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#9425 REVIEW

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Title	Modernizing tradition: reinforcing ASWAJA al-Nahdhiyah authority among millennials in Indonesia
Section	Original Research - Editor Planning Issue 1
Editor	Andries Van Aarde Elizna De Bod

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Modernizing Tradition: Reinforcing ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* Authority Among Millennials in Indonesia

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The *da'wah* (invitation to Islamic teachings) movement of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah al-Nahdhiyah*, abbreviated as ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah*, formerly centered around the elderly, rural, and traditional populations, has now experienced a reinforcement that extends to the millennial demographic. The evolution of time and technological advancement have introduced novel challenges in conveying the *da'wah* message to a generation immersed in the digital era. Millennials possess distinct communication preferences and characteristics compared to preceding generations, necessitating efforts to tailor the *da'wah* content to their context and needs. The primary objective of this research is twofold: to chart emerging forms of new traditions within the ideological reinforcement of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* among the millennial populace, and to analyze the underlying factors giving rise to these novel traditions within the framework of ideological reinforcement of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* in the millennial context. Employing a qualitative approach, this study adopts the method of netnography, aiming to comprehend cultural experiences encompassing traces, practices, networks, and social media systems. This is achieved through the amalgamation of distinct research approaches categorized into data collection, analysis, and interpretation. The findings of this research reveal that the reinforcement efforts encompassing diverse new traditions are realized through the appropriation of media platforms and the vigorous pursuit of education, cadre development, and intensive mentorship within various millennial domains. This enhancement not only augments the acceptance and affiliation towards ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* but also serves as a counterforce against the pervasive proliferation of radical ideologies.

Contribution: This paper contributes to the current understanding of the strengthening of Ahlusunnah wal Jamaah An-Nahdhiyah as a traditional religious view that is now experiencing a

32 transformation in da'wah, in addition to being familiar with the use of contemporary media and
33 aggressively targeting groups of young people in the midst of the swift global religious
34 understanding and transnational da'wah movements that are developing in Indonesia.

35

36 Keywords: *da'wah* authority, ASWAJA *al-nahdhiyah*, millennials, new tradition

37

38

39 1. Introduction

40

41 The *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah al-Nahdhiyah*, abbreviated as ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* or simply
42 ASWAJA, which is often labeled as a traditional and elderly-focused *da'wah* movement, has now
43 conspicuously extended its reach to encompass the millennial demographic. Various forms of
44 strengthening have been undertaken within the framework of instilling ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah*
45 ideology among millennials. The resurgence of commitment to ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah da'wah*
46 patterns within the sphere of Indonesia's major Islamic organization Nahdhatul Ulama (NU) is at
47 least marked by several indicators, both discursive and practical. Notable among these indicators
48 are the emergence of new traditions within this reinforcement framework, such as the *baiat*
49 (pledge) administered to the millennial preacher **Hanan Attaki Founder of SHIFT Pemuda Hijrah**,
50 which recently took place, symbolizing readiness for *da'wah* and advocacy in upholding ASWAJA
51 within the Nahdhatul Ulama fold (Muhyiddin, 2023). Attaki, renowned among millennial circles
52 for his *hijrah* (literally the act of distancing oneself from evil and embracing goodness) movement,
53 has evolved into an emblematic figure of urban millennial *da'wah*, exuding a sense of modernity
54 and resonance (Akmaliah, 2020b). The burgeoning *hijrah da'wah* movement within the millennial
55 sector has been regarded as a novel Islamic trend, often contrasted with traditional *da'wah*
56 endeavors (Setia & Dilawati, 2021). While this *da'wah* movement has found warm reception
57 within the urban millennial populace, a different sentiment has emerged within the NU community.
58 The presence of *hijrah* preachers has faced resistance on several occasions, particularly from
59 religious figures associated with Banser (Barisan Ansor Serbaguna), NU's youth wing, who often
60 rebuff the arrival of preachers that are deemed "deviant" within the NU paradigm (Tim Redaksi
61 TVONE /A.R., 2023). In a similar vein, new traditions have also arisen through the appropriation
62 of new media as a *da'wah* medium. The NU sphere has vigorously adopted new media as a conduit
63 for disseminating ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* principles via platforms like Cyber ASWAJA An-
64 Nahdhiyah. Public lectures, scriptural studies, and NU preacher sermons are now fervently
65 conducted through these new media channels. The discourse on ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* has
66 significantly pervaded virtual spaces (Said & Nugroho, 2019).

67

68 Numerous studies have hitherto engaged in discussions concerning the tradition of
69 strengthening the ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah da'wah*. These previous inquiries can be broadly
70 categorized into three perspectives. First, there are studies that scrutinize the tradition of enhancing
71 ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah da'wah* from historical and doctrinal standpoints, as evidenced in the
72 works of Nakamura (1981), Van Bruinessen (1995), Suwandana (2023), Hamzah (2017), and Fealy
73 and Bush (2014). Second, there are studies that view the strengthening tradition of ASWAJA *al-*
74 *Nahdhiyah* as the axis of the moderate *da'wah* movement, as reflected in the research of Akmaliah
75 (2022), Sunda and Fitri (2022), Ismail (2020), Saenong (2021), and Pribadi (2022). Third, there
76 are studies that explore the reinforcement tradition of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* in response to other
77 *da'wah* movements and dynamics, as observed in the research of Saini (2022), Moqsith (2016), A.
78 R. Arifianto (2021), Fata and Ichwan (2017), and Khasanah (2022).

79

80 However, a thorough review of prior literature reveals a dearth of specific investigation
81 into the newly emerging traditions that have evolved from their predecessors within the context of
82 reinforcing ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah da'wah*, targeting the millennial demographic. In alignment
83 with this observation, this article endeavors to complement preceding studies. Specifically, it raises
84 two inquiries: Firstly, what are the forms of novel traditions within the ideological reinforcement
85 of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah da'wah* among millennials? Secondly, what are the factors
86 underpinning the emergence of these novel traditions within the framework of reinforcing the
87 ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah da'wah* ideology among millennials? Addressing these queries will enable
88 a comprehension of the often-overlooked endeavors towards forging new tradition-based
89 approaches in reinforcing ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah da'wah* ideology among millennials, a sphere
90 that has received limited attention from the NU community, particularly concerning the millennial
91 generation beyond traditional *pesantren* institutions.

92

93 The arguments presented within this article fortify the notion that tradition transformation
94 is an inevitability that births new traditions aimed at enhancing existing presence and authority,
95 currently under threat. Assorted *da'wah* methodologies have emerged, saturating the virtual
96 landscape, thereby reshaping discourse, ideologies, and religious dispositions of the populace.
97 Such developments also pose a challenge to various forms of mainstream religious authority,

98 particularly that of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah*. Multiple endeavors are undertaken to fortify these
99 principles, integrating contemporary perspectives favored by the millennial population. This
100 pertains to aspects like leadership, media, and *da'wah* methods. The integration of the *hijrah*
101 community into the ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah da'wah*, under the leadership of its *Ustadh* Hanan
102 Attaki, serves as an illustration of this endeavor. Furthermore, there's a consolidation of Cyber
103 ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah*, along with a mastery of new media for NU *da'wah* purposes.

104

105 2. Literature Review

106

107 The authority of *da'wah* signifies the custodianship of Islamic authority itself. **Da'wah is based on**
108 **Tauhid (Ramli et al., 2023 ; Anshory et al., 2023)**. The basis of Islamic authority stems from the
109 Quran and hadith, both documented in the Arabic language. Those who wield Islamic authority
110 are individuals who maintain proximity to, engage with, and possess mastery over these sources.
111 Such custodians include scholars, muftis, and qadhis (Turner, 2007). Terms such as *kyai*, *ustadh*,
112 *abuya*, and *ajengan* among others, represent local appellations for those occupying positions
113 within the hierarchy of Islamic authority. In their efforts to establish their authority, these
114 individuals further the cause of Islamic *da'wah* through traditional institutions such as *pesantren*
115 and *madrasah*, which serve as authoritative centers for the transformation of Islamic knowledge
116 (Hosen, 2019). Islamic authority, beyond its foundational aspect of mastery over authoritative
117 Islamic sources, is also grounded in experiential practice. This is exemplified by **Kyai Haji Ahmad**
118 **Dahlan (1868-1923)**, the founder of another major Islamic organization in Indonesia,
119 Muhammadiyah (Kim, 2010).

120

121 Traditional bearers of Islamic authority function both individually and collectively,
122 operating through educational institutions, *da'wah* initiatives, and social endeavors. *Da'wah*, as a
123 facet of religious devotion, transpires on both personal and collective levels, with the aim of
124 promoting virtue and deterring vice (Bensaid, 2013). Preachers, who simultaneously occupy
125 positions of religious authority, hold the duty of conveying the messages of Allah Almighty to
126 humanity (Saputra et al., 2021). In addition to prerequisites of mental fortitude and moral integrity,
127 wielders of *da'wah* authority must possess mastery over Islamic sources, forming the bedrock of

128 religious comprehension competence (Hasanah, 2020). In this regard, Natsir (1978) characterizes
129 this preparation as a stage of mental cultivation (*al-i'dad al-fikri*), along with scholarly readiness
130 encompassing the understanding of religious knowledge, or *tafaqquh fi al-din*, and social
131 proficiency involving a comprehensive understanding of da'wah targets, or *tafaqquh fi al-nas*.
132 Furthermore, qualifications for preachers are founded on the mastery of skills and methodologies,
133 serving as benchmarks for authoritative *da'wah*. Notably, the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI)
134 has extended these criteria to include not only religious knowledge but also a mastery of national
135 perspectives (Hasanah & Asia, 2022).

136

137 The term “*ahl al-sunnah wa al-jama'ah*” has evolved within the realm of theological
138 discourse since the era of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) (Hasan,
139 2005). Abbreviated as ASWAJA in Indonesian parlance, the term is frequently defined as a group
140 or community in Islam that identifies itself as adherents to the Prophet's Sunnah and the ways of
141 his companions. The divergence of political viewpoints following the passing of the Prophet has
142 instigated variations in religious interpretations. These political disparities reached a zenith after
143 the occurrence of the *fitnah kubra* (the great strife), signifying the assassination of Uthman ibn
144 Affan, which subsequently gave rise to theological divergences and even distinct Islamic factions
145 (Farida, 2014). For a segment of adherents, the ASWAJA understanding has become a reference
146 point for theories and practices that harmoniously integrate the outward and inward dimensions of
147 faith. Notably, Nahdhatul Ulama (NU) adopts ASWAJA as its foundation for thinking, attitude,
148 and action (Harianto, 2018). NU unequivocally aligns its perspective with ASWAJA and declares
149 itself a proponent of this ideology, specifically adhering to the theological stance of Abu Musa Al-
150 Asy'ari or the Asy'ariyyah doctrine. In the realm of *fiqh* (jurisprudence), NU draws from the four
151 main Sunni schools of thought (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i, and Hanbali), with practical adherence
152 predominantly to the Shafi'i school. In the realm of *tasawwuf* (mysticism), NU's orientation is
153 influenced by the *tasawwuf* teachings of Junaid al-Baghdadi and Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (Hasan,
154 2005). ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* embodies the religious understanding of ASWAJA as propagated
155 by the Great Teacher Hasyim Asy'ari, the founder of NU (Hamzah, 2017).

156

157 **3. Methods**

158

159 This study employs a qualitative approach using netnographic methodology to
160 comprehensively understand cultural experiences encompassing traces, practices, networks, and
161 the realm of social media systems. The research integrates diverse research methods into three
162 distinct categories: data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Kozinets, 2010). In this research,
163 netnographic methodology is adopted to examine and select diverse conversational sources from
164 social media and mainstream platforms related to the phenomenon of Bai'at, particularly within
165 the context of Aswaja among social media users, specifically the millennial generation.

166 The data collection technique entails netnographic procedures. It involves identifying
167 social media networks, such as YouTube, Instagram, and Twitter, followed by identifying groups
168 affiliated with ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* that intensely utilize social media platforms, whether on a
169 personal level or representing organizations. Subsequently, relevant data related to the study's topic
170 is gathered, encompassing posts, conversations, comments, user interactions, and secondary data
171 reflecting social media discussions using specific keywords. After data accumulation, the
172 subsequent stage involves analysis following the methodology outlined by Krippendorff (2019).

173

174 4. Results

175

176 4.1. Pledge from a Millennial Preacher

177

178 Recently, the leadership of NU (Nahdlatul Ulama) in East Java undertook a significant
179 event: they administered the *baiat* (pledge) to *Ustaz* Hanan Attaki, the founder of the "Shift" youth
180 *hijrah* movement, renowned as a millennial preacher. The *baiat* ceremony was overseen by K.H.
181 Marzuki Mustamar, a prominent figure within the PWNU or Pengurus Wilayah Nahdhatul Ulama
182 (Nahdlatul Ulama Regional Board) in East Java. The Bai'at ceremony took place on Thursday,
183 June 11, 2023, during a celebratory event of the extended family of Pondok Pesantren
184 Sabilurrosyad in Gasek, Malang. This ceremony was conducted openly in the presence of the
185 general public attending the occasion. According to K.H. Fahrur Rozi (Gus Fahrur), a leading
186 figure within PBNU (the Central Board of Nahdlatul Ulama), this act of taking a pledge from an
187 individual who commits to becoming a member or a member of NU is unprecedented in the history

188 of NU (Baihaqi, 2023). The *baiat* ceremony, apart from being attended by NU dignitaries and the
189 local community in East Java, also received the presence of a prominent NU figure from
190 Melbourne, Australia, namely Nadirsyah Hossein. During the event, Nadirsyah Hossein offered
191 insightful words of wisdom. In his counsel, he advised Hanan Attaki to exhibit patience in carrying
192 out his *da'wah* efforts in collaboration with NU. Hanan Attaki was urged to impart his knowledge
193 to the students within NU's schools to cultivate a new generation of figures akin to Hanan Attaki
194 (NU Channel, 2023).

195

196 During the *baiat* ceremony, subsequent to the articulation of the *shahadah* or the two declarations
197 of faith by Hanan Attaki, he proceeded to vocalize five distinct vows, as shown in Table 1.

198

199

200

Table 1. The five vows in Hanan Attaki's *bai'at* process

No.	Vows in <i>bai'at</i>	Code
1	I, <i>Ustaz</i> Hanan Attaki, solemnly declare before Allah, truly a devout and sincere Muslim in practice and in heart.	Vowing in the name of Allah
2	I, <i>Ustaz</i> Hanan Attaki, pledge and swear to follow the tenets of faith as advocated by scholars, <i>habaib</i> (descendants of the Prophet), and <i>kyai</i> from the <i>ahl al-sunnah wa al-jama'ah</i> .	Vowing and pledging
3	I, <i>Ustaz</i> Hanan Attaki, solemnly pledge and swear, by Allah, to genuinely embrace and adhere to the community, congregation, and teachings of Nahdhatul Ulama founded by the Great Teacher K.H. M. Hasyim Asy'ari, K.H. Abdul Wahab Hasbullah, and K.H. Bisri Syamsuri, in practice and in heart and I am pleased by that.	Joining and following NU
4	I, <i>Ustaz</i> Hanan Attaki, genuinely and sincerely affirm acceptance of the state system, nationhood, the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution, guided by the scholars and <i>habaib</i> of <i>ahl al-sunnah wa al-jama'ah</i> .	Loving the homeland
5	I declare my readiness to die in defense of Islam, in defense of <i>ahl al-sunnah wa al-jama'ah</i> , in defense of and striving for Nahdhatul Ulama, ready to die for NKRI. [The pledge concludes with the words] <i>La haula wa la quwwata illa billahi al-'Aliyyi al-'Azhim</i> .	Striving to uphold religion and the state

201 Source: *NUGres*, 2023

202

203

204 According to Hanan's statement, as reported by national media, his pledge was made voluntarily
205 and consciously, without any form of coercion. The *baiat* took place after his return from
206 performing the *umrah* pilgrimage, during which he prayed to be guided by a *mursyid* (spiritual
207 guide) who could provide guidance in his *da'wah* efforts. Hanan Attaki, along with his wife, visited
208 *Kyai* Marzuki Mustamar, who also serves as a teacher and *mursyid* to Hanan's wife (Timdetik.com,
209 2023). Hanan Attaki's rationale for accepting the *baiat* was to reaffirm the strong commitment of
210 a student to his teacher and to underscore his dedication to following the guidance of the *mursyid*.
211 (Youtube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HvQUzzGRs04>)

212

213 Furthermore, Hanan Attaki also recommends to his companions who have undergone the
214 *hijrah* through his guidance to seek mentorship from genuinely knowledgeable individuals, those
215 who possess expertise in their respective fields. He openly acknowledges having numerous
216 mentors, several of whom he mentions by name, encompassing various disciplines such as Quranic
217 studies, hadith, *fiqh*, and *ushul fiqh* (the principles of jurisprudence. To this day, he continues to
218 receive mentorship from a diverse array of teachers, with *Kyai* Marzuki Mustamar being one of
219 them. He strongly advises his companions not only to embrace the spirit of *hijrah* but also to seek
220 guidance from reputable mentors to foster their practical religious understanding. He expresses
221 regret over instances where some of those who have made the *hijrah*, upon seeking guidance,
222 encountered mentors or groups that easily proclaimed certain practices as forbidden or heretical.
223 Consequently, this has led many to place blame on him for having facilitated their *hijrah*, with
224 some inadvertently falling into interpretations deemed "misguided." This perception has
225 contributed to a negative portrayal of Hanan Attaki, often being perceived as straying from the
226 path of ASWAJA-NU. Notably, even one of NU's clerics, *Kyai* Anwar Zahid, characterizes his
227 pledge as a repentance from his previous "deviation," expressing a hope that Hanan Attaki will not
228 "apostatize" again, as conveyed through a video on YouTube (Anza Channel KH. Anwar Zahid,
229 2023).

230

231 As a youthful preacher, Hanan Attaki has become a prominent figure among religiously
232 inclined millennials. He has effectively woven the *hijrah* movement into the lifestyle of urban
233 millennials. His presence is eagerly anticipated by his followers in various cities. However, his

234 *da'wah* endeavors have not been without obstacles. He frequently encounters resistance from
235 certain factions within NU and Banser, particularly in East Java, which is renowned as a stronghold
236 of NU (Tim Redaksi TVONE/A.R., 2023). His *da'wah* initiatives in this region have experienced
237 several setbacks. Numerous allegations have been leveled against him, branding his group as
238 fundamentalist and often denouncing other groups. Additionally, he has been accused of endorsing
239 Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), an organization advocating for a caliphate that has been proscribed
240 in Indonesia. Furthermore, some of his sermons have courted controversy (Tamami, 2023). These
241 allegations have been contested by Hanan Attaki. Furthermore, his wife has also endeavored to
242 provide clarification by elaborating on the lineage of her family and the historical endeavors of her
243 grandfather as a prominent figure within Nahdhatul Ulama (NU) in Tuban, East Java
244 (Rahmatullah, 2023)..

245

246 **4.2. Seizing New Media as a Conduit for ASWAJA**

247

248 The vigorous propagation of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* is no longer confined to teaching,
249 religious lectures, and spiritual guidance; it has extended to the transmission of the Islamic value
250 of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (mercy to the worlds) through digital means. This is done to present the
251 values of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* and counter the virtual narratives of radicalism and terrorism
252 that proliferate in cyberspace, primarily targeting the millennial generation. The robust
253 dissemination of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* values takes place across various social media platforms,
254 including live-streamed lessons from traditional Islamic texts on YouTube and Facebook.
255 Additionally, social media accounts with an ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* identity are prevalent,
256 managed both systematically by NU and by pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) affiliated with
257 NU, along with other autonomous institutions linked to the NU cause. There is even an ongoing
258 discourse competition centered around Indonesian-style Islam, referred to as Islam Nusantara or
259 moderate Islam, achieved through structural campaigns and religious moderation initiatives
260 supported by state institutions. This includes the reinforcement of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah*'s
261 position in various aspects—cognitive, affective, and behavioral—accomplished through cultural
262 *da'wah* movements within NU lectures and the realm of NU Cyber (Said & Nugroho, 2019). Table

263 2 provides a comprehensive breakdown of the content categories of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah*'s
264 *da'wah* as narrated by prominent ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* figures.

265

266 In addition to the dedicated channels managed by platforms aligned with ASWAJA *al-*
267 *Nahdhiyah*, similar efforts are undertaken by channels created by NU-affiliated schools and NU
268 organizational wings. The network of students and followers of NU teachings also serves as a
269 chain-link in the dissemination of content to social media platforms. The phenomenon of sermon
270 and study of religious texts, including the Quran, broadcasted through social media within the NU
271 community, presents a narrative characterized by peaceful values and moderate Islamic principles,
272 reflective of the distinct identity of Islam in the Indonesian archipelago. Beyond the extensive
273 utilization of social media as a medium to propagate the values of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah*, the use
274 of online media has also emerged as another arena of interest for the movement. Amid the
275 proliferation of conservative media outlets affiliated with organizations advocating the
276 establishment of a caliphate, such as *muslim.or.id*, *portal-islam.id*, and *islampos.com*, which are
277 frequently accessed and regarded as reference sources for certain segments of the Indonesian
278 Muslim population, it is notable that a significant proportion of online media is dominated by
279 conservative factions actively disseminating *khilafah* ideology, as illustrated in the figure below.

280

281

Table 2. Ranking of Islamic websites in Indonesia for July 2020

Year			Rangking	
No	Islamic site	Affiliate	Indonesia	Global
1	nu.or.id	Moderate	122	3,242
2	Bincangsyariah.com	Moderate	244	10,176
3	Islami.co	Moderate	364	10,574
4	Muslim.or.id	Conservative	661	32,182
5	Rumahsyo.com	Conservative	675	30,930
6	Alif.id	Conservative	746	44,389
7	Portal-islam.id	Conservative	749	42,902
8	Islampos.com	Conservative	792	47,532
9	Dalamislam.com		914	46,289
10	Almanhaj.or.id	Conservative	1,395	40,652

282 Source: Fahmi, 2020a

283

284

285 The awareness to seize online media as a source of Islamic reference with the essence of ASWAJA
286 *al-Nahdhiyah* is growing among the millennial generation of NU. Online platforms such as
287 *nu.or.id*, *bincangsyariah.com*, and *islami.co* emerge as alternative narratives that are gaining
288 attention within the millennial community. These ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah*-oriented websites not
289 only influence public discourse in the virtual sphere but have also become focal points of
290 information. In the year 2020, online media with moderate narratives took the forefront, aligning
291 with the increasing vigor of news dissemination and moderate narrative content produced by NU
292 followers.

293

294 **4.3. ASWAJA Millennial Regeneration & Fostering Outside the Pesantren**

295

296 The ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* movement, in addition to its internal development and cadre
297 formation efforts, as well as its primary base in pesantren, has expanded beyond its mainstream
298 sphere. Through various affiliated branches within NU, the movement caters to different segments
299 of its membership. Each sector assumes the role of nurturing and cadre formation. Cadre formation
300 and development within NU are not solely based on educational institutions or pesantren overseen
301 by NU clerics. It can also occur through recognition of an individual's contributions to advancing
302 NU's cause. The process of cadre formation, as stipulated in NU's Statutes and Bylaws (AD/ART),
303 occurs through both regular membership and honorary membership pathways. Meanwhile, cadre
304 formation within NU generally takes place through various stages. Firstly, there is PD-PKPNU or
305 *Pendidikan Dasar-Pendidikan Kader Penggerak Nahdhatul Ulama*, (Basic Education-Cadre
306 Education for Progressing Nahdlatul Ulama). Secondly, PKMNU or *Pendidikan Menengah*
307 *Kepemimpinan Nahdhatul Ulama* (Middle-Level Leadership Education of Nahdlatul Ulama).
308 Thirdly, AKNNU or *Akademi Kepemimpinan Nasional Nahdhatul Ulama* (National Leadership
309 Academy of Nahdlatul Ulama). In addition to this hierarchical system of cadre formation, there is
310 also the practice of *muadalah* or equalization among NU's autonomous bodies and educational
311 institutions, such as *pesantren*. Cadre formation is also a prerequisite for becoming a NU official,
312 as emphasized by PBNU's Chairman of the Research and Human Resource Development Institute,
313 Ulil Abshar Abdala (Triono, 2022). In the process of cadre formation and recruitment for ASWAJA
314 *al-Nahdhiyah*, a natural progression has been observed, primarily rooted in *pesantren*. NU's

315 institutional wings catering to youth such as Gerakan Pemuda Ansor (Ansor Youth Movement),
316 PMII or Pergerakan Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia (Indonesian Islamic Student Movement), IPNU
317 or Ikatan Pelajar Nahdhatul Ulama (Nahdhatul Ulama Student Association), and IPPNU or Ikatan
318 Pelajar Putri Nahdhatul Ulama (Nahdhatul Ulama Female Student Association) are all inherently
319 connected to the identity of pesantren. However, NU's presence in general education institutions,
320 particularly at the high school level, has been absent. Typically, religious activities in public
321 schools have been monopolized by *rohis* or *rohani Islam sekolah* (Islamic student councils) that
322 affiliate with organizations outside of NU.

323

324 Presently, the ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* movement is targeting groups outside the
325 mainstream of *pesantren* and rural areas, such as urban millennials and students in public schools,
326 including senior high schools and vocational high schools. Religious activities within public
327 schools, which have been traditionally monopolized by *rohis* councils, are now influenced by the
328 *ASWAJA Muda* (ASWAJA youth) movement, involving participants from IPNU, IPPNU, Lembaga
329 Dakwah NU (NU Da'wah Institute), and other NU-affiliated wings. The existence of *rohis* council,
330 the sole religious organization in schools providing spiritual guidance to students, is based on the
331 Permendiknas No. 39 of 2008. In its trajectory, the *rohis* movement is suspected of being exploited
332 by certain groups leading to radical religious understanding (Maknun et al., 2018). Transnational
333 alumni networks and religious groups have been intensively nurturing religious development
334 among students. Meanwhile, mainstream religious organizations have primarily focused on
335 internal development within their own core membership base. *Rohis* has now become a contested
336 space for Islamic organizations like NU and Muhammadiyah after a period of relative obscurity
337 and waning popularity among young people (Aidulsyah, 2016). In this context, the ASWAJA *al-*
338 *Nahdhiyah*-NU movement is conducting development and cadre formation activities for ASWAJA
339 beyond the confines of *pesantren*, particularly targeting urban millennials and students in public
340 schools.

341

342
343**Table 4.** List of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah da'wah* cadre formation activities beyond pesantren

Event	Organizer(s)	Outcome
Seminar and workshop against radicalism	PCNU or Pengurus Cabang Nahdhatul Ulama (Branch Nahdhatul Ulama Board), IPNU, IPPNU https://nu.or.id/nasional/seminar-nasional-radikalisme-awali-munas-vi-kmnu-di-purwokerto-dNWap#google_vignette	Regencies and cities, targeting students from public high schools and vocational schools
Seminar and Workshop Reinforcing regulation for NU student organizations	PCNU, IPNU, IPPNU https://www.nu.or.id/nasional/radikalisme-tinggi-pelajar-nu-bahas-urgensi-organisasi-pelajar-ekstra-di-sekolah-zb3hx#google_vignette	Youth wings of NU such as IPNU and IPPNU could legally engage within the realm of public schools
Seminar and workshop on religious moderation	Ministry of Religious Affairs under the Directorate General of Islamic Religious Education and in conjunction with NU's wing organizations https://www.nu.or.id/nasional/penanaman-nilai-moderasi-beragama-di-kalangan-pelajar-sangat-penting-SvKr2	Enhancing comprehension of religious moderation
Dissemination and Strengthening of SETAMAN or Sekolah Cinta Perdamaian (Peace Loving School)	Fahmina Institute as an integral part of NU's network https://fahmina.or.id/menebar-cinta-kebhinekaan-bersama-rohis/	Instilling the principles of tolerance, respect, and nondiscrimination
ASWAJA Muda (ASWAJA Youth) cadre formation	PCNU, IPNU, IPPNU https://www.nu.or.id/nasional/pentingnya-pijakan-aswaja-an-nahdliyah-dalam-penguatan-literasi-digital-IBhz1	Cadre formation platform for <i>al-Nahdhiyah</i> adolescents
Overnight leadership and nationalism empowerment camp and introduction to ASWAJA	IPNU, NU https://nu.or.id/warta/pw-ipnu-jatim-adakan-pelatihan-aswaja-405Q7	Concurrently strengthening the narratives of leadership, nationalism, and ASWAJA ideology
National <i>rohis</i> camp	Ministry of Religious Affairs, Directorate of Islamic Religious Education, and NU Cadres https://pendis.kemenag.go.id/pai/page/perkemahan-rohis	Establishing Rohis as an inclusive organisation to encourage more students to engage in religious studies
Millennial ASWAJA Café	PCNU, IPNU, IPPNU	Providing the society with an insight into ways to counteract the

	https://www.nu.or.id/daerah/cafe-aswaja-milenial-benteng-kaum-muda-dari-paham-radikal-sBqo9	misguided hijrah movement among the millennial generation.
Activities for PMA or Pegiat Muda ASWAJA (Young ASWAJA Advocates)	PCNU, IPNU, IPPNU https://maarifnajateng.or.id/2021/05/membentuk-generasi-aswaja-an-nandhliyah/	Bolstering ASWAJA understanding among high school and university students
Millennial Digital Camp	PWNU of East Java https://www.nubangil.or.id/tag/digital-camp/page/2/	Catalyzing digital media literacy within the millennial generation, congregating students from diverse schools to participate

344 Source: various sources

345

346 5. Discussion

347

348 The intensification of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* has been actively pursued by the NU community,
 349 positioned as one of the key Islamic authorities in Indonesia. These holders of Islamic authority
 350 disseminate and proliferate religious teachings through education and proselytization, grounded in
 351 original sources or linked to trusted chains of transmission (*sanad*) that reinforce their authority
 352 within the NU sphere, facilitated by the study of classical Islamic texts such as the Yellow Books.
 353 The robust tradition of NU encompasses not only scholarly endeavors but also local cultural
 354 traditions developed by past scholars. Turner (2007) posits that Islamic authority is vested in those
 355 who have proximity to, interaction with, and mastery over these sources, including ulemas, muftis,
 356 and qadhis. NU's ambition is to restore the tradition of ulemas as thought leaders, guiding behavior
 357 and actions (Asy'ari, 2021). In establishing its authority, NU cultivates the concept of ASWAJA
 358 *al-Nahdhiyah da'wah* through traditional institutions like *pesantren* and *madrasah*, acting as hubs
 359 for the authoritative transformation of Islamic knowledge (Hosen, 2019). Despite its age, NU
 360 maintains recognition and trust from the public, earned through educational institutions such as
 361 NU-affiliated *madrasah* and *pesantren* scattered across the archipelago, including institutions from
 362 basic to tertiary levels. Similarly, educational endeavors like NU's *ta'lim* (learning) assemblies,
 363 present both in urban and rural areas, contribute to this recognition. Additionally, NU oversees
 364 numerous affiliated autonomous organizations, further expanding its influence.

365

366 As an extensive front of scholars, NU operates not only within grassroots movements but
367 also at higher echelons. At the grassroots, it establishes *pesantren* institutions in rural regions and
368 imparts classical textual knowledge (Van Bruinessen, 1995). Simultaneously, NU engages in top-
369 tier politics, participating in high-level political and legislative roles and other centers of influence.
370 Though an Islamic organization rather than a political entity, individuals in NU's cadre often hold
371 significant positions in the government and society, reflecting both state and public trust. Alongside
372 other Islamic organizations like Muhammadiyah, PERSIS, and others, NU shares the
373 responsibility of disseminating Islamic teachings, fostering communities, educating the populace,
374 combating colonization, and contributing to the national and societal landscape. While differences
375 exist, they generally generate dynamic rather than divisive interactions. Collaboration is common,
376 based on mutual respect and alignment with respective visions and missions. For instance,
377 Muhammadiyah champions "progressive Islam," positioning itself within modernization
378 movements in Indonesia. It stands as the country's largest modern Islamic organization and
379 authoritative institution (Kim, 2010). Similarly, NU, founded as a movement by scholars, functions
380 as the central axis of ASWAJA Islam in Indonesia (Noer, 1991).

381

382 While the introduction of Hanan Attaki within the NU community may have been
383 perceived as having minimal impact, as stated by Kiai Anwar Zahid, who advised during the
384 pledge, "neither beneficial nor detrimental," the actual influence of the Hanan Attaki pledge
385 extends to the reception of NU among millennials. This has the potential to invigorate a segment
386 of NU that has been less engaged in conveying teachings to the millennial generation. Furthermore,
387 Hanan Attaki's presence holds the promise of reshaping the perception of NU's preaching, which
388 has often been stereotyped as "traditional and outdated," into a more appealing, contemporary,
389 trendy, and attractive endeavor (Akmaliah, 2020b). Despite NU's efforts to transform its online
390 presence in the *ahl al-sunnah wa al-jama'ah* spirit through Cyber NU, it is opined by Akmaliah
391 (2020a) that transnational cyber media groups exhibit greater progressiveness, engaging with more
392 intensity. The power of the cyber media within the *hijrah* community can potentially contribute to
393 the dissemination of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah*'s Islamic understanding, creating a more extensive
394 impact. This cohort of *hijrah* communities, known for their ardent religiosity and zeal, presents an

395 avenue to rediscover a more fitting course of action within the realms of Islamic and Indonesian
396 contexts. In this *hijrah* movement, public figures play a pivotal role as driving forces amidst a
397 popular culture significantly influenced by market dynamics. As religiosity trends, it experiences
398 fluctuations, governed by various factors. As change in this era differs from previous eras, it is
399 influenced by a multitude of factors, encompassing social, political, economic, and technological
400 aspects. As asserted by Pribadi et al. (2020), the acceptance of the founders and proponents of the
401 *hijrah* movement can reshape the landscape of Islam among the contemporary millennial
402 generation, particularly after Hanan Attaki's pledge.

403

404 This change is not only confined to reinforcing the mission of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah*
405 within the existing *hijrah* preaching movement but has also given birth to a new *hijrah* preaching
406 movement among millennials adhering to ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah*. Previously, NU kept its
407 distance from the *hijrah* preaching movement, but the current momentum provides an opportunity
408 to embrace and nurture this movement, competing with other forces. Historically, the *hijrah*
409 community has often been associated with exponents of HTI, *salafiy*, and *wahhabiy* ideologies
410 (Zaenuri & Yusuf, 2019). While confrontational and repressive tactics have been employed, albeit
411 currently seemingly mild and conducive due to state power and authority, it is important to note
412 that they are not inactive or inert. The forces aligned with the pro-caliphate and radical ideologies
413 persistently market their ideas through subtly different patterns and presentations. In fact, certain
414 factions within the *hijrah* community have evolved institutionally, penetrating education and
415 Quranic memorization institutions to establish their authority.

416

417 6. Conclusion

418

419 This study concludes that the ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah da'wah* movement, previously known as a
420 traditional preaching movement, is undergoing a departure from its conventional trajectory.
421 Historically, this movement was primarily directed towards rural communities and the elderly, with
422 minimal utilization of contemporary media. However, recent developments indicate a shift in its
423 target audience and approach. This transformation is evident in the changing preferences of the
424 millennial generation and urban society. Formerly, millennials and urban communities were

425 associated with the upper-middle-class demographic, more inclined towards modernist *da'wah*
426 movements, the *hijrah* community, and even transnational preaching movements. These newer
427 movements leverage social media, information technology, and modern approaches to disseminate
428 religious messages. In this context, the ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah da'wah* movement encounters
429 challenges in maintaining its relevance. To remain pertinent, it necessitates adapting to evolving
430 social trends and behavioral patterns.

431

432 A critical aspect to consider is the utilization of contemporary media and a more inclusive
433 approach to reach the millennial generation. In response to these challenges, the ASWAJA *al-*
434 *Nahdhiyah da'wah* movement can broaden its reach through social media, digital platforms, and
435 engaging content. By adopting an open and inclusive approach, the movement can capture the
436 attention and involvement of millennials who previously held limited engagement with it.
437 Moreover, it is crucial for the movement to reinforce religious education and enlightenment that
438 aligns with the needs and interests of millennials. This can be accomplished by offering educational
439 programs that intertwine religious values with the context of modern life. Changes in societal
440 patterns and preferences are inherent in any religious movement. Consequently, the ASWAJA *al-*
441 *Nahdhiyah da'wah* movement must continuously adapt and devise new strategies to uphold its
442 existence amidst the ever-evolving social and cultural landscape. This ensures its continued
443 relevance and effectiveness in disseminating religious values across various strata of society,
444 including millennials and urban communities. However, this study is limited by its methodological
445 aspects, as it solely relies on online media information and reports. Further research is warranted
446 to delve deeper into the perspectives of actors and respondents through a more comprehensive
447 qualitative approach.

448

449

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Modernising tradition: Reinforcing ASWAJA al-Nahdhiyah authority among millennials in Indonesia

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The da'wah (invitation to Islamic teachings) movement of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah al-Nahdhiyah, abbreviated as ASWAJA al-Nahdhiyah, formerly centred around the elderly, rural and traditional populations, has now experienced a reinforcement that extends to the millennial demographic. The evolution of time and technological advancement has introduced novel challenges in conveying the da'wah message to a generation immersed in the digital era. Millennials possess distinct communication preferences and characteristics compared to preceding generations, necessitating efforts to tailor the da'wah content to their context and needs. The primary objective of this research is twofold: to chart emerging forms of new traditions within the ideological reinforcement of ASWAJA al-Nahdhiyah among the millennial populace and to analyse the underlying factors giving rise to these novel traditions within the framework of ideological reinforcement of ASWAJA al-Nahdhiyah in the millennial context. Employing a qualitative approach, this study adopts the method of ethnography, aiming to comprehend cultural experiences encompassing traces, practices, networks and social media systems. This is achieved through the amalgamation of distinct research approaches categorised into data collection, analysis and interpretation. The findings of this research reveal that the reinforcement efforts encompassing diverse new traditions are realised through the appropriation of media platforms and the vigorous pursuit of education, cadre development and intensive mentorship within various millennial domains. This enhancement not only augments the acceptance and affiliation towards ASWAJA al-Nahdhiyah but also serves as a counterforce against the pervasive proliferation of radical ideologies.

Contribution: This paper contributes to the current understanding of the strengthening of Ahlusunnah wal Jamaah An-Nahdhiyah as a traditional religious view that is now experiencing a transformation in da'wah, in addition to being familiar with the use of contemporary media and aggressively targeting groups of young people in the midst of the swift global religious understanding and transnational da'wah movements that are developing in Indonesia.

Keywords: da'wah authority; ASWAJA al-nahdhiyah; millennials; new tradition.

[AQ1]

[AQ2]

Introduction

The *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah al-Nahdhiyah*, abbreviated as ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* or simply ASWAJA, which is often labelled as a traditional and elderly-focused *da'wah* movement, has now conspicuously extended its reach to encompass the millennial demographic. Various forms of strengthening have been undertaken within the framework of instilling ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* ideology among millennials. The resurgence of commitment to ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah da'wah* patterns within the sphere of Indonesia's major Islamic organisation Nahdhatul Ulama (NU) is at least marked by several indicators, both discursive and practical. Notable among these indicators are the emergence of new traditions within this reinforcement framework, such as the *baiat* (pledge) administered to the millennial preacher Hanan Attaki Founder of SHIFT Pemuda Hijrah, which recently took place, symbolising readiness for *da'wah* and advocacy in upholding ASWAJA within the NU fold (Khazanah 2023). Attaki, renowned among millennial circles for his *hijrah* (literally the act of distancing oneself from evil and embracing goodness) movement, has evolved into an emblematic figure of urban millennial *da'wah*, exuding a sense of modernity and resonance (Akmaliah 2020). The burgeoning *hijrah da'wah* movement within the millennial sector has been regarded as a novel Islamic trend, often contrasted with traditional *da'wah* endeavours (Setia & Dilawati 2021). While this *da'wah* movement has found a warm reception within the urban millennial populace, a different sentiment has emerged within the NU community. The presence of *hijrah* preachers has faced resistance on several occasions, particularly from religious figures

[AQ3]

associated with Banser (Barisan Ansor Serbaguna), NU's youth wing, who often rebuff the arrival of preachers who are deemed 'deviant' within the NU paradigm (Tim Redaksi TVONE/A.R. 2023). In a similar vein, new traditions have also arisen through the appropriation of new media as a *da'wah* medium. The NU sphere has vigorously adopted new media as a conduit for disseminating ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* principles via platforms like Cyber ASWAJA An-Nahdhiyah. Public lectures, scriptural studies and NU preacher sermons are now fervently conducted through these new media channels. The discourse on ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* has significantly pervaded virtual spaces (Said & Nugroho 2019).

Numerous studies have hitherto engaged in discussions concerning the tradition of strengthening the ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah da'wah*. These previous inquiries can be broadly categorised into three perspectives. Firstly, there are studies that scrutinise the tradition of enhancing ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah da'wah* from historical and doctrinal standpoints, as evidenced in the works of Nakamura (1981), Van Bruinessen (1995), Suwandana et al. (2023), Hamzah (2017) and Fealy and Bush (2014). Secondly, there are studies that view the strengthening tradition of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* as the axis of the moderate *da'wah* movement, as reflected in the research of Akmaliah (2022), Sunda and Fitri (2022), Ismail (2020), Saenong (2021) and Pribadi (2022). Thirdly, there are studies that explore the reinforcement tradition of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* in response to other *da'wah* movements and dynamics, as observed in the research of Saini (2022), Moqsith (2016), Arifianto (2021), Fata and Ichwan (2017) and Khazanah (2022).

However, a thorough review of prior literature reveals a dearth of specific investigation into the newly emerging traditions that have evolved from their predecessors within the context of reinforcing ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah da'wah*, targeting the millennial demographic. In alignment with this observation, this article endeavours to complement preceding studies. Specifically, it raises two inquiries: Firstly, what are the forms of novel traditions within the ideological reinforcement of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah da'wah* among millennials? Secondly, what are the factors underpinning the emergence of these novel traditions within the framework of reinforcing the ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah da'wah* ideology among millennials? Addressing these queries will enable a comprehension of the often-overlooked endeavours towards forging new tradition-based approaches in reinforcing ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah da'wah* ideology among millennials, a sphere that has received limited attention from the NU community, particularly concerning the millennial generation beyond traditional *pesantren* institutions.

The arguments presented within this article fortify the notion that traditional transformation is an inevitability that births new traditions aimed at enhancing existing presence and authority, currently under threat. Assorted *da'wah* methodologies have emerged, saturating the virtual landscape, thereby reshaping discourse, ideologies and

religious dispositions of the populace. Such developments also pose a challenge to various forms of mainstream religious authority, particularly that of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah*. Multiple endeavours are undertaken to fortify these principles, integrating contemporary perspectives favoured by the millennial population. This pertains to aspects like leadership, media and *da'wah* methods. The integration of the *hijrah* community into the ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah da'wah*, under the leadership of its *Ustadh* Hanan Attaki, serves as an illustration of this endeavour. Furthermore, there is a consolidation of Cyber ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah*, along with a mastery of new media for NU *da'wah* purposes.

Literature review

The authority of *da'wah* signifies the custodianship of Islamic authority itself. *Da'wah* is based on Tauhid (Anshory et al. 2023; Ramli, Ashath & Moghri 2023). The basis of Islamic authority stems from the Quran and hadith, both documented in the Arabic language. Those who wield Islamic authority are individuals who maintain proximity to, engage with and possess mastery over these sources. Such custodians include scholars, muftis and qadhis (Turner 2007). Terms such as *kyai*, *ustadh*, *abuya* and *ajengan* among others, represent local appellations for those occupying positions within the hierarchy of Islamic authority. In their efforts to establish their authority, these individuals further the cause of Islamic *da'wah* through traditional institutions such as *pesantren* and *madrasah*, which serve as authoritative centres for the transformation of Islamic knowledge (Hosen 2019). Islamic authority, beyond its foundational aspect of mastery over authoritative Islamic sources, is also grounded in experiential practice. This is exemplified by Kyai Haji Ahmad Dahlan (1868–1923), the founder of another major Islamic organisation in Indonesia, Muhammadiyah (Kim 2010).

Traditional bearers of Islamic authority function both individually and collectively, operating through educational institutions, *da'wah* initiatives, and social endeavours. *Da'wah*, as a facet of religious devotion, transpires on both personal and collective levels, with the aim of promoting virtue and deterring vice (Bensaid 2013). Preachers, who simultaneously occupy positions of religious authority, hold the duty of conveying the messages of Allah Almighty to humanity (Saputra et al. 2021). In addition to prerequisites of mental fortitude and moral integrity, wielders of *da'wah* authority must possess mastery over Islamic sources, forming the bedrock of religious comprehension competence (Hasanah 2020). In this regard, Natsir (1978) characterises this preparation as a stage of mental cultivation (*al-i'dad al-fikri*), along with scholarly readiness encompassing the understanding of religious knowledge, or *tafaqquh fi al-din*, and social proficiency involving a comprehensive understanding of *da'wah* targets or *tafaqquh fi al-nas*. Furthermore, qualifications for preachers are founded on the mastery of skills and methodologies, serving as benchmarks for authoritative *da'wah*. Notably, the Indonesian Ulema

Council (MUI) has extended these criteria to include not only religious knowledge but also a mastery of national perspectives (Hasanah & Anam 2022).

The term '*ahl al-sunnah wa al-jama'ah*' has evolved within the realm of the theological discourse since the era of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) (Hasan 2005). Abbreviated as ASWAJA in Indonesian parlance, the term is frequently defined as a group or community in Islam that identifies itself as adherents to the Prophet's Sunnah and the ways of his companions. The divergence of political viewpoints following the passing of the Prophet has instigated variations in religious interpretations. These political disparities reached a zenith after the occurrence of the *fitnah kubra* (the great strife), signifying the assassination of Uthman ibn Affan, which subsequently gave rise to theological divergences and even distinct Islamic factions (Farida 2014). For a segment of adherents, the ASWAJA understanding has become a reference point for theories and practices that harmoniously integrate the outward and inward dimensions of faith. Notably, NU adopts ASWAJA as its foundation for thinking, attitude and action (Harianto 2018). Nahdhatul Ulama unequivocally aligns its perspective with ASWAJA and declares itself a proponent of this ideology, specifically adhering to the theological stance of Abu Musa Al-Asy'ari or the Asy'ariyyah doctrine. In the realm of *fiqh* (jurisprudence), NU draws from the four main Sunni schools of thought (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i and Hanbali), with practical adherence predominantly to the Shafi'i school. In the realm of *tasawwuf* (mysticism), NU's orientation is influenced by the *tasawwuf* teachings of Junaid al-Baghdadi and Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (Hasan 2005). *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah al-Nahdhiyah al-Nahdhiyah* embodies the religious understanding of ASWAJA as propagated by the Great Teacher Hasyim Asy'ari, the founder of NU (Hamzah 2017).

Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach using netnographic methodology to comprehensively understand cultural experiences encompassing traces, practices, networks and the realm of social media systems. The research integrates diverse research methods into three distinct categories: data collection, analysis and interpretation (Kozinets 2010). In this research, netnographic methodology is adopted to examine and select diverse conversational sources from social media and mainstream platforms related to the phenomenon of Bai'at, particularly within the context of ASWAJA among social media users, specifically the millennial generation.

The data-collection technique entails netnographic procedures. It involves identifying social media networks, such as YouTube, Instagram and Twitter, followed by identifying groups affiliated with ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* that intensely utilise social media platforms, whether on a personal level or representing organisations. Subsequently, relevant data related to the study's topic are gathered,

encompassing posts, conversations, comments, user interactions and secondary data reflecting social media discussions using specific keywords. After data accumulation, the subsequent stage involves analysis following the methodology outlined by Krippendorff (2019).

Results

Pledge from a millennial preacher

Recently, the leadership of NU (Nahdlatul Ulama) in East Java undertook a significant event: they administered the *baiat* (pledge) to *Ustaz* Hanan Attaki, the founder of the 'Shift' youth *hijrah* movement, renowned as a millennial preacher. The *baiat* ceremony was overseen by K.H. Marzuki Mustamar, a prominent figure within the PWNU or Pengurus Wilayah NU (Nahdlatul Ulama Regional Board) in East Java. The Bai'at ceremony took place on Thursday, 11 June 2023, during a celebratory event of the extended family of Pondok Pesantren Sabilurrosyad in Gasek, Malang. This ceremony was conducted openly in the presence of the general public attending the occasion. According to K.H. Fahrur Rozi (Gus Fahrur), a leading figure within PBNU (the Central Board of Nahdlatul Ulama), this act of taking a pledge from an individual who commits to becoming a member or a member of NU is unprecedented in the history of NU (Baihaqi 2023). The *baiat* ceremony, apart from being attended by NU dignitaries and the local community in East Java, also received the presence of a prominent NU figure from Melbourne, Australia, namely Nadirsyah Hossein. During the event, Nadirsyah Hossein offered insightful words of wisdom. In his counsel, he advised Hanan Attaki to exhibit patience in carrying out his *da'wah* efforts in collaboration with NU. Hanan Attaki was urged to impart his knowledge to the students within NU's schools to cultivate a new generation of figures akin to Hanan Attaki (NU Channel 2023).

During the *baiat* ceremony, subsequent to the articulation of the *shahadah* or the two declarations of faith by Hanan Attaki, he proceeded to vocalise five distinct vows, as shown in Table 1.

According to Hanan's statement, as reported by national media, his pledge was made voluntarily and consciously, without any form of coercion. The *baiat* took place after his return from performing the *umrah* pilgrimage, during which he prayed to be guided by a *mursyid* (spiritual guide) who could provide guidance in his *da'wah* efforts. Hanan Attaki, along with his wife, visited *Kyai* Marzuki Mustamar, who also serves as a teacher and *mursyid* to Hanan's wife (Timdetik.com 2023). Hanan Attaki's rationale for accepting the *baiat* was to reaffirm the strong commitment of a student to his teacher and to underscore his dedication to following the guidance of the *mursyid* (Youtube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HvQUzzGRs04>).

Furthermore, Hanan Attaki also recommends to his companions who have undergone the *hijrah* through his

TABLE 1: The five vows in Hanan Attaki's *bai'at* process.

No.	Vows in <i>bai'at</i>	Code
1	I, <i>Ustaz</i> Hanan Attaki, solemnly declare before Allah, truly a devout and sincere Muslim in practice and in heart.	Vowing in the name of Allah
2	I, <i>Ustaz</i> Hanan Attaki, pledge and swear to follow the tenets of faith as advocated by scholars, <i>habaib</i> (descendants of the Prophet) and <i>kyai</i> from the <i>ahl al-sunnah wa al-jama'ah</i> .	Vowing and pledging
3	I, <i>Ustaz</i> Hanan Attaki, solemnly pledge and swear, by Allah, to genuinely embrace and adhere to the community, congregation and teachings of Nahdhatul Ulama founded by the Great Teacher K.H.M. Hasyim Asy'ari, K.H. Abdul Wahab Hasbullah and K.H. Bisri Syamsuri, in practice and in heart and I am pleased by that.	Joining and following NU
4	I, <i>Ustaz</i> Hanan Attaki, genuinely and sincerely affirm acceptance of the state system, nationhood, the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution, guided by the scholars and <i>habaib</i> of <i>ahl al-sunnah wa al-jama'ah</i> .	Loving the homeland
5	I declare my readiness to die in defense of Islam, in defense of <i>ahl al-sunnah wa al-jama'ah</i> , in defense of and striving for Nahdhatul Ulama, ready to die for NKRI. [The pledge concludes with the words] <i>La haula wa la quwwata illa billahi al-'Aliyi al-'Azhim</i> .	Striving to uphold religion and the state

Source: NUGres, R., 2023, 'Ini 5 Butir Baiat NU KH Marzuki Mustamar yang Ditirukan oleh Ustaz Hanan Attaki', Nugres.com, viewed 01 June 2023, from <https://nugresik.or.id/ini-5-butir-baiat-nu-kh-marzuki-mustamar-yang-ditirukan-oleh-ustaz-hanan-attaki/>

guidance to seek mentorship from genuinely knowledgeable individuals and those who possess expertise in their respective fields. He openly acknowledges having numerous mentors, several of whom he mentions by name, encompassing various disciplines such as Quranic studies, hadith, *fiqh* and *ushul fiqh* (the principles of jurisprudence). To this day, he continues to receive mentorship from a diverse array of teachers, with *Kyai* Marzuki Mustamar being one of them. He strongly advises his companions not only to embrace the spirit of *hijrah* but also to seek guidance from reputable mentors to foster their practical religious understanding. He expresses regret over instances where some of those who have made the *hijrah*, upon seeking guidance, encountered mentors or groups that easily proclaimed certain practices as forbidden or heretical. Consequently, this has led many to place blame on him for having facilitated their *hijrah*, with some inadvertently falling into interpretations deemed 'misguided'. This perception has contributed to a negative portrayal of Hanan Attaki, often being perceived as straying from the path of ASWAJA-NU. Notably, even one of NU's clerics, *Kyai* Anwar Zahid, characterises his pledge as a repentance from his previous 'deviation', expressing a hope that Hanan Attaki will not 'apostatise' again, as conveyed through a video on YouTube (Anza Channel KH. Anwar Zahid 2023).

As a youthful preacher, Hanan Attaki has become a prominent figure among religiously inclined millennials. He has effectively woven the *hijrah* movement into the lifestyle of urban millennials. His presence is eagerly anticipated by his followers in various cities. However, his *da'wah* endeavours have not been without obstacles. He frequently encounters resistance from certain factions within NU and Banser, particularly in East Java, which is renowned as a stronghold of NU (Tim Redaksi TVONE/A.R. 2023). His *da'wah* initiatives in this region have experienced several setbacks. Numerous allegations have been levelled against him, branding his group as fundamentalist and often denouncing other groups. Additionally, he has been accused of endorsing Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), an organisation advocating for a caliphate that has been proscribed in Indonesia. Furthermore, some of his sermons have courted controversy (Tamami 2023). These allegations have been contested by Hanan Attaki. Furthermore, his wife has also endeavoured to provide clarification by elaborating on the

lineage of her family and the historical endeavours of her grandfather as a prominent figure within NU in Tuban, East Java (Rahmatullah 2023).

Seizing new media as a conduit for ASWAJA

The vigorous propagation of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* is no longer confined to teaching, religious lectures and spiritual guidance; it has extended to the transmission of the Islamic value of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (mercy to the worlds) through digital means. This is done to present the values of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* and counter the virtual narratives of radicalism and terrorism that proliferate in cyberspace, primarily targeting the millennial generation. The robust dissemination of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* values takes place across various social media platforms, including live-streamed lessons from traditional Islamic texts on YouTube and Facebook. Additionally, social media accounts with an ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* identity are prevalent, managed both systematically by NU and by pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) affiliated with NU, along with other autonomous institutions linked to the NU cause. There is even an ongoing discourse competition centred around Indonesian-style Islam, referred to as Islam Nusantara or moderate Islam, achieved through structural campaigns and religious moderation initiatives supported by state institutions. This includes the reinforcement of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah*'s position in various aspects – cognitive, affective and behavioural – accomplished through cultural *da'wah* movements within NU lectures and the realm of NU Cyber (Said & Nugroho 2019). Table 2 provides a comprehensive breakdown of the content categories of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah*'s *da'wah* as narrated by prominent ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* figures.

In addition to the dedicated channels managed by platforms aligned with ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah*, similar efforts are undertaken by channels created by NU-affiliated schools and NU organisational wings. The network of students and followers of NU teachings also serves as a chain link in the dissemination of content to social media platforms. The phenomenon of sermon and study of religious texts, including the Quran, broadcasted through social media within the NU community, presents a narrative characterised by peaceful values and moderate Islamic principles, reflective of the distinct identity of Islam in the Indonesian archipelago.

TABLE 2: Ranking of Islamic websites in Indonesia for July 2020.

Year No	Islamic site	Affiliate	Ranking	
			Indonesia	Global
1	nu.or.id	Moderate	122	3242
2	Bincangsyariah.com	Moderate	244	10 176
3	Islami.co	Moderate	364	10 574
4	Muslim.or.id	Conservative	661	32 182
5	Rumahsyo.com	Conservative	675	30 930
6	Alif.id	Conservative	746	44 389
7	Portal-islam.id	Conservative	749	42 902
8	Islampos.com	Conservative	792	47 532
9	Dalamislam.com	-	914	46 289
10	Almanhaj.or.id	Conservative	1395	40 652

Source: Fahmi (2020)

Beyond the extensive utilisation of social media as a medium to propagate the values of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah*, the use of online media has also emerged as another arena of interest for the movement. Amid the proliferation of conservative media outlets affiliated with organisations advocating the establishment of a caliphate, such as *muslim.or.id*, *portal-islam.id* and *islampos.com*, which are frequently accessed and regarded as reference sources for certain segments of the Indonesian Muslim population, it is notable that a significant proportion of online media is dominated by conservative factions actively disseminating *khilafah* ideology, as illustrated in Table 2.

The awareness to seize online media as a source of Islamic reference with the essence of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* is growing among the millennial generation of NU. Online platforms such as *nu.or.id*, *bincangsyariah.com* and *islami.co* emerge as alternative narratives that are gaining attention within the millennial community. These ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah*-oriented websites not only influence public discourse in the virtual sphere but have also become focal points of information. In the year 2020, online media with moderate narratives took the forefront, aligning with the increasing vigour of news dissemination and moderate narrative content produced by NU followers.

ASWAJA millennial regeneration and fostering outside the pesantren

The ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* movement, in addition to its internal development and cadre formation efforts, as well as its primary base in pesantren, has expanded beyond its mainstream sphere. Through various affiliated branches within NU, the movement caters to different segments of its membership. Each sector assumes the role of nurturing and cadre formation. Cadre formation and development within NU are not solely based on educational institutions or pesantren overseen by NU clerics. It can also occur through recognition of an individual's contributions to advancing NU's cause. The process of cadre formation, as stipulated in NU's Statutes and Bylaws (AD/ART), occurs through both regular membership and honorary membership pathways. Meanwhile, cadre formation within NU generally takes place through various stages. Firstly, there is PD-PKPNU or *Pendidikan Dasar-Pendidikan Kader Penggerak Nahdhatul*

Ulama (Basic Education-Cadre Education for Progressing Nahdlatul Ulama). Secondly, PKMNU or *Pendidikan Menengah Kepemimpinan Nahdhatul Ulama* (Middle-Level Leadership Education of Nahdlatul Ulama). Thirdly, AKNNU or *Akademi Kepemimpinan Nasional Nahdhatul Ulama* (National Leadership Academy of Nahdlatul Ulama). In addition to this hierarchical system of cadre formation, there is also the practice of *muadalah* or equalisation among NU's autonomous bodies and educational institutions, such as *pesantren*. Cadre formation is also a prerequisite for becoming a NU official, as emphasised by PBNU's Chairman of the Research and Human Resource Development Institute, Ulil Abshar Abdala (Triono 2022). In the process of cadre formation and recruitment for ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah*, a natural progression has been observed, primarily rooted in *pesantren*. Nahdhatul Ulama's institutional wings catering to youth such as Gerakan Pemuda Ansor (Ansor Youth Movement), PMII or Pergerakan Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia (Indonesian Islamic Student Movement), IPNU or Ikatan Pelajar NU (Nahdhatul Ulama Student Association) and IPPNU or Ikatan Pelajar Putri NU (Nahdhatul Ulama Female Student Association) are all inherently connected to the identity of pesantren. However, NU's presence in general education institutions, particularly at the high school level, has been absent. Typically, religious activities in public schools have been monopolised by *rohis* or *rohani Islam sekolah* (Islamic student councils) that affiliate with organisations outside of NU.

Presently, the ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* movement is targeting groups outside the mainstream of *pesantren* and rural areas, such as urban millennials and students in public schools, including senior high schools and vocational high schools. Religious activities within public schools, which have been traditionally monopolised by *rohis* councils, are now influenced by the ASWAJA *Muda* (ASWAJA youth) movement, involving participants from IPNU, IPPNU, Lembaga Dakwah NU (NU Da'wah Institute) and other NU-affiliated wings. The existence of *rohis* council, the sole religious organisation in schools providing spiritual guidance to students, is based on the Permendiknas No. 39 of 2008. In its trajectory, the *rohis* movement is suspected of being exploited by certain groups leading to radical religious understanding (Maknun et al. 2018). Transnational alumni networks and religious groups have been intensively nurturing religious development among students. Meanwhile, mainstream religious organisations have primarily focused on internal development within their own core membership base. *Rohis* has now become a contested space for Islamic organisations like NU and Muhammadiyah after a period of relative obscurity and waning popularity among young people (Aidulsyah 2016). In this context, the ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah*-NU movement is conducting development and cadre formation activities for ASWAJA beyond the confines of *pesantren*, particularly targeting urban millennials and students in public schools.

TABLE 3: List of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah da'wah* cadre formation activities beyond **pesantren**.

Event	Organiser(s)	Outcome
Seminar and workshop against radicalism	PCNU or Pengurus Cabang Nahdhatul Ulama (Branch Nahdhatul Ulama Board), IPNU, IPPNU https://nu.or.id/nasional/seminar-nasional-radikalisme-awali-munas-vi-kmnu-di-purwokerto-dNWap#google_vignette	Regencies and cities, targeting students from public high schools and vocational schools
Seminar and Workshop Reinforcing regulation for NU student organisations	PCNU, IPNU, IPPNU https://www.nu.or.id/nasional/radikalisme-tinggi-pelajar-nu-bahas-urgensi-organisasi-pelajar-ekstra-di-sekolah-zb3hx#google_vignette	Youth wings of NU such as IPNU and IPPNU could legally engage within the realm of public schools
Seminar and workshop on religious moderation	Ministry of Religious Affairs under the Directorate General of Islamic Religious Education and in conjunction with NU's wing organisations https://www.nu.or.id/nasional/penanaman-nilai-moderasi-beragama-di-kalangan-pelajar-sangat-penting-SvKr2	Enhancing comprehension of religious moderation
Dissemination and Strengthening of SETAMAN or Sekolah Cinta Perdamaian (Peace Loving School)	Fahmina Institute as an integral part of NU's network https://fahmina.or.id/menebar-cinta-kebhinekaan-bersama-rohis/	Instilling the principles of tolerance, respect, and nondiscrimination
ASWAJA Muda (ASWAJA Youth) cadre formation	PCNU, IPNU, IPPNU https://www.nu.or.id/nasional/pentingnya-pijakan-aswaja-an-nahdhiyah-dalam-penguatan-literasi-digital-IBhz1	Cadre formation platform for <i>al-Nahdhiyah</i> adolescents
Overnight leadership and nationalism empowerment camp and introduction to ASWAJA	IPNU, NU https://nu.or.id/warta/pw-ipnu-jatim-adakan-pelatihan-aswaja-405Q7	Concurrently strengthening the narratives of leadership, nationalism and ASWAJA ideology
National <i>rohis</i> camp	Ministry of Religious Affairs, Directorate of Islamic Religious Education, and NU Cadres https://pendis.kemenag.go.id/pai/page/perkemahan-rohis	Establishing Rohis as an inclusive organisation to encourage more students to engage in religious studies
Millennial ASWAJA Café	PCNU, IPNU, IPPNU https://www.nu.or.id/daerah/caffe-aswaja-milenial-benteng-kaum-muda-dari-paham-radikal-sBqo9	Providing the society with an insight into ways to counteract the misguided hijrah movement among the millennial generation.
Activities for PMA or Pegiat Muda ASWAJA (Young ASWAJA Advocates)	PCNU, IPNU, IPPNU https://maarifnajateng.or.id/2021/05/membentuk-generasi-aswaja-an-nahdhiyah/	Bolstering ASWAJA understanding among high school and university students
Millennial Digital Camp	PWNU of East Java https://www.nubangil.or.id/tag/digital-camp/page/2/	Catalysing digital media literacy within the millennial generation, congregating students from diverse schools to participate

Source: Various sources

Discussion

The intensification of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* has been actively pursued by the NU community, positioned as one of the key Islamic authorities in Indonesia. These holders of Islamic authority disseminate and proliferate religious teachings through education and proselytisation, grounded in original sources or linked to trusted chains of transmission (*sanad*) that reinforce their authority within the NU sphere, facilitated by the study of classical Islamic texts such as the Yellow Books. The robust tradition of NU encompasses not only scholarly endeavours but also local cultural traditions developed by past scholars. Turner (2007) posits that Islamic authority is vested in those who have proximity to, interaction with and mastery over these sources, including ulemas, muftis and qadhis. Nahdhatul Ulama's ambition is to restore the tradition of ulemas as thought leaders, guiding behaviour and actions (Asy'ari 2021). In establishing its authority, NU cultivates the concept of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah da'wah* through traditional institutions like *pesantren* and *madrasah*, acting as hubs for the authoritative transformation of Islamic knowledge (Hosen 2019). Despite its age, NU maintains recognition and trust from the public, earned through educational institutions such as NU-affiliated *madrasah* and *pesantren* scattered across the archipelago, including institutions from basic to tertiary levels. Similarly, educational endeavours like NU's *ta'lim* (learning) assemblies, present both in urban and rural areas, contribute to this recognition. Additionally, NU oversees numerous affiliated autonomous organisations, further expanding its influence.

As an extensive front of scholars, NU operates not only within grassroots movements but also at higher echelons. At the grassroots, it establishes *pesantren* institutions in rural regions and imparts classical textual knowledge (Van Bruinessen 1995). Simultaneously, NU engages in top-tier politics, participating in high-level political and legislative roles and other centres of influence. Though an Islamic organisation rather than a political entity, individuals in NU's cadre often hold significant positions in the government and society, reflecting both state and public trust. Alongside other Islamic organisations like Muhammadiyah, PERSIS and others, NU shares the responsibility of disseminating Islamic teachings, fostering communities, educating the populace, combating colonisation and contributing to the national and societal landscape. While differences exist, they generally generate dynamic rather than divisive interactions. Collaboration is common, based on mutual respect and alignment with respective visions and missions. For instance, Muhammadiyah champions 'progressive Islam', positioning itself within modernisation movements in Indonesia. It stands as the country's largest modern Islamic organisation and authoritative institution (Kim 2010). Similarly, NU, founded as a movement by scholars, functions as the central axis of ASWAJA Islam in Indonesia (Noer 1991).

While the introduction of Hanan Attaki within the NU community may have been perceived as having minimal impact, as stated by Kiai Anwar Zahid, who advised during the pledge, 'neither beneficial nor detrimental', the actual

influence of the Hanan Attaki pledge extends to the reception of NU among millennials. This has the potential to invigorate a segment of NU that has been less engaged in conveying teachings to the millennial generation. Furthermore, Hanan Attaki's presence holds the promise of reshaping the perception of NU's preaching, which has often been stereotyped as 'traditional and outdated', into a more appealing, contemporary, trendy and attractive endeavour (Akmaliah 2020). Despite NU's efforts to transform its online presence in the *ahl al-sunnah wa al-jama'ah* spirit through Cyber NU, it is opined by Akmaliah (2020) that transnational cyber media groups exhibit greater progressiveness, engaging with more intensity. The power of the cyber media within the *hijrah* community can potentially contribute to the dissemination of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah*'s Islamic understanding, creating a more extensive impact. This cohort of *hijrah* communities, known for their ardent religiosity and zeal, presents an avenue to rediscover a more fitting course of action within the realms of Islamic and Indonesian contexts. In this *hijrah* movement, public figures play a pivotal role as driving forces amidst a popular culture significantly influenced by market dynamics. As religiosity trends, it experiences fluctuations, governed by various factors. As change in this era differs from previous eras, it is influenced by a multitude of factors, encompassing social, political, economic and technological aspects. As asserted by Pribadi (2020), the acceptance of the founders and proponents of the *hijrah* movement can reshape the landscape of Islam among the contemporary millennial generation, particularly after Hanan Attaki's pledge.

[AQ6]

This change is not only confined to reinforcing the mission of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* within the existing *hijrah* preaching movement but has also given birth to a new *hijrah* preaching movement among millennials adhering to ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah*. Previously, NU kept its distance from the *hijrah* preaching movement, but the current momentum provides an opportunity to embrace and nurture this movement, competing with other forces. Historically, the *hijrah* community has often been associated with exponents of HTI, *salafiy* and *wahhabiy* ideologies (Zaenuri & Yusuf 2019). While confrontational and repressive tactics have been employed, albeit currently seemingly mild and conducive because of state power and authority, it is important to note that they are not inactive or inert. The forces aligned with the pro-caliphate and radical ideologies persistently market their ideas through subtly different patterns and presentations. In fact, certain factions within the *hijrah* community have evolved institutionally, penetrating education and Quranic memorisation institutions to establish their authority.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah da'wah* movement, previously known as a traditional preaching movement, is undergoing a departure from its conventional trajectory. Historically, this movement was primarily directed towards rural communities and the elderly, with

minimal utilisation of contemporary media. However, recent developments indicate a shift in its target audience and approach. This transformation is evident in the changing preferences of the millennial generation and urban society. Formerly, millennials and urban communities were associated with the upper-middle-class demographic, more inclined towards modernist *da'wah* movements, the *hijrah* community and even transnational preaching movements. These newer movements leverage social media, information technology and modern approaches to disseminate religious messages. In this context, the ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah da'wah* movement encounters challenges in maintaining its relevance. To remain pertinent, it necessitates adapting to evolving social trends and behavioural patterns.

A critical aspect to consider is the utilisation of contemporary media and a more inclusive approach to reach the millennial generation. In response to these challenges, the ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah da'wah* movement can broaden its reach through social media, digital platforms and engaging content. By adopting an open and inclusive approach, the movement can capture the attention and involvement of millennials who previously held limited engagement with it. Moreover, it is crucial for the movement to reinforce religious education and enlightenment that aligns with the needs and interests of millennials. This can be accomplished by offering educational programs that intertwine religious values with the context of modern life. Changes in societal patterns and preferences are inherent in any religious movement. Consequently, the ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah da'wah* movement must continuously adapt and devise new strategies to uphold its existence amidst the ever-evolving social and cultural landscape. This ensures its continued relevance and effectiveness in disseminating religious values across various strata of society, including millennials and urban communities. However, this study is limited by its methodological aspects, as it solely relies on online media information and reports. Further research is warranted to delve deeper into the perspectives of actors and respondents through a more comprehensive qualitative approach.

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Authors' contributions

Umdatul Hasanah (Author 1): Conceived and designed the experiments, analysed the data and wrote the manuscript.

Khairil Anam [Author 2]: Conducted experiments, collected data and contributed to data analysis and interpretation.

Muassomah [Author 3]: Assisted with data collection, conducted literature review and contributed to manuscript preparation.

Ethical considerations

The Chairman of Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian kepada Masyarakat (Research and Community Services/ LPPM), Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten, approved ethical clearance of the following research project:

Title: Modernising Tradition: Reinforcing ASWAJA al-Nahdhiyah Authority Among Millennials in Indonesia

Research Leader: Dr. Umdatul Hasanah, M.Ag

Institution: Faculty of Da'wah UIN Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin, Banten

This was based on the recommendation of the Institution Research and Publication Committee held on 17 July 2023. The validity of this ethical clearance is 1 year effective from 01 August 2023 to 01 August 2024. It will be required to apply for renewal on an ethical clearance on a yearly basis if this research project is not completed at the end of this clearance period.

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Data availability

The data supporting the findings of this study are available in the manuscript with the accession codes/unique identifiers [provide accession codes or unique identifiers here]. A list of figures that have associated data is provided below:

- Figure 1: [The baiat process of Hanan Attaki]
- Figure 2: [Khilafah topic trends over 1 year (2019–2020)]

For access to the data, please visit [<https://www.slideshare.net/IsmailFahmi3/religious-moderation>] Figure (2) and enter the provided accession codes/unique identifiers.

The data are made available to facilitate transparency, reproducibility and further research in line with our commitment to open science. We encourage researchers to adhere to responsible data usage practices and respect any data access restrictions.

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Modernising tradition: Reinforcing ASWAJA al-Nahdhiyah authority among millennials in Indonesia

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The *da'wah* [invitation to Islamic teachings] movement of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah al-Nahdhiyah, abbreviated as ASWAJA al-Nahdhiyah, formerly centred around elderly, rural, and traditional populations, has now expanded its influence to encompass the millennial demographic. The evolving landscape of time and technological advancements present novel challenges in effectively communicating the *da'wah* message to a generation deeply immersed in the digital era. Millennials exhibit distinct communication preferences and characteristics compared to previous generations, necessitating tailored approaches to disseminate *da'wah* content that resonates with their context and needs. This research aimed to achieve two primary objectives: firstly, to identify emerging forms of new traditions within the ideological reinforcement of ASWAJA al-Nahdhiyah among millennials, and secondly, to analyse the underlying factors contributing to these novel traditions within the millennial context. Employing a qualitative approach, this study utilised **nethnography** as its methodological framework, seeking to understand cultural experiences encompassing traces, practices, networks, and social media systems. By combining various research approaches for data collection, analysis, and interpretation, the study shed light on the reinforcement efforts that give rise to diverse new traditions. The findings highlighted that the reinforcement endeavours, including the appropriation of media platforms and the emphasis on education, cadre development, and intensive mentorship within millennial domains, significantly contribute to the acceptance and affiliation towards ASWAJA al-Nahdhiyah. Moreover, these efforts serve as a counterforce against the proliferation of radical ideologies, safeguarding the traditional religious views amid the rapid globalisation of religious understanding and transnational *da'wah* movements in Indonesia.

[AQ3]

Contribution: This article advanced our understanding of the evolving dynamics within the ASWAJA al-Nahdhiyah movement, particularly its adaptation to contemporary communication channels and its strategic engagement with young audiences amid the changing religious landscape in Indonesia.

Keywords: *da'wah* movement; *da'wah* authority; ASWAJA al-Nahdhiyah; millennials; new tradition; Ideological reinforcement; media platforms.

Introduction

The *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah al-Nahdhiyah*, abbreviated as ASWAJA al-Nahdhiyah or simply ASWAJA, which is often labelled as a traditional and elderly-focused *da'wah* movement, has now conspicuously extended its reach to encompass the millennial demographic. Various forms of strengthening have been undertaken within the framework of instilling ASWAJA al-Nahdhiyah ideology among millennials. The resurgence of commitment to ASWAJA al-Nahdhiyah *da'wah* patterns within the sphere of Indonesia's major Islamic organisation Nahdhatul Ulama (NU) is at least marked by several indicators, both discursive and practical. Notable among these indicators are the emergence of new traditions within this reinforcement framework, such as the *baiat* (pledge) administered to the millennial preacher Hanan Attaki Founder of SHIFT Pemuda Hijrah, which recently took place, symbolising readiness for *da'wah* and advocacy in upholding ASWAJA within the NU fold (Redaksi Khazanah 2023). Attaki, renowned among millennial circles for his *hijrah* (literally the act of distancing oneself from evil and embracing goodness) movement, has evolved into an emblematic figure of urban millennial *da'wah*, exuding a sense of modernity and resonance (Akmaliah 2020). The burgeoning *hijrah da'wah* movement within the millennial sector has been regarded as a novel Islamic trend, often contrasted with traditional *da'wah* endeavours (Setia & Dilawati 2021). While this *da'wah* movement has found a warm reception within the

urban millennial populace, a different sentiment has emerged within the NU community. The presence of *hijrah* preachers has faced resistance on several occasions, particularly from religious figures associated with Banser (Barisan Ansor Serbaguna), NU's youth wing, who often rebuff the arrival of preachers who are deemed 'deviant' within the NU paradigm (Tim Redaksi TVONE/A.R. 2023). In a similar vein, new traditions have also arisen through the appropriation of new media as a *da'wah* medium. The NU sphere has vigorously adopted new media as a conduit for disseminating ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* principles via platforms like Cyber ASWAJA An-Nahdhiyah. Public lectures, scriptural studies and NU preacher sermons are now fervently conducted through these new media channels. The discourse on ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* has significantly pervaded virtual spaces (Said & Nugroho 2019).

Numerous studies have hitherto engaged in discussions concerning the tradition of strengthening the ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah da'wah*. These previous inquiries can be broadly categorised into three perspectives. Firstly, there are studies that scrutinise the tradition of enhancing ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah da'wah* from historical and doctrinal standpoints, as evidenced in the works of Nakamura (1981), Van Bruinessen (1996), Suwandana et al. (2023), Hamzah (2017) and Fealy and Bush (2014). Secondly, there are studies that view the strengthening tradition of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* as the axis of the moderate *da'wah* movement, as reflected in the research of Akmaliah (2022), Sunda and Fitri (2022), Ismail (2020), Saenong (2021) and Pribadi (2022). Thirdly, there are studies that explore the reinforcement tradition of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* in response to other *da'wah* movements and dynamics, as observed in the research of Saini (2022), Moqsith (2016), Arifianto (2021), Fata and Ichwan (2017) and Khazanah (2022).

However, a thorough review of prior literature reveals a dearth of specific investigation into the newly emerging traditions that have evolved from their predecessors within the context of reinforcing ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah da'wah*, targeting the millennial demographic. In alignment with this observation, this article endeavours to complement preceding studies. Specifically, it raises two inquiries: Firstly, what are the forms of novel traditions within the ideological reinforcement of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah da'wah* among millennials? Secondly, what are the factors underpinning the emergence of these novel traditions within the framework of reinforcing the ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah da'wah* ideology among millennials? Addressing these queries will enable a comprehension of the often-overlooked endeavours towards forging new tradition-based approaches in reinforcing ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah da'wah* ideology among millennials, a sphere that has received limited attention from the NU community, particularly concerning the millennial generation beyond traditional *pesantren* institutions.

The arguments presented within this article fortify the notion that traditional transformation is an inevitability that births new traditions aimed at enhancing existing

presence and authority, currently under threat. Assorted *da'wah* methodologies have emerged, saturating the virtual landscape, thereby reshaping discourse, ideologies and religious dispositions of the populace. Such developments also pose a challenge to various forms of mainstream religious authority, particularly that of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah*. Multiple endeavours are undertaken to fortify these principles, integrating contemporary perspectives favoured by the millennial population. This pertains to aspects like leadership, media and *da'wah* methods. The integration of the *hijrah* community into the ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah da'wah*, under the leadership of its *Ustadh* Hanan Attaki, serves as an illustration of this endeavour. Furthermore, there is a consolidation of Cyber ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah*, along with a mastery of new media for NU *da'wah* purposes.

Literature review

The authority of *da'wah* signifies the custodianship of Islamic authority itself. *Da'wah* is based on Tauhid (Anshory et al. 2023; Ramli, Ashath & Moghri 2023). The basis of Islamic authority stems from the Quran and hadith, both documented in the Arabic language. Those who wield Islamic authority are individuals who maintain proximity to, engage with and possess mastery over these sources. Such custodians include scholars, muftis and qadhis (Turner 2007). Terms such as *kyai*, *ustadh*, *abuya* and *ajengan* among others, represent local appellations for those occupying positions within the hierarchy of Islamic authority. In their efforts to establish their authority, these individuals further the cause of Islamic *da'wah* through traditional institutions such as *pesantren* and *madrasah*, which serve as authoritative centres for the transformation of Islamic knowledge (Hosen 2019). Islamic authority, beyond its foundational aspect of mastery over authoritative Islamic sources, is also grounded in experiential practice. This is exemplified by Kyai Haji Ahmad Dahlan (1868–1923), the founder of another major Islamic organisation in Indonesia, Muhammadiyah (Kim 2010).

Traditional bearers of Islamic authority function both individually and collectively, operating through educational institutions, *da'wah* initiatives, and social endeavours. *Da'wah*, as a facet of religious devotion, transpires on both personal and collective levels, with the aim of promoting virtue and deterring vice (Bensaid 2013). Preachers, who simultaneously occupy positions of religious authority, hold the duty of conveying the messages of Allah Almighty to humanity (Saputra et al. 2021). In addition to prerequisites of mental fortitude and moral integrity, wielders of *da'wah* authority must possess mastery over Islamic sources, forming the bedrock of religious comprehension competence (Hasanah 2020). In this regard, Natsir (2008) characterises this preparation as a stage of mental cultivation (*al-i'dad al-fikri*), along with scholarly readiness encompassing the understanding of religious knowledge, or *tafaqquh fi al-din*, and social proficiency involving a comprehensive understanding of *da'wah* targets or *tafaqquh fi al-nas*.

Furthermore, qualifications for preachers are founded on the mastery of skills and methodologies, serving as benchmarks for authoritative *da'wah*. Notably, the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) has extended these criteria to include not only religious knowledge but also a mastery of national perspectives (Hasanah & Tawang 2022).

The term '*ahl al-sunnah wa al-jama'ah*' has evolved within the realm of theological discourse since the era of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) (Hasan 2005). Abbreviated as ASWAJA in Indonesian parlance, the term is frequently defined as a group or community in Islam that identifies itself as adherents to the Prophet's Sunnah and the ways of his companions. The divergence of political viewpoints following the passing of the Prophet has instigated variations in religious interpretations. These political disparities reached a zenith after the occurrence of the *fitnah kubra* (the great strife), signifying the assassination of Uthman ibn Affan, which subsequently gave rise to theological divergences and even distinct Islamic factions (Farida 2014). For a segment of adherents, the ASWAJA understanding has become a reference point for theories and practices that harmoniously integrate the outward and inward dimensions of faith. Notably, NU adopts ASWAJA as its foundation for thinking, attitude and action (Harianto 2018). Nahdhatul Ulama unequivocally aligns its perspective with ASWAJA and declares itself a proponent of this ideology, specifically adhering to the theological stance of Abu Musa Al-Asy'ari or the Asy'ariyyah doctrine. In the realm of *fiqh* (jurisprudence), NU draws from the four main Sunni schools of thought (Hanafi, Maliki, Shafi'i and Hanbali), with practical adherence predominantly to the Shafi'i school. In the realm of *tasawwuf* (mysticism), NU's orientation is influenced by the *tasawwuf* teachings of Junaid al-Baghdadi and Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (Hasan 2005). *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah al-Nahdhiyah* embodies the religious understanding of ASWAJA as propagated by the Great Teacher Hasyim Asy'ari, the founder of NU (Hamzah 2017).

Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach using netnographic methodology to comprehensively understand cultural experiences encompassing traces, practices, networks and the realm of social media systems. The research integrates diverse research methods into three distinct categories: data collection, analysis and interpretation (Kozinets 2010). In this research, netnographic methodology is adopted to examine and select diverse conversational sources from social media and mainstream platforms related to the phenomenon of Bai'at, particularly within the context of ASWAJA among social media users, specifically the millennial generation.

The data-collection technique entails netnographic procedures. It involves identifying social media networks, such as YouTube, Instagram and Twitter, followed by identifying groups affiliated with ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* that intensely utilise social media platforms, whether on a personal level or representing organisations. Subsequently,

relevant data related to the study's topic are gathered, encompassing posts, conversations, comments, user interactions and secondary data reflecting social media discussions using specific keywords. After data accumulation, the subsequent stage involves analysis following the methodology outlined by Krippendorff (2019).

Results

Pledge from a millennial preacher

Recently, the leadership of NU (Nahdlatul Ulama) in East Java undertook a significant event: they administered the *baiat* (pledge) to *Ustaz* Hanan Attaki, the founder of the 'Shift' youth *hijrah* movement, renowned as a millennial preacher. The *baiat* ceremony was overseen by K.H. Marzuki Mustamar, a prominent figure within the PWNU or Pengurus Wilayah NU (Nahdlatul Ulama Regional Board) in East Java. The *baiat* ceremony took place on Thursday, 11 May 2023, during a celebratory event of the extended family of Pondok Pesantren Sabilurrosyad in Gasek, Malang. This ceremony was conducted openly in the presence of the general public attending the occasion. According to K.H. Fahrur Rozi (Gus Fahrur), a leading figure within PBNU (the Central Board of Nahdlatul Ulama), this act of taking a pledge from an individual who commits to becoming a member or a member of NU is unprecedented in the history of NU (Baihaqi 2023). The *baiat* ceremony, apart from being attended by NU dignitaries and the local community in East Java, also received the presence of a prominent NU figure from Melbourne, Australia, namely Nadirsyah Hossein. During the event, Nadirsyah Hossein offered insightful words of wisdom. In his counsel, he advised Hanan Attaki to exhibit patience in carrying out his *da'wah* efforts in collaboration with NU. Hanan Attaki was urged to impart his knowledge to the students within NU's schools to cultivate a new generation of figures akin to Hanan Attaki (NU Channel 2023).

During the *baiat* ceremony, subsequent to the articulation of the *shahadah* or the two declarations of faith by Hanan Attaki, he proceeded to vocalise five distinct vows, as shown in Table 1.

According to Hanan's statement, as reported by national media, his pledge was made voluntarily and consciously, without any form of coercion. The *baiat* took place after his return from performing the *umrah* pilgrimage, during which he prayed to be guided by a *mursyid* (spiritual guide) who could provide guidance in his *da'wah* efforts. Hanan Attaki, along with his wife, visited *Kyai* Marzuki Mustamar, who also serves as a teacher and *mursyid* to Hanan's wife (Timdetik.com 2023). Hanan Attaki's rationale for accepting the *baiat* was to reaffirm the strong commitment of a student to his teacher and to underscore his dedication to following the guidance of the *mursyid* (Youtube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HvQUzzGRs04>).

Furthermore, Hanan Attaki also recommends to his companions who have undergone the *hijrah* through his

TABLE 1: The five vows in Hanan Attaki's *bai'at* process.

No.	Vows in <i>bai'at</i>	Code
1	I, <i>Ustaz</i> Hanan Attaki, solemnly declare before Allah, truly a devout and sincere Muslim in practice and in heart.	Vowing in the name of Allah
2	I, <i>Ustaz</i> Hanan Attaki, pledge and swear to follow the tenets of faith as advocated by scholars, <i>habaib</i> (descendants of the Prophet) and <i>kyai</i> from the <i>ahl al-sunnah wa al-jama'ah</i> .	Vowing and pledging
3	I, <i>Ustaz</i> Hanan Attaki, solemnly pledge and swear, by Allah, to genuinely embrace and adhere to the community, congregation and teachings of Nahdhatul Ulama founded by the Great Teacher K.H.M. Hasyim Asy'ari, K.H. Abdul Wahab Hasbullah and K.H. Bisri Syamsuri, in practice and in heart and I am pleased by that.	Joining and following NU
4	I, <i>Ustaz</i> Hanan Attaki, genuinely and sincerely affirm acceptance of the state system, nationhood, the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI) based on Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution, guided by the scholars and <i>habaib</i> of <i>ahl al-sunnah wa al-jama'ah</i> .	Loving the homeland
5	I declare my readiness to die in defense of Islam, in defense of <i>ahl al-sunnah wa al-jama'ah</i> , in defense of and striving for Nahdhatul Ulama, ready to die for NKRI. [The pledge concludes with the words] <i>La haula wa la quwwata illa billahi al-'Aliyi al-'Azhim</i> .	Striving to uphold religion and the state

Source: NUGres, R., 2023, 'Ini 5 Butir Baiat NU KH Marzuki Mustamar yang Diturunkan oleh Ustaz Hanan Attaki', *Nugres.com*, viewed 01 June 2023, from <https://nugresik.or.id/ini-5-butir-baiat-nu-kh-marzuki-mustamar-yang-diturunkan-oleh-ustaz-hanan-attaki/>

NU, Nahdhatul Ulama; K.H, XXX; NKRI, XXX.

[AQ1]

guidance to seek mentorship from genuinely knowledgeable individuals and those who possess expertise in their respective fields. He openly acknowledges having numerous mentors, several of whom he mentions by name, encompassing various disciplines such as Quranic studies, hadith, *fiqh* and *ushul fiqh* (the principles of jurisprudence). To this day, he continues to receive mentorship from a diverse array of teachers, with *Kyai* Marzuki Mustamar being one of them. He strongly advises his companions not only to embrace the spirit of *hijrah* but also to seek guidance from reputable mentors to foster their practical religious understanding. He expresses regret over instances where some of those who have made the *hijrah*, upon seeking guidance, encountered mentors or groups that easily proclaimed certain practices as forbidden or heretical. Consequently, this has led many to place blame on him for having facilitated their *hijrah*, with some inadvertently falling into interpretations deemed 'misguided'. This perception has contributed to a negative portrayal of Hanan Attaki, often being perceived as straying from the path of ASWAJA-NU. Notably, even one of NU's clerics, *Kyai* Anwar Zahid, characterises his pledge as a repentance from his previous 'deviation', expressing a hope that Hanan Attaki will not 'apostatise' again, as conveyed through a video on YouTube (Anza Channel KH. Anwar Zahid 2023).

As a youthful preacher, Hanan Attaki has become a prominent figure among religiously inclined millennials. He has effectively woven the *hijrah* movement into the lifestyle of urban millennials. His presence is eagerly anticipated by his followers in various cities. However, his *da'wah* endeavours have not been without obstacles. He frequently encounters resistance from certain factions within NU and Banser, particularly in East Java, which is renowned as a stronghold of NU (Tim Redaksi TVONE/A.R. 2023). His *da'wah* initiatives in this region have experienced several setbacks. Numerous allegations have been levelled against him, branding his group as fundamentalist and often denouncing other groups. Additionally, he has been accused of endorsing Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), an organisation advocating for a caliphate that has been proscribed in Indonesia. Furthermore, some of his sermons have courted controversy (Tamami 2023). These allegations have been contested by Hanan Attaki. Furthermore, his wife has also

endeavoured to provide clarification by elaborating on the lineage of her family and the historical endeavours of her grandfather as a prominent figure within NU in Tuban, East Java (Rahmatullah 2023).

Seizing new media as a conduit for ASWAJA

The vigorous propagation of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* is no longer confined to teaching, religious lectures and spiritual guidance; it has extended to the transmission of the Islamic value of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* (mercy to the worlds) through digital means. This is done to present the values of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* and counter the virtual narratives of radicalism and terrorism that proliferate in cyberspace, primarily targeting the millennial generation. The robust dissemination of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* values takes place across various social media platforms, including live-streamed lessons from traditional Islamic texts on YouTube and Facebook. Additionally, social media accounts with an ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* identity are prevalent, managed both systematically by NU and by pesantren (Islamic boarding schools) affiliated with NU, along with other autonomous institutions linked to the NU cause. There is even an ongoing discourse competition centred around Indonesian-style Islam, referred to as Islam Nusantara or moderate Islam, achieved through structural campaigns and religious moderation initiatives supported by state institutions. This includes the reinforcement of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah's* position in various aspects – cognitive, affective and behavioural – accomplished through cultural *da'wah* movements within NU lectures and the realm of NU Cyber (Said & Nugroho 2019). Table 2 provides a comprehensive breakdown of the content categories of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah's* *da'wah* as narrated by prominent ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* figures.

In addition to the dedicated channels managed by platforms aligned with ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah*, similar efforts are undertaken by channels created by NU-affiliated schools and NU organisational wings. The network of students and followers of NU teachings also serves as a chain link in the dissemination of content to social media platforms. The phenomenon of sermon and study of religious texts, including the Quran, broadcasted through social media within the NU community, presents a narrative characterised by peaceful

TABLE 2: Ranking of Islamic websites in Indonesia for July 2020.

Year No	Islamic site	Affiliate	Ranking	
			Indonesia	Global
1	nu.or.id	Moderate	122	3242
2	Bincangsyariah.com	Moderate	244	10 176
3	Islami.co	Moderate	364	10 574
4	Muslim.or.id	Conservative	661	32 182
5	Rumahsyo.com	Conservative	675	30 930
6	Alif.id	Conservative	746	44 389
7	Portal-islam.id	Conservative	749	42 902
8	Islampos.com	Conservative	792	47 532
9	Dalamislam.com	-	914	46 289
10	Almanhaj.or.id	Conservative	1395	40 652

Source: Fahmi, I., 2020, *Religious moderation: Public discourse in social media*, viewed 20 May 2023, from <https://www.slideshare.net/IsmailFahmi3/religious-moderation>

values and moderate Islamic principles, reflective of the distinct identity of Islam in the Indonesian archipelago. Beyond the extensive utilisation of social media as a medium to propagate the values of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah*, the use of online media has also emerged as another arena of interest for the movement. Amid the proliferation of conservative media outlets affiliated with organisations advocating the establishment of a caliphate, such as *muslim.or.id*, *portal-islam.id* and *islampos.com*, which are frequently accessed and regarded as reference sources for certain segments of the Indonesian Muslim population, it is notable that a significant proportion of online media is dominated by conservative factions actively disseminating *khilafah* ideology, as illustrated in Table 2.

The awareness to seize online media as a source of Islamic reference with the essence of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* is growing among the millennial generation of NU. Online platforms such as *nu.or.id*, *bincangsyariah.com* and *islami.co* emerge as alternative narratives that are gaining attention within the millennial community. These ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah*-oriented websites not only influence public discourse in the virtual sphere but have also become focal points of information. In the year 2020, online media with moderate narratives took the forefront, aligning with the increasing vigour of news dissemination and moderate narrative content produced by NU followers.

ASWAJA millennial regeneration and fostering outside the pesantren

The ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* movement, in addition to its internal development and cadre formation efforts, as well as its primary base in pesantren, has expanded beyond its mainstream sphere. Through various affiliated branches within NU, the movement caters to different segments of its membership. Each sector assumes the role of nurturing and cadre formation. Cadre formation and development within NU are not solely based on educational institutions or pesantren overseen by NU clerics. It can also occur through recognition of an individual's contributions to advancing NU's cause. The process of cadre formation, as stipulated in NU's Statutes and Bylaws (AD/ART), occurs through both regular membership and honorary membership pathways. Meanwhile, cadre formation within NU generally takes

place through various stages. Firstly, there is PD-PKPNU or *Pendidikan Dasar-Pendidikan Kader Penggerak Nahdhatul Ulama* (Basic Education-Cadre Education for Progressing Nahdlatul Ulama). Secondly, PKMNU or *Pendidikan Menengah Kepemimpinan Nahdhatul Ulama* (Middle-Level Leadership Education of Nahdlatul Ulama). Thirdly, AKNNU or *Akademi Kepemimpinan Nasional Nahdhatul Ulama* (National Leadership Academy of Nahdlatul Ulama). In addition to this hierarchical system of cadre formation, there is also the practice of *muadalah* or equalisation among NU's autonomous bodies and educational institutions, such as *pesantren*. Cadre formation is also a prerequisite for becoming a NU official, as emphasised by PBNU's Chairman of the Research and Human Resource Development Institute, Ulil Abshar Abdala (Triono 2022). In the process of cadre formation and recruitment for ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah*, a natural progression has been observed, primarily rooted in *pesantren*. Nahdhatul Ulama's institutional wings catering to youth such as Gerakan Pemuda Ansor (Ansor Youth Movement), PMII or Pergerakan Mahasiswa Islam Indonesia (Indonesian Islamic Student Movement), IPNU or Ikatan Pelajar NU (Nahdhatul Ulama Student Association) and IPPNU or Ikatan Pelajar Putri NU (Nahdhatul Ulama Female Student Association) are all inherently connected to the identity of pesantren. However, NU's presence in general education institutions, particularly at the high school level, has been absent. Typically, religious activities in public schools have been monopolised by *rohis* or *rohani Islam sekolah* (Islamic student councils) that affiliate with organisations outside of NU.

Presently, the ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* movement is targeting groups outside the mainstream of *pesantren* and rural areas, such as urban millennials and students in public schools, including senior high schools and vocational high schools. Religious activities within public schools, which have been traditionally monopolised by *rohis* councils, are now influenced by the ASWAJA *Muda* (ASWAJA youth) movement, involving participants from IPNU, IPPNU, Lembaga Dakwah NU (NU *Da'wah* Institute) and other NU-affiliated wings. In its trajectory, the *rohis* movement is suspected of being exploited by certain groups leading to radical religious understanding (Maknun et al. 2018). Transnational alumni networks and religious groups have been intensively nurturing religious development among students. Meanwhile, mainstream religious organisations have primarily focused on internal development within their own core membership base. *Rohis* has now become a contested space for Islamic organisations like NU and Muhammadiyah after a period of relative obscurity and waning popularity among young people (Aidulsyah 2016). In this context, the ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah*-NU movement is conducting development and cadre formation activities for ASWAJA beyond the confines of *pesantren*, particularly targeting urban millennials and students in public schools.

Discussion

The intensification of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* has been actively pursued by the NU community, positioned as one of the key

TABLE 3: List of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah da'wah* cadre formation activities beyond pesantren.

Event	Organiser(s)	Outcome
Seminar and workshop against radicalism	PCNU (Branch Nahdhatul Ulama Board), IPNU, IPPNU https://nu.or.id/nasional/seminar-nasional-radikalisme-awali-munas-vi-kmnu-di-purwokerto-dNWap#google_vignette	Regencies and cities, targeting students from public high schools and vocational schools
Seminar and Workshop Reinforcing regulation for NU student organisations	PCNU, IPNU, IPPNU https://www.nu.or.id/nasional/radikalisme-tinggi-pelajar-nu-bahas-urgensi-organisasi-pelajar-ekstra-di-sekolah-zb3hx#google_vignette	Youth wings of NU such as IPNU and IPPNU could legally engage within the realm of public schools
Seminar and workshop on religious moderation	Ministry of Religious Affairs under the Directorate General of Islamic Religious Education and in conjunction with NU's wing organisations https://www.nu.or.id/nasional/penanaman-nilai-moderasi-beragama-di-kalangan-pelajar-sangat-penting-SvKr2	Enhancing comprehension of religious moderation
Dissemination and Strengthening of SETAMAN or Sekolah Cinta Perdamaian (Peace Loving School)	Fahmina Institute as an integral part of NU's network https://fahmina.or.id/menebar-cinta-kebhinekaan-bersama-rohis/	Instilling the principles of tolerance, respect, and nondiscrimination
ASWAJA Muda (ASWAJA Youth) cadre formation	PCNU, IPNU, IPPNU https://www.nu.or.id/nasional/pentingnya-pijakan-aswaja-an-nahdhiyah-dalam-penguatan-literasi-digital-IBhz1	Cadre formation platform for <i>al-Nahdhiyah</i> adolescents
Overnight leadership and nationalism empowerment camp and introduction to ASWAJA	IPNU, NU https://nu.or.id/warta/pw-ipnu-jatim-adakan-pelatihan-aswaja-405Q7	Concurrently strengthening the narratives of leadership, nationalism and ASWAJA ideology
National <i>rohis</i> camp	Ministry of Religious Affairs, Directorate of Islamic Religious Education, and NU Cadres https://pendis.kemenag.go.id/pai/page/perkemahan-rohis	Establishing Rohis as an inclusive organisation to encourage more students to engage in religious studies
Millennial ASWAJA Café	PCNU, IPNU, IPPNU https://www.nu.or.id/daerah/cafes-aswaja-milenial-benteng-kaum-muda-dari-paham-radikal-sBqo9	Providing the society with an insight into ways to counteract the misguided <i>hijrah</i> movement among the millennial generation.
Activities for PMA or Pegiat Muda ASWAJA (Young ASWAJA Advocates)	PCNU, IPNU, IPPNU https://maarifnujateng.or.id/2021/05/membentuk-generasi-aswaja-an-nahdhiyah/	Bolstering ASWAJA understanding among high school and university students
Millennial Digital Camp	PWNU of East Java https://www.nubangil.or.id/tag/digital-camp/page/2/	Catalysing digital media literacy within the millennial generation, congregating students from diverse schools to participate

PCNU, Pengurus Cabang Nahdhatul Ulama; IPNU, ; IPPNU, ; NU, ; SETAMAN, ; ASWAJA, ; PMA, .

Islamic authorities in Indonesia. These holders of Islamic authority disseminate and proliferate religious teachings through education and proselytisation, grounded in original sources or linked to trusted chains of transmission (*sanad*) that reinforce their authority within the NU sphere, facilitated by the study of classical Islamic texts such as the Yellow Books. The robust tradition of NU encompasses not only scholarly endeavours but also local cultural traditions developed by past scholars. Turner (2007) posits that Islamic authority is vested in those who have proximity to, interaction with and mastery over these sources, including ulemas, muftis and qadhis. Nahdhatul Ulama's ambition is to restore the tradition of ulemas as thought leaders, guiding behaviour and actions (Asy'ari 2021). In establishing its authority, NU cultivates the concept of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah da'wah* through traditional institutions like *pesantren* and *madrasah*, acting as hubs for the authoritative transformation of Islamic knowledge (Hosen 2019). Despite its age, NU maintains recognition and trust from the public, earned through educational institutions such as NU-affiliated *madrasah* and *pesantren* scattered across the archipelago, including institutions from basic to tertiary levels. Similarly, educational endeavours like NU's *ta'lim* (learning) assemblies, present both in urban and rural areas, contribute to this recognition. Additionally, NU oversees numerous affiliated autonomous organisations, further expanding its influence.

As an extensive front of scholars, NU operates not only within grassroots movements but also at higher echelons. At the grassroots, it establishes *pesantren* institutions in rural

regions and imparts classical textual knowledge (Van Bruinessen 1995). Simultaneously, NU engages in top-tier politics, participating in high-level political and legislative roles and other centres of influence. Though an Islamic organisation rather than a political entity, individuals in NU's cadre often hold significant positions in the government and society, reflecting both state and public trust. Alongside other Islamic organisations like Muhammadiyah, PERSIS and others, NU shares the responsibility of disseminating Islamic teachings, fostering communities, educating the populace, combating colonisation and contributing to the national and societal landscape. While differences exist, they generally generate dynamic rather than divisive interactions. Collaboration is common, based on mutual respect and alignment with respective visions and missions. For instance, Muhammadiyah champions 'progressive Islam', positioning itself within modernisation movements in Indonesia. It stands as the country's largest modern Islamic organisation and authoritative institution (Kim 2010). Similarly, NU, founded as a movement by scholars, functions as the central axis of ASWAJA Islam in Indonesia (Noer 1991).

While the introduction of Hanan Attaki within the NU community may have been perceived as having minimal impact, as stated by Kiai Anwar Zahid, who advised during the pledge, 'neither beneficial nor detrimental', the actual influence of the Hanan Attaki pledge extends to the reception of NU among millennials. This has the potential to invigorate a segment of NU that has been less engaged in conveying teachings to the millennial generation. Furthermore, Hanan

Attaki's presence holds the promise of reshaping the perception of NU's preaching, which has often been stereotyped as 'traditional and outdated', into a more appealing, contemporary, trendy and attractive endeavour (Akmaliah 2020). Despite NU's efforts to transform its online presence in the *ahl al-sunnah wa al-jama'ah* spirit through Cyber NU, it is opined by Akmaliah (2020) that transnational cyber media groups exhibit greater progressiveness, engaging with more intensity. The power of the cyber media within the *hijrah* community can potentially contribute to the dissemination of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah*'s Islamic understanding, creating a more extensive impact. This cohort of *hijrah* communities, known for their ardent religiosity and zeal, presents an avenue to rediscover a more fitting course of action within the realms of Islamic and Indonesian contexts. In this *hijrah* movement, public figures play a pivotal role as driving forces amidst a popular culture significantly influenced by market dynamics. As religiosity trends, it experiences fluctuations, governed by various factors. As change in this era differs from previous eras, it is influenced by a multitude of factors, encompassing social, political, economic and technological aspects as asserted by Pribadi (2020). The acceptance of the founders and proponents of the *hijrah* movement can reshape the landscape of Islam among the contemporary millennial generation, particularly after Hanan Attaki's pledge.

This change is not only confined to reinforcing the mission of ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah* within the existing *hijrah* preaching movement but has also given birth to a new *hijrah* preaching movement among millennials adhering to ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah*. Previously, NU kept its distance from the *hijrah* preaching movement, but the current momentum provides an opportunity to embrace and nurture this movement, competing with other forces. Historically, the *hijrah* community has often been associated with exponents of HTI, *salafiy* and *wahhabiy* ideologies (Zaenuri & Yusuf 2019). While confrontational and repressive tactics have been employed, albeit currently seemingly mild and conducive because of state power and authority, it is important to note that they are not inactive or inert. The forces aligned with the pro-caliphate and radical ideologies persistently market their ideas through subtly different patterns and presentations. In fact, certain factions within the *hijrah* community have evolved institutionally, penetrating education and Quranic memorisation institutions to establish their authority.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah da'wah* movement, previously known as a traditional preaching movement, is undergoing a departure from its conventional trajectory. Historically, this movement was primarily directed towards rural communities and the elderly, with minimal utilisation of contemporary media. However, recent developments indicate a shift in its target audience and approach. This transformation is evident in the changing preferences of the millennial generation and urban society.

Formerly, millennials and urban communities were associated with the upper-middle-class demographic, more inclined towards modernist *da'wah* movements, the *hijrah* community and even transnational preaching movements. These newer movements leverage social media, information technology and modern approaches to disseminate religious messages. In this context, the ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah da'wah* movement encounters challenges in maintaining its relevance. To remain pertinent, it necessitates adapting to evolving social trends and behavioural patterns.

A critical aspect to consider is the utilisation of contemporary media and a more inclusive approach to reach the millennial generation. In response to these challenges, the ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah da'wah* movement can broaden its reach through social media, digital platforms and engaging content. By adopting an open and inclusive approach, the movement can capture the attention and involvement of millennials who previously held limited engagement with it. Moreover, it is crucial for the movement to reinforce religious education and enlightenment that aligns with the needs and interests of millennials. This can be accomplished by offering educational programs that intertwine religious values with the context of modern life. Changes in societal patterns and preferences are inherent in any religious movement. Consequently, the ASWAJA *al-Nahdhiyah da'wah* movement must continuously adapt and devise new strategies to uphold its existence amidst the ever-evolving social and cultural landscape. This ensures its continued relevance and effectiveness in disseminating religious values across various strata of society, including millennials and urban communities. However, this study is limited by its methodological aspects, as it solely relies on online media information and reports. Further research is warranted to delve deeper into the perspectives of actors and respondents through a more comprehensive qualitative approach.

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Authors' contributions

U.H. conceived and designed the experiments, analysed the data and wrote the manuscript. K.A. conducted experiments, collected data and contributed to data analysis and interpretation. M.M. assisted with data collection, conducted literature review and contributed to manuscript preparation.

Ethical considerations

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Data availability

The data supporting the findings of this study are available within the article and here: <https://www.slideshare.net/IsmailFahmi3/religious-moderation>.

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