Representing Arab-Indonesian identity: Language and cultural narratives on social media

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ABSTRACT

This study explores how Arab-Indonesian identity is represented and negotiated on social media platforms, focusing on Instagram and Facebook, through the lens of Critical Discourse Analysis. Arab-Indonesians, descendants of Hadhrami migrants, embody a hybrid identity that merges Arabic heritage with Indonesian cultural elements. The research examines how linguistic and cultural strategies, including Arabic loanwords, bilingual code-switching, religious hashtags, and visual symbols such as traditional attire, calligraphy, and cultural practices, are used to articulate identity in digital spaces. Findings highlight the strategic use of Arabic phrases such as *Alhamdulillah* (praise be to God) and *InshaAllah* (God willing) alongside Indonesian language, reflecting linguistic hybridity and cultural pride. Code-switching between Arabic and Indonesian in captions and comments serves as a dynamic tool for expressing dual cultural affiliations. Additionally, hashtags such as #ArabIndonesian and #TradisiArab amplify representation and foster community solidarity. Visual elements like *jubah* and *abaya*, Arabic calligraphy, and depictions of cultural celebrations reaffirm cultural heritage and assert identity in Indonesia's multicultural society. Social media enables Arab-Indonesians to navigate cultural hybridity, balancing the preservation of Arabic traditions with integration into Indonesian contexts. These platforms also provide opportunities to challenge stereotypes, share positive narratives, and enhance cultural visibility. This study contributes to the understanding of hybrid identities, demonstrating how digital platforms facilitate the interplay between language, culture, and technology in identity construction. The research, however, has limitations. It focuses exclusively on Instagram and Facebook, excluding other platforms like YouTube or TikTok, and relies on publicly accessible content, potentially missing private community discussions. Future studies could explore audience responses and extend the scope to other digital and offline spaces, offering a more holistic understanding of Arab-Indonesian identity representation.

Keywords: Arab-Indonesian identity; Critical Discourse Analysis; digital representation; social media;

INTRODUCTION

The Arab-Indonesian community, primarily descendants of Hadhrami migrants from Yemen, has significantly influenced Indonesia's cultural and sociolinguistic landscape. The Hadhrami migration, which began centuries ago, led to the establishment of vibrant Arab-Indonesian communities that have seamlessly integrated into Indonesian society while preserving distinct cultural and religious practices (Amaruli et al., 2021; Prayogi & Al-Asyari, 2021).

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This integration is evident in various aspects of Indonesian culture, including language, cuisine, dress, and architecture, reflecting a rich tapestry of cultural exchange and adaptation (Husein, 2021; Nurish, 2024).

In the digital age, social media platforms have become pivotal arenas for identity construction and cultural representation (Li et al., 2024). They offer individuals and communities the tools to present, negotiate, and perform their identities in a globalized virtual space (Scarcelli & Farci, 2024). For Arab-Indonesians, platforms like Facebook and Instagram serve as modern stages where cultural narratives are expressed and shared, facilitating both the preservation of heritage and the negotiation of hybrid identities (Mandal, 2024, pp. 36-53). The dynamic and interactive nature of social media allows for continuous engagement with both local and global audiences, fostering a sense of community and belonging (Pérez-Torres, 2024).

Language plays a crucial role in this online identity construction (Wang, 2024, p. 51). The interplay between Arabic and Indonesian languages in social media content reflects the dual heritage of Arab-Indonesians. Arabic loanwords and religious phrases are often interwoven with Indonesian text, symbolizing religious devotion and cultural pride. This linguistic blending not only reinforces group identity but also showcases the community's adaptability and integration within the broader Indonesian society (Adoui, 2023). Such practices highlight the community's efforts to maintain cultural distinctiveness while embracing the linguistic norms of their Indonesian environment (Mazya et al., 2024).

Studies have highlighted the significant influence of Arabic on the Indonesian language, particularly within Islamic discourse. The incorporation of Arabic terms into Indonesian has enriched the language, especially in religious contexts, where Arabic phrases are commonly used in prayers, greetings, and expressions of faith (Anzalman et al., 2024; Fuadi et al., 2023; Ilma & Rohmah, 2024). This linguistic integration reflects the deep-rooted presence of Arab culture in Indonesia and underscores the role of language as a vehicle for cultural transmission and identity formation. The prevalence of Arabic loanwords in everyday Indonesian speech serves as a testament to the historical and ongoing interactions between the two cultures (Qodim et al., 2022; Suri et al., 2020).

Social media platforms have emerged as significant sites for performing cultural identities, fostering representation, and negotiating cultural hybridity (Balogun & Aruoture, 2024). For the Arab-Indonesian community, these platforms provide opportunities to showcase cultural practices, share experiences, and engage in dialogues that reinforce their unique identity (Rijal, 2020). Through the sharing of cultural content, such as traditional music, dance, culinary arts, and religious practices, Arab-Indonesians can assert their presence within the digital landscape, challenge stereotypes, and educate others about their heritage (Mandal 2024, see also Millie & Baulch, 2024 for the discussion on broader context). This digital engagement facilitates a dynamic process of identity negotiation, where traditional cultural elements are reinterpreted and integrated within the contemporary Indonesian context (Pérez-Torres, 2024).

Despite the rich cultural tapestry and active online presence of Arab-Indonesians, there remains a paucity of research focusing specifically on how this community utilizes social media for identity construction. Existing studies on digital identity often overlook the nuanced experiences of Arab-Indonesians, resulting in a gap in the literature. Addressing this gap is essential for a comprehensive understanding of the ways in which marginalized or hybrid communities navigate and negotiate their identities in the digital age. Such study can provide valuable insights into the broader processes of cultural preservation, adaptation, and transformation in an increasingly interconnected world (Pérez-Torres, 2024).

While prior studies have extensively explored digital identity among various cultural groups, there remains a notable gap concerning the Arab-Indonesian community. Study focusing specifically on how Arab-Indonesians utilize social media to represent their identity is limited, particularly in understanding the sociocultural dynamics that influence identity construction. As Amsariah et al. (2024) point out, Arab-Indonesians often rely on a blend of cultural and religious symbols to express their unique heritage, but these efforts remain understudied in the context of digital spaces. Addressing this gap is critical, as the Arab-Indonesian community embodies a distinctive intersection of Arab heritage and Indonesian culture, forming a hybrid identity that warrants further exploration.

Language is a key component in this identity construction, especially in online platforms like Instagram and Facebook (Aazam et al., 2024; Dubravac & Skopljak, 2020). The interplay between Arabic and Indonesian languages is reflective of Arab-Indonesians' dual heritage, where Arabic loanwords and religious phrases are often interwoven with Indonesian text. As Millie and Baulch (2023) suggest, language in digital spaces not only communicates meaning but also acts as a powerful marker of identity, enabling users to assert cultural pride while engaging with a diverse audience. Similarly, cultural symbols such as traditional clothing, calligraphy, and religious practices feature prominently in the digital narratives of Arab-Indonesians, providing visual reinforcement of their cultural identity (Li et al., 2024).

Social media platforms have emerged as crucial sites for performing cultural identities, fostering representation, and negotiating hybridity (see Conti, 2025). These platforms allow marginalized or hybrid communities, such as Arab-Indonesians, to articulate their identities while navigating external stereotypes and internal reflections. According to Stamou (2018), social media offers a dynamic and interactive space where cultural practices are reinterpreted and shared, fostering a sense of belonging and visibility. However, while these dynamics have been explored in broader cultural contexts, little attention has been given to how Arab-Indonesians use language and cultural symbols to construct their identities in digital spaces.

This lack of studies highlights the need for a comprehensive linguistic and cultural study that examines both textual and visual narratives shared on social media. By addressing this gap, the study try to illuminate the strategies Arab-Indonesians employ to navigate their hybrid identity in the digital realm, balancing the preservation of cultural heritage with contemporary Indonesian society. Such an investigation is crucial for understanding how communities use digital platforms not only to maintain their traditions but also to adapt and respond to changing cultural and societal dynamics.

This study aims to (1) examine how Arab-Indonesians represent their identity through language and cultural practices on Instagram and Facebook, utilizing Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework; (2) analyze the linguistic features present in textual and visual narratives, including the use of Arabic loanwords, bilingual practices, and the incorporation of cultural symbols such as clothing, calligraphy, and traditions; and (3) explore how Arab-Indonesian identity is constructed, negotiated, and hybridized within the broader sociocultural context through the production and consumption of social media content.

This study is expected to hold significance in several areas. Firstly, it can contribute to the application of Fairclough's CDA in understanding how linguistic and cultural identities are shaped and represented in digital spaces, offering a methodological framework for similar studies (Wahyuni et al., 2024). The study provides a detailed exploration of how textual and discursive practices, such as captions, hashtags, and comments, intersect with social practices, including cultural heritage and hybrid identity, in constructing Arab-Indonesian identity (Zotzmann & O'Regan, 2016). By focusing on the specific case of Arab-Indonesians, a group often overlooked in digital identity studies, the study expands the field of sociolinguistics and cultural studies, highlighting the diversity of identity construction processes (Nisa, 2017). The findings offer insights into how

marginalized or hybrid communities leverage social media as platforms for cultural preservation, negotiation, and visibility, informing strategies for digital engagement and community building (Stamou, 2018).

METHOD
Research Design
This study adopts a qualitative research design, employing Fairclough's (1995; 2013) CDA framework to investigate how Arab-Indonesian identity is represented through language and culture on Instagram and Facebook. CDA is a well-established approach that examines the relationship between language, power, and society, making it particularly suitable for analyzing identity construction in digital spaces (Cunneen & Rieder, 2024). As Fairclough (2013) emphasizes, discourse is not only a reflection of social reality but also a means of shaping and reproducing it. By focusing on social media content, this study explores how Arab-Indonesians articulate their hybrid identities and negotiate cultural norms in a highly mediated environment.

Fairclough's Three-Dimensional Framework forms the analytical foundation of this study. The first dimension, text analysis, involves a detailed examination of linguistic features, including word choice, tone, and syntax, to uncover underlying ideologies embedded in the language used on social media platforms. For example, Arabic loanwords and bilingual expressions often function as markers of both religious devotion and cultural heritage. Such linguistic choices in Instagram captions are powerful tools for articulating Islamic and cultural identities among Indonesian users, reflecting the unique sociolinguistic practices of Arab-Indonesians (Rahman et al., 2021).

The second dimension, discursive practice, focuses on the production, distribution, and consumption of social media content (KhosraviNik, 2022). By examining how posts are authored, shared, and engaged with by audiences, this dimension sheds light on how cultural narratives are negotiated in digital spaces. Social media interactions are inherently dialogic, involving active participation from users who co-construct meaning through their comments, likes, and shares (Tereszkiewicz, 2024). This study applies these insights to understand how Arab-Indonesian communities use Instagram and Facebook to engage with their audiences and reinforce their cultural visibility.

The third dimension, social practice, contextualizes the findings within broader sociocultural and ideological frameworks (Agyare, 2024). Social media posts often reflect deeper cultural negotiations (see Literat & Kligler-Vilenchik, 2021), as users balance their Arab

heritage with their Indonesian identity. Millie and Baulch (2023) argue that digital platforms allow marginalized groups to reassert their cultural pride while navigating the expectations of a diverse audience. This dimension helps explain how Arab-Indonesians use social media not only to preserve their traditions but also to adapt to Indonesia's multicultural society.

Data Collection

Data for this study were collected from Instagram and Facebook, two of the most popular social media platforms among Arab-Indonesian communities. These platforms provide a rich source of multimodal content, including text, images, and user interactions, making them ideal for analyzing identity representation. As Rahman et al. (2021) note, Instagram is particularly effective for showcasing visual and textual narratives, as its focus on captions and hashtags allows users to embed linguistic markers and cultural symbols. Similarly, Facebook's community-oriented features enable users to engage in collective identity expressions through public groups, shared posts, and discussions.

In line with ethical research practices, only publicly available data was collected. This included statuses, comments, and posts that were made public by users on their profiles or in public groups, ensuring transparency and respect for user privacy. No private or restricted content was accessed or used. Consent was not required, as all content was publicly available and not behind privacy settings (i.e., posts shared with a restricted audience were excluded). In addition, care was taken to anonymize any personal information that could potentially identify individual users, ensuring that the data remained aggregated and did not violate privacy rights. Data were collected from posts and comments made within the year of 2023 (from January 1st to Dec 31st), providing a contemporary snapshot of identity representation in the Arab-Indonesian community.

To ensure the relevance and richness of the data, a purposeful sampling strategy was employed. This approach allowed the selection of posts that explicitly featured elements of Arab-Indonesian identity, such as the use of Arabic loanwords, religious expressions, and cultural symbols. As Fairclough (1995) highlights, language choices in discourse are deeply tied to power dynamics and identity construction, making the inclusion of these linguistic elements essential for a comprehensive analysis. Additionally, posts were selected based on their audience engagement, with priority given to those with significant likes, shares, or comments, as this indicates their resonance within the community.

The data include both textual and visual elements. Textual data, such as Instagram captions and hashtags, as well as Facebook statuses and comments, were collected to analyze the linguistic strategies used to articulate identity. Visual data, including images depicting traditional Arab clothing, Arabic calligraphy, and cultural events, were also examined for their symbolic value. As Millie and Baulch (2023) assert, visual symbols often serve as powerful tools for reinforcing cultural narratives, particularly in the visually-driven context of social media. The time frame for data collection was limited to the past two years to capture recent trends in identity representation, ensuring that the findings reflect the contemporary practices of Arab-Indonesian communities.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the data collected from Instagram and Facebook will employ Fairclough's Three-Dimensional CDA framework. This approach provides a comprehensive method for analyzing the relationship between discourse and its sociocultural contexts. As Fairclough (1995) emphasizes, discourse operates as both a reflection of and a contributor to social reality, which makes CDA particularly effective for studying how Arab-Indonesians construct and negotiate their hybrid identities through digital communication.

The first stage of the framework, **Text Analysis**, focuses on identifying and describing linguistic patterns in social media posts. This involves examining the use of Arabic loanwords and phrases, such as *habib*, *barakallah*, and *inshaAllah*, which frequently appear in captions and comments to signify religious and cultural identity. These linguistic choices not only reinforce religious devotion but also serve as symbolic markers of identity, particularly among Indonesian Muslim communities engaging with broader audiences online (Rahman et al., 2021). Additionally, the analysis will consider instances of bilingual code-switching between Arabic and Indonesian, reflecting the hybrid nature of Arab-Indonesian identity. Purnomo et al. (2021) highlight that code-switching in digital communication often functions as a strategic tool to emphasize cultural pride while maintaining accessibility to a wider audience. Furthermore, stylistic features such as repetition, tone, and rhetorical emphasis in captions and statuses will be examined to uncover how language is used to evoke cultural values and emotional engagement.

The second stage, **Discursive Practice**, explores the production, distribution, and reception of social media content. This stage aims to understand how Arab-Indonesian cultural and linguistic identities are performed through captions, hashtags, and visual posts, as well as how these are interpreted by audiences. Millie and Baulch (2023) emphasize that social media interactions are inherently dialogic, with users co-constructing meaning through likes, comments, and shares. By

analyzing user interactions, this study will identify shared cultural meanings and patterns of engagement that highlight the community's collective identity-building efforts. For instance, posts featuring religious or cultural symbols often generate comments that reaffirm shared values, illustrating how identity representation is both individual and communal.

Finally, **Social Practice** situates the findings within broader sociocultural contexts. This stage examines how Arab-Indonesian identity is negotiated and represented in digital spaces, reflecting the interplay between tradition and modernity. As Nawas et al. (2023) suggest, digital media allows users to reimagine cultural heritage in ways that challenge stereotypes and assert agency over representation. The analysis will also consider how power relations are expressed in cultural narratives, exploring themes such as cultural pride, preservation, and adaptation. For example, the blending of Arabic and Indonesian traditions in visual posts often reflects a deliberate effort to assert hybrid identity, challenging homogenizing narratives of Arabness or Indonesianness.

By applying Fairclough's framework across these three stages, this study aims to provide a nuanced understanding of the linguistic and cultural strategies Arab-Indonesians employ in constructing and negotiating their identities in digital spaces. This approach highlights how discourse operates as a site of cultural production, negotiation, and transformation, particularly in the context of hybrid communities engaging with globalized digital platforms.

FINDINGS
Linguistic Strategies in Representing Arab-Indonesian Identity
Arab-Indonesian communities actively utilize social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook to express and negotiate their unique cultural identities. A key aspect of this digital representation involves specific linguistic strategies that blend Arabic and Indonesian elements, reflecting their rich heritage and contemporary societal integration.

Arabic Loanwords and Religious Phrases
The incorporation of Arabic loanwords and religious expressions is a prominent feature in the social media posts of Arab-Indonesians. Commonly used terms include *habib* (respected person), *barakallah* (blessings from Allah), *alhamdulillah* (praise to God), and *inshaAllah* (God willing). These expressions serve dual functions: they affirm the user's Islamic faith and underscore their Arab cultural heritage. For instance, a Facebook post showcasing a family gathering might read: *"Alhamdulillah untuk hari yang indah ini. Semoga berkah Allah selalu Bersama kita"* (*Alhamdulillah* for this beautiful day, may *barakallah* be with us

all). Such usage not only conveys gratitude but also subtly reinforces the individual's cultural identity (cf. Mol, 2022).

The prevalence of Arabic loanwords in Indonesian is well-documented, with many terms seamlessly integrated into daily communication (see Al-Jarf, 2021). This linguistic phenomenon reflects Indonesia's historical interactions with Arab traders and the subsequent spread of Islam. According to Van Dam (2010), the assimilation of Arabic vocabulary into Indonesian signifies deep-rooted cultural and religious connections. In the context of social media, the deliberate use of these loanwords allows Arab-Indonesians to maintain a connection to their ancestral roots while engaging with a broader Indonesian audience.

Code-Switching between Arabic and Indonesian
Another prevalent linguistic strategy is code-switching, where individuals alternate between Arabic and Indonesian within a single post or conversation. This practice reflects the hybrid identity of Arab-Indonesians, symbolizing their integration into Indonesian society while preserving their distinct cultural heritage. For example, an Instagram birthday message might state: "*Selamat ulang tahun, Habib. Semoga barokah dan sehat selalu ya!*" (Happy birthday, Habib. I hope [you have] *barokah* and always healthy!). Here, the Indonesian phrase for "happy birthday" is combined with the Arabic term *habib* and the expression *barakallah*, illustrating a seamless blend of languages.

Code-switching serves several communicative functions (Nazri & Kassim, 2023). It allows individuals to express solidarity and shared identity with their community, convey nuanced meanings that may not be fully captured by a single language, and navigate different cultural contexts. In online interactions, this practice can also signal group membership and reinforce social bonds. As Nordin (2024) notes, code-switching in social media contexts often reflects users' attempts to balance multiple cultural affiliations and linguistic repertoires.

Hashtag Usage
Hashtags are instrumental in amplifying identity representation on social media. Arab-Indonesians employ specific hashtags to categorize their content and connect with like-minded individuals. Tags such as #ArabIndonesian, #TradisiArab (Arab traditions), and #HabibStyle function as digital markers of identity, facilitating community building and cultural expression. Additionally, religious hashtags like #Alhamdulillah and #InshaAllah are frequently used to express gratitude and hope, reinforcing shared Islamic values.

The strategic use of hashtags enables users to participate in broader conversations and movements,

enhancing the visibility of their cultural narratives. By tagging posts with culturally specific identifiers, Arab-Indonesians can both celebrate their heritage and educate others about their traditions. This practice also aids in the preservation and dissemination of cultural knowledge within the digital sphere.

Data Examples

To illustrate these linguistic strategies, consider the following social media posts.

1. Instagram Post: A photo of a traditional Arab-Indonesian wedding ceremony with the caption: "*Alhamdulillah, hari ini penuh berkah.* #TradisiArab #ArabIndonesian" (Alhamdulillah, today is full of blessings).
2. Facebook Status: "*InshaAllah, besok kita akan mengadakan pengajian di rumah. Semua dipersilakan hadir.* #InshaAllah #Pengajian" (InshaAllah, tomorrow we will hold a religious study at home. Everyone is welcome to attend).
3. Instagram Story: A short video of cooking traditional Middle Eastern cuisine with the overlay text: "*Mencoba resep baru hari ini, semoga hasilnya ajib!* #HabibStyle #KulinerArab" (Trying a new recipe today, hope the result is amazing!).
4. Facebook Comment: "*MasyaAllah, anak-anak sudah besar sekarang. Semoga menjadi anak yang sholeh dan sholehah.* #Alhamdulillah" (MasyaAllah, the children have grown up now. May they become pious individuals).
5. Instagram Caption: A picture of a mosque during Ramadan with the text: "*Bulan suci telah tiba, mari tingkatkan ibadah. Barakallah fi kum.* #RamadanKareem #TradisiArab" (The holy month has arrived, let's increase our worship. May Allah bless you).

These examples demonstrate how Arab-Indonesians blend languages and cultural references to articulate their identities on social media platforms. Through the use of Arabic loanwords, code-switching, and culturally resonant hashtags, they create a digital space that reflects their unique heritage and contemporary experiences.

The linguistic strategies employed by Arab-Indonesians on social media are multifaceted and purposeful. The integration of Arabic loanwords and religious phrases serves to affirm both religious devotion and cultural heritage, while code-switching between Arabic and Indonesian reflects the dynamic nature of their hybrid identity. Strategic hashtag usage further amplifies their presence in the digital realm, fostering community engagement and cultural preservation. These practices highlight the complex interplay between language, identity, and

technology in the modern world (Darvin & Norton, 2023), showcasing how traditional cultural elements can be maintained and adapted within contemporary digital communication platforms.

Visual and Cultural Representations on Instagram and Facebook

Arab-Indonesian communities actively utilize visual content on social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook to express and reinforce their cultural identity. Through the strategic use of traditional clothing, calligraphy, religious symbols, and the depiction of cultural practices, they create a distinctive online presence that reflects their rich heritage and contemporary experiences.

Clothing as Cultural Symbols

Traditional attire serves as a potent symbol of cultural identity among Arab-Indonesians. Visual content frequently features garments such as the *jubah* (robe) for men and the *abaya* for women, both emblematic of modesty and cultural heritage. The *sorban* (headscarf) is also prominently displayed, symbolizing respect and piety. These clothing items are often showcased in posts celebrating significant life events, religious ceremonies, or cultural festivals.

For instance, a Facebook post display a wedding photograph with the caption: "Pernikahan adat Arab-Indo, penuh barakah dan tradisi yang indah" (Arab-Indonesian traditional wedding, full of blessings and beautiful traditions). Such posts not only document personal milestones but also serve to educate and inform a broader audience about Arab-Indonesian customs.

The portrayal of traditional clothing on social media platforms is a deliberate act of cultural preservation and identity assertion. By sharing images of traditional attire, Arab-Indonesians reinforce their unique cultural identity within the diverse tapestry of Indonesian society. This visual representation fosters a sense of community among Arab-Indonesians and educates others about their rich cultural heritage.

Calligraphy and Religious Symbols

Arabic calligraphy holds a revered place in Islamic art and is extensively utilized in social media posts by Arab-Indonesians. Visuals featuring Quranic verses or phrases like "Bismillah" (In the name of Allah) are common, serving as expressions of faith and cultural identity. These calligraphic elements are often incorporated into digital art, photographs, or as overlays on images depicting daily life, thereby intertwining the sacred with the mundane.

The use of Arabic calligraphy in social media posts signifies religious devotion and acts as a cultural marker that differentiates Arab-Indonesian identity from mainstream Indonesian culture. By incorporating calligraphy into their visual content,

Arab-Indonesians maintain a connection to their linguistic heritage and express their religious identity in a visually engaging manner.

Cultural Practices and Celebrations
Social media platforms serve as digital stages for showcasing Arab-Indonesian cultural practices and celebrations. Posts highlighting traditions such as *Maulid Nabi* (the Prophet Muhammad's birthday) often feature images of communal gatherings, traditional foods, and religious recitations. For example, an Instagram post might display trays of food prepared for *Maulid Nabi* with the caption: "*Tradisi Arab kita tetap terjaga. Alhamdulillah, kebersamaan selalu membawa berkah,*" meaning "Our Arab traditions are preserved. Praise be to Allah, togetherness always brings blessings."

Weddings, or *walimah*, are another focal point, with posts showcasing traditional attire, Arabic décor, and ceremonial practices. These visual narratives not only document personal and communal events but also serve to educate a wider audience about Arab-Indonesian cultural practices, fostering greater understanding and appreciation within the broader Indonesian society.

Culinary traditions are also prominently featured, with dishes like *mandi* rice and *kabsah* showcased in photos and videos. Sharing images of traditional cuisine allows Arab-Indonesians to express their cultural identity and share their heritage with a broader audience. These posts often include recipes or cooking demonstrations, inviting others to engage with and appreciate Arab-Indonesian culinary traditions.

Data Examples
To illustrate these visual and cultural representations, consider the following social media posts.
1. Instagram Post: A photo of a family dressed in traditional attire during Eid celebrations, captioned: "*Merayakan Idul Fitri dengan penuh syukur dan tradisi.* #EidMubarak #TradisiArab" (Celebrating Eid al-Fitr with gratitude and tradition).
2. Facebook Status: "*Alhamdulillah, selesai membuat nasi mandi untuk keluarga tercinta.* #KulinerArab #ResepTradisional" (Praise be to Allah, finished making mandi rice for the beloved family).
3. Instagram Story: A short video clip of a calligraphy artwork being created, with the overlay text: "*Seni kaligrafi Arab, warisan budaya yang indah.* #ArabicCalligraphy #Heritage" (Arabic calligraphy art, a beautiful cultural heritage).
4. Facebook Post: An image of a community gathering during *Maulid Nabi*, with the caption: "*Memperingati Maulid Nabi bersama komunitas, semoga membawa berkah bagi kita semua.* #MaulidNabi #TradisiArab" (Commemorating the Prophet's birthday with the community, may it bring blessings to us all).
5. Instagram Caption: A picture of traditional Arab-Indonesian wedding attire on display, with the text: "*Busana pernikahan tradisional Arab-Indonesia, perpaduan keanggunan dan warisan budaya.* #WeddingTraditions #ArabIndonesian" (Traditional Arab-Indonesian wedding attire, a blend of elegance and cultural heritage).

These examples demonstrate how Arab-Indonesians utilize visual content on social media to express their cultural identity, preserve traditions, and engage with both their community and the broader public. Through the strategic use of imagery and accompanying narratives, they contribute to a dynamic and evolving representation of their heritage in the digital age.

The visual and cultural representations employed by Arab-Indonesians on Instagram and Facebook are multifaceted and intentional. Through the display of traditional clothing, calligraphy, religious symbols, and cultural practices, they assert their unique identity within the diverse Indonesian landscape. These digital expressions serve not only as personal or communal affirmations but also as educational tools that bridge cultural gaps, fostering greater understanding and appreciation among the wider audience. In the rapidly evolving digital era, such practices highlight the importance of visual media in the preservation and dissemination of cultural heritage.

Negotiating Hybrid Identity in Social Media Spaces
Arab-Indonesians actively engage with social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook to navigate and express their hybrid identities, blending elements of both Arab and Indonesian cultures. Through visual and textual content, they articulate a multifaceted identity that reflects their unique cultural heritage and contemporary Indonesian context.

Blending Arabic and Indonesian Culture
Social media serves as a dynamic arena where Arab-Indonesians negotiate their dual cultural affiliations. Posts often depict the integration of Arabic cultural elements within Indonesian settings, symbolizing the harmonious coexistence of these identities. For instance, individuals may share images of themselves wearing traditional Arabic attire, such as the *jubah* or *abaya*, during Indonesian cultural events like *halal bihalal* gatherings, which are communal activities held to strengthen social bonds after Ramadan.

An Instagram post feature a family dressed in traditional Arabic clothing attending a Javanese cultural festival, captioned: "*Menghormati warisan Arab kami sambil merayakan budaya Indonesia. #ArabIndonesian #BudayaHybrid*" (Honoring our Arab heritage while celebrating Indonesian culture). Such representations highlight the fluidity of cultural boundaries and the creation of a hybrid identity that encompasses both ancestries.

This blending of cultures is not merely superficial but reflects deeper social practices and values. By incorporating elements from both cultures, Arab-Indonesians demonstrate adaptability and a commitment to preserving their heritage while fully participating in Indonesian society. This cultural hybridity is a testament to the dynamic nature of identity formation in a globalized world.

Cultural Pride and Preservation
Expressions of cultural pride and efforts toward preservation are prevalent in Arab-Indonesian social media activity. Users frequently share content that celebrates their unique heritage, positioning it as an integral part of Indonesia's multicultural society. For example, Facebook group discussions may include statements like: "*Kita bangga menjadi bagian Arab-Indonesia, menjaga tradisi dan nilai leluhur kita,*" translating to "We are proud to be Arab-Indonesians, preserving our traditions and ancestral values."

Such declarations serve multiple purposes: they reinforce group identity, educate others about Arab-Indonesian culture, and counteract potential marginalization by asserting the community's value within the broader national context. By publicly affirming their heritage, Arab-Indonesians contribute to the rich tapestry of Indonesia's cultural diversity and promote inclusivity.

Moreover, these expressions of cultural pride are often accompanied by initiatives aimed at preserving traditional practices, such as language use, culinary arts, and religious customs. By documenting and sharing these practices on social media, Arab-Indonesians ensure the transmission of their cultural heritage to future generations and raise awareness among the wider public.

Resistance to Stereotypes
Social media platforms also provide Arab-Indonesians with the means to challenge and resist stereotypes associated with their community. By sharing personal narratives, achievements, and positive representations, they confront misconceptions and promote a more nuanced understanding of their identity. For instance, a Facebook post might address common stereotypes by stating: "*Banyak yang salah paham tentang komunitas Arab-Indonesia. Kami berkontribusi dalam berbagai bidang dan bangga menjadi bagian dari masyarakat Indonesia,*" meaning "Many

misunderstand the Arab-Indonesian community. We contribute in various fields and are proud to be part of Indonesian society."

By actively engaging in such discourse, Arab-Indonesians utilize social media as a platform for social activism, seeking to reshape public perceptions and advocate for their rightful place within the national narrative. This resistance to stereotypes is crucial in combating discrimination and fostering a more inclusive society. Similarly, as Safrina et al. (2024) illustrate in their analysis of *Menanam adalah Melawan*, language serves as a powerful tool for resistance, allowing marginalized groups to challenge dominant narratives and assert agency. Just as the act of planting is framed as defiance against environmental and political injustices, the digital activism of Arab-Indonesians represents a linguistic and sociocultural struggle to reclaim their identity and contest exclusion. Both forms of resistance demonstrate how discourse—whether through ecological activism or online advocacy—can function as a means of subverting oppressive structures and fostering social change.

Data Examples
To illustrate these dynamics, consider the following social media posts.

1. Instagram Post: A photo of an Arab-Indonesian woman wearing a traditional *abaya* while participating in a Balinese dance performance, captioned: "*Merayakan keindahan dua budaya. Bangga menjadi Arab-Indonesia.* #CulturalFusion #PrideInHeritage" (Celebrating the beauty of two cultures. Proud to be Arab-Indonesian).

2. Facebook Status: "*Sebagai komunitas Arab-Indonesia, kami berperan aktif dalam pembangunan bangsa. Mari hilangkan stereotip dan bersama membangun Indonesia yang lebih baik.* #UnityInDiversity" (As the Arab-Indonesian community, we play an active role in national development. Let's eliminate stereotypes and together build a better Indonesia).

3. Instagram Story: A short video showcasing the preparation of traditional Arab-Indonesian fusion cuisine, with overlay text: "*Menggabungkan cita rasa Arab dan Indonesia, warisan kuliner yang kaya.* #KulinerHybrid #WarisanNusantara" (Combining Arab and Indonesian flavors, a rich culinary heritage).

4. Facebook Post: An image of a community seminar discussing the contributions of Arab-Indonesians to Indonesian literature, captioned: "*Diskusi hari ini mengungkap peran penulis Arab-Indonesia dalam memperkaya sastra Indonesia.* #LiteraryHeritage #BanggaBudaya" (Today's discussion reveals the role of Arab-

Indonesian writers in enriching Indonesian literature).

5. Instagram Caption: A picture of young Arab-Indonesians engaging in a traditional Indonesian *gotong royong* (community mutual assistance) activity, with the text: "*Bersama dalam keberagaman, membangun masyarakat yang lebih kuat.* #GotongRoyong #ArabIndonesian" (Together in diversity, building a stronger community).

These examples demonstrate how Arab-Indonesians utilize social media to navigate and express their hybrid identities, blending cultural elements, asserting pride, and challenging stereotypes. Through such digital engagements, they contribute to a more inclusive and multifaceted representation of Indonesian society.

The negotiation of hybrid identity by Arab-Indonesians on social media platforms reflects a complex interplay of cultural integration, preservation, and resistance. By blending Arabic and Indonesian cultural elements, expressing pride in their heritage, and challenging stereotypes, they actively construct a multifaceted identity that honors their ancestry while embracing their Indonesian nationality. Social media serves as a vital space for this ongoing negotiation, enabling Arab-Indonesians to articulate their unique identity within Indonesia's diverse cultural landscape.

DISCUSSION

The findings from this study demonstrate that social media platforms, particularly Instagram and Facebook, serve as critical spaces for Arab-Indonesians to express, negotiate, and assert their hybrid identities. These platforms provide a unique blend of linguistic, visual, and interactive elements, enabling individuals to balance and integrate their Arabic and Indonesian cultural affiliations.

Language as a Marker of Identity

Language emerges as one of the most significant tools in Arab-Indonesian identity representation. Arabic phrases, such as *Alhamdulillah* (praise be to God), *Barakallah* (blessings from Allah), and *InshaAllah* (God willing), are frequently used in captions and comments, reinforcing both religious devotion and cultural pride. As Al Rashdi and Mehta (2023) argue, Arabic serves as a linguistic bridge that connects diasporic Arab communities to their ancestral roots while simultaneously asserting their cultural distinctiveness within multicultural societies (see also Berrebbah, 2021; and Mansour et al., 2024). This aligns with the findings of this study, where Arabic phrases function not just as markers of piety but also as cultural signifiers that distinguish Arab-Indonesians within Indonesia's broader sociocultural landscape.

Code-switching between Arabic and Indonesian is another key linguistic strategy. Social media users often embed Arabic words into predominantly Indonesian sentences, creating a dynamic interplay between their dual cultural identities. For example, an Instagram caption read, "*Selamat ulang tahun, Habib. Semoga barokah dan sehat selalu ya!*" (Happy birthday, Habib. I hope [you have] *barokah* and always healthy!) blending Indonesian greetings with Arabic blessings. As Purnomo et al. (2021) note, code-switching in digital spaces reflects a deliberate effort to navigate multiple cultural affiliations while fostering a sense of belonging within both linguistic spheres.

Hashtags, too, play a vital role in identity representation. By using tags like #ArabIndonesian and #TradisiArab, users amplify their cultural narratives and connect with a broader community. These hashtags act as digital markers that foster collective identity while simultaneously increasing the visibility of Arab-Indonesian traditions within the larger Indonesian social media ecosystem. This resonates with La Rocca and Boccia Artieri (2023), who highlights how hashtags function as symbolic tools that enhance community solidarity and cultural expression in online platforms.

Visual Content as Cultural Assertion

Visual elements on Instagram and Facebook, such as traditional clothing, calligraphy, and cultural practices, are equally powerful in reinforcing Arab-Indonesian identity. The use of traditional garments like the *jubah* and *abaya* in posts celebrating weddings or religious events underscores cultural pride and heritage. These visuals, often paired with captions emphasizing familial and religious values, exemplify what van Leeuwen (2021) refers to as the "representation of social actors," where imagery is used to assert identity and convey cultural narratives to diverse audiences.

Arabic calligraphy, particularly in the form of Quranic verses or phrases like *Bismillah* (In the name of Allah), serves as another prominent visual marker. These symbols, integrated into photos or digital artwork, signify religious devotion while differentiating Arab-Indonesian identity from mainstream Indonesian culture. As Kuraedah et al. (2022) observe, visual representations of cultural and religious symbols play a crucial role in shaping public perceptions and fostering cultural preservation within diasporic communities.

Negotiating Hybrid Identity Through Social Media Dynamics

Social media platforms enable Arab-Indonesians to actively negotiate their hybrid identities, balancing Arabic traditions with Indonesian cultural contexts. Posts frequently depict the integration of Arabic cultural elements within Indonesian settings, such as wearing traditional Arabic attire during *halal bihalal*

gatherings or participating in Indonesian cultural festivals. Such representations highlight the fluidity of cultural boundaries and the dynamic nature of identity construction in digital spaces. Al Rashdi and Mehta (2023) emphasize that this type of negotiation is a hallmark of diasporic identities, where individuals blend heritage elements with their host culture to create a multifaceted identity.

Cultural pride and preservation are recurring themes in the content shared by Arab-Indonesians. For example, Facebook group discussions often feature statements like, "*Kami bangga menjadi Arab-Indonesia, menjaga tradisi dan nilai leluhur kita*" (We are proud to be Arab-Indonesians, preserving our traditions and ancestral values). These expressions align with the concept of "cultural self-assertion" discussed by van Leeuwen (2021), wherein marginalized communities utilize public platforms to reinforce their value and legitimacy within a larger societal framework.

Social media also provides a platform for Arab-Indonesians to challenge stereotypes and promote positive narratives about their community. By sharing stories of individual and collective achievements, users combat misconceptions and advocate for greater understanding and inclusivity. For instance, posts highlighting the contributions of Arab-Indonesians in fields such as education, business, and the arts serve to dismantle reductive stereotypes and showcase the diversity of their community. As Nordin (2024) notes, digital platforms are powerful tools for reframing public discourse and fostering more inclusive representations of cultural identities.

The findings of this study underscore the critical role of social media platforms in the representation and negotiation of Arab-Indonesian identity. Linguistic practices, such as the use of Arabic phrases, code-switching, and hashtags, serve as powerful tools for expressing cultural and religious affiliations. Visual content, including traditional clothing, calligraphy, and cultural celebrations, reinforces pride in heritage and articulates hybrid identities. Moreover, the interactive nature of social media enables Arab-Indonesians to navigate their dual affiliations, assert cultural pride, and challenge stereotypes, contributing to a richer and more inclusive understanding of identity in the digital age. These findings align with and extend previous research, highlighting the transformative potential of social media in shaping and expressing complex cultural identities.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how Arab-Indonesian identity is represented through language and culture on Instagram and Facebook, employing CDA to uncover linguistic and cultural strategies. The findings underscore the significant role of social media in shaping, negotiating, and asserting Arab-Indonesian identity within Indonesia's multicultural society. The analysis revealed that Arab-Indonesians leverage both textual and visual elements on these platforms to construct a hybrid identity that balances Arabic heritage with Indonesian cultural norms.

The strategic use of Arabic loanwords emerged as a key linguistic practice among Arab-Indonesian social media users. Phrases such as *Alhamdulillah* (praise be to God), *Barakallah* (blessings from Allah), and *InshaAllah* (God willing) were frequently embedded within Indonesian captions and comments. These expressions served as markers of religious devotion and cultural pride, enabling users to maintain a connection to their Arab roots while engaging with broader Indonesian audiences. This practice aligns with broader patterns of linguistic hybridity observed in Arab diaspora communities globally, as noted by Al Rashdi and Mehta (2023). Moreover, the use of such phrases reflects the integration of Arabic language and Islamic culture into Indonesia's linguistic and cultural fabric.

Bilingual code-switching between Arabic and Indonesian further highlighted the community's hybrid identity. Social media posts and comments often blended Arabic terms with Indonesian sentences, illustrating the fluid negotiation of dual cultural affiliations. For example, captions like "*Selamat ulang tahun, Habib. Semoga barokah dan sehat selalu ya!*" (Happy birthday, Habib. I hope [you have] *barokah* and always healthy!) seamlessly integrated Arabic and Indonesian, emphasizing both cultural pride and accessibility to diverse audiences. As Purnomo et al. (2021) noted, such practices in digital communication not only express personal identity but also foster inclusivity and cross-cultural understanding.

Religious hashtags like #Alhamdulillah and #InshaAllah further reinforced Arab-Indonesian identity by amplifying cultural narratives and fostering virtual community building. These hashtags acted as symbolic tools, enabling users to connect with others who shared similar values and beliefs. This aligns with Nordin's (2024) observation that hashtags serve as digital markers of identity, fostering solidarity and cultural visibility in online spaces.

Visual content also played a central role in affirming and preserving Arab-Indonesian identity. Posts featuring traditional Arab clothing, such as the *jubah* for men and the *abaya* for women, were prevalent, often paired with captions emphasizing cultural pride and religious significance. Arabic calligraphy, particularly Quranic verses and phrases like *Bismillah*, further underscored religious devotion and differentiated Arab-Indonesian identity from mainstream Indonesian culture. For instance, Instagram posts displaying wedding ceremonies

showcased not only traditional attire but also Arab-influenced décor, blending Arabic aesthetics with Indonesian cultural contexts. Such visual representations affirmed the community's heritage and contributed to the preservation of cultural traditions.

Social media also emerged as a dynamic space for negotiating cultural hybridity. Arab-Indonesians actively used these platforms to balance their Arabic roots with Indonesian cultural influences. Posts depicting Arabic clothing worn during Indonesian cultural events or communal gatherings, such as *halal bihalal*, exemplified this blending of traditions. As noted by van Leeuwen (2021), the representation of social actors through imagery and language on social media serves as a means of asserting identity and shaping public perceptions.

Furthermore, Arab-Indonesians leveraged social media to challenge stereotypes and promote positive narratives about their community. By sharing stories of their contributions to various sectors, such as business, education, and the arts, they combated misconceptions and highlighted the diversity and richness of Arab-Indonesian culture. Facebook discussions and Instagram posts often carried messages of pride, such as "Kami bangga menjadi Arab-Indonesia, menjaga tradisi dan nilai leluhur kita" (We are proud to be Arab-Indonesians, preserving our traditions and ancestral values). These narratives reflect the community's efforts to assert their rightful place within Indonesia's multicultural society.

In conclusion, the findings of this study highlight the intricate ways in which Arab-Indonesians use social media to express and negotiate their hybrid identities. Through the strategic use of language, visual content, and interactive features, they assert their cultural heritage, navigate dual affiliations, and challenge stereotypes. These practices underscore the transformative potential of social media as a platform for cultural preservation, representation, and engagement in the digital age. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of how hybrid identities are constructed and maintained within the dynamic and increasingly globalized digital landscape.

This study is expected to contribute to the understanding of hybrid cultural identities by examining the role of language and culture in their construction. Through the strategic use of Arabic loanwords, bilingual code-switching, religious hashtags, and visual symbols such as traditional clothing and calligraphy, Arab-Indonesians demonstrate how linguistic and cultural practices shape hybrid identities. These findings offer valuable insights into how individuals navigate the complexities of dual cultural affiliations, balancing their Arabic heritage with their Indonesian identity. The study also underscores the transformative

potential of social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook in enabling cultural visibility and identity negotiation, particularly for marginalized or hybrid communities. By providing a space for Arab-Indonesians to articulate their identity, these platforms empower users to preserve their traditions, challenge stereotypes, and foster a sense of belonging within broader sociocultural contexts.

While this study proposes important aspects of Arab-Indonesian identity representation, it is not without limitations. First, the analysis is confined to Instagram and Facebook, excluding other platforms such as YouTube or TikTok that might offer additional perspectives on identity construction. Second, the research relies solely on publicly accessible posts, which may not capture private discussions within closed groups or personal accounts. These limitations suggest that the findings, while insightful, may not fully represent the diversity and nuances of Arab-Indonesian identity expression across different digital and offline spaces.

Future research could expand upon this study by exploring audience responses to Arab-Indonesian narratives on social media. Analyzing comments, shares, and other forms of engagement would provide deeper insights into how cultural perceptions are shaped and how users interact with identity representations. Additionally, extending the scope of analysis to include other platforms like YouTube or examining offline contexts such as cultural festivals, religious gatherings, or community meetings could offer a more comprehensive understanding of Arab-Indonesian identity. These avenues would enrich the discourse on hybrid identities and the evolving role of digital platforms in cultural representation.

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