillah* or the past two or three days *alhamdulillah* I've been living off
>
> soup. And I've never been so grateful to Allah for giving me the ability to eat,
>
> you know."

ET says *alhamdulillah* (all praises be to Allah) often in his videos. In this case, he is talking about how grateful he was that as long as this time before sick, he could eat without obstacles. The use of this term represents his religious identity as a Muslim that he remembers Allah, the God of Islam, even in his hard days. Not only in ET, *alhamdulillah* also appear in MZ and YT videos with the highest quantity, 67 times in total (see table 4.1).

Islamic terms are also used to express Allah's power or authority over something happened in this world:

> (1.4) YT: "*I've been very interested in pretty much all those like Combat Sports*
>
> *so **inshallah** I might or might not, um, sign up. They have like free trials the first,*
>
> *the first session is complimentary. Um so I'm gonna try that out **inshaallah**…*"

Here YT says "if Allah wills," highlighting that human can only plan, but something can really happen only if the Lord of the world wills it. In other occasion he also said *mashaallah*, means "Allah has willed it" highlighting that things happen because Allah wills it to happen.

> (1.5) YT: "*Currently I'm studying entrepreneurship from mentors in areas I*
>
> *want to pursue and on the side answering emails from clients, or attending*
>
> *meetings or webinars. We live in a time where any skill can be monetized at a*
>
> *large scale and traditional education isn't the only route of becoming successful.*
>
> *Say **mashallah** you demons.*"

He talks about how the ease of this modern time is significant, and he says *mashallah* at the end of the speech to make a point that all of the ease, advancement and sophistication in this era happen with the permission of Allah.

Interestingly, they do not only use Arabic when they convey Islamic terms, but also when they speak other words that actually can be said in English or other languages:

(1.6) ET: "*it felt so good to be at the **Masjid** today honestly.*"

ET surely can use the term "mosque" or "place of worship" to make it more general, but he said "*masjid*" instead, which specifically refers to the Muslims' place of worship. MZ does the same thing when he says "*shaytan*," the Arabic word of "devil."

(1.7) MZ: "*You are 100% accountable for the things that you did. Can't blame it on anybody else. You can't blame it on your environment. You can't even blame it on **shaytan**.*"

In other occasions, they even use Arabic noun and pluralize it by adding the suffix -*s*. For example, in the word *akhi* which literally means "my brother" and the word *salam* that means "greeting" in the noun form:

(1.8) YT: "*and uh… right now, we are headed to Sugar Lakes Park to have the first ever CH run, with a couple of the **akhis** from Houston.*"

(1.9) MZ: "*If you've been to Medina, you know that in the front of the masjid, they have the grave of the Prophet SAW, Abu Bakr As-Shidiq, and Umar ibn Khattab and you can go and send your **salams** and your shalawat.*"

To summary, the Arabic words and expressions that are said by these three influencers are presented in the table below:

Table 4.1 *Arabic Words and Expressions Discovered from the Data*

Category	Utterances	Channels			Total Qty.
		MZ	YT	ET	
Thanking others	Jazaakumullah khairan	2	-	2	4
Oath	Wallah	1	-	1	2
	Wallahi	3	1	-	4
Praying for others	Baarakallahufikum	3	-	-	3
	Mashaallah tabaarakallah	-	-	1	1
	Allahumma barik	-	-	6	6
Greetings	Assalamu'alaikum warahmatullah wabarakatuh	1	-	8	9
	Assalamu'alaikum	4	3	5	12
	Assalamu'alaika	3	-	-	3
	Salam	-	-	10	10
	Wassalamu'alaikum	8	-	-	8
	Wa'alaikumsalam warahmatullah wabarakatuh	1	-	-	-
Remembrance of Allah (form of *dhikr*)	Alhamdulillah	10	25	32	67
	Inshaallah	11	16	26	53
	Mashaallah	6	2	5	13
	Subhanallah	10	2	1	13
	Allahuakbar	2	-	1	3
	Bismillah	3	-	4	7
	Biidznillah	-	-	2	2
	Astaghfirullah	-	2	-	2
	Wallahu a'lam	-	-	1	1
Islamic terms and/or Arabic words	Haram	3	1	-	4
	Halal	-	1	1	2
	Masjid	19	19	9	47
	Ihsan	-	-	1	1
	Barakah	2	-	-	2
	Ajr	2	-	-	2
	Shaytan	3	-	-	3
	Shayatin	-	1	-	1
	Jannah	1	1	-	2
	Jahannam	-	-	1	1
	Ummah	2	-	-	2
	Rizq	1	-	-	1
	Akhira	2	1	2	5
	Deen	5	9	2	16
	Dunya	2	11	-	13
	Khayr	1	1	-	2
	Shabab	-	-	1	1
	Thobe	1	-	1	2
	Abaya	1	-	-	1
	Akhis	-	1	-	1
	Halaqas	3	-	-	3

Masajids		-	-	4	4
Salams		1	-	-	1
Rakaas		2	-	1	3
Na'am		1	-	-	1
Hasanat		-	-	1	1
Yawmul qiyamah		-	2	-	2

It is possible that there is more amount of these words and expressions uttered in the videos, but were not documented because of the less significancy of the overall sentence or context, or it is a form of worship that will be documented in the third theme.

By using Arabic words and expressions, as to how Hasif (2023) argues, they covertly represent their religious identity. They do not directly mention themselves as a Muslim, but they use many Arabic in their videos. The use of Arabic can give sense of strong spirituality and connection towards the Islamic world, and hence can be used to construct the "Islamic" vibes. However, this kind of conversation that include many Arabic maybe influenced by the supposition that the viewers are also Muslims, so the audience will have the same interpretation of the codes the youtubers share. They may have intended to create the contents mainly for Muslim viewers in the first place.

2. Engagement with Islamic Teachings

Throughout the video, MZ, YT and ET often mention Islamic stories, values, principles and/or laws from the holy Qur'an or Hadith (the Prophet Muhammad's sayings). They deliver their ideas about certain topics and then mention Islamic knowledge as the reference and/or supporting argument, or vice

versa. When MZ is talking about accountability as an important quality for self-improvement, for example, he mentions the Quranic principle about accountability.

> (2.1) MZ: *"Even though Quran talks about this topic of accountability. Allah says (Quranic verse) when you do the act of guidance then he will be guided. You do the acts of guidance, you pray on time, you read Quran, you stay away from sins, go to the message, then you will be guided. You deserve that outcome because you did the act of guidance. (Quranic verse) the opposite is true if you, if you misguide if you do the actions of misguidance then you will be misguided. It sounds very practical but it's the truth. You keep committing, you keep going away from Allah, you keep doing the actions of misguidance, then guess what, you're going to be misguided. (Quranic verse) no soul will bear the burden of another soul. In other words, you are completely and ultimately accountable for your actions."*

Self-improvement is one of the hot topics in this day and age, and by integrating that topic with Islamic teaching, MZ represents that his Muslim identity encourage him and other Muslims to develop themselves as an individual.

ET on his video entitled "I bought My Mom Her Dream Car" also says that he loves his mother so much that he really attributes everything to his parents. But he does not simply express his love to his mother, he also mentions a hadith that highlights how noble is the position of a mother in Islam.

> (2.2) ET: *"And you all know what Islam says about mothers **"al-jannah tahta aqdamil ummahat,"** paradise is under your mother's feet, so if you can, try your best to make your mothers happy and, you make your mom happy and Allah will make you happy inshallah."*

Here ET constructs a positive meaning of being Muslim that Islam teaches its followers to show affection toward family, especially being respectful toward mothers. The above-mentioned hadith motivates him to do so, as well as the other hadith that he conveys when he encourages his audience to go to the gym:

> (2.3) ET: *"So the prophet SAW says in a hadith Muslim **"Al-qowiyyun mukmin khoirun wa ahabbu ila Allah minnal mukmina dhoif"** and what this translates to is that a strong believer is better and more beloved in the eyes of Allah than a weak believer. So let me ask you, after hearing this Hadith, is this not the only Hadith that will motivate you to become the strongest and best version of yourself?"*

These Islamic teachings are not always directly mentioned. YT indirectly mentions about the Hadith of "tying the camel before leave it" which serves as a metaphor of struggle before resignation. In addition, he also indirectly mentions Islamic teachings from the Qur'an about the obligations of a husband. He takes these lessons as Islamic principles that supporting his view about how a man has to be strong and be able to provide healthy amount of comfort, safety, and income for his wife.

> (2.4) YT: *"And in a marriage and or any relationship when it comes to males and females the man is always going to have to provide a healthy amount of comfort to his woman the same way the woman is going to provide a healthy amount of hardship in his in her man's life. Now why is that? That's simply because healthy hardship for a man is a necessary requirement for him to climb the levels of success in this life, right? Even in Islam we're taught to say no to our desires and we're taught to go out and put in the work and **tie our camel**, essentially, right? **and for us as men we're taught to enter the traditional sense***

to provide comfort, safety, security, to provide a house to provide an income to

our women, so that they can feel comfortable and they can just live life."

However, beside the holy Qur'an and the Sunnah of the prophet, there is also one finding of MZ mentioning a quote of a great Muslim scholar, Imam Abu Hanifa, when he speaks about how priceless their faith is as a Muslim:

(2.5) MZ: *"one of my favorite quotes is from Abu Hanifa where he says* **"if the Kings and the Royals knew of the pleasure that we are in, they would send their armies to fight us with their swords and take it from us."**

MZ then continue to explain why would the kings and the royals envy by referencing a verse from the Qur'an:

(2.6) MZ: *". . . but you realize that some of the richest some of the most successful people in this Dunya are actually very miserable. They're very depressed, because there's just no inner peace,* **"'ala bidzikrillahi tath' mainnul quluub,"** *that inner peace only comes from the remembrance of Allah."*

Other than these, either MZ, YT, and ET involve pretty many audio clips of modern Muslim scholars talking about various religious reminder, including story of the prophet's companion such as Khalid ibn Walid.

Table 4.2 *Islamic Teachings Discovered from the Data*

Category	Utterances	Channels
From Qur'an	Even though Quran talks about this topic of accountability. . . (2.1)	MZ
	and for us as men we're taught to enter the traditional sense to provide comfort, safety, security, to provide a house to provide an income to our women (2.4)	YT
	but you realize that some of the richest some of the most successful people in this Dunya are actually very miserable. They're very depressed, because there's just no inner peace, *'ala*	MZ

	bidzikrillahi tath' mainnul quluub, that "inner peace only comes from the remembrance of Allah." (2.6)	
	. . . and it goes back to that verse in surah Hasyr *wa laa takunu kalladzina nasullaha fa ansahum anfusahum*, "do not be among those," God says, "do not be among those that forgot Me, so I made you forget yourself" right.	YT
	One very big aspect in Islam you find is tawakkul. And tawakkul, I feel like has helped me myself, drastically change my mental health state. For those of you guys who don't know, tawakkul means having full reliance on Allah subhanahu wa ta'ala. We've heard *wa makru wa makarallahu wallahu khairun al-makirin* "and they planned and Allah plans and Allah is the best of planners."	ET
	I could have just been lazy, went right back to sleep, or I could have gotten up and started my day very productive. And I remember the Ayah of Allah subhana wa tala, *wa manyattaqillaha yaj'alahu makhrojan wa yarzuqhu min haytsu laa yahtasib*, whoever has taqwa of Allah subhanahu watala, and by taqwa it's more of like a god consciousness. So as soon as I remember the Ayah I got out of bed and I decided I'm just going to go ahead and move forward with this day.	ET
	But I was thinking about the meaning of life you know. A lot of people go about life, chasing happiness, chasing money, chasing fame. Allah SWT already told us what the purpose of life is. He says in the Quran *wa maa khalaqtul jinna wal insa illa liya'buduun*, "I have not created the Jin, which is the Gin kind, or the humankind except to worship [Me]." So our purpose in this life is number one to worship Allah subhana wa tala.	ET
From Hadith	And you all know what Islam says about mothers *al-jannah tahta aqdamil ummahat*, "paradise is under your mother's feet," so if you can, try your best to make your mothers happy and, you make your mom happy and Allah will make you happy inshallah. (2.2)	ET
	and then my second advice would be good to your parents no matter what. Like, whether you like them or not, they're the ones that brought you to this earth. Allah SWT says, *walaa taqullahuma ufw* like don't even like-like I'm so tired of this.	ET
	So the prophet SAW says in a hadith Muslim *Al-qowiyyun mukmin khoirun wa ahabbu ila Allah minnal mukmina dhoif*, and what this translates to is that "a strong believer is better and more beloved in the eyes of Allah than a weak believer." So let me ask you, after hearing this Hadith, is this not the only Hadith that will motivate you to become the strongest and best version of yourself? (2.3)	ET
	And there's a Hadith of the prophet sallallahu alaihi wasallam in which he mentions, "take advantage of five before five. Your youth before your old age, your health before your sickness, your wealth before your poverty, your free time before you become preoccupied, and your life before death." And this is narrated by Ibnu Abbas. So this Hadith emphasizes the use of time and resources wisely.	ET
	The prophet sallallahu alai wasallam said *Innamal a'malu bin niyat*, every single act you do is based off-of intention. So I highly advise you before even setting on this journey of productivity, make an intention with yourself and with Allah subhana wa tala,	ET

	and really think deep and think to yourself, why am I doing this? Why do I want to become productive?	
	So Allah subhana wa tala says in a Hadith, "I am as my servant thinks I am. And I am with him when he remembers me. If he remembers me in himself, then I will remember him in myself. And if he mentions me in an assembly, I will mention him in a better assembly." What is that better assembly? A better assembly includes all the angels.	ET
	This is narrated in Bukhari and Muslim. *Arrijalu 'ala diini khalilihi*, "a man follows the religion of his friends," fal yandzhur ahadukum man yukholil *"and one should take care of who they befriend."* The people around you will have the biggest influence on who you become.	ET
	You know the prophet SAW says in bukhari and Muslim, "the believer to the believer is like a strong building. One part supports the other." So it's very important to build strong bonds with those in our community.	ET
	Don't make drastic changes to your life, because science shows that a big change is not a change that you can be consistent with. It's very important to start with slow small changes that you stay consistent upon. And there's even a Hadith about this. The prophet SAW says in bukhari, "the most beloved deed to Allah subhana wa tala is the most regular and consistent even if it is small."	ET
	we're taught to go out and put in the work and tie our camel, essentially, right? (2.4)	YT
	There's a Hadith that says on yaumul qiyamah, on the day of judgment, and there are going to be people that are going to be under the shade of the arsy, the throne of Allah SWT, and one of them is people whose hearts were attached to the Masjid.	YT
From Muslim Scholar	one of my favorite quotes is from Abu Hanifa where he says "if the Kings and the Royals knew of the pleasure that we are in, they would send their armies to fight us with their swords and take it from us." (2.5)	MZ

From the above data, we can see that related to the language practice, MZ and ET tend to code-switch to Arabic and say the original text, and after that say the English translation. Meanwhile, YT tend to directly quote or tell some parts of the teachings without the original text.

Their engagement with Islamic teachings that relates to various topics here represent the idea of "being Muslim." By engaging with the Qur'an, the Hadith, and the opinion of Muslim scholar, they construct that being Muslim means using

Islamic knowledge as the basis of their thoughts and deeds, in which they submit themselves to Islamic values, views, laws, and principles.

3. Mention or Discussion of Religious Beliefs and Practices

There are two religious practices that are commonly mentioned or discussed by all of the three influencers in their YouTube videos. The first one is to go to the Masjid (mosque) and the second one is to work on their bodies, specifically to work out or go to the gym. The researcher argues that these two acts –that seems to be in two different aspects of life (hereafter vs worldly)– are dominant because of two factors.

Firstly, they have the belief that the aspects of *deen* and *dunya* are actually not separated. Both worlds are not opposites. They can "balance" it, or in other words as to how YT says in three different occasions:

> (3.1) YT: *"For me personally balance means making time for spiritual growth and self-reflection while also pursuing my ambitions and engaging with the world."*

> (3.2) YT: *". . . being religious did not mean isolating oneself from the world, but rather use one's faith as a guiding light to navigate through its complexities."*

> (3.3) YT: *"Try your best to live, um through the lens of Islam as much as you can"* MZ: *"right."* YT: *"you know what I mean? Without obviously becoming too too extreme, and like judging people, and going out of your way to like inconvenience yourself for the sake of Islam, you know what I mean? I think that's kind of like what the, what the, the balance is, and whatnot."*

These utterances reflect YT's religious belief about the concept of *deen* and *dunya* that both are not separated.

Secondly, both going to the masjid and to the gym are related with their male gender. In Islam, men are highly recommended to pray at the masjid. Meanwhile, from their utterances and what they depict in the videos, they represent themselves as a masculine and manly figure by working out at the gym, which will be less possible to appear if the data source are female Muslim influencers. To the best of my knowledge, some of female Muslim influencers tend to highlight or depict feminine activities like drinking tea, cooking, or talking about hijab.

A question may arise, how can any type of sport be categorized into "Religious Practice"? ET says in one of his videos that in Islam (based on a hadith), every action depends on the intention. If they have the intention to worship, it can be included as an action of worship. Without being able to judge their true intentions, the data show that they do work on their bodies based on religious motives:

> (3.4) YT: *"There's-there's no there's no reason why you shouldn't be working out your body. Allah SWT has given us our body as a vessel, it's an amanah, it's a trust on ourselves to take care of this. So it's our job to strengthen it, and to beautify it, and to take care of it."*

> (3.5) ET: *"And I highly highly highly recommend, anyone who's interested in doing a combat sports to do it, because number one, uh, I believe it's sunnah to wrestle."*

(3.6) YT: *"Um so I'm gonna try that out inshaallah because Abdul he does Jiu Jitsu and then my videographer, the guy that helps me film these videos Jason, he also does Jujitsu. And they've just been telling me like really great things about it. And also to kind of like fulfill the Sunnah you know."*

(3.8) MZ: *"it's gonna be a fun workout."* ET: *"inshaallah"* MZ: *but uh, yeah, we're not lifting anywhere near what we used to it's okay. We do it what? for what?* YT: *"haqq" (points index finger upwards).* ET: *"for imam mahdi's army."*

Underlining (3.8), ET says the reason they do the work out is to prepare for Imam Mahdi. This reason appears two times in the overall data. By this reason, it can be concluded that they believe in the religious tiding that Imam Mahdi will come near the judgement day. Other than work out, ET also says in one of the videos that worship can be in many aspects of life.

(3.9) ET: "*. . . you can worship Allah through other aspects of your life, for example studying. If your intentions are pure and they're for the sake of Allah that is also a form of worship. Providing for the family is also a form of worship. So just make sure that everything you do in your life is has the right intentions behind it, and is a form of worship of Allah subhana wa tala.*"

The religious practices are not always directly mentioned, but reflected in some utterances, for example the act of *shukr* (gratitude) and *tawakkul* (trusting in God's plan) in YT:

(3.10) YT: "*So visualization paired with dua and action can literally change your life. All the goals that I had in my 14-year-old journal, every single one was ticked off, except for getting into the NFL. That was the only dream I wasn't able to accomplish, **but, Alhamdulillah**, you know, **Allah SWT had a different***

*plan. So, don't take that lightly, and visualize, make dua for it, **Allah SWT will***

***take care of the rest**.*"

In addition, other interesting finding related to this theme is that in two
occasions, the religious practices are mentioned jokingly:

(3.11) YT*: "Tell me a little about what's on your plate, your food choices so
why did you select these food choice?"* JB *(other friend): "Really I didn't want
to but I was walking by, they were talking to me they said-they said free us and-
and put us on your plate, so I did it. So I'm really just doing charities."*

(3.12) MZ: *"hey so listen, make sure, remember when you're-when you're uh,
when you're in Salah, at the end you got to make Salam both ways. You got,
assalamualaikum warahmatullah (turning head to the left shoulder), what I'm
saying, assalamualaikum warahmatullah (turning head to the right shoulder)."*
JB: *"crazy you started left." [laughter]*

In (3.11) YT's friend JB says that he has so many foods on his plate because he is
doing "charities" to the food. He provides help for the food by "freeing" them from
the buffet. Meanwhile, in (3.12) MZ and friends are preparing themselves to attend
ET's wedding. Once they ready, there is a clip where MZ and JB are looking at the
mirror, and MZ says that sentence while actually showing that he looks cool already
with the suits and hairdo by doing *salam* movement. However, JB says it is crazy
because the practice of *salam* at the end of prayer should be started from the right
side instead of left.

Table 4.3 *Religious Practices and Beliefs Discovered from the Data*

Category	Codes	Channels
Religious practices	Five/some/one of the daily prayers	MZ, YT, ET
	Jumu'ah prayer	MZ, YT, ET
	Tarawih prayer	MZ, YT, ET

	Going to the masjid	MZ, YT, ET
	Tahajjud/Qiyam/qiyamul lail	MZ
	Make wudu	ET
	Charity	MZ, YT
	Du'a	MZ, YT, ET
	Religious practices in Ramadan	MZ, YT, ET
	Fasting on Monday and Thursday	MZ
	The sunnah of wrestling	YT, ET
	Work on your body	MZ, YT, ET
	The sunnah of eating dates in odd numbers	ET
	Halaqah	MZ, YT, ET
	Khatm	MZ, YT
	I'tikaf	MZ
	Suhoor	MZ, ET
	Iftar	MZ, ET
	Eating halal	YT
	Khutbah	MZ, YT, ET
	Getting married in Islamic way	YT, ET
	Reading Qur'an	MZ, YT, ET
	Memorizing Qur'an	MZ, YT
	Lowering gaze	MZ
	Eid	YT
	Taqwa	MZ, ET
	Shukr/gratitude	MZ, YT, ET
	Tawakkul	YT, ET
Religious beliefs	Seeking reward of the last 10 days of Ramadan	MZ, YT
	Allah created everything and He loves His creations	YT
	Allah is always watching	MZ
	Imam Mahdi	ET
	Balancing between the world and the hereafter	MZ, YT, ET

4. Share Personal Religious Experiences

As to how Islamic teachings are used to support the topics or ideas they want to deliver, most of the personal experiences are also functioned the same.

Table 4.4 *Personal Religious Experiences Discovered from the Data*

Category	Utterances	Channel
Go to the Masjid	(4.1) Through my high school years, I remember not particularly looking forward to going to the Masjid. I remember my dad would kind of have to force me a bit to go to tarawih during Ramadan, and it wasn't until a bit later on where we started kind of running community events, and-and boys halaqas in the Masjid. And that's when I really fell in love with it. Other than the obvious factor of Salah, there's a lot more benefits to going to the Masjid. Being involved in these halaqas and community events gave me this sense of purpose that was bigger than myself.	MZ

	(4.2) Alhamdulillah I had a father growing up that was attached to the Masjid, and he would force me go to go to the Masjid with him. And you know I would come back from school and I would want to ride my bike, and I'd want to play with my friends, like rip sticks and skateboards, and all these things. And I would get so angry at the fact that my dad would pull me in to go to the Masjid. But now, looking back at it, is one of the things about my childhood that I'm most grateful for. So, so not only does it make you and your parents happy but it makes Allah SWT happy and that is the most important. Because when Allah is happy with you, then everything else in your life just-just becomes happier, you know what I mean?	YT
	(4.2) . . . every time I go in there it's like this humbling experience you walk in, and the only reason that you're there, is literally for your, like your religious for for for Islam, you know.	YT
	(4.4) it felt so good to be at the Masjid today honestly it's been a while since I was able to catch a prayer over there especially Jumu'ah you know. Jumu'ah is just the past two weeks has just been really hard to catch but alhamdulillah we're back. You never feel more at peace than when you are at the Masjid.	ET
Salah	(4.5) . . . I'll sympathize a bit because there were periods in my life where waking up for fajr was very difficult.	MZ
	(4.6) . . .when I woke up for fajr and stayed awake afterwards the day just seemed more stretched and I had more time to finally record my videos and I could still go to the gym and get my homework done and do everything that needed to get done. This is a huge life Hack and it'll definitely give you more time to achieve your goals.	MZ
	(4.7) . . . Never mind the fact that it's obligatory, but the days that I do hit it always just tend to have more barakah, more energy in them, the days feel longer Etc. But if I do miss Fajr I can always sense that my mood and energy levels, and just overall productivity take a hit the rest of that day.	MZ
	(4.8) But I was just sitting here and thinking of something my father used to always tell me when I was growing up is, there's a time for having fun and then there's a time for serious. Cuz growing up I wasn't the most serious kid, you know. I was just always looking to have fun, no matter everything, like even-even during Salah, like I would just be playing footsie with whoever was next to me, like I was just the most unserious kid. And like growing up, as I got older I started thinking more and more of what my dad said. And he just, he was so right, you know. Like there's always going to be a time to have fun and then there's a time when you have to be serious in life. And the times when you you have to be serious in life, the golden age is, I would say 16 to 26, that's when you really just developing your skills, you're developing what you will be doing for the rest of your life, you know. So be very careful of what you do in your free time because that will all have an impact of your future.	ET
	(4.9) I feel like sometimes you have to take a step back and think about your priorities in this life, and just realize that you're here, to please Allah subhana wa tala and number one priority should always be ibadah. So if I was kind of disappointed in myself because, and I always do this every single time I have a 7:00 a.m. class, I'll wake up freaking out thinking I missed it. But whenever I wake up for fajr prayer, it's like if I wake up I wake up, if I don't wake up it's okay, I'll just pray the two prayers after. But I think that's one of the most important things I need to focus on. And that's to wake up earlier not	ET

	only for fajr prayer but inshaallah the goal is to wake up for tahajjud prayer.	
Ramadan	(4.10) Growing up I never really understood it in fact, I actually, I actually didn't look forward to Ramadan at all. I kind of dreaded when it would come because I just looked at it as 30 days where I couldn't eat or drink, my energy levels were always low, but I still had to go to school, and see everyone else, you know, eat and drink and do whatever. And then I had to go at night with my dad to the Masjid, and just stand there and pray for an hour. It it wasn't a fun experience for me. Until I saw one of my friends in the hallway at school and I, I remember this so vividly, because he came down the hall on the first day of Ramadan and he was practically jumping down the Halls. He was so excited. And so I go up to him and I'm like "dude why, why are you so excited, what happened?" he's like "bro it's the first day of Ramadan" like why "why how can I not be excited?" and I'm like subhanallah that's the exact reason why I'm in such a bad mood right now. But you know when we talked about it and I did more research on you know, the purpose and, and the rewards of Ramadan, naturally I got really excited too.	MZ
	(4.11) I know those of you guys that have been watching me for a while know that I've been documenting this entire process-process since year six. And now it's year nine. Tarawih is a very very stressful time of year, especially as it moves back towards January and into the school year, um it's just and then-it's just a lot of responsibilities and me being married and having to juggle like adult responsibilities and business and stuff like that. Uh it's just been a lot, you know. So this year has been probably like the toughest year I wanted to tell-I wanted to tell my dad that, okay this year is done. Like this is my last year leading. And I was honestly going to crumble under the pressure of having to uphold, like all the responsibilities that I had, but alhamdulillah we pushed through and I did not quit. I did not quit. Your boy is not a quitter.	YT
	(4.12) I did a horrible job in preparing for this Ramadan. I did not do a good job in feeling the spiritual like vibe that Ramadan is supposed to give you, you know. And I think a lot of that is because I was just chasing this Dunya you know. Not even in like a bad way like Allah says that go tie your camel, go-go take care of your families, go take care of yourself, you know. Um but there comes a-there comes a limit where you have to kind of pull yourself away and ask yourself who is in control. And, because I'm not going to lie, like I-I would be super anxious and super stressed about work. I'll be super anxious and super stressed about life, and-and-and and business and stuff you know. Um, when I launched the brand it just completely exploded my stress levels, and my entire focus was diverted, you know. Um but it was a way that Allah SWT just humbled me so quickly. And He taught me that if you take comfort and you try to find a source of calm and Serene, Serenity in this Dunya, it's going to give you nothing but chaos. But if you if you seek calmness and love and serenity in God, then he will take care of you.	YT
Umrah	(4.13) I mean off [unclear] Medina is just so much more calm and peaceful. People are sitting down before Isha' just relaxing. I mean, in Mecca you will not see kids playing soccer right outside of the Masjid, it's just not possible. Um, now the vibes here are amazing Alhamdulillah.	MZ

	(4.14) You know if I-if I even tried explaining, what that experience is like, it wouldn't do it justice man, it wouldn't. Wallahi I made du'a, that every person watching would be given the opportunity to come and visit and send his salam to the prophet SAW. I mean you're, the-the the leader of this ummah and he's 5 feet away from you.	MZ
Qur'an	(4.15) I remember my parents always told me as a kid that memorizing Quran only gets harder the older you get. And I remember I woul-I would always look at them like, that's not true. The older I get, the smarter I'm going to get, the easier it's going to be to memorize. I can say with certainty that they were a 100% right. I'm very grateful that my parents did a lot of my hifdz, but I wasn't able to finish the entire Quran. And that is one of my biggest regrets, because being able to have that memorized and understanding the book of Allah is one of the biggest blessings that you can be given. And now with dental school and a million other things going on, it's still possible but it's a lot harder to do your hifdz.	MZ
	(4.16) I remember when I was studying in my Quran school, my teacher forced us to write all the tajwid rules in our composition notebooks. We had two categories of one reading, and one memorizing. The reading category was where we had to learn our makhraj which is our pronunciation and our tajwid. And we had to read the Quran like 30 40 times before we were able to transition to our memorizing portion of like the school, but our, those four classes, out of those four classes our class always ranked number one, because our teacher made us write down all the tajwid rules. Every single one we wrote it down, from the fathah to the kasrah to a dhommah to mad asli to all the different types of mads and ghunnahs, all the alphabets we literally wrote it from scratch. And you guys have seen my recitation videos, and you know how my recitation is Alhamdulillah, I'm so grateful that I have gotten to it in a habit from a young age of writing things down.	YT
	(4.17) Growing up my father wasn't that present in my life, which wasn't his fault at all, but I grew up in a New York school which I'll probably do a future video of that encompassing the entire story of it was like studying in New York for a Quran boarding school. But up from the ages of 12 to 16 some of you guys know that I wasn't with my family. I didn't have that strong of a masculine figure in my life, and that kind of led down to me trying to seek validation online through my YouTube channel, through my Instagram and what not and let me down this little rabbit hole. I'm always in the search of direction and trying to be the best man that I could possibly be and unfortunately I had to go through those circumstances when I was young, but now that I'm older I can view it as a learning experience rather than something traumatic.	YT
Friend	(4.18) So I kind of just made friends with the first people that I met. And although they weren't the worst people, they weren't Muslim, and so they didn't do very Muslim things. They cursed a lot, they dated, they talked about very [unclear] stuff, and naturally when you're around that type of environment every day, you start acting like that as well, right. I started cursing, I started thinking about haram relationships, and I could see the effect it was having on me. It wasn't until I kind of realized the effect they were having, and I made a very conscious effort to switch up my friend group. I started finding more Muslims in the community, I went to this Muslim summer camp and met so many guys there, and some of them I still consider to this day	MZ

	to be some of my closest friends. Especially going to Dallas and studying at Qalam and being around so many Muslims. I would say that had the biggest impact on me as a person.	
Deen & Dunya	(4.19) Growing up in a religious family and a convert mother. Alhamdulillah, my mother is a convert and she's from the Philippines. I always live my life with the intention of pleasing Allah SWT and seeking his guidance in everything that I do. I rarely ever questioned why I was doing what I was doing, because from a young age, I think my father gave me this understanding that my religion wasn't a separate thing outside of the box from the world, from this Dunya, but rather, he taught me to use it as a Guiding Light. To kind of filter all of what I do in this world through the lens of my Deen. And honestly looking back at that, that influenced every single decision that I have made up until this point. Now, there's a verse in the Quran that I recently came across, that says, "do not be among those who forgot God, so he made them forget themselves." And I think even before I understood the translation of that ayah, of that verse. It was something that I always implemented in my life subconsciously.	YT
Eman	(4.20) But while I am talking about this live update, I want to talk to you guys about my eman. So my Eman for the past two weeks has never been challenged this heavily in my entire life now. I never in my life had to step away from work to pray my Salah, or I never had to consciously think about my relationship with Allah SWT. It kind of always came to me naturally and Alhamdulillah I always had that luxury, up until this point in my life. And I'm not saying that that job is permanent, but it has definitely opened my eyes a lot to the things that I need to focus on, um and that's being disciplined you know, that's being disciplined with my Deen. So it feels good because I feel like I can relate to you guys now, right. Before I wasn't able to relate to you guys because I wasn't going to school. I didn't have a real full-time job, which now I do, you know. So it'd be cool.	YT

In terms of going to the masjid, both MZ and YT experienced being forced by their fathers when they were young (4.1 & 4.2). MZ started to fall in love with the Masjid when the community events were running. He found that Masjid is not simply the place for praying but it also has many other benefits, including the presence of the community. YT felt angry back then, but now he is very grateful that his father care about attaching him to the Masjid.

How YT feels about going to the Masjid now is more or less same with how ET feels. They experience the humbling and peaceful experience where their focus is only for the religious affair, like they take a rest for a while from the hustle of the

world. YT shared this experience (4.3) when he got a question in a Q&A video "what is your favorite sunnah act?" and he answered going to the Masjid. Meanwhile, ET shared his experience (4.4) after he was healed from sickness. So, he was happy to be able go to the masjid again.

In terms of Salah, MZ specifically mentions the fajr prayer more often than the other prayers (4.6, 4.7). Although he experienced the difficulty of waking up for fajr (4.5), but he has positive experiences about it and he loves how he seems to have more time to do more things when he prays fajr and does not sleep again.

ET on the other hand, shared two other experiences about salah. First when he was a kid, he liked to play during the salah, and did not yet see it as a serious thing (4.8). The second one is about the feeling of disappointment when he prioritizes his class than prayer, when he would anxious about missing the class but not with missing fajr (4.9).

Other categories include experiences related to Ramadan, umrah, Qur'an, Muslim friend and deen & dunya. All of these experiences are shared before or after the main topic they actually want to convey, but some are the main topic itself. The messages they want to share are not always in line with the written category, because the category spots the religious experience, not the main topic. For example, when YT shares his experience studying in a Qur'an school (4.17), he may talk about his Qur'an class, but actually he delivers this story to highlight the importance of writing by hand while journaling thoughts.

5. Show Community Engagement and Social Responsibility

As Muslim influencers who own personal channels, most of their videos have the setting where they are the only speaker, even if they involve some of clips outside when they meet people. Nevertheless, they still represent through some utterances and clips that they are part of the community around them. For example, when MZ encourages his audience to do physical activities, he does not highlight personal benefit, but the benefit of the world and the Muslim people if they have strong human resource.

> (5.1) MZ: *"**As a man you need to be healthy, you need to have a strong body, and you need to be able to carry a heavy load**. So pick whatever appeals to you most as long as it puts your body through pain, whether it be weightlifting or calisthenics or even a sport, soccer, football, running, swimming, anything to really get you moving and to push your body. This is so so important as a guy. **Imagine how much better our world, not even our world but just our Ummah would be if we had strong men. Not just physically but mentally as well and emotionally.**"*

MZ also mentions the group chat he has with his friends. He emphasizes that involved in the community is important to keep each other accountable and support each other to do good deeds, specifically *fajr* prayer (the first obligatory prayer of a Muslim before sunrise) and study in this context.

> (5.2) MZ: *We have a Fajr group chat, where we keep each other accountable for Fajr, we have a study group chat to keep each other accountable for our studies, it's really important to have people in your life that will keep you accountable, and where you can push each other.*

One of the topics that is dominant since the beginning also present in this theme; involved with Muslim community in the Masjid. Masjid does not only function as a place of worship, but also place to find and build relationship with good friends and people. To the best of my knowledge, many mosques in the USA have various events beside *halaqah* (a gatherings for the study of Islam). They have other activities such as backyard gardening, fundraising dinner, community dinner, community iftar, fall family fun night, Islamic classes or programs for both kids and adult, and summer camp to keep the Muslim community connected. Therefore, in Islam Mosque is highly important and is considered as the place to empower the ummah.

(5.3) YT: *"**We all know how important it is to stay involved with our community. And one of the best ways to do that, is to frequently be in the Masjid**. . . Wallahi when you enter the Masjid, and you go inside there, there is this type of peace that the people have over there. And that the Masjid itself holds, that you can't find anywhere else in this world. . . **And most of us need good friends, most of us need brothers and sisters that have the same Islamic values that we have. There's no better place in the world to find them other than the Masjid.**"*

(5.4) ET: *"and it's really beautiful to see like that Muslim brotherhood bond, that's forming, and you know, these are your brothers for life, you know. **Like the friends that you make from the Masjid are the friends that will stay with you for the rest of your life, you know**. Those are people-you don't even call them friends, at the end of the day they just become family, and **you guys just feel so close to each other**. So um if one of you guys or some of you guys are struggling to find friends out there. Or you have friends but you're looking for*

> *friends that will guide you to the better path. I highly recommend finding friends*
>
> *from the Masjid."*

Their love for the masjid is in line with Peek's (2005) reasons of why religion may become a significant identity basis for American Muslims, because it provides the sense of community. These utterances show how high they put value into the in-group, that it becomes pivotal for them to stay involved with the Muslim community.

With this sense of community, ET jokingly says something in one of his videos that portray how they have the wills to give in-group benefit:

> (5.5) ET: *"How much are you charging? yeah he gives the first 100 customers*
>
> *for free right?"* F: *"right right."* ET: *"especially if they're Muslims?"* Friend:
>
> *"yeah."* ET: *"yeah* (laughs)." F: *"InshaAllah."*

The context of this conversation is ET's friend called him and asked for help to unload and set up the orthodontic dental chair his friend had ordered. So based on the conversation they want to give free dental procedures especially for the fellow Muslims.

Besides the value ET puts toward his Muslim friends, ET is the one who also share his interactions with his non-Muslim friends. ET records pretty much clips when he is in the dental school, or when he is going to the gym with his non-Muslim fellow student.

> (5.6) ET: *"say it again?"* F: *"hmm."* ET: *"what-what else did you say after?"*
>
> F: *"salam."* ET: *"all right so, this guy said, 'I'm fasting too' and then he out all*
>
> *this food. He's like 'I got you one too man.'"* [laughter]

This same friend also pretty often follows ET saying some Islamic terms like *inshaallah* and *alhamdulillah*.

Out of the specific Muslim and Non-Muslim context, all of the three influencers are talking about social issues, for instance about what is happening in Palestine. MZ and YT even went to Palestine for charity work and fundraise donations from their audience. YT shows empathy in one of the videos about a horrific incident happened in Gaza, and he states that even as a human being he does not understand how can a human do that kind of outrage to another human. But still, in the last of the sentence he mentions the in-group. He expresses his anger and disappointment on how Muslims, including he himself because he uses the pronoun "we," still cannot do something impactful to eradicate the genocide.

(5.7) YT: ***"Forget about politics, forget about religion, forget about race, forget about everything else. At the end of the day, how can one human do that to another human? How?*** *Like I-I genuinely I don't understand how? Like it gets me so fired up because I sometimes, my mind inevitably goes to places where I put myself in their shoes, and I put myself-I put myself in that man's shoes. Where he's in the hospital and his wife is 5 months pregnant. I have a wife now, right. I have a wife. And I can't imagine being in that position.* ***Like my blood generally just boils and it's like there's two billion of us Muslims in-in the world. Two billion of us, and we still can't make a difference of things that are happening over there.****"*

Table 4.5 *Community Engagement and Social Responsibility Discovered from the Data*

Category	Codes	Channels
Community engagement (Non-Muslim)	Having conversations with non-Muslim friends	ET
Community engagement (Muslim)	Strong men will make a better world and better ummah	MZ

	Having fajr and study groups chat	MZ
	Stay involved with Muslim community in the Masjid	MZ, YT, ET
	Leading tarawih	YT
	Performing khutbah	MZ
	Joining jiu jitsu competition	ET
	Running with CH (*club haqq*) boys	YT
	Amazed with Muslim in Dallas	ET
	Free dental procedures for Muslims	ET
Social responsibility	Doing charity work in Palestine	MZ, YT
	Share awareness about Palestine	MZ, YT, ET

B. Discussion

The key findings of this current research were already presented above. Based on the findings, the American Muslim influencers represent their religious identity through five ways; using Arabic language and expressions, engaging with Islamic teachings, mentioning or discussing religious practices and beliefs, sharing personal religious experiences, and showing community engagement and social responsibility.

1. The use of Arabic Words and Expressions

When the SMI's use Arabic language and expressions, they covertly represent their religious identity as a Muslim (Hasif, 2023). Here they do not directly position or mention themselves as a Muslim, but code-mixing English with some words and expressions that are usually used by Muslims in daily basis (see table 4.1). For non-native Arabic and especially westerners, when they hear someone uses many Arabic words and moreover Islamic terms and expressions such as *alhamdulillah* that mostly appeared in this research, they may immediately think that the person is a Muslim.

That is how the majority of society, including the in-group, perceive mental representation of a Muslim; closely related with Arabs and/or Arabic. Hence, this theme shows that Arabic serves as a covert identity marker of a Muslim. It becomes a linguistic sign that represents these SMIs' religious identity.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that the use of Arabic may also affected by the influencers' immigrant background. Both MZ and ET have Egyptian background. In one of the clips, the researcher found MZ uses Arabic when he interacts with his father. Accordingly, the use of Arabic, moreover if it is not an Islamic term, does not always reflect religious identity. Audience from Arabic speaking countries may not perceive all of them as religious representation. So, this finding justifies Omoniyi & White's (2006) principle of identity that more than one identity may be articulated in one context.

2. Engagement with Islamic Teachings

The second theme shows that the involvement of Islamic teachings is pretty significant in the data. These Islamic teachings are mostly referenced to support and strengthen the idea they want to deliver to the audience. For examples, they involve Islamic teachings when they are talking about accountability, productivity, balancing between world and hereafter, and going to the gym (see table 4.2). All of them also have similar kind of videos entitled "morning/night routine backed by Islam and

science," where they integrate information from science and the Qur'an/Hadith related to healthy lifestyle. Thus, this theme informs that Islamic teachings appears in many of the videos.

The involvement of Islamic teachings are signs of religious identity representation. It shows their identity as a Muslim who live their life based on Islamic lens and values. According to the data, the Islamic teachings they mentioned sourced from the holy Qur'an, the sayings and deeds of the Prophet, and the point of views of Muslim scholars.

The researcher argues that this kind of representation is in line with Omoniyi & White's (2006) identity principle number two, that identity is constructed within established context. In the context of Muslim influencers' channels, it is not enough that the SMIs are recognized as "a Muslim" by overtly stating that they are Muslims. They are also expected to present Islamic views and behaviors, because it will be learned and usually followed by the audience. In different context, for example classroom presentation with many non-Muslim audience about the benefit of exercise, the identity construction can be different. They may not mention many Islamic teachings, or probably less.

3. Mention or Discussion of Religious Beliefs and Practices

The third theme is the theme where they mostly represent their religious identity overtly. For examples, they say "I pray fajr" "I'm fasting," "we will celebrate Eid," "I read His word (the Qur'an)," "I . . . study my

deen at an Islamic school," "I try to follow the Sunnah," in these examples, they position themselves as the subject and the doer of those religious practices. By this mention, they represent themselves as practicing Muslims.

In some occasions, religious beliefs and practices are not simply mentioned but also discussed. In data 3.3 MZ and YT are talking about how, as Muslims, they perceive *deen* and *dunya*. They believe that both aspects are not something separated, but complement and affect each other. In data 3.4, YT explains the "religious reasons" of why exercising is part of religious practice.

4. Share Personal Religious Experiences

The fourth theme is actually the most interesting part. The SMIs openly tell their stories that not all of them representing the "ideal" Muslim version. They have moments of anger, happiness, and disappointment. They mostly deliver the stories for both saying that they too ever find it is hard to follow some of the practices, and also expressing how conducting the practices give them many positive benefits (see table 4.4).

One of the salient experiences is about going to the Masjid. They can feel the peace and happiness whenever they come to the Masjid. In line with their experiences, Smith (1999) says that Mosques in the USA can provide them with worship facility, and enable the Muslim community to have pride in its identification with Islam. The visible structures give sense that Islam in America could "stand up and be counted."

However, despite the Islamophobia challenges of American Muslim society, the researcher did not find any shared experience that express discrimination toward them from the out-group in the 30 videos. Based on the data, the challenging experiences deal with their own discipline, or in other words internal problems, rather than external. The researcher argues that it is because they intend to be focused in building the in-group quality.

5. Show Community Engagement and Social Responsibility

The last theme validates Wang's (2020) research that found community is part of Muslim American experience and identity –beside ethnic diversity, religious practice, and unity. MZ YT and ET represent that they are part of the in-group, mainly by talking about going to the Masjid (MZ, YT, ET), sharing experience of leading tarawih (YT) and doing khutbah (MZ). All of them also show that they are part of the world population by showing care toward Palestine. In addition, ET shows moments of him keep in touch with some non-Muslim friends in a good way.

Based on the above data, overall, there are some similarities and differences this study can conclude about how the SMIs represent their religious identity. The main and most salient similarity founded from the three channels is the practice of code-mixing. All of the SMIs often code-mix English with Arabic when they are uttering (mainly) Islamic terms or phrases, like *Assalamu'alaikum* and *Alhamdulillah*. Other notable similarities, in terms of non-verbal signs, include the

use of Islamic attires like skullcap and thobe, the beards, and the depiction of them going to the mosque, praying, studying, and working out at the gym along with the back sound of Qur'an recitations, nasheeds, or Islamic reminders from modern scholars. The researcher argues that these similarities are affected by their social connection, as they know each other in real life (although they live in different states) and have similar interest around Islam, self-improvement, and fitness.

However, they also have some differences. In linguistic practice, when sharing a verse from the Qur'an or a hadith, ET usually code-switch to Arabic to mention the original text first, then he will translate the text into English (see table 4.2). MZ is similar to ET, but he mentions less Islamic teachings than ET. Meanwhile, YT tend to directly state the translation or simply mentions the main idea. ET also says more Islamic terms than MZ and YT, specifically the words *Assalamu'alaikum warahmatullah wabarakatuh*, *alhamdulillah*, and *inshaallah* (see table 4.1). ET usually opens the video with the Islamic greeting, in the opposite, MZ usually closes the video with that type of greeting, and YT's openings and closings are varied. The non-verbal signs are generally the same, but just different in terms of quantity. ET shows more clips when he is praying. He has more smiles on his face during podcasting, and he also involves clips when he is prostrating and indicating *laa ila ha illa Allah* "there is no God but Allah" with his index finger after winning jiu jitsu competition. Hence, the researcher states that based on the data source, ET represents himself more "Islamically" than the other two channels.

To sum up, there are two important points this research could discover. First, these SMIs represent their religious identity openly and positively, as a declared

identity, where they deliver a message that "I am Muslim and I am proud of it" (Peek, 2005). They focus on making contents that give depictions of how they think and what they do in the daily basis as a Muslim. They construct themselves as being pious, discipline, and care with the community. Goffman (1959) used the term "frontstage behavior" for this kind of depiction in social media. Their positive portrayals of utterances and behaviors that focus on improvement and beneficial deeds in the videos also play its role to combat Islamophobia. This can be validated from Saleem & Ramasubramanian (2017) research that found negative media representations can give pressure for Muslims, while positive representations and sense of community and support from the in-group foster their identity confidence. Additionally, their positive representations can be a form of passive *da'wah* that informs public about the 'true' Islamic values (Yahya et al. 2020; Sule & Suleiman 2020). Positive representations by the in group also considered able to make Islam attractive in the eyes of the out-group (Chen & Dorairajoo, 2020).

Secondly, all of the utterances documented in the findings section consist of many codes that possibly understood by fellow Muslims but may not understood by non-Muslims. Hence, it reflects the identity principle that identity "is constructed within established context" (Omoniyi & White, 2006). In the videos, they communicate with the audience as a Muslim influencer, where the contents tend to encourage people to become the better version of themselves as a Muslim. This can also become the reasons why they do not highlight their American identity or any experience of discrimination.

There are two major implications that can be acted upon the findings. First, this data can be used to inform non-Muslims about how American Muslims, this minority group, practicing their religion. What really Islam teaches them? And what do they think about the teachings? Do they really cannot suit American culture? Non-Muslims can learn from the Muslim itself beside what they know from mainstream medias. Secondly, the findings can also be learned by the fellow Muslims. Some Muslims may have negative opinion of American Muslims since they 'live in America.' They may be overlooked American Muslims for the 'negative environment.' But from the findings Muslims from other countries can try to learn more about how American Muslims try to live their identity.

Nevertheless, this research has its limitations and thus recommend some points for future researches. This research does not cover other forms of representation than language, which limits the depiction of the subject's identity. Moreover, some utterances can be interpreted better if the researcher can validate it to the SMIs. Hence, combinations of data forms and interview to validate what the SMIs really represent can be implemented.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

A. Conclusion

This research investigates religious identity representation of American Muslim influencers through the lens of sociolinguistics. It highlights three pivotal things; that religious identity is overlooked in science and research while most of people embracing faith, that American Muslim community starts to grow bigger and can live their lives as American citizens, and that Social Media Influencers hold important role to contribute regulate social behaviors. Therefore, this study presents valuable insights worthy of investigation.

By conducting thematic analysis, the results show that American Muslim influencers represent their religious identity through:

1. The use of Arabic words and expressions, such as *Jannah* (heaven), *khayr* (goodness), *alhamdulillah* (all praises be to Allah), and *assalamu'alaikum* (peace be upon you).

2. Engagement with Islamic teachings from the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and the quote of Muslim scholar.

3. Mention or discussion of religious beliefs and practices, such as the belief that religion does not forbid them from chasing worldly things, and the worships like praying and following the prophet recommendation of wrestling.

4. Share personal religious experiences about *salah*, going to the Masjid, and memorizing the holy Qur'an.

5. Show community engagement and social responsibility. Whether it is related to non-Muslims, fellow Muslims, and humankind in general.

All of the themes above reflect that they construct the sense of being Muslim positively by showing devotion, discipline, and care for the community. It goes in line with Sule & Suleiman (2020) analysis that many Muslims use their social media as a place to conduct *da'wah* or simply being vocal with their faith. They are combating the negative narratives from mainstream media that Muslim is considered spreading 'terror' and can endanger some values hold by many Americans and westerners.

B. Suggestion

This research proposes several recommendations for enhancing future studies in this field. It suggests that future research explore how female American Muslims articulate their religious identity, compare both the representations from male and female American Muslim influencers, and consider diverse age groups. Additionally, researchers are encouraged to broaden the data sources beyond personal influencer channels to include media from mosque and immigrant communities. Supplementing online data with in-depth interviews and/or audience responses is also recommended as it would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the interpretation. Furthermore, incorporating linguistic and visual analyses could offer clearer and more nuanced depictions of religious representation. Future studies might also investigate whether individuals from

different social groups show similar or differing ways of expressing their religious identity.

After all, the findings of this research offer valuable insights for both Muslims and non-Muslims seeking to understand how American Muslims express their identity through YouTube channels. It sheds light on the ways in which SMIs (Social Media Influencers) navigate and articulate their religious beliefs in a digital context. The researcher emphasizes the ongoing relevance of exploring this topic in diverse and evolving ways, recognizing that religious identity continues to be a deeply meaningful aspect of personal and communal expression in contemporary society.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Sakinah Asa Lalita was born in Magelang on July 09, 2000. She graduated from MA Muhammadiyah 1 Malang in 2018. During her study at the Senior High School, she actively participated in IPM (such as OSIS) as the chief of Pengkajian Ilmu Pengetahuan department. She also joined cooking extracurricular, and got an achievement in English story telling competition. She started her higher education in 2018 at the Department of English Literature UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang and finished in 2024. During her study at the University, she joined English Literature Student Association (ELSA), Haiah Tahfidzul Qur'an (HTQ), IPM of Malang region, and founded social movement program that focuses on Qur'an and literacy development named Yuk Iqro'. She won several competitions including English drama, short story writing competition, da'wah vlog competition, and awarded as the best student of Quranic Social Movement in Global Quranic Student (GQS) program. She also became the awardee of partial scholarship GQS Goes to Turkiye in 2021. In her semester break, she experienced teaching Qur'an, STEM experiments, and Art & Craft activities for kids, and teaching beginner English speaking for young adults.

APPENDICES

A. List of Video Titles

Channel	Title	Date	Link
Moaaz	7 Habits That Will Make You Unstoppable in 2023	January 6, 2023	https://youtu.be/7GUlcQB2IHw?si=uHElWNFX4tAyju7q
	Visiting the Forgotten Syrian Refugee Camps	January 10, 2023	https://youtu.be/wp38selLZto?si=IyU8iw6t6bdHrMi0
	Q&A WITH YUSUFTRUTH | Deen, Marriage, Role Models	January 31, 2023	https://youtu.be/VFisOMzO4ak?si=vrZXcUPzAKQ6asKb
	How I Balance my Life as an Islamic Studies Student	February 19, 2023	https://youtu.be/J-sV3_kj6Yo?si=VQzgu4siM7FSDcqa
	Why You Should Be Excited for Ramadan (and how to prepare for it)	March 7, 2023	https://youtu.be/lJSJMA7mg_8?si=tBKNk7lOkiJIwPgk
	Delivering Aid to Palestinian Families | The Reality of Life in Occupied Land	April 5, 2023	https://youtu.be/3n7xJ_SkAlY?si=dSFYc1VqeYNFYEBg
	The First Step to First Self-Improvement	August 27, 2023	https://youtu.be/0ViR8ez_TjA?si=5Ut5hOc81B2m1_PE
	Day in The Life of a Dental Student	November 11, 2023	https://youtu.be/LGscmVniVFk?si=LB8dDhL_RsGEUOHz
	Come With Me to Umrah! | TRIP OF A LIFETIME	January 9, 2024	https://youtu.be/lz99sDpd4ZI?si=QYMsCwFjMrTJjQjf
	7 Things I Regret From My Teenage Years	January 30, 2024	https://youtu.be/MlEDx88M2I4?si=cwhErt5UDd49CT_N
	A DAY IN MY LIFE | Work, Gym, Muslim Masculinity	May 12, 2023	https://youtu.be/z9Z5J-N8BSo?si=hKGNJkPokXJno_ST
	Habits That Got Me Thru My Teens (important)	August 20, 2023	https://youtu.be/Id0Bj35L5ag?si=2fSxYC5MNWr0bh8W

Yusuf Truth	Things are changing	September 10, 2023	https://youtu.be/nc5MQ5GrscE?si=XbaNdVCMc1lo50jQ
	The Art Of Balance (Religion & Life)	October 15, 2023	https://youtu.be/YX4rB_2I14M?si=h2TdrRptC55sQPd0
	Living with my Wife, Apartment Updates & New Habits for Brain Health	December 5, 2023	https://youtu.be/ihXItdSGQ9I?si=jrP644mx70WVsHcO
	My 'Ideal' 6AM Morning Routine | simple, productive & brain health based	December 8, 2023	https://youtu.be/t9yQu9_mLZQ?si=cejgj9bcGXcRj8z4
	Tennessee Diaries, The Haqq Boys & Fun Weddings	January 12, 2024	https://youtu.be/3OeabB892C4?si=A8Ld-sVz27HZEptj
	Visiting Our Masjid, Training & The CH Mindset	February 4, 2024	https://youtu.be/x1cmTYSx2rI?si=EdTXrc8MhJdLGQMy
	Life After Becoming a Husband, Being Authentic & Running with the brothers	March 1, 2024	https://youtu.be/tlF48gK6AQg?si=3FRgXVWdSHEU5WI5
	Ramadan 2024 Reflections	March 30, 2024	https://youtu.be/Z4TiT2ETAJQ?si=C5NgNnSOR_mG3cml
Egypturk	BUILDING A STRONG MUSLIM COMMUNITY	May 2, 2023	https://youtu.be/ReL6UBqB7zY?si=VNDCk6b3H8GhOqhd
	I BOUGHT MY MOM HER DREAM CAR	May 25, 2023	https://youtu.be/Wp1aq5wtKUY?si=dawbYaBAc-6pIKp6
	75 HARD: MUSLIM EDITION	August 5, 2023	https://youtu.be/U9kAcoWmVdQ?si=BeP6MpJuTfb-3cgY
	99% will fail, 1 % will keep going	December 18, 2023	https://youtu.be/aQiAKE0rYVk?si=pWHUNeWvyJKqJVAa
	answering questions about marriage	January 22, 2024	https://youtu.be/9dYP0Gmgbuk?si=o8TjKVUvosXEqPcg
	What is the purpose of life	February 1, 2024	https://youtu.be/RMo7_QTyYbk?si=7IV753AWaz_F-2GL

How to Be Effortlessly Productive: 5 Mindset Shifts	February 3, 2024	https://youtu.be/rf02 o6jtXYc?si=5OMH5 qmDn_B5DglR
Do this one thing to become the richest person alive	February 7, 2024	https://youtu.be/P4M K8SIRS4I?si=5fZwt 6Hq1CQclhZb
Come with me to my first jiu jitsu tournament	February 12, 2024	https://youtu.be/7wfv ygsaNwc?si=Ribp8T xe16U4Hne1
What I Eat In a Day | Ramadan Edition	March 18, 2024	https://youtu.be/4nv0 - pEXU9s?si=OqHJT2 j3EPzeau8s

B. Script of Data Used

1. The Use of Arabic Words and Expressions

The data scripts in this category are too much to be listed. But the summary is presented in table 4.1.

2. Engagement with Islamic Teachings

All data scripts of this category are mentioned in table 4.2.

3. Mention or Discussion of Religious Beliefs and Practices

Channel	Script
	Number one is to wake up at 6am. If you're Muslim and you're watching this video this one should be a no-brainer because you're waking up for fajr anyways, it's one of the five daily prayers. It is an obligation on us. There really shouldn't be any discussion on this matter.
	Mama would always tell me that when you do something for the sake of Allah even if it's small, Allah is going to put baraka in the rest of your things. So if you're memorizing Quran or if you're even reading a little bit of Quran every day, the rest of your day is going to have a lot of Barakah.
MZ	Allah tells us in the Quran that "fasting has been written for you just like it's been written for those before you so that you may achieve taqwa." . . . But because I know that Allah is always watching me, whether I'm out in public or I'm alone in my room, I'm not going to eat, I'm not going to drink, and when you do that for 30 days, that sense of piety starts to build up and it applies to other aspects of your life as well, right?
	Think of Ramadan the same way, it is 30 days where we absolutely push ourselves physically, mentally, and spiritually, to better ourselves as people, to make it easier for us outside of Ramadan. Because you've

already been doing so much ibadah in those 30 days you've been reading Quran every day, you've been praying, you've been going to the Masjid, what Allah asks for outside of Ramadan is so much less. So it's easy for you now. Now when that attractive girl walks by on campus you're gonna be like nope, I was lowering my gaze for the last 30 days, I can do another day, no problem.
Ramadan isn't just supposed to fix you, it's supposed to elevate you, it's supposed to be a spiritual experience that you haven't felt all year.

If you're already doing all five of them now, then start doing those sunnah prayers, right. After Salah, do your [unclear] and witr at night, and if you really can if you really want to push it, then do your tahajjud or qiyamul lail before fajr. Also make it a point to start praying at least Fajr or Isha' in the Masjid especially if you're a guy, you're already going to be doing this anyways in Ramadan, because of tarawih, and then you really should be getting Fajr in the Masjid during Ramadan, so it'd be good practice to start those from now.

You know the Mondays and Thursdays leading up to Ramadan. Obviously it was the sunnah of the Prophet SAW to do so, and so not only are you emulating the Sunnah, you're also going to make it easier for when you have to fast during Ramadan and you are gaining a bunch of good deeds at the same time.

(Daud) "it helps provide iftar for those who pray and doing I'tikaf. There are people who come from all over the area who do not want to leave the masjid.

So we just arrived at Masjid An-Nabawi. A, the athan for Maghrib was like 5 minutes ago, so we just made it in time for Salah.

(YT) because when you talk about like balancing your Dunya and your Deen, it's like okay you have to pick and choose (MZ) it's like two things are exclusive (YT) yeah it's like or like Polar Opposites you know what I mean? Try your best to live, um through the lens of Islam as much as you can (MZ) right (YT) you know what I mean? Without obviously becoming too too extreme, and like judging people, and going out of your way to like inconvenience yourself for the sake of Islam, you know what I mean? I think that's kind of like what the, what the, the balance is, and whatnot.

for those that are new here, my name is Muadz I recently graduated from uni, and decided to take a gap year, and move to Dallas Texas to study my Deen at an Islamic school called the Qalam Institute. I'd give you all some more insight on what it's like here, between studying the deen, going to the gym, cooking, doing homework, making videos, going the halaqas, and trying to still have a social life.

(MZ) So we just finished distributing pretty much all the uh all the wood that people are getting through your donations. And uh as you guys can tell we uh we did some pretty heavy lifting Alhamdulillah. (YT) Car area was full of these heaters, and we were able to within 10-15 minutes give it to all the families. (MZ) But alhamdulillah that's amazing seeing you know the benefit that the money actually goes towards. Obviously they use these woods for heat during the winter, nights get really cold and um it was it was amazing to be able to actually like help out. Um and yeah.

As a man you need to be healthy, you need to have a strong body, and you need to be able to carry a heavy load. So pick whatever appeals to you most as long as it puts your body through pain, whether it be weightlifting or calisthenics or even a sport, soccer, football, running, swimming, anything to really get you moving and to push your body.

	This is so-so important as a guy. Imagine how much better our world, not even our world but just our Ummah would be if we had strong men Not just physically but mentally as well and emotionally.
YT	Alright you guys, so you know that it's a pretty big Sunnah to grow out your beard. It was a sunna of the Prophet peace be upon him to grow out your beard.
	So visualization paired with d'ua and action can literally change your life. All the goals that I had in my 14 year old journal, every single one was ticked off, except for getting into the NFL. That was the only dream I wasn't able to accomplish, but, Alhamdulillah, you know, Allah SWT had a different plan. So, don't take that lightly, and visualize, make dua for it, Allah SWT will take care of the rest.
	There's-there's no there's no reason why you shouldn't be working out your body. Allah SWT has given us our body as a vessel, it's an amanah, it's a trust on ourselves to take care of this. So it's our job to strengthen it, and to beautify it, and to take care of it.
	Um so Alhamdulillah, I'm going to see my girl inshallah in a couple of days. Today, of the day of filming this it is the 25th of March, today is a Monday and inshallah Sarah is going to be coming on Friday night and our khatam is going to be Saturday inshallah. I'm so excited to see her, we haven't been separated this long, ever um, since we got married. And uh yeah I just miss her and I can't wait to see her face inshallah. But, and then after that I will be going back to Houston, um to spend Eid with her family. Um, and the week after that I think my family's going to come to Houston and we can spend time together over there.
	I'm just gonna mention some benefits that you get from going to the Masjid, in case some of y'all need motivation, number one, praying Isha' at the Masjid counts as if you prayed half the night in prayer, and then praying the Fajr in the Masjid counts for the other half of the night. Every step that you take towards the Masjid, gives you one good deed and it removes a sin. And one of the seven people under the shade of Allah SWT on the Day of Judgment is someone whose heart was attached to the Masjid. Also, in general or generally, the people that you find at the Masjid are going to be people that you want to surround yourself with, right, people that go to halaqa, the people that are connected to the Deen, these are people that you want to be friends with and that you want to be around.
	He taught them that being religious did not mean isolating oneself from the world, but rather use one's faith as a guiding light to navigate through its complexities.
	For me personally balance means making time for spiritual growth and self-reflection while also pursuing my ambitions and engaging with the world.
	(YT) Tell me a little about what's on your plate, your food choices so why did you select these food choice? (JB) "Really I didn't want to but I was walking by they were talking to me they said they said free us and and put us on your plate, so I did it. So I'm really just doing charities."
	Looking for halal friendly options
	. . . getting married and-and being an adult is an amazing thing. It's an amazing thing I wish all of you guys can ex, will experience inshaAllah. But all these hardships in life kind of just remind you that we're not here forever. That this isn't a destination, this is just a journey. And to be truly be a traveler in that Journey, you have to go through the ups and downs because you're striving for a better thing.

	I highly recommend not waiting till your older to get married – if you have the means to get married, do it – our parents and society make us feel we have to be 100% secure prior to marriage – but our deen tells us to get married young – and Allah will make ways for you – any young couple will stand testament to that
	Um so I'm gonna try that out inshaallah because Abdul he does Jiu Jitsu and then my videographer the guy that helps me film these videos Jason he also does Jujitsu and they've just been telling me like really great things about it. And also to kind of like fulfill the Sunnah you know.
	[Prayer (Fajr) 06:15 – at this point of the morning I haven't looked at a screen – So to say my thanks to God, I try and read His word as the first thing that I look at – The chapter (surah) I'm reading is Yaseen – Read until sunrise].
	(MZ) hey so listen, make sure, remember when you're-when you're uh when you're in Salah at the end you got to make Salam both ways. You got, assalamualaikum warahmatullah, what I'm saying, assalamualaikum warahmatullah, (JB crazy you started left [laughter]
ET	[ET] And there's nothing wrong with becoming the most successful and the most richest person in this world. And that in a Dua, in a very famous Dua that people say during tawaf, "Rabbana atina fiddunya hasanah, wa fil akhirati hasanah waqina adzabannar," oh Allah grant me goodness in this world and goodness in the afterlife. If this world wasn't important, then why would the prophet wasallam make a Dua that contains this world? So always focus us on achieving your goals in this world, and especially your goals in the afterlife.
	I try to follow the Sunnah and eat the dates in odd numbers, so I'll eat it in either one three or five or if I'm feeling crazy I'll go for seven dates.
	You go straight, you make wudhu and then you start your day off fresh. That'll for sure change your mental health state for that day. The feeling when you wake up early you go to the Masjid, you go to the gym, that feeling you have is Indescribable.
	And I highly highly highly recommend, anyone who's interested in doing a combat sports to do it, because number one, uh, I believe it's Sunnah to wrestle. And number two it's just amazing cardio and it really keeps your body in shape. And, you know, you never know um, mah-Imam Mahdi might come out at any time. So it's always good to be prepared in case that happens.
	(MZ) it's gonna be a fun workout (ET) inshaallah (Moaaz) but uh, yeah we're not lifting anywhere near what we used to it's okay. We do it what? for what? (Yusuf) haqq (ET) for imam mahdi's army
	So Alhamdulillah, I officially just got done with school for the day. And that workout wasn't the best of workouts, but it wasn't also the worst of workouts. I feel like the-the more I work out around fajr time the most energy I have and the most hydrated I am. But the later on I extend it throughout the day I just feel a lot more exhausted and tired and I don't get to, really lift as heavy as I want to. But anyways the month of Ramadan is really about focusing on your worship and whatnot, so when it comes to the gym I'm trying my best to just maintain the level where I'm at. And then also just make time for Ibadah and all of that.
	Alright so now it's time to make iftar, and iftar for today we're going pretty simple.
	So for those of you guys who don't know what Ramadan is, I really just want to bring you guys with this journey of all the Muslims, and kind of so you guys can see what a day in the life of a Muslim goes like in Ramadan. So we actually start off in the night with tarawih prayers

	which the fardh is to like, the which is the mandatory part, is the isha' prayer. And that's highly recommended to be prayed at the Masjid. My wife and I are going to pray tarawih at the Masjid. So I kind of want to show you guys what tarawih is and what isha prayer is. This is obviously for everyone who hasn't even seen that stuff before. So uh hopefully you guys enjoy this video. I'm also going to be sharing with you guys things that I eat throughout the day, um not throughout the day, throughout like the time when I can't eat, which is Ramadan because I can't eat cuz I'm fasting.
	But I feel like a really big part of it, is looking at the whole Islamic process. So the prophet SAW always recommended getting the wali involved. So in the Islamic process you-actually go visit the houses both families get to know each other, cuz one thing you have to realize is, you're not just marrying the person, you're marrying the family. So you have to want to kind of like, make sure that the families are both compatible, not just you and her. And another thing is, the really the biggest thing is you have to just have faith in Allah SWT. You have to make the istikharah [caption; "istikhara" is a prayer in Islam that seeks guidance from Allah when making a decision, especially when facing a choice that may have significant consequences], and then you just go everything about the Islamic way, you have to ask the right questions, make sure that you guys are both on the same-same level morally, and with the same values, ask how you both want the kids to be raised, do you even want to have kids, just very important questions. And always try your best to find someone that will not only push you to become better in this life, but also to help you build in the akhira.
	you can worship Allah through other aspects of your life, for example studying. If your intentions are pure and they're for the sake of Allah that is also a form of worship. Providing for the family is also a form of worship. So just make sure that everything you do in your life is has the right intentions behind it, and is a form of worship of Allah subhana wa tala.

4. Share Personal Religious Experiences

All data scripts of this category are mentioned in table 4.4.

5. Show Community Engagement and Social Responsibility

Channel	Script
MZ	As a man you need to be healthy, you need to have a strong body, and you need to be able to carry a heavy load. So pick whatever appeals to you most as long as it puts your body through pain, whether it be weightlifting or calisthenics or even a sport, soccer, football, running, swimming, anything to really get you moving and to push your body. This is so so important as a guy. Imagine how much better our world, not even our world but just our Ummah would be if we had strong men Not just physically but mentally as well and emotionally.
	(MZ) So we just finished distributing pretty much all the uh all the wood that people are getting through your donations. And uh as you guys can tell we uh we did some pretty heavy lifting Alhamdulillah. (Yusuf) Car area was full of these heaters, and we were able to within 10-15 minutes

	give it to all the families. (Moaaz) But alhamdulillah that's amazing seeing you know the benefit that the money actually goes towards. Obviously they use these woods for heat during the winter, nights get really cold and um it was it was amazing to be able to actually like help out. Um and yeah.
	(YT) it's heartbreaking you see families like that, like the siblings are the ages of our siblings, you know and you see little kids little boys, it's that thought in my head man, (MZ) yeah (YT) it's always like . . . what if these are one of my-my brothers? (Moaaz) yeah, subhanallah (YT) not just, it goes, he goes crazy. But Alhamdulillah man (MZ) Alhamdulillah for this trip.
	You guys have absolutely blown me away with how much support you guys have shown, we've raised about 57 000 at the time of me recording this, InshaAllah the goal is 65 000. I love you guys so much, I made du'a for the 1452 of you guys that donated. May Allah bless you guys, and honor you, and increase your rizq. Amen, amen, amen.
	(YT) Also, in general or generally, the people that you find at the Masjid are going to be people that you want to surround yourself with, right, people that go to halaqa, the people that are connected to the Deen, these are people that you want to be friends with and that you want to be around.
	We have a Fajr group chat, where we keep each other accountable for Fajr, we have a study group chat to keep each other accountable for our studies, it's really important to have people in your life that will keep you accountable, and where you can push each other [Quran verses].
	(Daud) Every donation that you make is going to make a big difference guys it's going to feed somebody. We're gonna do a lot of great things with your donations with the help of the people of Palestine insha'Allah. Barakallahufikum
	(MZ) Hey where's for YouTube? (friend) YouTube man, all I want to say is, laa ilaha illa Allah, muhammadur Rasulullah (Moaaz) Allahuakbar (friend) thank Allah and only Allah, you know, make sure to do your prayers, the ffi, I got I got a tip, the five steps to success is Fajr, Dzuhur, Ashr (MZ) Allahh (friend) Maghrib, Isha', that's it (MZ) wise words, wise words.
	And if you've been following this channel for a while, you know that the point I probably stress the most is the importance of good friends. And where better to find righteous like-minded people than the Masjid? than the house of Allah? That is where you're going to find the people that you want to be around. That is where you're going to find the people, that are going to help you in your eman.
YT	We all know how important it is to stay involved with our community. And one of the best ways to do that, is to frequently be in the Masjid. . . Wallahi when you enter the Masjid, and you go inside there, there is this type of peace that the people have over there. And that the Masjid itself holds, that you can't find anywhere else in this world. . . And most of us need good friends, most of us need brothers and sisters that have the same Islamic values that we have. There's no better place in the world to find them other than the Masjid.
	It's crazy to see how, one human being can do another thing to another human being. Forget about politics, forget about religion, forget about race, forget about everything else. At the end of the day, how can one human do that to another human? How? Like I-I genuinely I don't understand how? Like it gets me so fired up because I sometimes, my mind inevitably goes to places where I put myself in their shoes, and I

	put myself-I put myself in that man's shoes. Where he's in the hospital and his wife is 5 months pregnant. I have a wife now, right. I have a wife. And I can't imagine being in that position. Like my blood generally just boils and it's like there's two billion of us Muslims in-in the world. Two billion of us, and we still can't make a difference of things that are happening over there.
	(ET) How much are you charging? yeah he gives the first 100 customers for free right? (friend) "right right" (ET) especially if they're Muslims? (friend) "yeah" yeah, [laughs] "InshaAllah."
	(ET) we're about to hit a nice chest day workout, and um he's about to outlift us all but it's okay, because "laa yu'minu ahadukum hatta yuhibba li akhihi ma yuhibbu linafsih," one will never become a true believer until he loves for his brothers what he loves for himself. (MZ) haqq (ET) haqq. And I want my brothers to be better than me at the gym, and-and in every aspect in life. So, it makes me happy to see it, alhamdulillah.
	I am finally back in Houston, this is my favorite city in the whole world after Mecca and Medina obviously, but just in terms of living here the Muslim community is great, so many Masajids like, within the within 5 to 10 minutes of where I live, there's alhamdulillah about maybe I would say 10 masajids all around. So, if you're looking for a place to live, that has like a good Islamic community, and um good food and fun things to do, definitely check out Houston.
ET	and it's really beautiful to see like that Muslim brotherhood bond, that's forming, and you know, these are your brothers for life, you know. Like the friends that you make from the Masjid are the friends that will stay with you for the rest of your life, you know. Those are people-you don't even call them friends, at the end of the day they just become family, and you guys just feel so close to each other. So um if one of you guys or some of you guys are struggling to find friends out there. Or you have friends but you're looking for friends that will guide you to the better path. I highly recommend finding friends from the Masjid. Because, those-those are the people that you know they have good morals and values. I'm not saying if you don't go to the Masjid then you don't have good morals or values, but someone who actually follows the deen will most likely try their best to emulate the prophet SAW, and he was known to have the best of character.
	[Conversation with non-Muslim friends] (ET) say it again? (friend) hmm (ET) what-what else did you say after? (friend) Salam (ET) all right so, this guy said, "I'm fasting too" and then he out all this food. He's like I got you one too man. [laughter]
	[Conversation with non-Muslim friend] (ET) So we're going to go catch a workout in right now fasted. I don't know about this guy (friend) fasted (ET) but yeah we'll let you all know how it goes Inshallah. We're going to have some deadlifts today, (friend) inshaallah (ET) so actually we're hitting chest today right (friend) chest chest (ET) yeah we're hitting chest today. So, no-no pre no food no water nothing, just go in raw we'll see how it goes (friend) Alhamdulillah (ET) alhamdulillah always [laughter]
	(ET) So unfortunately, it's time for me to go back to Florida. But it was such a great time meeting these brothers. In a nutshell Dallas Community is awesome, what would you guys say about the Dallas? Muslim Dallas Community (MZ) I think it would be better if you were here. but a- (ET) thank you (MZ) it's- amazing alhamdulillah. (YT) I can't even top that (ET) yet it's so crazy because, every single kid I met

	is studying under some Institute of Islamic knowledge mashallah and, one thing I really love is like, not even like the older guys, it's just the youth generation (MZ) there's a lot of youth here that are-that are tied to the deen (ET) yeah (MZ) that you don't find that very often (ET) and they will like juggle it with school too (MZ) yeah (ET) so it's not like they're doing it full-time, they're focusing on this life and the next life, which is really like, it was really inspirational and eye-opening for me. And hope, maybe one day I'll move out here, (MZ & YT) inshaallah/mashaallalh (ET) who knows?
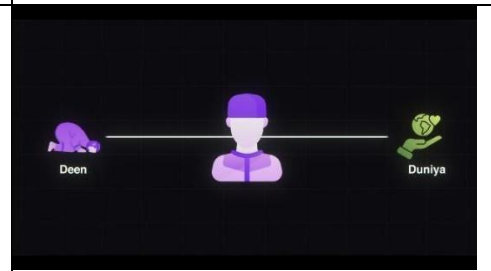
C. Some Photographs

1. Moaaz

Visiting refugee camp	Working out at the gym
Wearing Islamic attire	Clip of *umrah*
Praying in the room	Studying in dental school
Clip at the Qalam Institute (the place where MZ learns Islamic studies)	Delivering aid in Palestine

2. Yusuf Truth

Wearing a skull cap	Visualizing the balance of the world and the hereafter
YT and his *hijabi* wife	Praying *jumu'ah* in the mosque
Ornament that signs *tawheed*	YT and friends –dressing up to attend a wedding
Looking for halal food	Reciting the holy Qur'an
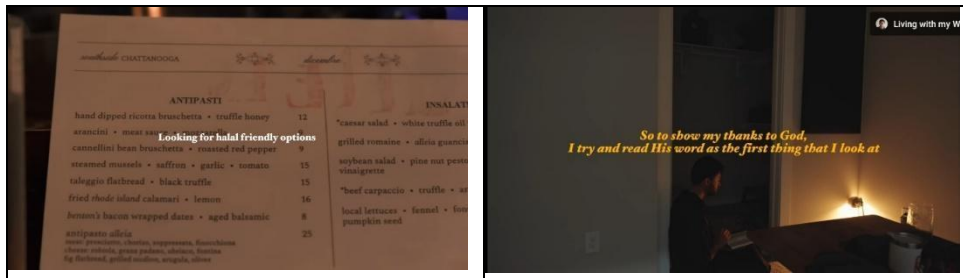
3. Egypturk

Going to the mosque with friends	ET, YT & MZ saying "haqq" while indexing *tawheed*
Reciting the holy Qur'an	Praying in the empty room at dental school
Prostrating when winning a jiu jitsu competition	Interacting with a non-muslim friend
Wearing a thobe	Joining *halaqah* with the syaikh