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**THE PHENOMENA OF SOCIAL MEDIA INTERACTION  
ON GLOBAL MUSLIM IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION****Muhammad Baiqun Isbahi**

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**Abstract:** The growth interaction of social media has become a global phenomenon. Recently, the usage of the internet worldwide has led to the popularity of social network sites. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube are the common websites shaped cooperative structures wherein the human digital crowd is encouraged proactively. The increasing interest in this means of communication technology has significant impacts on the social landscapes of global affairs and physical social life. Both of these factors make people play certain characters in the social arena. The Social Network is gaining more and more importance in today's world and has a deeper impact on society as to the traditional media. Social media enables identity expression, exploration, and experimentation; something natural for the human experience. It is the agencies in real life, which provide a source of names for different sectors, that inspire the internet communities and the interactions they make within themselves. It is essential to comprehend the motives of agencies to have an understanding of the group interactions on social platforms. However, (Especially,) the perception of global Muslim worldviews are being challenged by these means of the information revolution. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to examine practical aspects of social media interaction on the global Muslim identity construction. Global Muslims is viewed on the existing relationship and critics of their civilization are also made in this work. Qualitative method is applied in conducting the work which enables authors to arrive at indisputable logical facts.

**Keyword:** Social media, interaction, global muslim, identity construction.

**Abstrak:** Interaksi pertumbuhan media sosial telah menjadi fenomena global. Baru-baru ini, penggunaan internet di seluruh dunia telah menyebabkan popularitas situs jejaring sosial. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, dan YouTube adalah situs web umum berbentuk struktur kooperatif di mana kerumunan digital manusia didorong secara proaktif. Meningkatnya minat pada alat teknologi komunikasi ini memiliki dampak signifikan pada lanskap sosial dari urusan global dan kehidupan sosial fisik. Kedua faktor ini membuat orang memainkan karakter tertentu di arena sosial. Jejaring Sosial semakin penting di dunia saat ini dan memiliki dampak yang lebih dalam pada masyarakat dibandingkan dengan media tradisional. Media sosial memungkinkan ekspresi identitas, eksplorasi, dan eksperimen; sesuatu yang alami untuk pengalaman manusia. Agen-agen dalam kehidupan nyata, yang menyediakan sumber nama untuk berbagai sektor, yang menginspirasi komunitas internet dan interaksi yang mereka lakukan dalam diri mereka sendiri. Sangat penting untuk memahami motif lembaga untuk memiliki pemahaman tentang interaksi kelompok di platform sosial. Namun, (Terutama,) persepsi pandangan dunia Muslim global ditantang oleh revolusi informasi ini. Oleh karena itu, tujuan dari makalah ini adalah untuk menguji aspek-aspek praktis dari interaksi media sosial pada konstruksi identitas Muslim

global. Muslim global dipandang pada hubungan yang ada dan kritik peradaban mereka juga dibuat dalam karya ini. Metode kualitatif diterapkan dalam melakukan pekerjaan yang memungkinkan penulis untuk sampai pada fakta logis yang tak terbantahkan.

**Kata Kunci:** Media sosial, interaksi, muslim global, konstruksi identitas.

## A. Background

The last twenty-five years have seen the rapid transformation of (these) traditional media into new media which are predicated upon the use of digital technologies, such as the Internet and video games, advent of digital television, online publications, image manipulation software (like Adobe Photoshop and desktop publishing tools) and social network such as Facebook, Youtube, Instagram and micro blogging Twitter. The world has witnessed this powerful tool of the global mass media due to the recent advances in communication technology that supplement the old or traditional media with new means of information production and dissemination.<sup>626</sup>

Platforms where all digital/virtual users with internet access can share content, express opinions about a topic and where communication and interaction processes intensely take place without any time or place limitation are defined as social media. Via social media, users come together with other users and are included in the communication or interaction processes. They can help other users, receive help from other users, answer the questions of other users and receive replies to their questions from other users. In this aspect, social media is one of the platforms where communication and interaction are most intensely experienced.

Social media allows its users to establish contact with publicly known or unknown users to share a content, which the user likes, with other users. However, it should be kept in mind that Media and Information technology plays an indispensable role in disseminating news and educating on issues relating to social, economic, political and religious concerns. Generally, the impacts of media are many and diverse, some are realized in short term while others are uncovered after a long period; the effect is which can either be short- or long-term, depending on the genre of (news and) information being disseminated. Social media is regarded as a powerful public relations mechanism as it affects many facets of lives.

More recently, new means in media in a contemporary society of global Muslims is more significant and topical than ever. In spite of the advent of internet means of communication that have helped to bridge the distances and tear all sorts of walls of ignorance and prejudice; it has been, however, found wanton for portraying erroneous information, one-sided images and misrepresent the Islamic world and the Islamic world in the West.<sup>627</sup>

Various researches have been conducted regarding global Muslim and the use of new media in teaching and learning but little study has been carried out regarding the phenomena of social media interaction on global Muslim identity construction designed means in media technologies on the Islamic world and the Islamic world in the West. Thus, the present paper is an attempt to provide useful information at understanding the phenomena of social media interaction on global Muslim identity construction as vehicles for image building and interaction between the Islamic world and the Islamic world in the West. Social communication platforms or social networks allow people to share their photographs and events with friends and to follow profiles and events of their friends by creating a digital identity.

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<sup>626</sup> Faatin. and K.H. Mujabeen, . Global media, Islamophobia and its impacts on conflict resolution, Working Group: Islam and media, institute of Hazrat Mohammad, Dhaka Bangladesh. 2005

<sup>627</sup>. Hafez Kai, The west and islam in the mass media: Cornerstones for a new international culture of communications in the 21st century. Center for European Integration Studies, Discussion Paper. 2000, pp:1-23.

## B. Methodology

The main purpose of this study is to develop a framework for understanding and analyzing social media interaction as an autonomous social structure in which to construct global Muslim identity. This study used qualitative method in conducting the work which enables authors to arrive at undisputable logical facts. This study also explores practical aspects of global Muslim identity construction, relating to issues virtual communities and social media. It also analyzes the probable reasons that individuals feel the need to create a virtual identity for themselves as well as "the spiral of transformation", that is, the creation period goes ahead of the internet to reach the real life. This study also aims at concentrating on the virtual communities appearing in the social networks interaction while questioning their social and cultural qualities and values.

## C. Result and Discussion

### 1. The Concept of Social Media and Social Networks

The structural advantages and advanced applications of new communication technologies offer an environment of freedom and ease content customization. There is a stark contrast between the forced consumption style and feeling of restriction presented to the audience by traditional media and the feeling of comfort and freedom presented to the new media audience. As a result of the interaction between technical infrastructure and communication concepts, information has become easily transmittable to wide communities; currently, people can access needed information without the delay that would be experienced with traditional communication systems.<sup>628</sup>

Modern-day communication systems quantitatively and qualitatively resemble each other. Watching TV on portable devices or online surfing on a fixed TV at home have mostly become routine. However, integration of new communication systems with one another shapes communication processes and enables communication in the light of personal necessity and desires.<sup>629</sup> The "new" term used in the new communication technologies is preferred because it has undergone a transformation. When the "new" term is evaluated in respect to communication systems, a newly generated system benefits from the previous system. The fact that new communication systems establish communication and interaction in a way that can be alternative to the former communication system is the basis of communication technologies of our age.<sup>630</sup>

According to Erdem<sup>631</sup>, "emerging of the new communication technologies was interpreted as a revolution, this revolution also brought about a social revolution. Claims of that all people in the world are linked each other via a virtual channel and freedom of communication, participation, development and democratization claims are also in the world's agenda." While creating alternative communication systems, previous communication systems should not be ignored; new systems should include attributes that improve both mass and personal communication. In regards to data transfer time, data transfer volume, place and date storage features, channels used in new communication technologies provide ease of use.<sup>632</sup>

<sup>628</sup> Karasar. "New Communication Technologies in Education: Internet and Virtual Higher Education", The Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology, 3(4), (2004) 117-125.

<sup>629</sup> Karacor, "New Communication Technologies, Political Participation, Democracy", Manisa: Celal Bayar University The Journal of Management and Economy, 16(2), (2009) 121-131.

<sup>630</sup> Vural, B. A. & Bat, M.: "Social Media As a New Communication Environment: A Research on Ege University Faculty of Communication", Journal of Yasar University, 20(5), (2010) 3348-3382

<sup>631</sup> Erdem, B.K. (2012): "Rhizome of the New World Order: The Arabs and Social Media", All of Us Global, All of Us Local from Gutenberg Galaxy to Zuckerberg Galaxy, ed. by Edibe Sözen, Istanbul: Alfa Publications, 165187.

<sup>632</sup> Calik, D. (2012): "New Communication Technologies and the Reflections on the Organizational Communication", Paper presented at 17. The Conference Internet in Turkey, 7-9 November 2012 Eskisehir Anadolu University, Retrieved at August 5, 2016 from <http://inet-tr.org.tr/inetconf17/bildiri/17.pdf>, 1-9.

Media presents a virtual framework for all individuals within a society to live within and brings this framework into the forefront as a settlement location. In other words, it creates an influence area within which an item which does not have an appearance in the media has no chance to make its presence felt.<sup>633</sup> Social communication platforms are one of today's most important issues due to the fact that users share their opinions, emotions and thoughts without having to practice any censorship or restraint and within which contents are created by users. Therefore, both organizations and non-professional users look for people who have common emotions, thoughts and opinions with themselves by sharing on social communication platforms, becoming an active power by constituting a community with like-minded users.

Social communities are communication platforms where people share online their common tendencies with acquaintances and interact with their acquaintances. Social communities allow people to create a profile and share their own photographs and events with their friends and to follow profiles and events of their friends. "Rapid development experienced in communication technologies brings every culture of the world closer each other. As a result of this, interaction of every culture of the world with other culture has increased".<sup>634</sup>

It can be said that social networks will become a form of media in the future. It has been estimated that in the face of ease of content selection and production of social media, traditional media cannot stand in the long term, although it should persist in the short and medium term. Although social media has unique rules, it is a fact that its deep-rooted principles have not yet been established. It can be thought that in the next time periods, at least in the medium term, it will undergo fundamental changes. With these changes, there are sufficient reasons to believe that social media, which is fully developed in terms of new income sources and sourcing, will be more powerful against the traditional media and will reshape all communication channels.

## 2. Virtual Socialization and Virtual Communities

It is possible to regard effective communication as belonging to a group, a nature of remaining a part of a group. In this framework, people fulfill their socialization functions when they perform actions such as confirming known things, liking or disliking posts, and even making comments about them and reacting to other comments. The most preferred action is likely to upload interesting photographs or videos that are not known by others given that new media viewership has rapidly taken the place of TV and other viewership.

The necessity of people to watch one another has switched to what other people are doing on their mobile phones rather than reading signs, advertisements, posters or other people's newspapers. In other words, everyone is under watch now. Consider that you are traveling with an audience, always checking others to see whether they are playing a game, messaging or watching a movie during a bus trip or even while getting on or off the tramway. Moreover, observing what other people are doing causes attitude, opinion and behavior changes. Therefore, the same audience finds social network messages more appealing than traditional media.

Daniel<sup>635</sup> claimed that there was an unprecedented rise in the number of internet communities in the twenty-first century, which shows that people strongly wish to socialize, share things, play games and work together regardless of time, space or the distance between them. A number of platforms including Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, Blogs, Wikis and LinkedIn have a growing popularity as an assistance for everyday activities. It is the social systems that shape the conventional ways of studying, and the integration of the modern technologies into our lives has demonstrated that some of these ways are insufficient to have an insight about the lives of people with social and cultural dimensions. There is need for scientific methods and

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<sup>633</sup>. Gunduz, U.(2013): "Social Movements, Civil Disobedience and The Reflections of Social Media", Büyükaslan, A. & Kirik A. M. (ed), Researches on Social Media-1: Socializing Person, Konya: Cizgi Publishing, 133154.

<sup>634</sup>. *ibid* page 5

<sup>635</sup>. Daniel, Ben Kei (2011): Handbook of Research on Methods and Techniques for Studying Virtual Communities: Paradigms and Phenomena Vol.1, USA: Information Science Reference.

perspectives to comprehend internet communities now that the virtual groups and happenings within the technologies became obvious. It is vital to have this understanding to generate beneficial information systems with no weaknesses as well as new tools and effective procedures. It will also help us maintain more meaningful interactions on the internet without any dangers yet with more fun instead.

Virtual environments are digital platforms where people establish communication with each other and give support to produced content on online platforms. In virtual environments, people are included in a common area whenever they want. People create a profile that represents themselves and are in interaction with others aurally or in written form. Thanks to virtual environments, people can form groups of all sizes. Although virtual environments are specified as virtual, the environment where they take place and the communication in that environment are real-time. Social interaction is becoming very easy thanks to virtual environments.

Virtual communities whose existence is primarily online, as opposed to physical world communities who conduct some but not all of their activities offline, are at a disadvantage in that there is little in the network or in network technology as currently constituted that encourages commitment. There are few "no exit" relationships in cyberspace, and the term "surfing the net" is an apt descriptor of the depth of much online activity.<sup>636</sup>

In communication processes, internet use allows people to establish interaction by ignoring voice, image and biological and social gender for the first time. Users can establish an identity for themselves by creating any profile that they want and can freely share any information.<sup>637</sup> In virtual environments, a user can establish an interaction with another user that they do not know without using his/her identity or by hiding or changing his/her gender or social status. Communication processes in virtual environments are carried out using fictionalized profiles.<sup>638</sup>

### 3. Social Media and Global Muslim Virtual Identity Construction

The individual needs others to establish himself/herself. The self or identity has a psychological dimension such as feeling the self as a part of a greater body, sense of security, belonging to a social, emotional, political body or community with affective bonds of solidarity. The self or identity has a psychological dimension such as feeling the self as a part of a greater body, sense of security, belonging to a social, emotional, political body or community with affective bonds of solidarity. Identities also bring diversity: Each new identity has its compatibilities and incompatibilities. Each new layer of communication seems to require a different identity; each new grouping will blur or clarify, depending upon the others in the communication. Virtual networks create diversity in society, so reflexive society creates reflexive identities. The risk of stereotyping also impacts, and there will be many identities resembling each other in the same community.<sup>639</sup>

<sup>636</sup> McLaughlin M. L, Osborne K. K. & Ellison N. B.: "Virtual Community in a Telepresence Environment", *Virtual Culture Identity and Communication in Cybersociety*, ed. by Steven G. Jones, U.K: Sage Publications, (2011) 146-168.

<sup>637</sup> Boyd, D. & Ellison, N.(2008): "Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship", *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*, 13(1), 210-230

<sup>638</sup> Otrar, M. & Argin, F. S. (2014): "The Examination of the Students' Attitudes Towards Social Media within the Context of Habits" *Journal of Research in Education and Teaching*, 3(3), 1-13.

<sup>639</sup> Gunduz. & Pembecioglu, N: "The Role of Social Media in the Sharing and Delivery of Authoritative and Governmental Issues", *European Journal of Research on Education*, Special Issue: Contemporary Studies in Social Science (2014)



Digital identity is attitude norms that are blended with technology. Digital identity includes displaying ethical and appropriate attitude while using electronic environments and receiving information about using electronic environments.<sup>640</sup>

Digital identity should make an impression that can criticize, has an idea about ethical results of initiatives conducted in interactive environments, can establish an ethical interaction, and does not abuse informatics, virtual environment and social media while using electronic interaction tools and environments. It is expected that a user with a digital identity act ethically and collaboratively when establishing interactions in virtual platforms.<sup>641</sup> To clarify digital identity, it is helpful to present its dimensions.

Digital trade and communication dimensions aim to provide competence and technological infrastructure for performing commercial activities in virtual environments. Digital communication has added a new dimension to communication processes and highlights the importance of interactive environments. Digital communication methods such as electronic mail, mobile communication instruments, and instant messaging systems have added a new dimension to personal and community interaction.

In today's technological world, the term "Islam" refers to a religion that finds diverse cultural expression around the world and "Muslim world" denotes both Muslim majority countries and a transnational Muslim community that includes growing minorities within Western and other countries. What binds a diverse Muslim world together is a shared religious identity based on monotheism, the prophet hood of Muhammad, and the revelation of the Qur'an. Based on this definition, the West, Islam, and the Muslim world are not mutually exclusive categories as the Muslims who live in Western countries are Western Muslims while non-Muslims in Muslim majority countries are part of the Muslim world, even though they may not be identified with its religious tradition.<sup>642</sup> True, the Muslim and the Western world have interacted in a myriad of ways down the centuries.<sup>643</sup> The relationship between the West and the Muslim world is a critical dynamic in today's world. Despite the fact that all our authentic religious traditions uphold the value of peace, and history has revealed it is quite possible to live with a diversity of cultures and religions, yet this state of affairs is being challenged as the West and Islam have had difficult times with each other over the past 1300 years. The factors creating tension, doubt and misunderstanding are many and varied and represent the forces that shape and measure the interactions between the two civilizations.<sup>644</sup>

To mention the concept of digital ethics; users should not ignore the fact that an attitude presented or a transaction executed in the internet environment also have an electronic standard. Although internet and social media are virtual users' attitudes and transactions should not have the intention to harm the rights and interests of others. Harming of rights and interests of others in the virtual environment is commonly manifested as bullying or defamation and similar cases. Legal arrangements are an irrevocable part of social life. Digital law includes liability of transactions executed in the internet environment in terms of digital identity. These transactions are subjected to particular punishments according to laws and regulations. The liability of transactions executed in the internet environment in terms of digital identity means that making

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<sup>640</sup>. Ozkan, N. P.(2013): "The Identity Construction Process of Social Networking Users in E-Socializing Processing", Paper presented at the II. International Conference on Communication, Media, Technology and Design, 2-4 May 2013, Famagusta North Cyprus, 386-391.

<sup>641</sup>. Ozel, A. P. & Sert, N.Y.(2014): "Corporate Blogs as a Tool of Digital Public R

<sup>642</sup>. John, J.D., 2008. Islam and the west: Annual report on the state of dialogue. World Economic Forum. pp: 5-10.

<sup>643</sup>. Lewis, P., 1994. Islamic Britain: Religious, politics and identity among the British Muslims, New York. pp:11-13.

<sup>644</sup>. Mehmet, 1994. Islam and the west: Can the Turkey bridge the gap. The Futures, 26(8): 811-829. and Lord, C., 2008. Islam and the west: Annual report on the state of dialogue. World Economic Forum. pp: 20-30.

banned broadcasts, promoting or selling a product of which sale is prohibited by law, thematic broadcasts encouraging to suicide and activities are subject to penal sanction.

Digital rights and liabilities can be evaluated in the following context: Although there are some limitations on the internet environment, the basis of this is a dynamic built on the fact that people express themselves freely. In the internet environment, people have rights and liabilities for expressing themselves freely. These rights and liabilities include some processes such as expressing an opinion on social media, forums or groups, or holding a discussion about a topic.

When the answer of the question 'What is digital health?' is being sought, it is possible to find the following result: People should be aware that there can be some factors in the internet environment that physically, mentally or spiritually affect health directly or indirectly. These effects include visual health, stress, introversion, and physical problems.

In the face of present-day technological developments, the importance of the security concept has appeared. Taking measures that protect user's personal security in the internet environment are evaluated within the scope of digital security dimension. Users should not share their password information with others on blogs, microblogs and similar platforms where users register on social media and virtual environments. Additionally, users should not open e-mails that come from unknown sources. It is quite easy to steal personal information via viruses uploaded to e-mails that come from unreliable sources. The first measure to be taken is to not share password information with others. The second important measure is to use a licensed anti-virus service.<sup>645</sup> When it comes to creation and acquisition of digital identity, digital identities are certifications of users in one respect. They confirm and allow the recipient to certify that an e-mail was really sent by you. Like identity cards used in daily life, a digital identity is also used to introduce oneself to others. Digital identity prevents another user from taking one's place and acting as this person, establishing communication and interaction on behalf of this person. In many organizations, members are assigned a digital identity by an information system technician. For personal use, it is necessary to get a digital identity from a certificate manager.<sup>646</sup>

In today's social media world, concepts such as digital tagging and social bookmarking have gained importance. Tagging is used for both real and digital applications. Digital tagging provides information about the content and gives connection to a particular user, a web site or a place regarding visual or other types of media sharing. Digital tagging is used to determine which users are included in an image shared or to inform about the image or content shared.<sup>647</sup>

In short, it is possible to state that social media is a communication stage where people opposing the system and people dominating the system come together. Therefore, "social media belongs to a cyber-world that real and virtual, real and story, real and lie have intertwined each other".<sup>648</sup>

Social media is regarded as having unique language and oratory culture. It has been observed that oratory tradition, which is a holdover from days when oratory arts were dominant and writing was not yet widely used, still influences written culture. *"Oratory is an art of public speaking, delivering a speech in front of an audience. It has two aims including to persuade and to explain"*.<sup>649</sup> Politicians, artists, and opinion leaders can write long posts by splitting them into numbered parts. Tweets can be shared with determining numbers (1-2-3...) and can reach the masses. This can be regarded as a continuation of the oratory tradition. Social media allows its users to establish contact with publicly known or unknown other users, to share favored content with other users. However, it should be kept in mind that other users can see information shared

<sup>645</sup>. Ozel, A. P.(2011): "Social Media and Trust: An Empirical Research Directed to Government, Non-Governmental Organizations and Business, Academic Journal of Information Technology, 7(2), 1-31.

<sup>646</sup>. Ibid page 8

<sup>647</sup>. Balaman, F. & Karatas, A. (2012): "The Usage Purpose of Social Network Sites of High School Students and Social Network Elements", Batman University Journal of Life Sciences, 1(1), 497-504

<sup>648</sup>. Ibid page 6

<sup>649</sup>. Ong, J. W.(2012): Orality and Literacy, Technologizing of the World, trans. by Sema Postacioglu Banon, Istanbul: Metis Publishing.

via social media. Nowadays, social media being in the public eye has become an indispensable fact for everyone, famous or not.

#### **D. Conclusion**

In the light of above discussion, as a result, social media is a magic wand that determines structure of the society, forms a basis for polarizations and dissolutions and also ensures mergers and agreements. The Big Brother concept in George Orwell's novel Nineteen Eighty-Four is now valid for everyone and has caused a panoptic on in that everyone observes everyone. In this platform, each person can replicate hundreds of times and will continue to replicate in the expectation that this replication will provide a kind of happiness while their reflections move away from their realities. On one hand social media allows people to express themselves, on the other hand it takes their believability and reliabilities away, trivializes them by objectifying. "Mainstream media" can be formed within the frame of social media in one sense. Although this situation appears as if it has emerged by itself, attractiveness of the like button, a profile of friend/follower list that forces participation lead people to become such that he/she has to plan all actions to be performed with a feeling of being kept under close watch continually.

The paper sums that the emergence of new means in media technologies and their role as a change agent has led to shape a new phase of negative relation between the Muslims and the West. The use of new resources in media technology such as Facebook, Twitters and You tube as a communication tools to disseminate information has been very significant in both worlds. Especially, the success of this communication revolution is beginning to change the perception of the global Muslim in Western counterpart as the news and mass media are no longer able to dominate and manipulate public opinion as their identity and as they could in the past simply the world has aware about the reportage and the prejudices inherent with the fillers and respondents.

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