

Recontextualizing Jihad in Digital Da'wah: A Corpus-Assisted Critical Discourse Analysis of NU Online

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Abstract

This study aims to examine how the meaning of jihad is recontextualized in NU Online discourse using the Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS) approach and Teun A. van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model. This study uses a mixed method that integrates corpus-based quantitative analysis and CDA-based qualitative analysis. The data were obtained from 95 NU Online articles containing the keyword "jihad," totaling 51,523 tokens. The data were collected using Octoparse and analyzed with AntConc. The corpus was built over the period 2012 to 2024. Collocation and concordance analysis were used to identify patterns of semantic association. In contrast, CDA was used to interpret the discourse construction of jihad at the text, social cognition, and social context levels. The results show that jihad in NU Online is situated within a positive, constructive discourse. The twelve words with the highest frequency of collocation with jihad are Resolution, NU, Meaning, Fatwa, Sabilillah, Physical, Economic, Hawa, Physical, Spiritual, Ashghar, and Akbarul. Eight words are categorized as positive, two words are neutral, and one word has a negative lexical connotation but is limited discursively. Jihad is predominantly framed as a historical response to colonialism, a normative decision by scholars, a social struggle, economic empowerment, and a moral and spiritual struggle. Physical jihad is positioned as a contextual historical phenomenon that is irrelevant in the contemporary peaceful situation. These findings confirm NU Online's role as an important discursive actor in shaping public understanding of jihad as a moderate religious movement.

Keywords

Jihad; NU Online; Recontextualization; Critical Discourse Analysis; Corpus.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The term jihad is one of the key concepts in Islamic tradition, with a broad spectrum of meanings, ranging from spiritual struggle (Enz-Harlass 2022; Carland and Buckley 2025), to moral struggle to physical defense (De Koning 2021). However, in the development of global discourse, the word jihad has often undergone a narrowing of meaning and has been reduced to acts of violence or holy war (Rahman 2016; Karipek 2020; Rahmawati, Udin, and Rafsanjanie 2024; Siddiqui 2025) constructed through international media coverage and the narratives of radical groups (Agbiboa 2014; Abid 2017; Kumar 2023). Several scholars and religious authorities emphasize that such a narrow representation contributes to the formation of negative perceptions of Islam and reinforces prejudices within plural and multicultural societies (Alshabani 2015; Sefriyono 2020). Therefore, the theoretical



debate in jihad studies is no longer limited to issues of normative definitions but has shifted to questions about how the meaning of jihad is selected and legitimized in the public discourse space.

The development of digital media further complicates these debates. The digital space enables the rapid and fragmented circulation of religious meanings, opening up opportunities for interpretations of jihad detached from its historical and theological contexts. This condition, as noted by several studies, contributes to self-radicalization, especially among youth. At the same time, digital media has become a strategic arena for the emergence of counter-discourses that seek to recontextualize jihad as a non-violent struggle, such as strengthening moral values, social justice, and humanitarian responsibility (Estuningtiyas 2024). However, most previous studies remain normative or based on limited case studies, thus failing to empirically explain how moderate Islamic media systematically build and stabilize alternative meanings of jihad on a broader discourse scale. In other words, there are still theoretical and methodological issues that remain unanswered regarding the discursive mechanisms of meaning construction in digital-based moderate Islamic media.

In the context of Indonesia, efforts to recontextualize the meaning of jihad are actively carried out by moderate Islamic organizations, especially Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), through various digital da'wah channels, including the NU Online news portal (Ismail 2011). As NU's official medium, NU Online plays a strategic role in representing moderate, contextually oriented Islam oriented towards social welfare within Indonesia's digital public space (Suprabowo 2020). While studies on jihad have been widely conducted, existing research is still dominated by a focus on radicalism, extremism, and the negative construction of jihad in Western or mainstream media (Sial and Anjum 2010; King and Taylor 2011; Vidino, Marone, and Entenmann 2017; Milla, Putra, and Umam 2019; Arfan and Salam 2024). These studies have generally concentrated on identity construction and securitisation narratives, rather than examining how key theological concepts undergo internal discursive reconfiguration. In the Indonesian context, no study to date has systematically integrated corpus-driven pattern identification with critical discourse analysis. What remains insufficiently explored is not merely the presence of moderate interpretations of jihad, but the discursive mechanisms through which such interpretations are stabilized, legitimized, and ultimately naturalized within the ecosystem of digital Islamic media. Based on this research gap, this study aims to answer questions about how is the meaning of jihad discursively reconstructed in NU Online.

To answer these research questions, this study adopts a Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS) approach combined with Teun van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). While corpus is often associated with quantitative empiricism and the identification of objective patterns in large datasets, Critical Discourse Analysis operates from a constructivist and power-sensitive epistemology. This study adopts a corpus-assisted critical framework in which quantitative regularities serve as heuristic indicators of discursive salience rather than neutral evidence. The corpus analysis identifies patterned linguistic tendencies, while van Dijk's model enables critical interpretation of how these patterns relate to ideology, social cognition, and institutional power. Through this corpus-based CDA integration, the study not only empirically maps variations in jihad meanings but also explains how these meanings are recontextualized as part of a discourse strategy for religious moderation in the digital space, thereby contributing to theoretical studies of Islamic discourse and to practical implications for strengthening religious moderation.

Thus, this research makes significant contributions in three main areas. Theoretically, it expands the study of Islamic discourse by showing how the meaning of jihad is constructed and recontextualized in multidimensional ways in moderate Islamic media, enriching the literature, which has traditionally

been dominated by Western contexts, with an Indonesian Islamic perspective. Methodologically, it contributes by integrating Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS) and Teun van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis, enabling empirical and systematic mapping of the representation of jihad in digital corpora and demonstrating the operationalization of corpus analysis within the CDA framework. In practice, the findings provide an empirical foundation for understanding how NU Online articulates jihad as a peaceful, progressive, and contextually grounded Islamic discourse in response to contemporary social challenges, thereby making it relevant to the development of religious communication strategies and the strengthening of religious moderation in Indonesia's digital space.

2. METHODS

This study uses a mixed-methods approach that integrates corpus-based quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis grounded in Teun A. van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) model (Van Dijk 2001). This approach was chosen because it provides an overview of linguistic patterns and an in-depth interpretation of discourse construction (Wodak 2002). Corpus analysis is used to identify linguistic tendencies systematically (Kennedy 2014), while CDA is used to explain the meanings and social relations that shape discourse representation (Baker et al. 2008). The data source for this research consists of news texts from the nu.or.id website containing the keyword "jihad". The corpus was constructed from all articles published between 2012 - 2024, reflecting the long-term development of the jihad discourse on NU Online. The year 2012 marks the stabilization of NU Online's digital publication system, allowing systematic retrieval and comparability of archived texts. This twelve-year span encompasses periods of varying socio-political salience in Indonesia. This study adopts a synchronic analytical orientation. The objective is to identify dominant discursive patterns across a sustained digital period rather than to trace diachronic shifts. This methodological decision prioritizes structural regularities in discourse over temporal fluctuation. All data found within this period were used in their entirety to maintain representativeness and avoid selection bias. Data collection was conducted using documentation techniques and Octoparse 8.1.24 to crawl articles systematically. This process yielded 95 articles totaling 51,523 tokens, which were then cleaned, standardized, and converted to text format for corpus analysis.

The research procedure is divided into two main stages. The first stage is corpus compilation and analysis. During this phase, the data were compiled into a single corpus and analyzed using AntConc 4.2.0. The analysis was carried out through three main steps: frequency, collocation, and concordance. Frequency analysis was used to identify the occurrences of the word "jihad" and related vocabulary in the corpus. The threshold of ≥ 50 occurrences for selecting lexical nodes was determined based on corpus size (51,523 tokens) to ensure the statistical stability of collocational patterns. In addition to raw frequency, Log-Likelihood (LL) values were employed to measure the strength of association between the keyword jihad and its collocates. Only collocations exceeding the LL significance threshold were considered analytically relevant. The five-left and five-right span (5L-5R) was selected to balance contextual sensitivity and analytical precision, consistent with established CADS practice. Subsequently, concordance analysis was used to examine sentence-level context in greater depth to understand the function and meaning of the term's usage in discourse. The quantitative findings from this stage serve as the empirical foundation for selecting and deepening the data during the critical discourse analysis phase. To enhance reliability, evaluative categorization was conducted through iterative contextual verification across concordance lines, and alternative interpretations were considered before final classification.

The second stage is critical discourse analysis using Teun A. van Dijk's CDA framework, which encompasses three main dimensions: text, social cognition, and social context. At the text level, the analysis focuses on macrostructure (global themes), superstructure (discourse organization), and microstructure, including lexical choices, coherence, modality, and rhetorical strategies such as referential/nominative strategies and predicational strategies. At the social cognition level, the analysis aims to understand the knowledge schemes, values, and ideological orientations underlying the production of jihad discourse on NU Online. Then, at the social context level, the analysis links discourse findings to Indonesia's socio-religious dynamics and to Nahdlatul Ulama's position as a moderate Islamic organization within the national discursive landscape.

The integration mechanism between corpus analysis and CDA is conducted systematically and complementarily. Corpus analysis serves as an exploratory stage to empirically identify dominant linguistic patterns. In contrast, CDA serves as an interpretative stage to explain the meanings, ideologies, and power relations embedded in these patterns. Therefore, the quantitative findings from the corpus are not treated as conclusions but rather as an analytical basis that is deepened through critical interpretation informed by CDA. The validity of this research is ensured through the transparent and contextual construction of the corpus, as well as the use of the Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS) approach, which allows the mapping of the meaning of jihad based on empirical linguistic evidence. The categories for analysis are not predetermined a priori but are derived from the frequency and collocations that emerge in the NU Online corpus. This study integrates inductive and deductive procedures in a complementary manner. Corpus analysis operates inductively, allowing dominant lexical and collocational patterns to emerge from the data. Subsequently, van Dijk's CDA framework is applied deductively as an interpretive lens to explain how these empirically identified patterns function at textual, cognitive, and social levels. Systematic, replicable research procedures and the traceability of the interpretation from quantitative data to critical discourse analysis strengthen the reliability of the analysis. The integration of corpus analysis with Teun A. van Dijk's CDA framework enables triangulation between the text, social cognition, and social context levels, thus reducing subjectivity and enhancing the interpretative robustness of the research findings.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results section of this study is structured through a layered analysis that integrates quantitative corpus-based findings with qualitative interpretations grounded in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). In the first stage, frequency analysis is conducted to identify the occurrences and distribution of the word "jihad" and the words most frequently collocating with it in the NU Online corpus. This stage aims to empirically map the initial lexical association patterns. In the second stage, collocation analysis is applied by setting a five-word left (five-left/FL) and five-word right (five-right/FR) range around the keyword to identify the strength and regularity of lexical relationships that shape the semantic tendencies of jihad. Collocational significance was calculated using Log-Likelihood (LL), with a critical threshold of $LL > 6.63$ ($p < 0.01$). All collocates included in Table 1 exceed this threshold, indicating statistically significant co-occurrence with the keyword jihad. In the third stage, concordance analysis is used to examine the context of the word "jihad" and its collocates in greater depth, enabling an evaluation of the discourse's function and evaluative orientation based on actual usage in the texts. The quantitative findings from these three stages are then critically interpreted using Teun van Dijk's CDA framework, specifically at the text, social cognition, and social context levels, to explain how these linguistic patterns contribute to the construction and recontextualization of the

meaning of jihad in NU Online discourse. The interpretation presented in the results section is not based solely on frequency data but rather on the integration of recurrent quantitative patterns and discourse context analysis, both supported by textual evidence.

As illustrated in Table 1, eight words have positive values (*Resolusi, Makna, Fatwa, NU, Sabilillah, Akbarul, Ekonomi, Ruhani, dan Hawa*). Two words have neutral values (*Asghar dan Jasmani*), and one word has a negative value (*Fisik*). The word *Resolusi* occupies the most dominant position in the corpus. This word plays a key role in shaping the discourse on jihad. In NU Online, the word *Resolusi* almost always refers to the 1945 Jihad Resolution (*Resolusi Jihad 1945*), which is framed as part of the history of the national struggle against colonialism. This collocation places jihad in the context of patriotism and national defense. Jihad is represented as a religious response to a historical emergency, not as a model of violence directly related to the current situation. On the other hand, the words *Ashghar* and *Jasmani* are categorized as neutral. These two terms are used in NU Online as terminological classifications in the treasury of jihad fiqh. In the hierarchy of jihad, *Ashghar* is positioned as a low level of jihad. Meanwhile, *Jasmani* is used to explain the physical dimension. These two words are often presented as a comparison between the concept of *Jihad Akbar* and the spiritual dimension (dimensi spiritual) through inner struggle. Rather than being ideologically pretentious, these two words are merely descriptive and normative in nature.

The word *Fisik* is considered to have negative connotations lexically because it is directly related to war or violence. However, NU Online seeks to limit and neutralize the word. Physical jihad is generally presented as a phenomenon of the past and irrelevant to the current peaceful conditions of the nation-state. In fact, in many contexts, physical jihad (jihad fisik) is positioned as an inferior form of jihad compared to spiritual jihad or social jihad. Overall, 12 high-frequency words in the NU Online corpus tend to valorize jihad in a positive, constructive manner. The dominance of words such as resolution (resolusi), meaning (makna), NU, fatwa, economy (ekonomi), spiritual (ruhani), and desire (hawa) indicates that jihad is represented as a historical, normative, and social concept, rather than an instrument of violence. Although there are words that lexically have the potential to be associated with violence (*fisik, ashghar, jasmani*), the context of the discourse consistently limits, classifies, or even delegitimizes the practice of physical jihad in the contemporary era. This pattern shows a reinterpretation of the concept of jihad through historicization, spiritualization, and adaptation to current social dynamics. The table below presents the twelve most statistically significant collocates, ranked by frequency, to focus on the strongest lexical associations shaping the discourse. The collocational strength of *Resolusi* (LL = 350.495; effect size = 2.556) significantly exceeds other lexical associations, indicating a dominant historical anchoring of the term jihad within the corpus. The gap between the first and second ranked collocate (NU; LL = 66.745) further demonstrates the disproportionate prominence of historical framing.

Table 1. Collocation and statistical data of the word Jihad

Kolokasi kata Jihad						
No	Word	Freq	FL	FR	Likelihood	Effect
1	Resolusi	178	166	12	350.495	2.556
2	NU	93	20	73	66.745	1.397
3	Makna	65	46	19	120.227	2.465
4	Fatwa	36	30	6	67.760	2.494

5	Sabilillah	31	6	25	40.815	2.003
6	Fisik	21	6	15	26.764	1.964
7	Ekonomi	20	5	15	24.961	1.940
8	Hawa	15	6	9	20.008	2.019
9	Jasmani	12`	1	11	25.570	2.697
10	Ruhani	12	1	11	20.498	2.350
11	Ashgar	7	4	3	31.743	4.379
12	Akbarul	7	3	4	25.383	3.794

The categorization of collocations into positive, neutral, and negative evaluative orientations in this study is not intended as a subjective sentiment analysis, but rather as an effort to identify the evaluative tendencies of discourse as understood in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and corpus linguistics traditions. Within the CDA framework, evaluation is understood as a discursive process that plays a role in legitimization, delegitimization, and the valorization of meaning through specific linguistic strategies (Van Dijk 2001; Poorebrahim 2013). In line with this, in corpus linguistics, the evaluative orientation of a lexicon can be traced through collocational patterns and semantic prosody, which refers to the tendency for meaning to form through lexical associations that recur in the corpus (Stubbs 2001; Baker and McEnery 2005; Baker et al. 2008). Thus, the classification of collocates in this study is empirically derived from the analysis of concordance context, regularity of collocational patterns, and the discursive function of those collocates in framing the concept of jihad, and is not based on normative judgments or the subjective preferences of the researcher.

3.1 Referential or Nomination Strategy

Referential or nominalization strategies are discursive mechanisms that are consciously used to shape discursive representations of social actors, objects, phenomena, events, processes, and actions (Reisigl and Wodak 2005). This strategy is realized through various linguistic elements, including membership categorization devices, metaphors, metonymy, and synecdoche, as well as the selection of verbs and nouns that mark specific processes and activities. Among these devices, metaphors play a fairly important role in constructing meaning in discourse.

In a linguistic context, metaphors are understood as a form of expression that transfers the use of a word or phrase to another object or action that does not literally correspond to its basic meaning. The use of metaphors allows for the expansion and framing of meaning, which plays a significant role in shaping the reader's understanding of the reality represented in the discourse (Burgers, Konijn, and Steen 2016; Semino, Demjén, and Demmen 2018). In collocation and concordance analysis, there are metaphors. Metaphors can be systematically identified from data (Pragglejaz 2007; Baker et al. 2008). Although the number is relatively small, namely 11.3%, jihad is described as a concept that must be contextualized with the struggles faced today. These struggles are through social, economic, and spiritual dimensions in achieving independence.

- *Fatwa Jihad yang dikeluarkan oleh Syekh KH M Hasyim Asy'ari di Tebuireng Jombang, yang nyata-nyata mewariskan spirit bela NKRI dan lawan pemecah belah negeri.* (The phrase "passing on the spirit" (mewariskan spirit) is a conceptual metaphor that nominates the Jihad Resolution as a living entity that can be passed down across generations.)
- *Jihad saat ini adalah memerangi Kemiskinan, Kebodohan, dan Keterbelakangan.* (The verb *perangi* ("to wage war against") carries strong militaristic connotations in Indonesian and is commonly used in

state and nationalist rhetoric, such as *memerangi narkoba*. In Islamic preaching, however, it functions metaphorically to intensify moral exhortation rather than to signal armed conflict. In NU Online's discourse, *perangi* retains the emotional force of warfare while being redirected toward abstract social issues like poverty and ignorance, allowing *jihad* to preserve rhetorical intensity without implying physical violence).

- *Umat Beragama Perlu Jihad Prestasi, Bukan Perang*. (The phrase "jihad of achievement" (Jihad Prestasi) is a powerful conceptual metaphor that frames *jihad* as an ethos of competition and achievement rather than violence).
- *Jihad Itu di Bidang Ekonomi, Budaya, dan Pendidikan, Bukan Ngebom!* (The phrase *bukan ngebom* ("not bombing") is particularly significant because *ngebom* is an informal colloquial verb in Indonesian, often associated with media representations of terrorism rather than classical Islamic jurisprudence. Its informal register contrasts sharply with the theological seriousness of the term *jihad*, thereby reinforcing a discursive boundary between religious struggle and extremist violence. This pragmatic contrast strengthens the delegitimization effect).
- *Jihad intelektual untuk melawan kebodohan, jihad ekonomi untuk mengatasi kemiskinan, dan jihad digital untuk merebut ruang narasi, terutama dalam menyebarkan kebaikan dan kebenaran*. (The words "resist" (*melawan*) and "seize space" (*merebut ruang*) are metaphors for conflict that shift the domain of war to the realm of structural and symbolic issues (knowledge and digital space)).

The analysis of metaphors in the corpus shows that metaphor usage is not sporadic or merely illustrative, but rather forms a relatively consistent and systematic framing pattern. Within the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), metaphors are understood as a referential strategy that functions to build meaning categorization and ideological legitimacy through the transfer of specific conceptual domains (Reisigl and Wodak 2005; Wodak 2002). In line with findings in corpus linguistics studies and critical metaphor analysis, the repetition of metaphors in a corpus signals the presence of dominant conceptual schemas that shape the collective understanding of a phenomenon (Charteris-Black 2004; Semino, Demjén, and Demmen 2018). Based on collocation and concordance analysis, the metaphor of *jihad* in NU Online can be classified into three main patterns.

First, the conflict metaphor, which systematically transfers the domain of physical warfare into the social, economic, educational, and digital realms, as seen in verbs such as "*perangi*" (to fight), "*melawan*" (resist), and "*merebut ruang*" (seize space). This pattern preserves the moral intensity and spirit of *jihad* struggle, but simultaneously delegitimizes physical violence as a contemporary practice of *jihad*. Such a pattern is consistent with Semino's findings, which show that conflict metaphors in public discourse are often used to maintain the mobilizing power of a concept without implying literal violence (Semino, Demjén, and Demmen 2018). Second, the generative and value inheritance metaphor, such as the phrase "*mewariskan spirit*" (passing on the spirit), which frames *jihad* as a moral-historical legacy. This metaphor nominates *jihad* as a value that can be transmitted across generations, rather than as a physical act that is directly replicated. This pattern aligns with Charteris-Black's analysis, which emphasizes that inheritance metaphors function to legitimize the continuity of values while opening space for contextual reinterpretation (Charteris-Black 2018). Third, the contrast metaphor, which explicitly asserts the discursive boundary between *jihad* and extreme violence through negation markers like "*bukan perang*" (not war) and "*bukan ngebom*" (not bombing). Moderate Islamic discourse tends to use social and moral metaphors to dampen the potential for symbolic violence in religious discourse while asserting a peaceful and contextual Islamic orientation (Azra 2010; Najib and Fata 2020). This strategy represents a discursive delegitimization practice, where the representation of extreme

violence is positioned as a negative symbol to strengthen the redefinition of jihad.

3.2 Prediction Strategy

Predication is a discursive strategy that serves to construct evaluative judgments in discourse, both affirmative and problematic, toward various discursive entities such as events, phenomena, and social processes. Through this strategy, discourse not only represents reality but also shapes the reader’s perspective on an issue by attributing attributes, emphasizing values, and reinforcing specific meanings. Predication is realized through evaluative lexical choices, recurring collocation patterns, and the use of explicit predicates that mark the ideological stance of the speaker or media institution (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009).

In this study, a prediction strategy was used to examine how the meaning of jihad was recontextualized in NU Online discourse, particularly through the representation of historical events, religious phenomena, and the accompanying social processes. The analysis began with compiling a word list from the NU Online corpus. Next, high-frequency words that collocate with jihad are extracted and analyzed using collocation and concordance tools (Baker and McEnery 2005). The analysis focuses on how events, phenomena, and processes are given discursive assessments in the text (Hunston 2007). The results of the analysis are then presented in the form of rankings and frequencies of occurrence of these keywords as a basis for mapping evaluative tendencies in the construction of jihad discourse on NU Online (Stubbs 2001; KhosraviNik 2009).

Table 2. Rankings and frequencies of predicate words in the corpus

Rank	Word	Freq	FL	FR	Likelihood	Effect
1	Resolusi	178	166	12	350.495	2.556
2	Sabilillah	31	6	25	40.815	2.003
3	Ekonomi	20	5	15	24.961	1.940
4	Hawa	15	6	9	20.008	2.019
5	Ruhani	12	1	11	20.498	2.350

3.2.1 Resolusi

The collocation results show that the word *resolusi* in NU Online is predominantly framed through the discourse of historical legitimacy, national struggle, and collective memory. This representation consistently links jihad to Indonesia’s historical context, particularly the events of the 1945 Jihad Resolution. The Jihad Resolution is positioned as a religious decision born out of colonialism and threats to national sovereignty. This emphasis shows that jihad cannot be separated from the socio-political reality of Indonesia at that time. Thus, jihad is presented as a form of religious responsibility in defending the homeland.

Furthermore, the resolution also emphasizes the rejection of jihad as transnational violence or extremism. Jihad is presented as a religious practice with strong roots in the nation’s history and the authority of Islamic scholars. This process of reproducing meaning is evident in the repeated commemorations, such as Santri Day, historical reenactments, and other historical narratives. These practices serve to preserve the Jihad Resolution as part of the national collective memory. In this context, jihad is understood as a symbol of struggle and devotion, not as a destructive act. Examples of the use of this phrase in this context include:

- *Resolusi Jihad merupakan bukti nyata cinta Tanah Air.* (Affirming jihad as part of the national struggle, in which the defense of Indonesia's independence is positioned as a form of religious and national devotion).
- *Baru pada 15 Oktober 2015, hari terbitnya fatwa yang dikenal dengan Resolusi Jihad, 22 Oktober 1945, ditetapkan dengan Keputusan Presiden sebagai Hari Santri.* (Representing the Jihad Resolution as a collective memory, institutionalized through state recognition, so that it continues to be reproduced in the national historical memory).

3.2.2 *Sabilillah*

Jihad fi sabilillah has consistently been linked to the historical context of defending the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, particularly during the 1945 independence revolution. This representation positions jihad as a religious response to a specific and temporary colonial situation. Thus, jihad is not presented as an ahistorical practice of violence, but rather as part of the narrative legitimizing the nation's struggle. This concept aligns with findings in contemporary Islamic law studies, which hold that jihad in Islam is recognized primarily as a form of self-defense valid in fiqh, not as offensive aggression (Shah 2013; Mostfa 2021; Ahmad and bin Mohd Jafree 2023; Fakhkhar Toosi 2024). This pattern of collocation shows a close relationship between the authority of the ulama, nationalism, and religious obligations. These findings indicate that NU Online reproduces jihad within the framework of institutionalized national history. Representing the Jihad Resolution as a collective memory, institutionalized through state recognition, so that it continues to be reproduced in the national historical memory.

Meanwhile, the category of social jihad extends the meaning of *Jihad Fi Sabilillah* into contemporary social life. In this context, jihad is represented through educational activities, social services, poverty alleviation, and strengthening people's welfare. The collocation that emerges confirms that jihad is understood as ethical and social work oriented towards mutual welfare. The use of the term sabilillah serves as a normative marker that shifts the meaning of jihad from physical action to religious values and goals. Thus, jihad is no longer reduced to the dimension of armed conflict, but is interpreted as a moral and social commitment.

- *Perjuangan dalam pendidikan, perekonomian, dan bidang-bidang lain untuk kemaslahatan umat Islam adalah jihad fi sabilillah. Justru cara-cara demikian yang harus dilakukan sekarang ini* (The term sabilillah is used in the context of social jihad, which emphasizes that jihad is understood as non-physical efforts oriented toward the welfare of the people, such as education, social welfare, and humanitarian work in the contemporary era).

- *Nahdlatul Ulama mengeluarkan sebuah resolusi jihad yang berisi seruan kepada pemerintah Indonesia untuk mengumumkan jihad fi sabilillah (perang di jalan Allah) guna mempertahankan kemerdekaan Indonesia melawan* (The term sabilillah was used in the context of the national struggle, namely as religious justification for defending Indonesia's independence in the historical context of colonialism, so that jihad was framed as a collective obligation that was contextual and temporary in nature).

3.2.3 *Ekonomi*

Collocation analysis shows that the word jihad, when used in the context of economics (ekonomi) in NU Online, is predominantly constructed through the discourse of community empowerment. Economic jihad is represented as a collective obligation (*fardhu kifayah*) that emphasizes productive work, independence, and the strengthening of society's economic base. In this

context, jihad is not directed at physical confrontation, but rather at systematic efforts to overcome poverty, social inequality, and economic dependence. These findings align with the literature that emphasizes the important role of Islamic economic instruments in supporting community welfare in a broader context (Widiastuti et al. 2022; Tok, Yesuf, and Mohamed 2022; Nurhasanah et al. 2023). This discourse pattern positions economic activity as an integral part of the practice of religious values. Thus, economic jihad is positioned as an ethical instrument for building shared prosperity. This representation shows a shift in the meaning of jihad towards constructive and sustainable social praxis.

Furthermore, the framing of economic jihad in NU Online emphasizes the integration between religious values and the social development agenda. The collocation that emerges shows that economic jihad is associated with terminology such as hard work, social responsibility, and the welfare of the people. This indicates that jihad is understood as a moral ethos that encourages active citizen participation in economic life. Within this framework, economic practices are not merely material in value, but also have dimensions of worship and social service. Thus, economic jihad serves as a medium for recontextualizing jihad in the face of contemporary challenges. These findings reinforce NU Online's position as a space for discourse that represents jihad within a spectrum of peaceful, productive, and transformative values.

- *Jihad intelektual untuk melawan kebodohan, jihad ekonomi untuk mengatasi kemiskinan, dan jihad digital untuk merebut ruang* (Jihad is presented as a strategic effort to increase the community's intellectual capacity, economic independence, and digital literacy. The orientation of jihad is to strengthen human resources and master productive public spaces, so that sabilillah is understood as an ethical-religious path towards collective benefit, rather than physical confrontation).
- *Anak muda akan sangat rapuh, pungkasnya. Jihad Itu di Bidang Ekonomi, Budaya, dan Pendidikan, Bukan Ngebom!* (Jihad is interpreted as a constructive effort to build social and intellectual resilience, while rejecting destructive interpretations that associate jihad with violence, so that sabilillah is understood as a path to strengthening social capacity and civilization).

3.2.4 *Hawa*

An analysis of the collocation of jihad and hawa in NU Online discourse shows the dominance of jihad as a spiritual and ethical practice oriented toward self-control. Jihad is represented as an inner struggle to subdue desires, purify the heart, and build individual moral integrity. In Islamic studies, jihad can be understood as an effort to control oneself, purify one's morals, and draw closer to God (Saritoprak, Exline, and Stauner 2018; Saritoprak, Exline, and Abu-Raiya 2020). This representation positions jihad as an internal process that takes place continuously in everyday life. Thus, jihad is not understood as a confrontational act against external parties, but rather as a personal, reflective endeavor. This discourse pattern underscores the spiritual dimension of jihad, rooted in Sufi teachings and Islamic ethics. This construction emphasizes that jihad functions as a mechanism for shaping an individual's character and piety.

- *Ibn Khaldun menegaskan bahwa jihad sejati adalah perjuangan melawan hawa nafsu, kebodohan, dan dorongan destruktif dalam diri. Al-Ghazali* (Jihad is defined as a process of self-control and personal ethical development, not as an act of external violence)
- *Jihad ruhani yaitu yaitu memerangi hawa nafsu, seperti membersihkan hati dari syak atau keraguan kepada* (Jihad as an internal and ongoing process, which places jihad in the spiritual and moral realm as the highest form of religious struggle)

3.2.5 *Ruhani*

An analysis of the collocation of the words *jihad* and *spiritual (ruhani)* in NU Online discourse shows the dominance of a hierarchical construction of *jihad* that places *spiritual jihad* as the most important form of struggle. *Spiritual jihad* is represented as a process of self-control, purification of the soul, and the formation of individual moral integrity. This representation emphasizes that *jihad* is not merely understood as an external, physical action. Instead, *jihad* is placed within an ongoing framework of ethics and spirituality. This discourse pattern directs readers to understand *jihad* as a reflective practice oriented toward self-improvement. Thus, *spiritual jihad* serves as a moral foundation in religious life.

Furthermore, the hierarchy of *jihad* that places *spiritual jihad* above *physical jihad* shows a shift in the meaning of *jihad* in NU Online's digital Islamic discourse. *Physical jihad* is not eliminated; instead, it is positioned as a contextual and limited form. Conversely, *spiritual jihad* is presented as a universal struggle relevant across space and time. *Jihad* is not merely a practice of violence but an ethical concept that emphasizes self-transformation and social responsibility (Haque 2004; Esposito 2015). This shift demonstrates an effort to recontextualize *jihad* to align it with the values of peace and social ethics.

- *"Jihad yang kedua yaitu jihad ruhani yang berlaku terus sepanjang zaman, karena tidak membutuhkan waktu."* (This sentence emphasizes the concept of *spiritual jihad* as a continuous struggle, which is universal and not bound to any particular conflict or historical context).
- *"Kedua jihad ruhani seperti yang disebutkan tadi, dan ini dinamakan jihad akbar (perjuangan besar)."* (This statement proves the existence of a *jihad* hierarchy, in which *spiritual jihad* is positioned as the highest form of *jihad (jihad akbar)*, emphasizing moral and spiritual dimensions over *physical jihad*).

Table 3 summarizes the dominant predicational patterns associated with the five principal phenomena of *jihad* in NU Online discourse. The findings indicate that *jihad* is predominantly framed through affirmative, normative, and contextually bounded predication rather than through associations with contemporary violence. Instead, *jihad* is constructed as a religiously legitimized historical event, a vehicle of social empowerment, and a form of individual moral and spiritual struggle. The recurrent collocational association of *jihad* with *resolusi*, *fatwa*, and NU reflects an underlying knowledge schema in which religious authority and national history are cognitively intertwined. This discourse presupposes a shared collective memory - particularly among NU constituents-that recognizes the 1945 *Jihad Resolution* as a legitimate defensive response to colonial threat. Such cognitive framing naturalizes *jihad* as historically situated and institutionally authorized, rather than as an individually mobilized call to action. At the level of social context, this recontextualization must be situated within Indonesia's post-Reformasi political landscape, characterized by the rise of transnational jihadist narratives and intensified state counter-radicalization initiatives. NU Online's emphasis on historically bounded and spiritually elevated *jihad* functions not only as a theological clarification but also as a strategic positioning within broader national efforts to counter extremism. In this sense, the discourse does more than redefine *jihad* semantically; it participates in institutional attempts to stabilize religious moderation within Indonesia's digital public sphere.

Table 3 Prediction of Jihad Phenomena in the Corpus

Phenomena	Prediction
Resolusi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Historical religious decisions in 1945 - National struggle and defense of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia

	- Collective memory of the nation through Santri Day and historical reenactments
	- Symbols of religious nationalism, not contemporary violence
Sabilillah	- Ethical orientation and religious objectives of jihad
	- National struggle and social jihad
	- Devotion and welfare of the people
Ekonomi	- Collective obligations
	- Productive work and poverty alleviation
	- Empowerment of the people and social-religious responsibility
Hawa	- Inner struggle
	- Individual piety
Ruhani	- The greater jihad (jihad akbar)
	- Continuous moral and spiritual struggle
	- Higher than physical jihad

3.3 Discursive Themes

In identifying the discursive themes within the discourse of jihad on NU Online, this study does not treat lexical frequency as a direct determinant of themes, but rather as a heuristic entry point for further discourse exploration. The analysis begins by mapping word frequency distributions to identify lexical nodes with high visibility in the corpus. A threshold of more than 50 occurrences is used not as a final thematic criterion, but as an initial indicator to select lexical nodes that potentially play a central discursive role (Baker et al. 2008; Partington, Taylor, and Duguid 2013). Based on this stage, the words "resolusi," "NU," and "makna" (resolution, NU, and meaning) are treated as discursive entry points, rather than themes in themselves (Hunston and Sinclair 2000).

The next stage involves collocation and concordance analysis of these three lexical nodes to trace usage patterns, discursive functions, and the accompanying socio-ideological context. Discursive themes are then derived through interpretative engagement with the recurring concordance context, identifying consistent representational functions in framing jihad (Sinclair 1991). Through this process, themes are not understood as categories based on individual words, but as meaning patterns that are articulated repeatedly through lexical relations, discourse structures, and representation strategies. This approach aligns with the tradition of Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies, which positions quantitative data as the basis for initial exploration, while theme identification is carried out through qualitative CDA-based analysis (Baker et al. 2008; Wodak 2002). This approach also opens up space to understand variations in framing jihad across different types of texts and discourse registers within the NU Online corpus (Biber 1995). The discursive themes identified in this study are not selected on the basis of topical appeal or analytical preference, but emerge from recurrent and statistically observable patterns within the corpus. Quantitative tendencies - particularly frequency concentration and collocational strength - serve as the empirical foundation for identifying thematic clusters, which are subsequently refined through concordance-based contextual interpretation. In this sense, themes are data-driven rather than impressionistic, and are analytically bounded by demonstrable linguistic regularities in the corpus. The thematic structure presented here does not claim exhaustive coverage of every textual variation; however, it accounts for the dominant and systematically recurring meaning patterns while acknowledging the presence of less frequent or peripheral articulations.

3.3.1 Discursive Theme 1: Jihad as a Historical Response to Colonialism

The results of collocation and concordance analysis in the NU Online corpus show that jihad is consistently understood as a historical response to the colonial conditions experienced by the Indonesian people in the past. Jihad is not treated as an ahistorical religious practice or one that applies across socio-political contexts. Instead, NU Online frames jihad strictly within a specific time and space, particularly in the colonial context leading up to and around 1945. This framing is evident in the dominance of references to the Jihad Resolution, the events of November 10, 1945, and the role of Islamic scholars in responding to colonialism. Jihad is thus positioned as a religious practice born out of concrete historical needs. This positioning confirms the connection between the meaning of jihad and the collective experience of the Indonesian people during the colonial period.

In NU Online discourse, jihad is understood as a religious decision that arises from emergencies caused by colonial threats and is directed at defending national independence. Jihad is not used to justify violence in peaceful conditions or in contemporary socio-political situations. Jihad is a normative and ethical effort, in accordance with sharia law, to address threats (self-defense) (Jackson 2002; Hamid and Sein 2009). This emphasis is evident in the mention of the Jihad Resolution as a situational fatwa issued to address real threats to the nation's sovereignty. Jihad is treated as a moral and religious instrument that functions in the context of national defense. Thus, the meaning of jihad is strictly limited by the historical conditions that underlie it. This limitation prevents jihad from being interpreted outside of its social and historical context.

NU Online situates jihad within the framework of national history through strong links to the memory of the struggle for independence. The narrative of jihad is presented through references to historical events, Santri Day commemorations, and the strengthening of the ulama's role during the colonial period. Jihad is understood as part of the dynamics of the nation's history, not as a normative teaching that is always active. This approach emphasizes that the relevance of jihad depends on the existence of a real threat to the state's sovereignty. In the post-independence period, jihad is not directed at armed conflict, but rather at strengthening national values. This pattern of discourse shows that jihad is placed within a specific and limited historical framework.

3.3.2 Jihad as a Normative Decision of Authoritative NU Scholars

An analysis of the collocation of the word fatwa in the NU Online corpus shows that jihad is consistently placed within the framework of religious decisions issued by scholars as holders of normative authority. The appearance of phrases such as "fatwa jihad," issued by Hadratussyaikh K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari, confirms that jihad is not an individual action but a collective decision based on scholarly authority. The title Hadratussyaikh attached to K.H. Hasyim Asy'ari confirms his position as a scholar with the highest scientific authority in the Islamic tradition of the archipelago, especially among the NU community. The attachment of this title is not only symbolic but also reflects a scientific capacity widely recognized by the scholarly community. In this framework, the fatwa on jihad is understood as a product of *ijtihad*, valid only if issued by a figure with deep scientific competence in religious matters. The call to jihad cannot be separated from scholarly authority and cannot be issued by individuals or groups that do not have religious legitimacy. Jihad is presented as the result of scholars' *ijtihad* in response to specific socio-political conditions, not as a spontaneous expression of the people. Jihad in NU Online discourse is always preceded by a process of religious reasoning that is valid according to *fiqh*.

The collocation of jihad also shows that the authority of NU scholars restricts its scope. Jihad is

directed at maintaining the unity of the people and the nation, and at avoiding the misuse of the concept of jihad for destructive purposes. NU understands that the concept of jihad in Islam is only used as a form of self-defense (Shah 2013; Yaman 2021; Maryono 2022). In this context, fatwas serve as a mechanism to control the meaning of jihad so that it remains within the corridors of religion and nationality. Jihad is not separated from the normative guidelines set by the ulama. Jihad is placed within clear religious boundaries and is accountable to social and scientific standards.

Although these themes indicate that NU Online consistently recontextualizes jihad within a non-violent and social framework, such framing cannot be understood as a neutral or interest-free discursive practice. From the perspective of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), every process of delegitimization and legitimization of meaning is always related to symbolic power relations that operate through language and institutions (Van Dijk 2001). For example, restricting physical jihad to specific historical contexts not only functions as a deradicalization strategy but also as an institutional mechanism for Nahdlatul Ulama to assert the authority of Islamic interpretations considered legitimate and moderate within the Indonesian public sphere. This practice aligns with Azra's findings, which show that moderate Islamic discourse in Indonesia operates by selecting and reinforcing specific religious authorities to maintain social stability and national cohesion (Azra 2010).

Such framing implicitly marginalizes alternative interpretations of jihad that still regard physical jihad as relevant in the contemporary context, whether originating from radical groups or from more conservative interpretations of Islam. The silence surrounding these arguments - which are rarely presented dialogically in NU Online - indicates a practice of discursive exclusion, where the boundaries of acceptable discourse are defined by institutional authority (Wodak 2002; Van Leeuwen 2008). In the Indonesian context, this practice of exclusion has also been noted in studies of religious discourse, which show that mainstream Islamic media tends to normalize moderate interpretations while silencing or reducing the diversity of interpretations deemed potentially disruptive to social order (Heryanto 2014; Nisa 2018).

Furthermore, framing jihad as a social and moral struggle also affects the audience's position. Readers are positioned as rational subjects expected to accept NU's moderation as a normative and ideal form of Islam. However, CDA research emphasizes that the audience is not always passive; resistance, negotiation, and alternative interpretations of the dominant discourse remain possible, particularly in a polyphonic, competitive digital media ecosystem. Indonesian Muslim audiences are not entirely homogeneous and often negotiate the discourse of moderation with their own religious and ideological experiences (Nisa 2018). The recontextualization of jihad in NU Online is not merely an educational process but also a practice of symbolic power that simultaneously educates, directs, and limits the spectrum of jihad interpretations circulating in Indonesia's digital public sphere. This approach underscores the importance of reading the discourse of moderation not only as a normative solution to radicalism but also as an arena of meaning contestation involving power relations, religious authority, and audience dynamics.

4. CONCLUSION

This study advances political communication theory by challenging the dominant assumption that ideology functions primarily as a stable symbolic resource or a flexible campaign style. The findings demonstrate that, in the context of Islamic party politics, ideology operates as an organisationally mediated communicative process whose effectiveness depends on how meaning is produced, routinised, and sustained within party structures. Rather than being weakened by voter rejection or

declining religious relevance, Islamic ideology in the North Sumatra case is shown to be constrained by centralised message control, personalised authority, and episodic engagement, which interrupt the circulation and stabilisation of meaning over time. This reconceptualisation shifts analytical attention away from ideological content alone toward the organisational conditions under which ideological communication becomes durable or fragile.

From this perspective, the gap between symbolic visibility and political attachment reflects a structural problem in meaning production rather than a failure of ideological appeal. Integrating Strategic Political Communication with Islamic communication principles enables a theoretical synthesis in which strategic fragmentation explains how communication fails, while ethical lenses clarify why such failures undermine ideological coherence without reducing them to moral shortcomings. Practical implications for Islamic parties follow from this analysis, particularly regarding decentralisation, professionalisation, and sustained engagement, yet these are secondary to the article's broader contribution to rethinking ideology as a communicative practice embedded in organisational routines. Future research can extend this framework by examining how different organisational configurations and audience positions reshape ideological communication across comparative political settings.

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