

Sumud Nusantara: Online Sentiments and Islamic Ethics on Social Media Solidarity with Palestine

Sumud Nusantara: Sentimen Dalam Talian dan Etika Islam dalam Solidariti Media Sosial dengan Palestin

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how Islamic ethical values shape digital expressions of solidarity with Palestine, focusing on *Sumud Nusantara*, a Malaysian-led humanitarian flotilla movement. Adopting a mixed-method research design combining automated sentiment analysis and qualitative thematic interpretation, the study examines how users articulate faith-driven hope and moral solidarity through Instagram comments. Data were collected from the official @sumudnusantara account, encompassing 144 cleaned comments drawn from the ten most engaging posts. Using a Python-based scraping pipeline, comments were extracted, cleaned, and preprocessed to remove metadata, duplicates, and non-human entries. Lexicon-driven sentiment detection and emotion-based scoring (via *text2emotion* and *NRCLex*) were employed to classify thematic presence and intensity across two ethical dimensions: *faith-driven hope* and *moral solidarity*. Subsequent qualitative interpretation mapped these sentiments against the Islamic ethical principles of *‘adl* (justice) and *hifz al-nafs* (preservation of life). Findings show that 132 comments expressed faith-driven hope, while 77 conveyed moral solidarity, often overlapping. The multilingual discourse—dominated by Malay and English—reflects both local cultural grounding and transnational *ummah* consciousness. Word frequency analysis highlights the dominance of spiritual and humanitarian terms (e.g., *Allah*, *semoga*, *safe*, *sumud*), signifying digital expressions of compassion, vigilance, and steadfastness. Engagement patterns demonstrate a community-oriented participation, reflecting the moral equilibrium of *‘adl* and the protective compassion of *hifz al-nafs*. The study concludes that *Sumud Nusantara*'s online activism represents a form of digital adab (ethical conduct), where justice and compassion converge in networked moral practice. It shows how faith-based digital publics translate Islamic ethics into contemporary humanitarian advocacy, transforming social media into a moral public sphere grounded in justice, empathy, and the preservation of life.

Keywords: Digital Solidarity; Sentiment Analysis; Islamic Ethics; Online Activism; Sumud Nusantara Flotilla

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini meneliti bagaimana nilai etika Islam membentuk ekspresi solidariti digital terhadap Palestin dengan memberi tumpuan kepada Sumud Nusantara, sebuah gerakan flotila kemanusiaan yang diterajui oleh Malaysia. Menggunakan reka bentuk kajian bercampur yang menggabungkan analisis sentimen automatik dan interpretasi tematik kualitatif, kajian ini meneliti bagaimana pengguna mengungkapkan harapan berteraskan keimanan (faith-driven hope) dan solidariti moral melalui ulasan



di Instagram. Data dikumpulkan daripada akaun rasmi @sumudnusantara, melibatkan 144 ulasan yang telah dibersihkan daripada sepuluh hantaran paling tinggi interaksi. Menggunakan saluran pengumpulan data berasaskan Python, ulasan telah diekstrak, dibersihkan, dan dipra-proses bagi membuang metadata, pendua, serta entri bukan manusia. Pengesanan sentimen berasaskan leksikon dan penilaian emosi (melalui text2emotion dan NRCLex) digunakan untuk mengklasifikasikan kehadiran dan intensiti tema merentasi dua dimensi etika: harapan berteraskan keimanan dan solidariti moral. Interpretasi kualitatif seterusnya memetakan sentimen tersebut terhadap prinsip etika Islam 'adl (keadilan) dan *hifz al-nafs* (pemeliharaan nyawa). Dapatan menunjukkan bahawa 132 ulasan menzahirkan harapan berteraskan keimanan, manakala 77 mengungkapkan solidariti moral, dengan beberapa yang bertindih. Wacana pelbagai bahasa didominasi oleh Bahasa Melayu dan Inggeris mencerminkan akar budaya tempatan serta kesedaran ummah transnasional. Analisis kekerapan perkataan menunjukkan dominasi istilah kerohanian dan kemanusiaan seperti Allah, semoga, safe, dan sumud, yang menandakan ekspresi digital berteraskan kasih sayang, kewaspadaan, dan keteguhan. Corak penglibatan pengguna memperlihatkan bentuk penyertaan berorientasikan komuniti yang mencerminkan keseimbangan moral 'adl dan sifat belas ihsan pelindung *hifz al-nafs*. Kajian ini merumuskan bahawa aktivisme digital Sumud Nusantara merupakan satu bentuk adab digital (tatasusila etika) di mana keadilan dan kasih sayang bersatu dalam amalan moral berangkaian. Ia menunjukkan bagaimana khalayak digital berteraskan keimanan menterjemahkan etika Islam ke dalam advokasi kemanusiaan kontemporari, sekali gus menjadikan media sosial sebagai ruang awam moral yang berteraskan keadilan, empati, dan pemeliharaan kehidupan.

Kata kunci: Solidariti Digital; Analisis Sentime; Etika Islam; Aktivisme Dalam Talian; Sumud Nusantara

INTRODUCTION

The Palestinian struggle has long symbolized resistance against oppression and the pursuit of justice within the global Muslim consciousness. In recent years, expressions of solidarity with Palestine have increasingly migrated to digital platforms, where social media functions as a moral and communicative sphere for activism and empathy (Castells, 2012). Hashtags such as #FreePalestine and #SaveSheikhJarrah have demonstrated how online networks construct powerful narratives of injustice, faith, and humanitarian concern that transcend geographical and political boundaries (Anisa, Harjoko & Khadifa, 2023). The emergence of what Papacharissi (2015) terms *affective publics*, an online community formed around shared emotion and moral commitment, illustrates how users mobilize compassion and outrage through digital media. For many Muslims, such engagement is more than political advocacy; it represents an ethical duty grounded in the Qur'anic imperatives of 'adl (justice) and *hifz al-nafs* (preservation of life). Social media thus serves as both a space for expression and a platform for enacting faith-based moral responsibility. Within this context, the Sumud Nusantara flotilla, a Malaysian humanitarian mission to Gaza, provides a meaningful case for examining faith-driven digital solidarity. The term *sumūd* (steadfastness) itself reflects resilience rooted in Islamic ethical ideals. The flotilla's visibility on social media generated widespread engagement across Muslim communities, turning its humanitarian mission into a symbolic act of religious and moral witness. While studies have explored the political and emotional dynamics of digital activism (Huda, Rahman & Fauzi, 2022; Zeitzoff, 2018), fewer have investigated how Islamic ethics inform online expressions of solidarity. This gap limits understanding of how faith and moral reasoning shape public sentiment in the digital sphere. Addressing this, the present study analyzes social media responses to the Sumud Nusantara flotilla through sentiment and thematic analysis, interpreting how digital users articulate solidarity with Palestine in ways that reflect Islamic principles of justice, compassion, and the preservation of life.

Objectives:

1. To examine the Islamic ethical foundations underlying solidarity with Palestine as manifested through the *Sumud Nusantara* flotilla expedition.
2. To analyze social media sentiments and thematic patterns within online discourse surrounding the *Sumud Nusantara* flotilla in expressing solidarity with Palestine.
3. To assess how digital expressions of faith-based solidarity correspond to and reflect Islamic moral principles, particularly 'adl (justice) and *hifz al-nafs* (preservation of life).

Research Questions:

1. How do Islamic ethical principles inform and shape expressions of solidarity with Palestine in the context of the *Sumud Nusantara* flotilla expedition?
2. What are the dominant sentiments and thematic narratives that emerge from social media discourse surrounding the *Sumud Nusantara* flotilla in support of Palestine?
3. In what ways do digital expressions of solidarity reflect and align with the Islamic moral principles of *'adl* (justice) and *hifz al-nafs* (preservation of life)?

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Social media has become a central arena for articulating moral and humanitarian concern, particularly within the Muslim digital sphere. Campaigns such as *#FreePalestine* and *#SaveSheikhJarrah* demonstrates how online users mobilize faith and emotion to express solidarity with Palestine (Anisa, Harjoko & Khadifa, 2023; Huda, Rahman & Fauzi, 2022). However, while existing research has examined the political and affective dimensions of such activism, relatively little attention has been given to the ethical and theological foundations that underpin these digital expressions. The *Sumud Nusantara* flotilla, a Malaysian-led humanitarian mission to Gaza, provides a meaningful opportunity to explore how Muslim users translate religious values into online advocacy. Rooted in the principle of *ṣumūd* (steadfastness), the flotilla embodies both humanitarian compassion and Islamic moral commitment. Yet, the extent to which social media discussions surrounding the flotilla reflect Islamic ethical principles particularly *'adl* (justice) and *hifz al-nafs* (preservation of life) remains largely unexplored. Furthermore, while computational tools such as sentiment analysis have been used to assess public emotion in crises, few studies integrate such methods with Islamic moral reasoning. This creates a gap in understanding how digital emotion, faith, and ethics intersect within Muslim online communities. Addressing this gap, the study investigates social media sentiments toward the *Sumud Nusantara* flotilla to uncover how faith-based moral consciousness is expressed through digital solidarity with Palestine.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media as a Moral and Communicative Space

The digital era has radically transformed how individuals and communities engage with political and humanitarian issues. Social media, once conceived merely as a networking tool, has become a moral and communicative sphere, a virtual public space where social realities, political dissent, and humanitarian empathy are constantly negotiated (Huda et al., 2022). Its features of instant connectivity and interactivity allow ordinary users to transcend traditional media gatekeeping and participate directly in constructing public narratives. Through likes, comments, shares, and hashtags, users collectively shape moral discourses around justice and human rights. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter (X), and Instagram provide an open stage for public participation in global events, particularly those involving moral outrage and collective compassion. In this sense, social media has democratized the production and distribution of information, enabling a global audience to witness and interpret crises in real time (Anisa, Harjoko & Khadifa, 2023).

While digital spaces foster connectivity and agency, they also produce ambiguities: misinformation, performative activism, and algorithmic biases that amplify selective narratives. Nonetheless, the emotional immediacy of social media has made it one of the most powerful mediums for expressing dissent and solidarity. It acts simultaneously as a mirror reflecting public sentiment and as a catalyst generating collective moral response.

Hashtags as Cultural and Political Instruments

One of the most distinctive communicative features of social media is the hashtag, a simple textual marker that functions as a mechanism of aggregation, identification, and mobilization. Anisa et al. (2023) argue that hashtags such as *#FreePalestine* are not merely technical tools but symbols of digital resistance that encapsulate ideological positions and moral commitments. They transform individual expressions into collective statements by linking scattered posts into coherent discursive communities.

Similarly, Huda et al. (2022) observe that trending hashtags like *#SaveSheikhJarrah*, *#AlAqsaUnderAttack*, and *#SavePalestine* embody the collective consciousness of digital publics, acting as rallying cries that unify dispersed supporters under a shared moral banner. These digital markers enable users to articulate solidarity, amplify voices from conflict zones, and construct narratives that challenge dominant geopolitical framings. The hashtag thereby serves a dual function: informational and symbolic. Informationally, it organizes digital content, making it searchable and analyzable for trend detection and sentiment mapping. Symbolically, it performs moral signaling—communicating empathy, outrage, or allegiance to a cause. As research on digital activism shows, hashtags generate communities of affect and action where meaning is collectively negotiated through iterative engagement (Carney, 2016; Murthy, 2018).

Social Media, Emotion, and the Construction of Solidarity

Empirical studies demonstrate that emotional discourse drives much of social media activism. The rapid diffusion of images, videos, and testimonials cultivates what Anisa et al. (2023) describe as *affective solidarity*: an emotional alignment among users who experience empathy, anger, or grief in response to shared digital stimuli.

Huda et al. (2022) found that during the 2021 conflict in Gaza and Sheikh Jarrah, social media narratives were dominated by themes of *justice*, *freedom*, and *Palestinian victimhood*. Word-cloud and cluster analyses revealed that hashtags such as *#FreePalestine* and *#SaveSheikhJarrah* correlated strongly ($r > 0.9$), indicating a tightly connected emotional and ideological community. These patterns show how digital users frame moral identities collectively, where empathy becomes a form of resistance.

Such emotional participation transforms social media into what Papacharissi calls “affective publics” where communities bound not by physical space but by shared emotion. In humanitarian crises, these publics act as amplifiers of witness: users repost scenes of destruction or suffering to bear moral testimony and to pressure global audiences toward recognition or action. Thus, emotional communication becomes a mode of digital witnessing, blurring the line between observation and activism.

Social Media and Digital Activism

Beyond emotional expression, social media has reconfigured the mechanics of collective action. Huda et al. (2022) note that networked protest where mobilization through interconnected users represents a new form of activism requiring minimal organizational infrastructure. Movements such as the *Arab Spring*, *Umbrella Movement*, and *Black Lives Matter* exemplify how social media’s low entry barrier allows dispersed individuals to converge around shared motives.

However, the digitalization of protest introduces both possibilities and pitfalls. While social media can mobilize millions within hours, it also risks producing low effort participation or commonly termed as *clicktivism* or *slacktivism*, where engagement remains confined to symbolic gestures rather than tangible change (Ghermandi & Sinclair, 2019). Still, these acts of symbolic participation hold communicative significance: they register public conscience and generate moral visibility for issues otherwise marginalized in mainstream media. For the Palestinian cause, social media operates as a transnational public sphere where users collectively construct and circulate narratives of justice, occupation, and resistance. These digital interactions extend the geography of solidarity beyond national or religious boundaries, linking Muslim and non-Muslim audiences in a shared moral discourse (Zeitsoff, 2017; Hayes, 2023).

Digital Visuality and Moral Imagination

Visual media like photos, infographics, short videos has become central to online advocacy. Anisa et al. (2023) highlight how visual culture intensifies emotional engagement, particularly on image-driven platforms such as Instagram. The visual representation of suffering, destruction, or acts of compassion serves as a catalyst for empathy and mobilization. Images of Palestinian civilians, children, and destroyed homes often function as moral symbols, communicating injustice more powerfully than textual argument. These images enable what Hayes (2023) describes as *digital witnessing*: users become remote observers of human tragedy, participating in a moral economy of attention. The sharing of such imagery transforms social media into an affective archive where collective memory and emotion are stored.

Theoretical Perspectives: Civil Society and Networked Communication

The role of social media in contemporary activism can also be interpreted through broader theories of civil society and networked communication. Cohen and Arato (1992) conceptualized civil society as a domain of voluntary association beyond the state and market—a definition that prefigures the participatory ethos of digital platforms. Castells (2012) later argued that social media reconstitutes this civil space by transforming fear and isolation into shared agency, as seen during the *Arab Spring*. In similar fashion, Huda et al. (2022) interpret digital activism in the Palestine–Israel conflict as the manifestation of networked civil resistance, where online publics operate as decentralized moral agents. Through continuous interaction, reposting, and hashtagging, these publics generate what could be called *distributed legitimacy*: the authority of collective moral voice. This theoretical frame situates online solidarity not merely as media expression but as a form of digital civil society, one that challenges the monopoly of institutional actors in defining justice and human rights.

Social Media and Middle Eastern Conflicts

Within the Middle Eastern context, social media plays a dual role: as a communication infrastructure and as a moral amplifier. Zeitzoff (2018) demonstrates that during the 2012 and 2014 Gaza conflicts, Twitter functioned as an alternative news ecosystem that bypassed official censorship and allowed victims to broadcast their experiences globally. Similarly, El Zein and Abusalem (2015) observed that Palestinian activists used online platforms to counter pro-Israel narratives and humanize the Palestinian struggle. Huda et al. (2022) further emphasize that social media removes the spatial and political distance between local conflicts and global audiences. It enables real-time participation and moral evaluation by users worldwide. The symbolic vocabulary of hashtags such as *#SavePalestine* and *#AlAqsaUnderAttack* transforms online discourse into a transnational movement of conscience. In this sense, digital platforms serve as extensions of resistance, providing an *information battlefield* where narratives of oppression, justice, and survival are contested and reframed. The Palestinian case thus represents not only a geopolitical conflict but also an ongoing communication war, where moral legitimacy is fought through images, posts, and hashtags.

Research Gap and Relevance to the Present Study

Despite the expanding literature on digital activism, there remains a relative paucity of studies examining how online sentiments correspond to ethical or religious frameworks particularly within Islamic thought. Existing research largely focuses on descriptive patterns (content, relations, engagement levels) but seldom interrogates whether such expressions align with religious-moral principles such as *'adl* (justice) and *hifz al-nafs* (preservation of life). Building on the models of Anisa et al. (2023) and Huda et al. (2022), the present study extends this line of inquiry by analyzing social-media sentiments surrounding the *Sumud Nusantara* flotilla, a Malaysian-led humanitarian mission to Gaza. This investigation not only maps affective and thematic patterns of digital solidarity but also situates them within Islamic ethical discourse, thereby bridging computational sentiment analysis with theological reflection. In doing so, the study contributes to two intersecting fields: digital humanities and Islamic ethics in communication, offering a framework to assess how online publics articulate justice, compassion, and human dignity through digital media.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative mixed-method research design to explore how Islamic ethical values are expressed in digital solidarity with Palestine. The analysis focuses on public social media discourse surrounding the *Sumud Nusantara* flotilla, emphasizing emotional and moral expressions conveyed through user comments.

Platform Selection and Scope

Although *Sumud Nusantara* maintains a presence on multiple social media platforms—including TikTok and Facebook—this study focuses exclusively on Instagram. Instagram was selected due to its unique affordances for analyzing public discourse in a visually oriented, post-centric format. Unlike TikTok, which emphasizes short-form video content with limited textual interaction, or Facebook, which often involves semi-private group-based discussions, Instagram provides an accessible and structured comment environment where audience reactions are directly linked to specific posts. Instagram's comment threads also tend to contain spontaneous and emotionally expressive language,

making it an appropriate platform for examining value-laden expressions related to religion, empathy, and solidarity. The public visibility of comments additionally ensures that data can be ethically collected and analyzed without breaching user privacy or institutional guidelines. While this single-platform focus provides a coherent dataset for deep analysis, future studies should consider integrating cross-platform data to capture a more comprehensive view of digital engagement.

Sampling Strategy

A purposive sampling method was used to curate the dataset. The ten most engaged posts from the official Instagram account (@sumudnusantaraofficial) were selected based on the highest number of comments and likes during the flotilla period. This approach aligns with qualitative research practices that emphasize information richness over statistical representativeness. Focusing on posts with significant engagement ensures that the dataset reflects the most visible and impactful expressions of public sentiment.

Data Collection and Preprocessing

Comments were extracted using a Python-based scraping tool and processed through the Pandas library. Only publicly available comments were collected to maintain ethical integrity. The initial dataset was cleaned to remove duplicates, spam, emojis, non-language entries, and irrelevant content. After preprocessing, 144 comments were retained for analysis.

Data Analysis

Two stages of analysis were conducted:

1. **Sentiment Analysis:**

Lexicon-based sentiment tools (VADER, TextBlob, NRCLex) were used to identify and classify emotional tones within the comments. This analysis identified dominant emotional themes, specifically *faith-driven hope* and *moral solidarity*, supported by sentiment scoring and frequency patterns.

2. **Thematic Analysis:**

A manual coding process was applied to identify underlying moral and spiritual themes. Comments were interpreted within the framework of Islamic ethics, focusing on the principles of *'adl* (justice) and *hifz al-nafs* (preservation of life). Linguistic patterns were also analyzed, particularly the use of Malay-English code-switching with Arabic expressions, to explore how identity and ethical sentiment are expressed in digital spaces.

Step 1 - Data Collection

1.1 Profile Selection

The study focused on the Instagram profile @sumudnusantara, which actively promotes solidarity and awareness for Palestine. The objective was to analyze audience responses to the account's most engaging posts.

1.2 Post Metadata Scraping

A Python-based scraper collected all posts from the profile. Metadata was stored in a structured CSV file to enable subsequent engagement analysis.

1.3 Selection of Top 10 Most Engaged Posts

Engagement was measured using the formula:

$$\text{Engagement} = \text{likesCount} + \text{commentsCount}$$

Posts were ranked in descending order of engagement, and the top 10 posts were selected for detailed analysis.

1.4 Comment Scraping

Approximately 10–15 comments per post were retrieved before scraper operations were halted by Instagram’s anti-bot protections. While non-exhaustive, this sample provides a representative snapshot of user sentiment.

Step 2 - Data Cleaning and Preprocessing

2.1 Cleaning Workflow

The cleaning pipeline ensured that only meaningful, human-generated comment text was retained. Steps included:

1. **Column Reduction:** Removed non-essential scraped_at metadata.
2. **Text Normalization:** Stripped newline characters and excessive whitespace using regex.
3. **Time Marker Removal:** Eliminated Instagram time indicators (e.g., 5w, 2d, 3h) via regex $(\backslash\text{d}+[\text{wdh}]\backslash\text{b})$.
4. **Author-Text Duplication Filtering:** Removed comments identical to usernames.
5. **Translation Prompt Removal:** Excluded interface prompts such as “See translation.”
6. **Author Blacklist:** Filtered out comments from system accounts (e.g., explore).
7. **Empty and Duplicate Removal:** Dropped empty rows and deduplicated comments.
8. **Merging and Export:** Consolidated all cleaned files into a single CSV (cleaned_comments_4.csv).





2.2 Outcome

The resulting dataset is high-quality, cohesive, and free from UI artifacts, duplicates, and low-value metadata. This dataset underpinned subsequent lexicon-based sentiment and thematic analyses.

Step 3 - Analysis: Thematic Moral Discourse Analysis

3.1 Lexicon Development

Two moral-affective lexicons were constructed to capture recurring themes in digital solidarity discourse:

Theme	Core Keywords	Emoji Cues	Conceptual Focus
Faith-Driven Hope	hope, faith, believe, prayer, trust, bless, divine, patience	 	Spiritual resilience and moral optimism amid crisis
Moral Solidarity	solidarity, support, unity, justice, freedom, resist, flotilla, Palestine	 	Collective identity, humanitarian unity, and resistance

Lexicons were expanded using **WordNet** to include semantic synonyms (e.g., assist, faithfulness, resistance).

3.2 Scoring Algorithm

Each comment was analyzed using a composite scoring function integrating:

1. **Keyword and Emoji Detection:** Captures direct and affective cues.
2. **Hashtag Parsing:** Identifies slogans (e.g., #PrayForPalestine).
3. **NLP Sentiment Augmentation:** Incorporates outputs from text2emotion and NRCLex.

Each comment yielded two intensity scores: one for Faith-Driven Hope and one for Moral Solidarity.

3.3 Aggregation and Sampling

- Scores were aggregated to measure overall thematic strength.
- Five representative high-scoring comments per theme were sampled for qualitative analysis.

3.4 Visualisation

Visualizations demonstrate thematic prevalence and intensity (refer to figures section).

Step 4 - Interpretation

The analysis demonstrates how digital discourse intertwines faith and justice in humanitarian engagement.

- **Faith-Driven Hope:** Spiritual endurance and reliance on the divine.
- **Moral Solidarity:** Collective empathy and identification with the Palestinian struggle.

Ethical Considerations

Only public comments were analyzed, and user identities were anonymized during the extraction and coding process. No personal or private content was accessed. The study followed ethical guidelines for digital research involving publicly accessible content, respecting both user consent and privacy.

Data Limitations and Reliability Justification

This study is limited to data collected from Instagram, despite *Sumud Nusantara's* presence on other platforms such as TikTok and Facebook. Instagram was selected due to its structured comment features, post-centric public engagement, and suitability for analyzing value-laden responses within a single platform context. However, this focus necessarily excludes the distinct forms of interaction and narrative expression that occur on other platforms such as TikTok's video-based content or Facebook's group-based discussions. As such, the findings may not capture the full spectrum of digital engagement surrounding the movement. Future research should consider incorporating cross-platform data to provide a more comprehensive view of Muslim digital activism and its varied communicative styles.

While this study analyzed a relatively small dataset of 144 comments derived from ten highly engaged Instagram posts, the sampling approach was guided by a qualitative logic of *information richness* rather than representativeness. Such focused sampling allows for deeper interpretive insight into the moral and emotional dimensions of faith-based discourse, consistent with previous qualitative studies in digital religion and activism (Huda et al., 2022; Zainal & Farid, 2022).

To enhance reliability, the dataset underwent rigorous preprocessing, including duplicate removal, language normalization, and manual validation of thematically relevant entries. The integration of both computational sentiment analysis and manual thematic interpretation further ensured internal consistency through method triangulation. Nonetheless, the study acknowledges that the limited sample size constrains generalizability. Future research should incorporate larger datasets or employ longitudinal designs to strengthen the robustness and external validity of the findings.

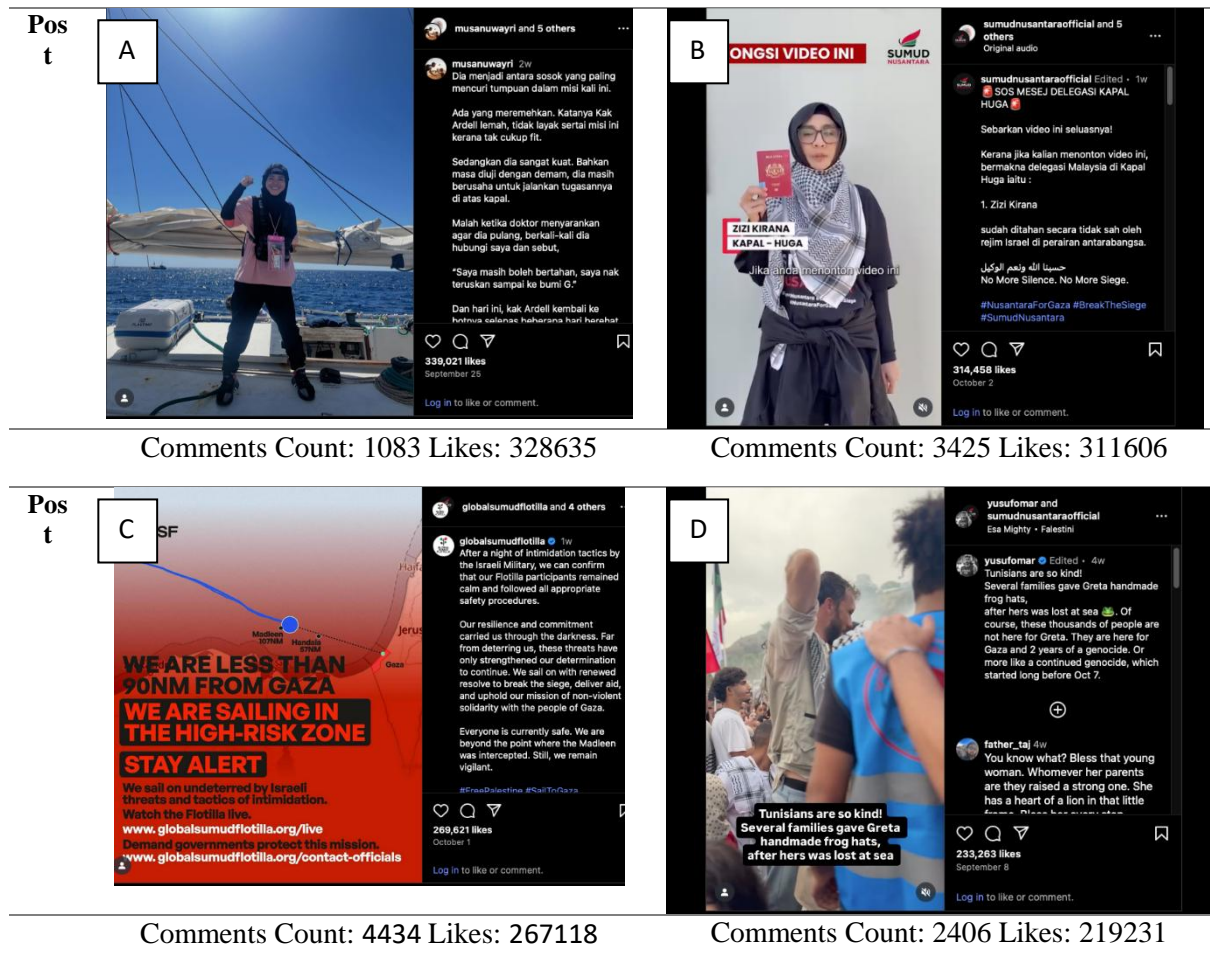
RESULTS AND FINDINGS

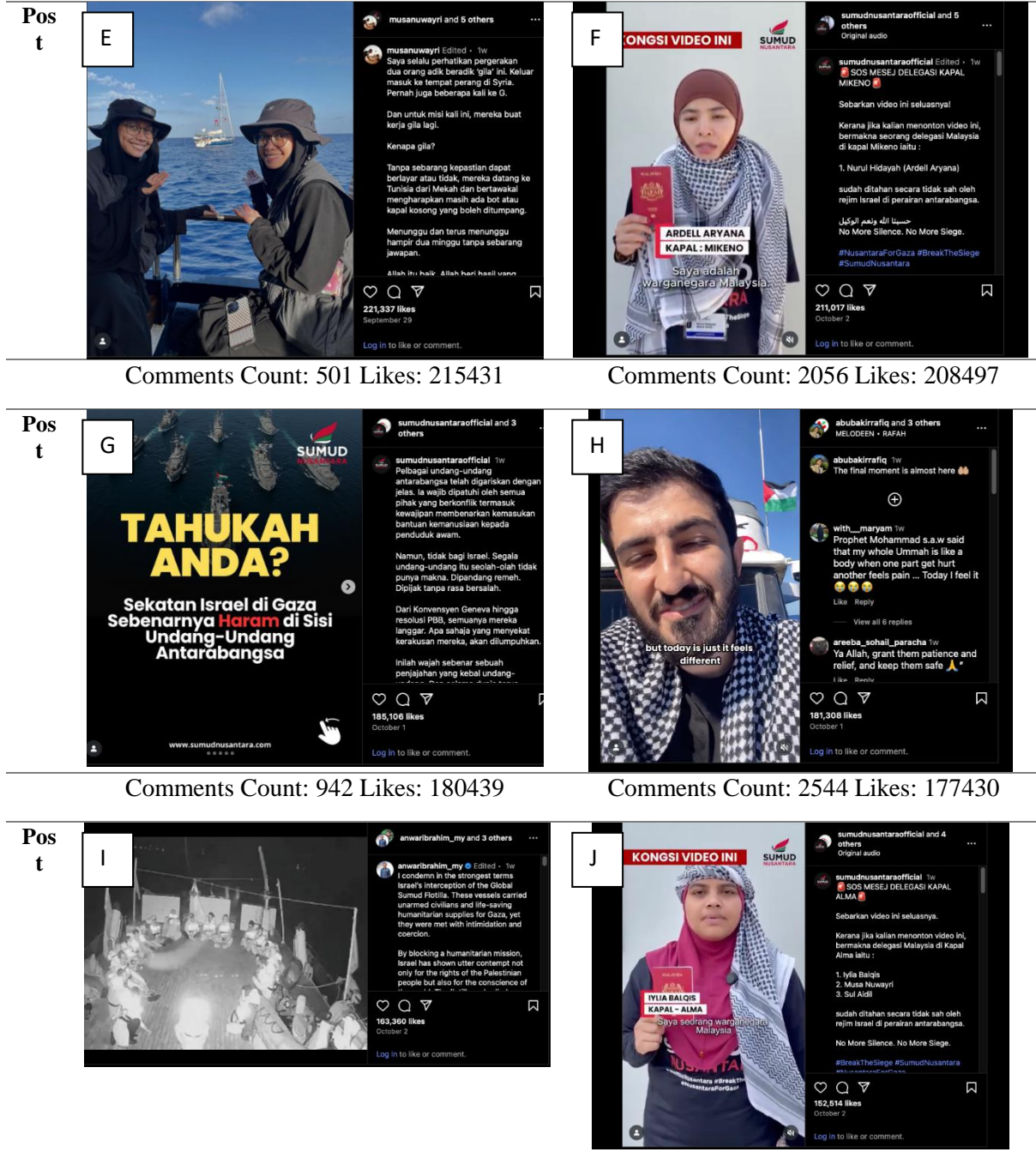
Islamic Ethical Principles as Foundation of Solidarity

The principles of *‘adl* (justice) and *hiḥẓ al-naḥs* (preservation of life) form the moral foundation of Islamic ethics and guide all actions toward human welfare (*maḥḥlahah*) and the prevention of harm (*maḥḥsadah*). As highlighted by Ramlan and Malkan (2025), *‘adl* functions as a balancing principle ensuring fairness, accountability, and equity in technological and social systems. In digital contexts, it calls for truthful, responsible, and respectful communication while upholding the Qur’anic command to “stand firmly for justice” (4:135). Online solidarity with Palestine thus represents emotional support and moral enactment of justice, affirming resistance to oppression through ethical expression. The principle of *hiḥẓ al-naḥs* complements justice by emphasizing the sanctity and dignity of life. Ramlan and Malkan (2025) associate it with efforts that safeguard humanity, from lifesaving technologies to moral advocacy that prevents harm. In social media discourse, this value is reflected in compassionate language, empathy for victims, and rejection of violence—digital acts that symbolically preserve life and human dignity (*karāmah insāniyyah*). Together, *‘adl* and *hiḥẓ al-naḥs* illuminate the moral depth behind the *Sumud Nusantara* flotilla discourse, where faith-based emotions such as hope, love, and solidarity express a commitment to justice, compassion, and the preservation of life in both spirit and communication.

Sentiment Analysis on Sumud Nusantara

Figure 1: The 10 Most Engaged Posts from Sumud Nusantara Instagram Page





Comments Count: 501 Likes: 215431

Comments Count: 2056 Likes: 208497

Comments Count: 942 Likes: 180439

Comments Count: 2544 Likes: 177430

The ten most engaged Instagram posts were selected as the sample for this study, based on the number of comments and likes received. Comments from these posts were then extracted, filtered, and cleaned to form the dataset used in the analysis.

Table 1: Posts Labels, Comments and Likes from The Sumud Flotilla Instagram Page

Comments Count: 2184 Likes: 161941	Comments Count: 1925 Likes: 151686
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Table 2: The Example Comments according to Themes

Theme	Example Comments	Interpretation
Faith-Driven Hope	<i>“Korang, put trust on our leader. PMX pun penaung utama Sumud Nusantara. Dorg mesti dah standby dan ready dengan kecemasan cmni.”</i>	Expression of trust in leadership and divine guidance; reflects optimism and collective faith.
	<i>“Thank you PMX for trying your best... may Allah bless you always 🙏 and may the people who are on that journey be safe 🙏.”</i>	Prayer for protection and success; invokes divine mercy, aligning with <i>hifz al-nafs</i> (preservation of life).
	<i>“Sending love and prayers for your safe passage and return. We will forever be grateful.”</i>	Emotional support and gratitude; emphasizes communal care and safety.
	<i>“We are watching 🙏 may your mission be successful—bless you all 🌟 🙏 🌟.”</i>	Encouragement and continuous moral attention; conveys participatory solidarity.
	<i>“Bless that young woman... She has a heart of a lion. Bless her every step.”</i>	Admiration and blessing for courage; symbolic affirmation of moral strength and divine protection.
Moral Solidarity	<i>“Korang sedar tak yang misi kali ini amat berjaya... teruskan bersuara dan teruskan boycott 🙏.”</i>	Call for continuous advocacy; moral awakening and collective resistance grounded in <i>‘adl</i> (justice).
	<i>“Ya Allah. Aku memang pendosa... Jadikan pergerakan ini asbab hidayah bertebaran seluruh alam 🙏.”</i>	Confessional tone of repentance; moral solidarity framed as spiritual renewal and divine mission.
	<i>“Thank you, Dato’ Sri. Semoga Tuhan melindungi mereka semua... MALAYSIANS STAND TOGETHER MY 🙏 🙏.”</i>	Expression of national unity and compassion; merges patriotism with faith-based solidarity.
	<i>“globalsumudflotilla and 4 others.”</i>	Direct tagging to amplify moral message; participation through digital networking.
	<i>“Literally watched the livestreams for the past 14 hours to keep eyes through the night. Free Palestine!”</i>	Vigilant online activism; emotional endurance as symbolic witness.

The table above presents selected examples from the total of 144 comments that correspond to the themes of *faith-driven hope* and *moral solidarity*. Each comment is interpreted through the lens of Islamic ethics to examine its alignment with the principles of *‘adl* (justice) and *hifz al-nafs* (preservation of life).

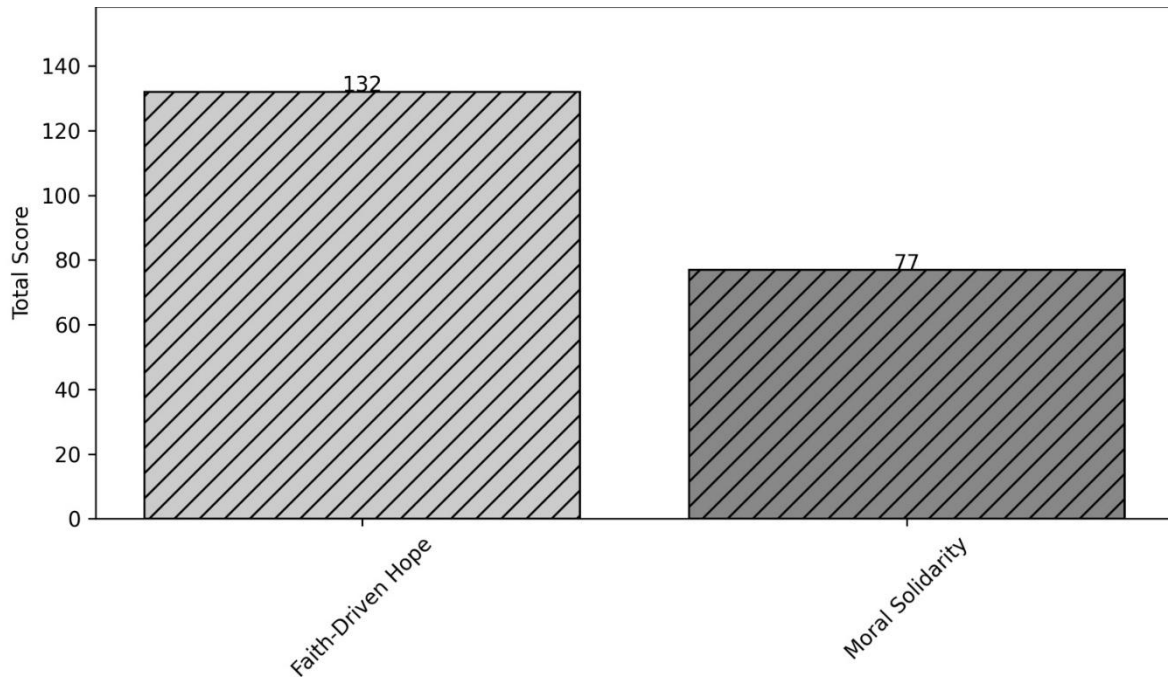


Figure 2: Faith-Driven Hope and Moral Solidarity

Islamic Ethics in the Comments

From the 144 user comments analyzed across the ten most engaging *Sumud Nusantara* Instagram posts, two major thematic currents emerged: faith-driven hope and moral solidarity. While these categories overlap in several instances, their distinct moral orientations reveal how online expressions of support for Palestine are imbued with Islamic ethical consciousness.

1. Faith-Driven Hope (132 instances)

A dominant feature of the comment corpus centers on faith expressions—invocations of trust in God and gratitude. Comments such as “Thank you PMX for trying your best... may Allah bless you always” and “Ya Allah. Aku memang pendosa... Jadikan pergerakan ini asbab hidayah bertebaran seluruh alam” illustrate how users frame solidarity as an act of religious devotion rather than mere political alignment. This pattern reflects ‘*adl* (justice) through *moral alignment with divine will*: users perceive justice not only as socio-political fairness but as part of a sacred moral order, where trust in leadership and prayer for protection align with the divine principle of maintaining balance. Simultaneously, these comments demonstrate *hifz al-nafs* (preservation of life) through compassion-oriented language such as prayers for safety, blessings, and divine protection for those involved in the humanitarian mission. This echoes the *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah* emphasis on safeguarding human life as a collective duty. Faith becomes an affective bridge connecting digital expressions with ethical responsibility.

2. Moral Solidarity (77 instances)

Another major sentiment trend centers on moral unity and communal duty. Users emphasize perseverance, unity, and continued advocacy. “Korang sedar tak yang misi kali ini amat berjaya... teruskan bersuara dan teruskan boycott 🕊️.” This linguistic pattern illustrates a communal sense of justice (‘*adl*) where fairness and moral obligation manifest through sustained support and collective resistance against perceived oppression. Expressions like “MALAYSIANS STAND TOGETHER MY❤️” and “Free Palestine!” reinforce digital solidarity not as passive sympathy but as an *ethical stance*. The online space becomes a venue for ‘*adl* enacted through speech, participation, and moral commitment. Simultaneously, moral solidarity also embodies *hifz al-nafs* through digital care practices such as expressing emotional support, watching livestreams to “keep eyes through the night,” and praying for safe passage. These acts signify not only empathy but a digital form of *amr bi’l ma’rūf* (enjoining good), motivated by the desire to preserve and honor life under threat.

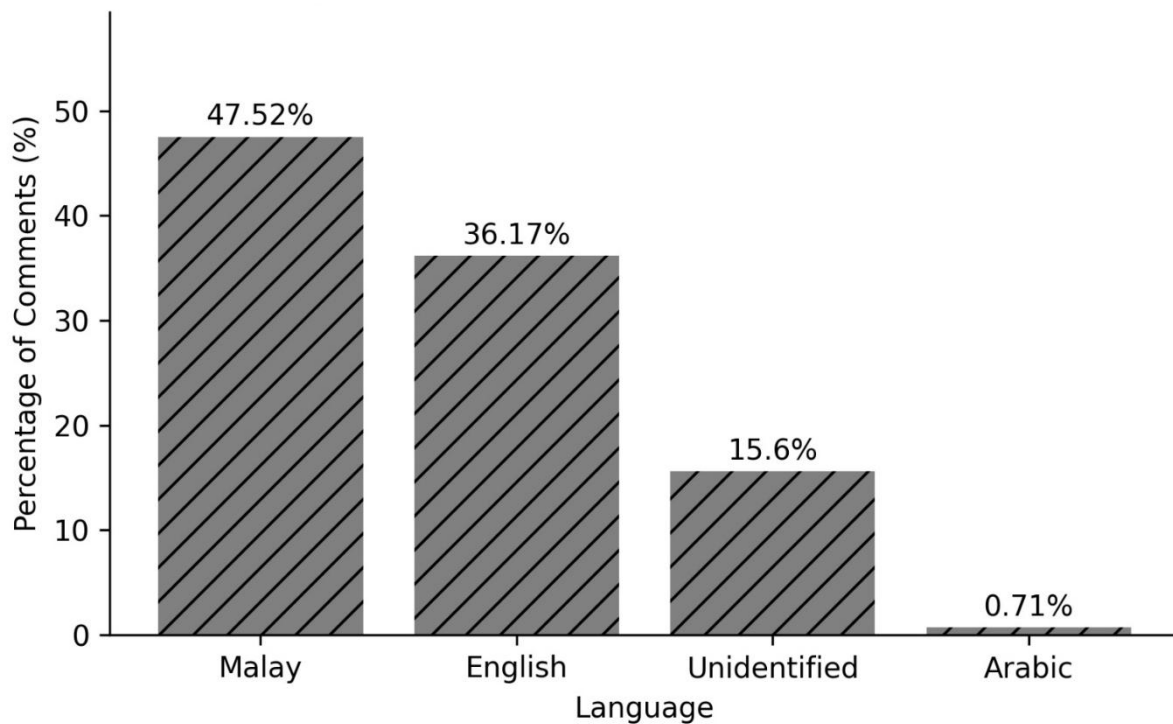


Figure 3: Language Distribution in Instagram Comments

Language Distribution

The language analysis reveals that user engagement within the *Sumud Nusantara* Instagram community is predominantly multilingual, with Malay (47.52%) and English (36.17%) forming most comments, followed by unidentified or mixed-language content (15.6%) and a small proportion in Arabic (0.71%).

1. Malay as the Dominant Medium: National-Religious Solidarity

The prominence of Malay-language comments reflects *Sumud Nusantara*'s local rootedness and cultural identity. Malay serves as both a linguistic and emotional medium for expressing national unity.

- Users employ Malay to communicate trust in leadership (“Korang, put trust on our leader. PMX pun penaung utama Sumud Nusantara”) and collective encouragement (“teruskan bersuara dan teruskan boycott”).
- This suggests that digital solidarity is articulated within a national-religious moral framework, where the use of Malay as Malaysia’s national language intersects with Islam as its constitutional religion.

In this sense, the Malay language functions as a moral vernacular—a way for users to express justice, compassion, and piety in familiar social and emotional terms.

2. English as a Transnational Bridge

The significant presence of English comments (36.17%) demonstrates how *Sumud Nusantara* also appeals to international audiences. English serves as a lingua franca for global solidarity, allowing communication with international supporters and aligning local activism with the broader *Free Palestine* movement.

- English-language comments like “Sending love and prayers for your safe passage and return” or “We are watching, may your mission be successful” reflect *hiḏz al-nafs* through empathetic, inclusive, and accessible moral communication.
- The bilingual interaction between Malay and English highlights how digital Islamic ethics traverse linguistic boundaries where faith and justice are not confined by language but translated into a shared moral vocabulary.

3. Arabic as Symbolic Invocation

Although Arabic accounts for less than 1% of comments, its presence carries strong symbolic and religious weight. Phrases like “*Ya Allah*” or “*Insha’Allah*” anchor the discourse in sacred expression, reinforcing the religious authenticity of online solidarity.

- Even minimal Arabic usage signifies unity and situates *Sumud Nusantara* within the moral universe of the global Muslim community *ummah*.
- It bridges emotional expression with theological meaning—embodying *‘adl* and *hifz al-nafs* as divinely guided principles.

4. Unidentified or Mixed-Language Content

The 15.6% of unidentified or hybrid language comments likely reflect code-switching practices common among Malaysian social media users. This mix of Malay-English or emotive symbols (e.g., emojis, transliterated Arabic) suggests that digital affect transcends rigid linguistic categories.

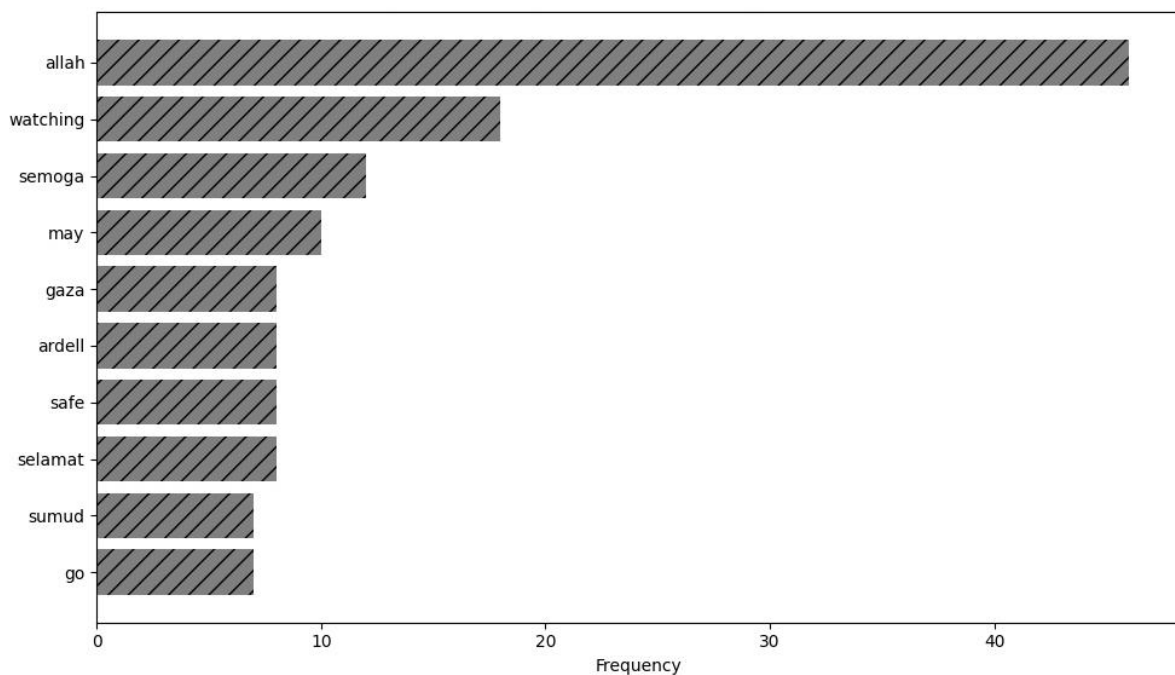


Figure 4: Ten Most Frequent Used Word

Lexical Patterns: Most Frequent Words

The most frequent words appearing in the 144 Instagram comments—after stopword removal—reveal the religious, affective, and moral orientation of online solidarity within the *Sumud Nusantara* discourse. The top words are: *Allah*, *watching*, *semoga*, *may*, *Gaza*, *Ardell*, *safe*, *selamat*, *Sumud*, and *go*.

1. Centrality of “Allah”: Faith as Moral Anchor

The word “Allah” dominates the frequency distribution, underscoring the theocentric foundation of user engagement. This pattern indicates that solidarity is expressed primarily through religious invocation, positioning faith as the emotional and ethical core of discourse.

- Invocations such as “*May Allah bless you*” or “*Ya Allah, protect them*” exemplify faith-driven moral communication, where *‘adl* (justice) is seen as submission to divine will and *hifz al-nafs* (preservation of life) as an act of spiritual responsibility.
- Allah remains the central focus of Muslim devotion, as believers turn to the Creator in times of difficulty, recognizing Him as the ultimate source of all solutions.

2. “Watching”: Digital Vigilance and Moral Witnessing

The prominence of “watching” signifies an active digital solidarity users position themselves as witnesses to events in Gaza or the flotilla mission (“Literally watched the livestreams for the past 14 hours”).

- This “moral surveillance” transforms spectatorship into ethical participation, aligning with *‘adl* by ensuring awareness and accountability.
- Watching becomes a performative act of empathy, contributing to *ḥifẓ al-nafs* through emotional presence and shared concern for the safety of others.

3. Hope and Blessings: “Semoga,” “May,” “Safe,” “Selamat”

Words such as “semoga” (Malay for “may”), “may,” “safe,” and “selamat” reveal a discourse dominated by prayers and blessings, reflecting the affective dimension of *ḥifẓ al-nafs*.

- These expressions translate ethical concern into everyday language of *du ‘ā’* (supplication) and *rahmah* (mercy).
- The repeated wish for safety mirrors a collective ethical consciousness grounded in compassion, believing that preservation of life is a shared moral duty.

4. “Gaza” and “Sumud”: Moral Geographies of Justice

The recurrence of “Gaza” and “Sumud” situates users’ emotional energy within the ethical geography of resistance and resilience.

- “*Sumud*”, meaning “steadfastness” in Arabic, was adopted as the name of the humanitarian mission to reflect the volunteers’ unwavering commitment to their cause.
- “Gaza” the location of the destination of this mission represents the goal of the humanitarian mission.

5. “Ardell” and the Personalization of Solidarity

The appearance of “Ardell” (likely referring to a Malaysian humanitarian or influencer associated with the mission) reflects personalized moral identification.

- Users often attach moral meaning to public figures embodying virtues like bravery and compassion.
- This personalization helps translate *‘adl* and *ḥifẓ al-nafs* into relatable moral exemplars, encouraging followers to emulate ethical courage in digital space.

6. “Go”: Mobilization and Empowerment

Finally, the frequent word “go” encapsulates motivational and action-oriented sentiment, urging continuation of effort and collective momentum (“Go Sumud!”).

- This linguistic pattern represents *‘adl* through active engagement—justice here is performative, requiring endurance and mobilization.

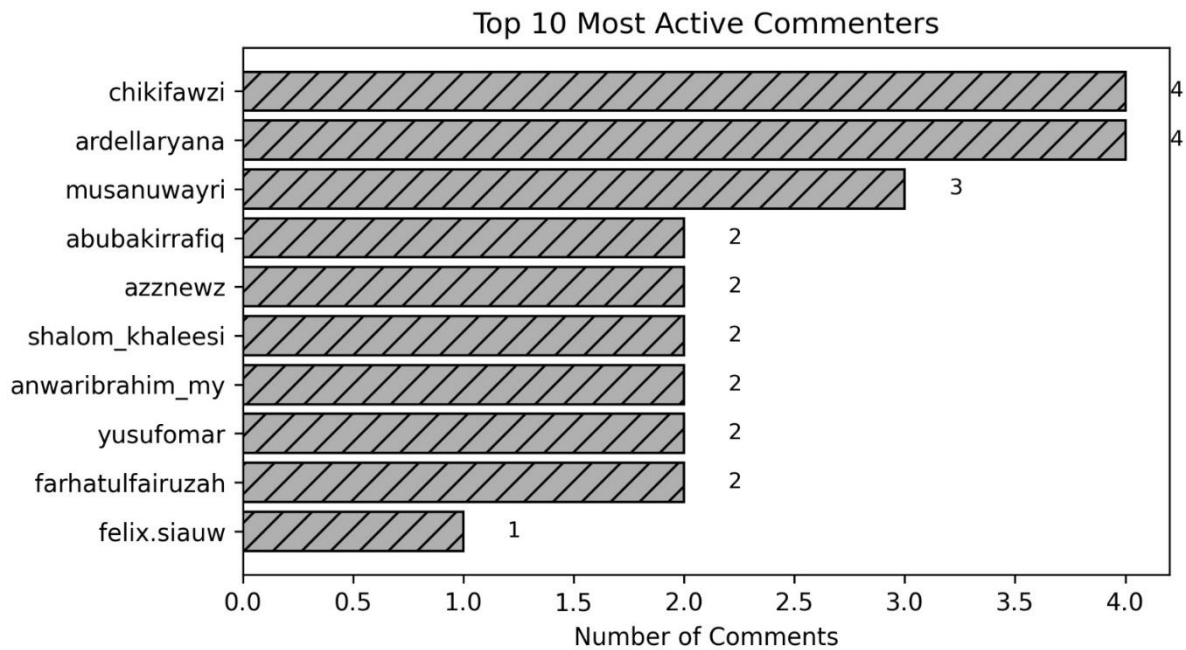


Figure 5: Ten Most Active Commenters

User Participation in Comments

The analysis of the Top 10 Most Active Commenters (Figure 5) indicates that engagement within *Sumud Nusantara's* Instagram page is both decentralized and ethically grounded. Most users contributed between one and four comments, demonstrating a balanced participation structure where no single voice dominates the discourse.

Among these commenters, two distinct groups emerge:

- (1) Volunteers physically present on the flotilla, such as @ardellaryana (Ardell), @musanuwayri, @abubakirrafiq, and @yusufomar;
- (2) Recognized public figures, including @anwaribrahim_my (Malaysia's Prime Minister), @farhatulfairuzah (a local *ustazah* and da'wah figure), and @felix.siauw (an Indonesian Islamic preacher).

The active presence of flotilla volunteers demonstrates embodied participation, where those directly involved in humanitarian efforts extend their moral commitment into the digital sphere. Their engagement transforms the comment space into a site of firsthand moral testimony, reinforcing the authenticity of the mission and deepening the ethical resonance of *ḥifẓ al-nafs* (*preservation of life*) through lived action.

Conversely, the participation of public figures lends symbolic authority and moral legitimacy to the discourse. Their presence functions as an endorsement of the mission's ethical and humanitarian foundation, amplifying the message of *'adl* (justice) and reinforcing the collective moral imagination of the online *ummah*.

DISCUSSION

1. Faith-Driven Hope and Moral Solidarity

Analysis of 144 user comments from *Sumud Nusantara's* top ten Instagram posts reveals that faith and moral emotion underpin the discourse of digital solidarity. Out of the total, 132 comments conveyed faith-driven hope, while 77 expressed moral solidarity, with overlapping instances where both appeared simultaneously. These findings indicate that online expressions of support for Palestine extend beyond political or humanitarian rhetoric; they are deeply infused with Islamic ethical reasoning and affective

devotion. Comments such as “*Ya Allah... Jadikan pergerakan ini asbab hidayah*” and “*May Allah bless you always*” illustrate a form of moral witnessing where spiritual invocation becomes intertwined with socio-political empathy. Within the framework of Islamic ethics, these sentiments reflect the principle of ‘*adl* (justice)—the moral imperative to uphold fairness, oppose oppression, and affirm moral truth. Concurrently, the frequent prayers for protection and safety articulate *ḥifẓ al-nafs* (preservation of life), one of the *maqāṣid al-sharī‘ah* (higher objectives of Islamic law), emphasizing the sanctity of human life and the duty of compassion toward those suffering from conflict. In this context, *Sumud Nusantara*’s comment sections operate as spaces of collective virtue, where users transform emotion into ethical participation, reaffirming both justice and care as intertwined dimensions of faith-based digital activism.

2. Language Distribution: Multilingual Expressions of the Digital Ummah

As illustrated in Figure 3, Malay (47.52%) and English (36.17%) dominate the language distribution, followed by unidentified (15.6%) and Arabic (0.71%). This multilingual composition reflects the plurality of the digital *ummah*, uniting diverse linguistic communities under a shared moral cause. Malay-language comments frequently employ religious and communal vocabulary, such as “*Semoga Allah lindungi mereka*” (“May Allah protect them”) and “*teruskan bersuara dan boycott*” (“continue to speak out and boycott”), emphasizing both spiritual conviction and civic responsibility. In contrast, English comments often adopt globally recognizable expressions of empathy (“Sending love and prayers,” “Safe passage and return”), extending the moral reach of the campaign to an international audience.

The coexistence of these languages highlights *Sumud Nusantara*’s function as a hybrid moral space—localized in Malaysian discourse. The minimal Arabic presence suggests that while the movement is grounded in local beliefs and remains connected to the Islamic ethical vocabulary shared across the *ummah*. Thus, linguistic diversity in the comment sections embodies the ethical principle of inclusivity and moral balance, affirming that justice in solidarity includes the equal participation of multiple voices and tongues.

3. Word Frequency: Faith as Moral Vocabulary

The prominence of the word “Allah” in the frequency analysis (Figure 4), followed by terms like “*semoga*,” “*may*,” “*safe*,” “*selamat*,” “*watching*,” and “*sumud*,” underscores the centrality of faith and protection in users’ moral vocabulary. The language of prayer, safety, and steadfastness suggests that users frame their engagement not as political spectatorship but as ethical witnessing. This fusion of faith and vigilance resonates with both ‘*adl* and *ḥifẓ al-nafs*: users monitor events (“watching”) out of moral concern, pray for safety (“*semoga selamat*”), and invoke divine justice (“Allah”) as the ultimate arbiter. In doing so, participants transform Instagram commentary into an act of ethical communication, where the repetition of pious and humanitarian phrases sustains a collective moral consciousness.

4. Patterns of Participation: Communal Engagement

The analysis of the Top 10 Most Active Commenters (Figure 5) shows that engagement on *Sumud Nusantara*’s page is diffused and egalitarian. The most active participants posted between one and four comments each, indicating a broadly distributed participatory structure rather than dominance by a few influential accounts. This pattern suggests a horizontal model of digital solidarity, where ordinary users and public figures coexist within a shared moral discourse. Even when leadership-linked accounts appear among the active commenters, their contribution remains proportional, signifying that prominence does not translate into monopolization of moral authority. Such participation aligns with the ethical principle of ‘*adl*, ensuring balance and equity in social engagement. At the same time, the act of commenting itself—whether through prayer, encouragement, or gratitude—embodies *ḥifẓ al-nafs* by expressing concern for human well-being and the preservation of life. The comment threads thus become spaces of digital *adab* (moral conduct), where participation reflects sincerity (*ikhhlās*), justice, and compassion—qualities central to Islamic communication ethics.

5. Synthesis: Digital Solidarity as Ethical Praxis

Taken together, these findings reveal that *Sumud Nusantara*’s online solidarity movement constitutes a form of digital ethical praxis. Through language, prayer, and participation, users enact Islamic ethical values in a contemporary, networked context. The interplay of ‘*adl* (justice) and *ḥifẓ al-nafs*

(preservation of life) transforms online engagement into a moral performance of solidarity, bridging the spiritual and the social. Such expressions suggest that the digital sphere is not value-neutral but can serve as a site of ethical formation, where moral reasoning and emotional devotion converge. By grounding activism in Islamic ethics, *Sumud Nusantara* demonstrates how online communities can embody *sumud* (steadfastness) as both an emotional virtue and a moral commitment to justice and life.

6. Implications for Islamic Digital Ethics

The findings of this study offer practical insights for developing Islamic ethical guidelines in areas such as digital activism, da'wah communication, and media awareness training. The recurring themes of *faith-driven hope* and *moral solidarity* reflect how users draw on Islamic values when responding to humanitarian concerns online, suggesting that ethical participation is already embedded in their digital behavior. The principles of *'adl* (justice) and *hifz al-nafs* (preservation of life) provide a useful framework for guiding responsible digital engagement. In the context of digital activism, *'adl* encourages commitment to truthfulness, verification of information, and fairness in advocacy ensuring that efforts to support oppressed communities do not devolve into misinformation or harmful rhetoric. *hifz al-nafs* complements this by emphasizing care in how content is shared, particularly when it involves suffering or trauma, encouraging users to preserve dignity and avoid emotional harm.

For da'wah communication, the findings suggest the importance of integrating ethical reflection into online religious content. The spontaneous use of prayers and moral reminders found in the discourse points to the potential for digital platforms to facilitate value-based Islamic communication that is empathetic, relevant, and socially conscious.

In terms of media awareness training, Islamic ethical principles can be embedded within digital literacy programs to help users critically engage with content while upholding moral standards. This includes practices such as source verification, respectful communication, and avoiding harmful or sensationalist material practices aligned with both *adab* (proper conduct) and the broader objectives of the *maqāsid al-sharī'ah*.

Overall, this study contributes to the ongoing effort to articulate Islamic ethical guidelines for digital engagement, demonstrating how religious principles can inform contemporary online behavior in ways that balance justice, compassion, and communal responsibility. Future studies can focus to develop guidelines in Islamic ethical and social interaction in the digital world.

Conclusion

The analysis of online sentiments surrounding *Sumud Nusantara* reveals that digital solidarity with Palestine operates not merely as a form of political advocacy but as an embodiment of Islamic ethical practice. Across multilingual commentaries—predominantly in Malay and English—users express faith-driven hope, moral solidarity, and compassion, translating theological values into contemporary digital discourse. By engaging through prayer, encouragement, and moral reflection, participants transform social media spaces into sites of ethical participation, where justice (*'adl*) and the preservation of life (*hifz al-nafs*) guide expressions of empathy and resistance. These findings highlight that Islamic ethics remain deeply relevant in shaping online moral consciousness, even within the fast-paced, emotionally charged environment of social media. Furthermore, the egalitarian participation patterns—where no single voice dominates—illustrate how *Sumud Nusantara* fosters a communal ethic of engagement, reflecting both Islamic notions of balance and the collective spirit of the *ummah*. The campaign's digital presence thus exemplifies a faith-mediated form of activism, where spiritual vocabulary and social justice language merged into an integrated moral framework. In a broader sense, this study contributes to understanding digital *adab* (ethical conduct) as a key dimension of online Muslim behavior. It demonstrates that social media can function as a moral public sphere, where users perform solidarity not only through information sharing but through the enactment of ethical virtues rooted in religious thought. Ultimately, *Sumud Nusantara* illustrates how Islamic ethics can inform and humanize digital activism, transforming online interactions into meaningful acts of faith, justice, and care for life—extending the traditional moral imperatives of Islam into the digital age.

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