HONESTY NARRATIVES IN THE NEGOTIATION OF RELIGIOUS IDENTITY AMONG MUSLIM FEMALE PUBLIC FIGURES IN DIGITAL MEDIA

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PROGRAM STUDI STUDI AGAMA-AGAM
FAKULTAS STUDI ISLAM DAN PERADABAN
UNIVERSITAS MUHAMMADIYAH SURABAYA

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Diajukan Kepada Universitas Muhammadiyah Surabaya
Untuk Memenuhi Salah Satu Persyaratan
Dalam Memperoleh Gelar
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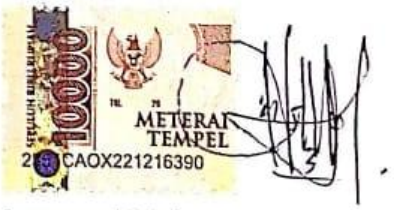
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Honesty Narratives In The Negotiation Of Religious Identity Among Muslim Female Public Figures In Digital Media

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Abstract

This article examines how three Indonesian Muslim female public figures Marshanda, Rina Nose, and Camillia Laetitia Azzahra used public narratives of honesty while negotiating changes in visible religious identity. Rather than diagnosing an internal psychological state, the study analyzes publicly available statements and their media circulation. A qualitative multiple-case design was applied to ten traceable data units published between 2017 and 2024, consisting of video interviews, Instagram statements reproduced by established news outlets, and follow-up media reports. Reflexive thematic analysis combined deductive concepts from cognitive dissonance theory with inductive coding of the subjects' own language. Four themes were identified: perceived inconsistency between public symbols and inner conviction; honesty as a moral counterframe; personal agency in religious searching; and intensified public judgment through digital visibility. The findings show that honesty narratives do not prove that dissonance was eliminated. They function as public meaning-making devices that reframe contested decisions, protect a coherent moral self, and negotiate audience expectations. The three cases also differ: Marshanda foregrounded self-recognition and the consequences of public stigma; Rina Nose emphasized autonomous inquiry and resistance to hostile judgment; and Azzahra explicitly linked honesty to a self-directed religious search. The study therefore proposes a limited interpretive model of narrative reframing while avoiding clinical inference and population-level generalization.

Keywords: *Cognitive Dissonance, Honesty Narrative, Muslim Women, Religious Identity, Social Media*

Abstrak

Artikel ini menganalisis bagaimana tiga publik figur muslimah Indonesia Marshanda, Rina Nose, dan Camillia Laetitia Azzahra menggunakan narasi kejujuran ketika menegosiasikan perubahan identitas religius yang terlihat di ruang publik. Penelitian tidak mendiagnosis keadaan psikologis internal, tetapi menelaah pernyataan publik dan sirkulasinya di media. Desain studi kasus jamak kualitatif diterapkan pada sepuluh unit data yang dapat ditelusuri, terbit pada 2017–2024, berupa wawancara video, pernyataan Instagram yang direproduksi media arus utama, dan laporan media lanjutan. Analisis tematik refleksif memadukan konsep deduktif dari teori disonansi kognitif dengan pengodean induktif terhadap bahasa yang digunakan subjek. Empat tema ditemukan: ketidakselarasan yang dipersepsikan antara simbol publik dan keyakinan batin; kejujuran sebagai bingkai moral tandingan; agensi personal dalam pencarian religius; serta menguatnya penilaian publik akibat visibilitas digital. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa "narasi kejujuran" bukan bukti bahwa disonansi telah hilang. Narasi tersebut berfungsi sebagai perangkat pemaknaan publik untuk membingkai ulang keputusan yang

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diperdebatkan, mempertahankan diri moral yang koheren, dan menegosiasikan ekspektasi audiens. Ketiga kasus juga berbeda: Marshanda menekankan pengenalan diri dan konsekuensi stigma publik; Rina Nose menonjolkan pencarian mandiri dan penolakan terhadap penghakiman; sedangkan Azzahra secara eksplisit menghubungkan kejujuran dengan pencarian religius yang diarahkan diri sendiri. Karena itu, studi ini menawarkan model interpretatif terbatas mengenai pembingkaian ulang naratif tanpa membuat inferensi klinis atau generalisasi populasi.
Kata Kunci: *Disonansi Kognitif, Narasi Kejujuran, Perempuan Muslim, Identitas Religius, Media Sosial*

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A. Introduction

Digital media have made religious expression more than a personal practice. It is also a representation that can be observed, evaluated, circulated, and detached from its original setting. For public figures, a change in dress or another visible religious symbol may quickly be interpreted as a moral declaration, even when the person concerned understands it as one stage in a longer personal journey. Research on digital religion shows that platforms create hybrid spaces in which identity, authority, and religious practice are produced and contested through interaction among users, audiences, media organizations, and technical systems (Campbell and Tsuria 2022; Evolvi 2022; Hannan 2023; Rohmawati, Zulkifli, and Hakiem 2025).

Muslim women encounter an especially gendered form of scrutiny because their bodies and clothing are frequently treated as public indicators of piety. Studies of niqabi women, Muslim influencers, and women's digital religious representation in Indonesia show that dress can simultaneously operate as an expression of faith, a social identity, a mediated image, and an object of moral surveillance (Asran and Udasmoro 2020; Basri 2021; Barizi et al. 2024; Nenohai and Hakim 2024). A visible change therefore cannot be reduced to a simple decline or disappearance of religiosity. The social meaning attached to the symbol may differ from the meaning claimed by the person wearing or removing it.

Cognitive dissonance theory explains how an inconsistency between important cognitions may create tension and encourage behavioral change, attitudinal change, the addition of supporting cognitions, or a reinterpretation of the action (Festinger 1957; Harmon-Jones and Mills 2019). Publicly available materials, however, do not provide direct access to internal psychological states. A researcher may interpret how a person speaks about inconsistency, but cannot establish its intensity or diagnose its psychological consequences from media statements alone. This epistemic boundary is essential because it prevents a theoretical concept from turning a visible change in clothing into an unsupported clinical claim.

This article uses honesty narrative as an operational term for a sequence of public statements that contains three elements. First, the speaker recognizes a distance between public appearance or social expectations and personal conviction or experience. Second,

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the speaker assigns moral value to openly acknowledging that distance. Third, openness is used to explain a decision and to reconstruct a coherent identity. This definition distinguishes an honesty narrative from authenticity, understood as an orientation toward self-congruence, and from self-justification, understood as a possible but not necessary psychological function of the narrative (Harmon-Jones and Mills 2019; Sutton 2020).

Recent studies have discussed Muslim identity on Instagram, digital religious authority, online feminism, and the agency of Muslim women (Daniah and Pribadi 2023; Dwifatma and Beta 2024; Kloos and Ismah 2023; Rachmad and Rohmah 2022). Fewer studies have compared how female public figures use the language of honesty to negotiate a change in religious symbolism while under sustained audience scrutiny. The gap is not merely thematic. It also concerns method: textual evidence, theoretical interpretation, and speculation about private psychology must be separated if public statements are to be analyzed responsibly.

Accordingly, the study asks two questions. How are honesty narratives constructed in the public statements of Marshanda, Rina Nose, and Camillia Laetitia Azzahra? How may these narratives be interpreted as reframing tensions surrounding religious identity in digital public space? The contribution lies in an operational definition, a cross-case comparison, and carefully limited claims that match a small public corpus. The article does not decide whether the subjects' choices were theologically correct, nor does it assess their overall religiosity.

The analytical framework connects three bodies of scholarship that must remain conceptually distinct. The first is cognitive dissonance, which addresses perceived inconsistency among significant cognitions. The second is narrative identity, which concerns the organization of experience into stories that become intelligible to the self and others. The third is digital religion, which examines how religious practice and representation are shaped through relations among platform users, audiences, media institutions, and technologies. The framework is applied sequentially: dissonance identifies the narrated inconsistency, narrative analysis explains the meaning assigned to it, and digital religion explains why that meaning becomes publicly contested (Campbell and Tsuria 2022; Festinger 1957; Harmon-Jones and Mills 2019).

The coexistence of apparently inconsistent elements does not by itself establish a measurable psychological tension. The significance of an inconsistency depends on its importance to the individual, the decision context, and anticipated consequences. Because this study uses neither psychological scales nor clinical interviews, it focuses on discursive markers: references to discomfort, distance between appearance and belief, pressure from judgment, the need for an independent search, and attempts to present a decision as morally accountable. This limitation prevents cognitive dissonance from being used to infer an inner condition solely from a change in dress.

Narrative identity is treated as selective and situated. When public figures explain decisions, they select events, order reasons, attach moral significance to conduct, and decide which information will remain private. A public statement is therefore not a

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transparent window onto motivation, but neither is it analytically empty. It is a social act showing how a person asks others to understand a decision. Honesty matters because it joins description and moral evaluation: the speaker states what has changed while proposing that openness is preferable to maintaining a symbol perceived as insufficiently congruent with personal conviction.

Authenticity is used cautiously. It refers to an experienced alignment among awareness, values, and self-expression, whereas honesty in this study is a communicative practice that acknowledges misalignment. The two may intersect, but they are not identical. A person can disclose an inconsistency honestly without claiming that every action is authentic, while a claim of authenticity may itself be part of self-presentation. A meta-analysis associates authenticity with well-being and engagement, but that general relationship cannot establish the psychological condition of the three cases examined here (Sutton 2020).

Digital religion places the audience inside the context rather than outside it. Interviews and posts can be excerpted, commented upon, transferred between platforms, and connected to broader moral debates. Because women's religious identity is often read through clothing, a change in appearance may acquire meanings that the subject cannot fully control. Studies of veiled women, Muslim influencers, and online authority demonstrate that digital visuality can reinforce displayed piety while also intensifying stigma and surveillance (Asran and Udasmoro 2020; Barizi et al. 2024; Basri 2021; Hefner 2022).

The framework therefore does not ask whether each decision is morally or theologically valid. It examines the structure of meaning: what tension is named, what value explains the decision, how personal responsibility is constructed, and where the audience is positioned in the account. This orientation keeps the analysis within psychology of religion and media studies without converting it into a judgment about Islamic law or the spiritual quality of an individual.

B. Method

The study uses a qualitative multiple-case design. The cases are three Indonesian Muslim female public figures who experienced a publicly visible change in hijab expression and for whom traceable statements were available. Purposive selection was used to compare the language of honesty across an actress, a television presenter, and a member of a prominent political family, all of whom had substantial digital visibility. The unit of analysis is not the total personality or biography of each subject. It is a public statement that explicitly addresses a decision, conviction, honesty, self-searching, or a response to social judgment.

The final corpus consists of ten data units: two video interviews or media reproductions of interviews, three Instagram statements substantially reproduced by established news outlets, and five follow-up reports containing direct statements or descriptions of public response. The 2017–2024 range was retained because the relevant

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decisions involving Rina Nose and Marshanda predated 2020, whereas Azzahra's announcement occurred in 2024. A source was included only when its URL, publication date, and media identity were traceable and its text contained a subject's statement rather than a reporter's opinion alone.

Duplicate syndication, reports without traceable statements, and claims about motive made solely by third parties were excluded. When several reports reproduced the same statement, they were treated as one event rather than independent evidence. This decision prevented repetition across portals from artificially increasing the apparent frequency of a theme. Video interviews were treated as closest to primary statements; reproductions of Instagram posts were used when the original post was difficult to access; and follow-up journalism was used mainly to reconstruct the context of public response.

Analysis followed reflexive thematic analysis. The first stage involved familiarization and a contextual note for each unit. The second involved open coding of phrases such as being honest with oneself, searching independently, acting from the heart, making one's own choice, feeling afraid, experiencing threat, and encountering public judgment. The third grouped codes into self-relation, moral framing, religious search, and audience pressure. The fourth reviewed candidate themes against the entire corpus and searched for divergence. The final stage compared the themes with cognitive dissonance theory without treating the theory as a diagnosis (Braun and Clarke 2021; Byrne 2022; Kiger and Varpio 2020).

Coding was performed at the level of meaning units rather than isolated words. The word honest entered the honesty-narrative category only when it was tied to acknowledged inconsistency and an explanation of a decision. Statements about searching independently were coded as agency in religious searching. References to fear, threat, condemnation, repeated questioning, or expectations were coded as audience pressure. A unit could receive more than one code when it clearly linked a personal choice, a moral value, and a social response. The initial manuscript referred to open, axial, and selective coding. That description was revised to maintain consistency with reflexive thematic analysis and to avoid implying that the study generated a formal grounded theory. Initial codes were compared for patterned relationships and developed into provisional themes. Themes were then tested by asking whether each had adequate textual support and whether it made a distinct analytical contribution. The procedure resulted in four related but nonidentical themes.

Negative-case reading focused on evidence that did not fully fit the expected pattern. Rina Nose, for example, did not consistently use the word honesty, so her materials were not forced into precisely the same pattern as Azzahra's statement. Similarly, Marshanda's discussion of being herself was not treated as evidence of religious rejection. Credibility was also supported through a source–statement–code–theme audit trail and cross-source comparison. Triangulation meant comparing public representations, not claiming that media accounts were identical to private experience. The study uses only publicly disseminated materials, minimizes the reproduction of

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sensitive statements, and does not label the subjects' faith or mental health. Public availability does not remove the ethical obligation to avoid unnecessary repetition, humiliation, or unsupported diagnosis. The subjects' names are retained because the cases were already widely publicized and the analysis depends on their public accounts, but direct quotation is limited and contextualized.

Table 1. Empirical corpus and analytical function

Code	Subject	Date and source	Textual evidence or context	Analytical function
M1	Marshanda	Detik, 23 Sep 2019	Emphasized honesty toward herself when facing risk and others' judgment.	Honesty; public risk
M2	Marshanda	Suara, 3 Nov 2020	Linked presenting herself as herself with a personally improved condition.	Self-coherence
M3	Marshanda	Detik, 23 Jul 2021	Recounted condemnation and accusations after a change in religious appearance.	Stigma; surveillance
R1	Rina Nose	YouTube, 13 Nov 2017	Described an independent process of searching and decision making.	Agency in searching
R2	Rina Nose	Detik, 11 Nov 2017	Said judgmental responses made her feel afraid and threatened.	Audience pressure
R3	Rina Nose	Detik, 5 Dec 2018	Said she did not feel guilty toward herself after searching	Moral autonomy

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			and thinking independently.	
R4	Rina Nose	Okezone, 1 Mar 2020	Resisted reducing a personal reason to a short answer for public consumption.	Privacy boundary
A1	C. L. Azzahra	Instagram/Detik, 5 Apr 2024	Said a future decision should emerge from her own search for conviction.	Religious search
A2	C. L. Azzahra	Instagram/Suara, 5 Apr 2024	Described public disclosure as her way of being honest and rejecting deception.	Explicit definition
A3	C. L. Azzahra	Liputan6, 10 Apr 2024	Responded to harsh comments and managed continuing digital engagement.	Audience negotiation

Source: compiled by the authors from the public corpus listed in the references.

C. Results and Discussion

The corpus contains language of inconsistency, searching, pressure, and reframing, but it does not allow the researcher to measure the intensity of dissonance or verify that it was reduced. Dissonance is therefore used as an interpretive lens for narrated relationships among symbols, convictions, decisions, and public judgment. This formulation is more defensible than stating that all three subjects experienced an identical psychological condition. The commonality lies in the discourse structure a distance between audience expectations and personal evaluation not in proof of the same private motive.

This distinction changes how the results are worded. A sentence stating that a subject reduced dissonance would present a psychological process as fact, even though the data show only a communicative act. The analysis instead states that a narrative may function as reframing or may be interpreted as an attempt to construct coherence. Such

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phrasing still permits theoretical explanation while preserving the boundary between empirical material and inference.

Religious symbols had social force in all three cases because the hijab had already become part of each public image. Scholarship on Muslim women's digital representation shows that dress is read not only as a personal choice but also as a sign connected with piety, authority, class, femininity, and community membership (Asran and Udasmoro 2020; Nenohai and Hakim 2024; Nisa 2022; Shin, Lew, and Seo 2023). A visible change can consequently generate demands for explanation that extend beyond clothing. Social pressure appears through concrete descriptions rather than as an abstract assumption. The materials refer to condemnation, allegations of religious conversion, repeated questions about belief, threatening modes of advice, and concern that parents would be blamed. Yet the pressure is not uniform. Marshanda foregrounded condemnation and stigmatizing interpretations of her mental health. Rina discussed intimidation produced by judgmental religious responses. Azzahra anticipated blame and explicitly protected her family from responsibility.

The corpus does not support a simple opposition between external symbols and personal meaning. Azzahra left open the possibility that she might wear the hijab again if that decision emerged from her own search. The issue is therefore not the symbol alone, but the claimed source of its legitimacy. The evidence is better understood as a negotiation between external authority and personal commitment than as a final movement from symbolic religion to individual religion. The clearest honesty narrative occurs in Azzahra's case. Statements reproduced by Detik and Suara connected three elements: a decision concerning the hijab, the need to arrive at conviction through an independent search, and the description of public openness as a way to be honest. She also distinguished appearance from a sincere heart and asked observers not to blame her parents. The account thus combines recognized inconsistency, a moral value, personal agency, and responsibility for the decision (Bagaskara 2024; Suara.com 2024).

In Marshanda's case, a comparable structure appears through the emphasis on being honest with herself and accepting the social risks attached to that choice. Later accounts connected presenting herself as she understood herself with an improved sense of personal coherence. The corpus does not show that she rejected religious values as a whole. It shows an attempt to relocate evaluation from the maintenance of a publicly observed symbol toward congruence between experience and self-presentation (DetikHot 2019; DetikHot 2021; Suara.com 2020).

Rina Nose used somewhat different language. Her accounts emphasized that she had thought, searched, and reached a decision independently, while judgmental comments made her feel afraid or threatened. This narrative draws a moral boundary between personal inquiry and hostile audience judgment. Because explicit references to honesty do not occur consistently in every unit, Rina's case is more accurately coded as reflective autonomy that overlaps with, but is not identical to, the honesty narrative (DetikHot 2017; DetikHot 2018; YouTube 2017).

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The differences clarify the relationship among honesty, authenticity, and self-justification. Honesty is a public statement or communicative practice; authenticity is the value of self-congruence claimed or implied by that statement; self-justification is one possible psychological function of the framing. The first two are visible in the text. The third can only be proposed as a limited interpretation. The evidence cannot establish whether the speakers consciously sought justification or simply described convictions they genuinely held.

Honesty operates as a moral counterframe by changing the question through which a contested action is evaluated. Instead of answering only whether the subject conformed to a visible expectation, the narrative asks whether the action corresponded with a conviction genuinely held. The shift does not cancel religious norms. It changes the basis of public self-defense. Honesty becomes a moral vocabulary recognizable to audiences, allowing a disputed decision to remain within a language of responsibility. This communicative function is visible in the effort to prevent predictable misinterpretations. Azzahra insisted that the decision was hers rather than evidence of parental failure. Rina responded to claims about religious conversion constructed from excerpted material. Marshanda described her choice as part of a longer process rather than a sudden act. Each subject contested a causal account imposed by others: family influence, a simple change of faith, impulsiveness, or mental instability.

The word strategy should not imply manipulation or complete planning. In qualitative interpretation, strategy may refer to a recurring communicative pattern that helps a person respond to a difficult setting. An honesty narrative can simultaneously express a conviction, organize emotional experience, and seek social understanding. The available materials do not permit the researcher to determine how much weight belongs to each function. Agency emerges through the claim that a religious choice should arise from one's own search rather than environmental demand. Azzahra connected agency with the possibility of wearing the hijab again if personally convinced. Rina defended the independence and privacy of inquiry. Marshanda emphasized willingness to accept consequences for a decision she understood as more congruent with herself. In each case, agency concerns who may authorize the relationship between visible expression and personal conviction.

Agency does not equal rejection of religion. Digital religion research shows that users may negotiate authority without leaving a religious framework; platforms multiply the figures, sources, experiences, and vocabularies through which faith is interpreted (Hannan 2023; Hefner 2022; Rohmawati, Zulkifli, and Hakiem 2025). Changes in visible expression are therefore more safely interpreted as negotiations of meaning than as evidence of theological departure. Research on Muslim women in Indonesia further shows that agency need not take the form of direct opposition to religious norms. It may involve choosing how a norm is practiced, negotiating with family, managing visibility, or reinterpreting personal responsibility. The article consequently does not present the subjects as icons of emancipation or deviation. The data show only that they claimed a

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greater role in deciding how conviction and appearance should be related (Dwifatma and Beta 2024; Kloos and Ismah 2023; Nisa 2022).

Agency also has a temporal dimension. The subjects described religious identity as a continuing process rather than a single event that closed all future possibilities. The language of process, searching, and potential reconsideration prevents one visible moment from permanently defining the individual. This is particularly important in digital settings, where archived stories and reposted content can preserve a single event as if it represented an unchanging identity. The reinterpretation found in the corpus primarily concerns the measure of integrity. Integrity is not described only through stability of appearance, but through correspondence among action, heart, and personally acknowledged conviction. This shift allows a subject to retain a moral identity when a public symbol changes. It should not be confused with doctrinal change, because the corpus provides no systematic explanation of the subjects' theological positions.

Digital media intensify tension because personal decisions become objects of comments, excerpts, screenshots, and labels. Rina's case shows how religious comments were experienced as frightening and threatening. Marshanda's later reflections recall condemnation and moral accusations. Azzahra's Instagram announcement quickly generated extensive commentary and cross-platform coverage. This material supports a claim about communicative pressure, but it cannot quantify psychological harm. At the same time, platforms enable subjects to formulate explanations in their own terms. Studies of Muslim influencers, online feminism, and veiled communities demonstrate that posts, captions, and videos can construct identity, contest stigma, and introduce alternative moral frames (Basri 2021; Daniah and Pribadi 2023; Rachmad and Rohmah 2022). Digital media therefore perform a double function: they expand surveillance while providing resources through which narrative authority may be reclaimed.

Cross-platform circulation increases the likelihood that context will disappear. A long statement may become a short headline, a video excerpt, or a screenshot. A fragment of Rina's writing generated claims that required another response. Azzahra's Instagram text was rapidly reproduced by news portals. Identity narration therefore does not end when the subject publishes a post. Its meaning continues to be shaped through editorial selection, audience comments, and platform distribution. Digital surveillance is also gendered. Women's bodies are frequently made into visible sites of moral proof, while conviction cannot be directly observed. Research on the politics of the hijab in Indonesia shows that women's dress can become a field of negotiation among piety, institutional authority, individual rights, and social expectation (Asran and Udasmoro 2020; Nenohai and Hakim 2024). Celebrity adds another layer: personal changes receive exceptional reach because they are connected with an already established public image.

Direct communication through personal accounts nevertheless reduces dependence on conventional spokespersons. Azzahra could establish the terms through which she wished the decision to be understood. Marshanda and Rina could challenge labels through interviews. Digital space is therefore neither simply liberating nor simply

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oppressive. It offers narrative resources while creating an expectation that a public figure must repeatedly explain herself (Campbell and Tsuria 2022; Evolvi 2022; Hannan 2023). The honesty narrative addresses two audiences. Inwardly, it arranges a coherent relationship between a personal choice and a moral self-image. Outwardly, it asks observers to evaluate the choice through an alternative value—honesty, searching, and personal responsibility—rather than through symbolic compliance alone. This interpretation is consistent with scholarship showing that digital religious identity is shaped through expressive acts, audience response, and platform conditions (Campbell and Tsuria 2022; Hannan 2023; Rachmad and Rohmah 2022).

Cross-case comparison produces a four-part interpretive model: narrated inconsistency, public acknowledgment of choice, activation of an alternative value such as honesty or autonomy, and negotiation of legitimacy with an audience. The model describes discourse, not a definite psychological sequence. Its elements can overlap, and no case displays each element with equal strength. Audience pressure may appear before a decision as an anticipated consequence or after it through condemnation and speculation. Azzahra provides the most explicit formulation because one set of statements links choice, religious search, the heart, honesty, personal responsibility, and family. Marshanda strengthens the model's attention to social consequences and post-decision self-coherence. Rina shows its boundary: autonomy and inquiry are more prominent than the explicit word honesty. This variation improves the analysis because the concept is not extended mechanically to every case.

Theoretically, reframing can lessen inconsistency by adding a cognition that supports an action: the decision is no longer interpreted only as a failure to meet expectations, but also as an honest and personally responsible act. Yet the public materials do not show whether psychological discomfort decreased, persisted, or changed form. The article's final claim is limited to an observable narrative function, not a measured therapeutic effect. Empirically, the findings demonstrate why one quotation cannot establish motive. Meaning emerges through relations among initial statements, follow-up explanations, responses to allegations, and recurring language. The corpus matrix is therefore not a decorative methodological addition. It provides an audit trail showing the source of each interpretation and indicates where the argument rests on direct statement, mediated reproduction, or contextual reporting.

Table 2. Cross-Case Thematic Comparison

Case	Narrated tension	Primary frame	Interpretive boundary
Marshanda	Public religious image, self-recognition, and condemnation	Honesty toward the self and acceptance of risk	Does not prove a single motive or loss of religiosity

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Rina Nose	Personal searching versus audience demand and judgment	Reflective autonomy and privacy boundaries	Honesty is not always stated explicitly
C. L. Azzahra	Environmental expectations versus conviction sought independently	Honesty, personal choice, and religious searching	One sequence of posts cannot represent a long-term journey

Source: Authors' Analysis.

1. Implications for the Psychology of Religion

The study has methodological implications for psychology of religion research using media materials. Researchers must distinguish religious experience, representation of experience, and circulation of that representation. An interview or post records what was said in a particular situation; journalism records how a statement was selected and framed; audience reaction records diverse reception. Combining these levels without distinction produces psychological claims that exceed the evidence. The present analysis keeps them separate so that each interpretation can be traced to an appropriate type of material.

Religiosity should not be reduced to a single visual indicator. The hijab carries significant religious meanings, but a person's relationship with religion also includes conviction, ritual practice, emotion, knowledge, community, and biography, much of which is not publicly visible. Because the corpus concerns changes in appearance, this study addresses the negotiation of visible identity only. It does not assess overall religiosity, degree of compliance, or depth of faith. This principle prevents scholarship from reproducing the judgmental logic it seeks to analyze.

Honesty narrative may serve as an intermediate concept for research in other settings. Future studies could compare public figures with ordinary social media users, examine decisions to adopt as well as remove visible symbols, or test whether audiences receive honesty claims differently according to gender and social status. Such work should maintain a clear operational definition and should not presume that every statement about being oneself proves cognitive dissonance. The concept can then develop without losing empirical precision.

The analysis also matters for media practice. Headlines that compress a religious journey into a single decision can remove context and reinforce labeling. Quotation should preserve the relationship among the statement, its time, and its communicative setting. Readers likewise need to distinguish criticism of an idea from judgment of a person, particularly when information about conviction appears only in fragmented content. Contextual accuracy protects subjects and improves research quality because analysis based on sensational fragments exaggerates conflict and erases ambivalence.

Public availability does not eliminate a researcher's duty to avoid excessive reproduction, insult, or diagnosis without evidence. The balance between traceability and

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dignity becomes especially important when a change in identity triggers stigma or personal attack. Names may be analytically necessary in well-publicized cases, but direct quotation and personal detail should be limited to what the argument requires. This ethical restraint is compatible with rigorous analysis because it encourages attention to context rather than the accumulation of intrusive material.

2. Limitations

The study has four principal limitations. First, the corpus consists of public materials already selected and framed by subjects, platforms, or media editors. Second, reports can excerpt interviews and cannot replace complete primary transcripts. Third, three cases cannot represent Indonesian Muslim women or public figures generally. Fourth, without direct interviews, the study cannot verify motive, emotion, or psychological change over time. The model should therefore be treated as an interpretive proposal grounded in public discourse.

These limits shape the language of the conclusion. The article does not claim that removing the hijab is always caused by dissonance, that honesty necessarily amounts to self-justification, or that religious identity moves linearly from symbolic to personal forms. Longitudinal interviews, complete post archives, and ethically designed audience analysis could test the model more strongly and examine how narratives change after public attention declines.

D. Conclusion

Across ten public data units, honesty narratives framed changes in visible religious expression as decisions that retained a moral basis. In Azzahra's case, the function was explicit in the connection among honesty, independent searching, and the possibility of future change. Marshanda emphasized honesty toward herself and acceptance of social risk. Rina foregrounded reflective autonomy, privacy, and resistance to hostile judgment. The cases share a discursive structure, but they do not provide evidence of identical motivations. The findings do not prove that the narratives eliminated cognitive dissonance. More modestly, the narratives may be interpreted as reframing devices through which subjects constructed moral coherence and negotiated legitimacy in digital space. Social media intensified pressure by expanding surveillance and recirculation, while also enabling subjects to explain decisions in their own words. These conclusions apply to the corpus and cases examined, not to Muslim women as a population. The interpretive model should therefore be treated as a transparent framework for further inquiry, not as a definitive account of any subject's private faith.

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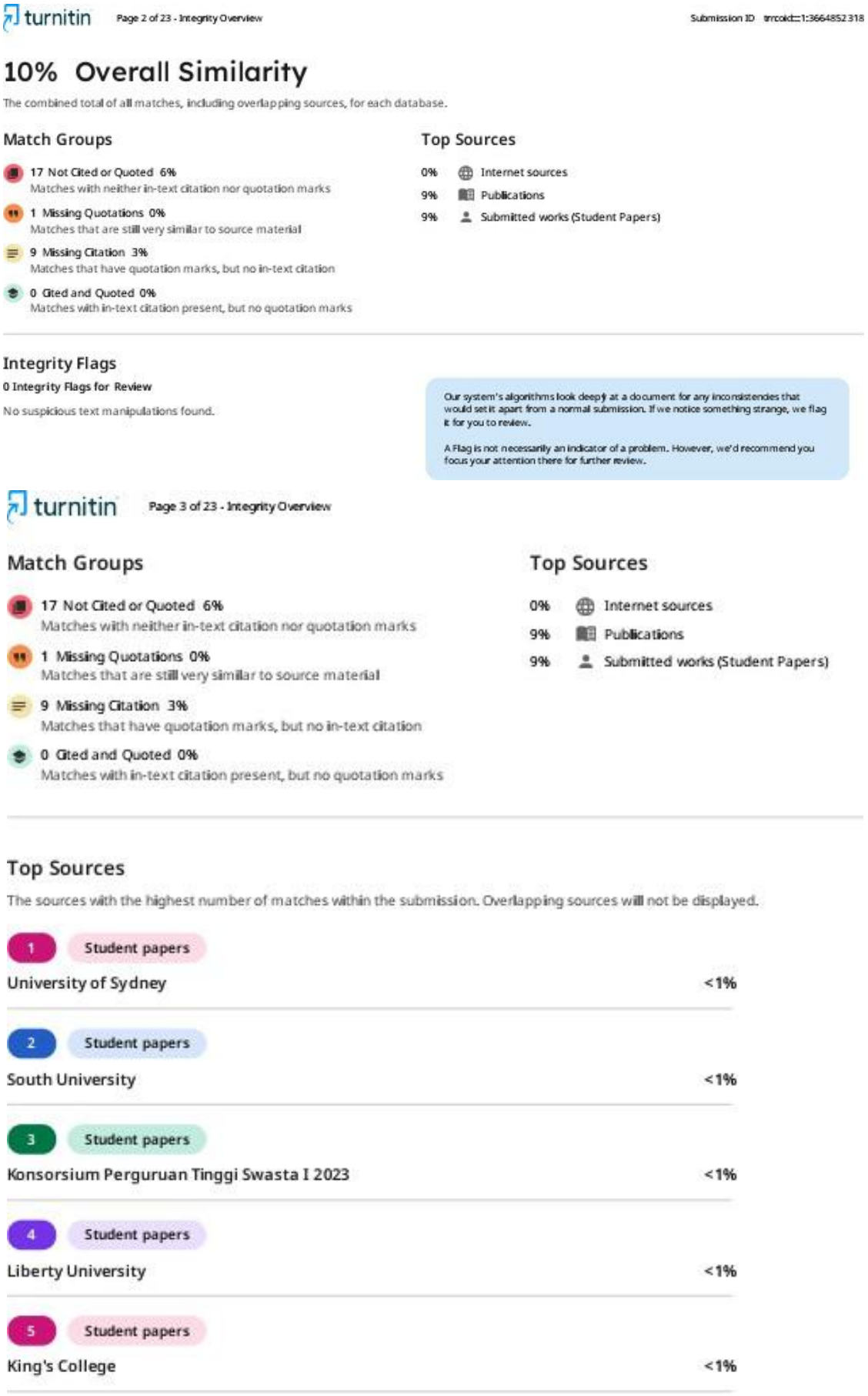
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Manuscript Title	:	Narasi Kejujuran sebagai Strategi Reduksi Disonansi Kognitif dalam Dinamika Identitas Religius Publik Figur Muslimah Marshanda, Rina Nose, dan Camillia Laetitia Azzahra
Authors	:	Mochammad Idris, Mukayyat Al amin, Muhammad Wahid Nur Tualeka
Affiliation	:	Universitas Muhammadiyah Surabaya, Indonesia
Corresponding Author's Email:		mochammadidris03425@gmail.com

This article has successfully passed the double-blind peer review process and is scheduled to be published in: **Volume 6, Issue 2 (September 2026)**

This Letter of Acceptance is issued truthfully for official and academic purposes. Please note that if any form of academic misconduct or ethical violation is found post-acceptance, appropriate actions will be taken in accordance with our publication ethics and editorial policies.

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This letter is to certify that the abstract of the thesis below

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Name	:	Mochammad Idris
Student ID Number	:	20221552011
Department	:	Religious Studies, Bachelor program, Faculty of Islamic Studies and Civilization, Muhammadiyah University of Surabaya, Indonesia

has been endorsed by Language Center of Muhammadiyah University of Surabaya for further approval by the examining committee of the faculty.

Surabaya, 1 October 2026

Chairperson,

Jepri Ali Saiful, Ph.D.