

Arabic Vocabulary and Socio-Religious Identity in Indonesian Muslim Society: A Sociolinguistic Literature Review

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Abstract

The increasing use of Arabic vocabulary in Indonesian Muslim society reflects a sociolinguistic phenomenon in which language carries not only communicative functions but also social, cultural, and religious meanings. This study aims to synthesize existing scholarship on the role of Arabic vocabulary in the construction of socio-religious identity and to provide an integrated sociolinguistic interpretation through the perspectives of Social Identity Theory and Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital. This research employed a qualitative approach using a traditional literature review design. Data were collected from peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, conference proceedings, and other relevant publications published between 2016 and 2026. The collected literature was analyzed thematically by identifying recurring patterns related to identity construction, symbolic meaning, and the social functions of Arabic vocabulary across educational, religious, economic, and public contexts. The synthesis indicates that Arabic lexical practices are consistently interpreted as symbolic resources associated with religious affiliation, identity expression, and the representation of Islamic values across diverse social settings. At the same time, the reviewed literature suggests that these symbolic meanings vary according to educational background, religious orientation,

institutional context, and local socio-cultural traditions, indicating that Arabic vocabulary is interpreted differently across Indonesian Muslim communities. The contribution of this study lies in providing a comprehensive conceptual synthesis that integrates findings previously discussed in separate contexts, thereby offering a broader understanding of the dynamic relationship between language, socio-religious identity, and symbolic meaning in contemporary Indonesian Muslim society while identifying the need for further empirical research across diverse local communities.

Keywords: *Arabic Vocabulary, Sociolinguistics, Social Identity, symbolic capital*

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is home to the world's largest Muslim population, making the relationship between language, religion, and identity a highly significant sociolinguistic phenomenon within its multicultural society (Almurashi, 2024). One of the most visible manifestations of this phenomenon is the increasing use of Arabic vocabulary in everyday communication, religious discourse, educational institutions, public spaces, and digital interactions (Alnizar et al., 2025). The presence of Arabic lexical items in Indonesian society is not merely the result of linguistic borrowing but reflects a long historical process closely connected to the spread of Islam in the Indonesian archipelago (Yahya et al., 2021). Since the arrival of Islam through trade networks, Islamic scholarship, and cultural assimilation, Arabic has occupied an important symbolic position within Muslim communities in Indonesia (Salmiyanti, 2025; Wandira et al., 2025). Over time, many Arabic expressions such as *alhamdulillah*, *insya Allah*, *hijrah*, *ukhuwah*, *halal*, and *barakah* have moved beyond their liturgical origins and become embedded within broader social and cultural practices (Adelaar & Hoogervorst, 2024; Rahman et al., 2021).

In contemporary Indonesia, the use of Arabic vocabulary has expanded significantly beyond religious rituals into social media, popular culture, economic activities, and public discourse (Pujiati et al., 2025). Arabic expressions are increasingly found not only in religious sermons and worship practices but also in social media discourse, educational environments, commercial branding, lifestyle movements, and interpersonal communication (Kurniawan, 2025). The growing visibility of Arabic lexical

items in public spaces demonstrates that language functions not solely as a communicative tool but also as a symbolic resource through which individuals construct and negotiate social identity (Shidiq et al., 2023; Suleiman, 2019). Within sociolinguistic studies, language is widely understood as an important marker of group affiliation, social distinction, and ideological positioning (Turner et al., 1979). Linguistic choices frequently reflect attempts to signal belonging, legitimacy, authenticity, and moral orientation within particular social communities (Naska, 2024; Tabouret-Keller, 2017).

However, the use of Arabic vocabulary as a symbolic linguistic resource may also contribute to forms of social distinction within multicultural societies. In certain contexts, the frequent use of Arabic expressions can be associated with perceptions of heightened religiosity, moral commitment, or stronger Islamic authenticity (Nasrullah, 2025; Satriawan, 2023; Webb, 2016). From a critical sociolinguistic perspective, such linguistic practices should not be interpreted solely as direct reflections of personal piety, but also as part of broader social processes through which identity, legitimacy, and symbolic recognition are negotiated in public interaction. In this sense, Arabic vocabulary may function as symbolic capital, enabling individuals or groups to position themselves within morally valued social frameworks (Bourdieu, 1991; Serrano Illán, 2026; Yul & Andrian, 2024).

Rather than assuming that Arabic lexical practices inherently produce particular social outcomes, this study examines how previous sociolinguistic research has interpreted the social meanings associated with their use in different Indonesian Muslim contexts. Existing studies suggest that Arabic vocabulary is frequently understood as a symbolic resource through which religious identity is expressed, negotiated, and recognized within particular communities. At the same time, the literature indicates that these linguistic practices may also be interpreted as contributing to symbolic distinctions, social boundaries, or differential recognition, although such interpretations remain context-dependent and cannot be generalized without empirical investigation. Therefore, this study does not seek to demonstrate causal relationships between Arabic vocabulary

and social hierarchy; instead, it synthesizes how existing scholarship conceptualizes the relationship between Arabic lexical practices, socio-religious identity, and symbolic meaning in contemporary Indonesian Muslim society (Farchan & Rosharlianti, 2021; Pujiati et al., 2025).

Several previous studies have examined the relationship between Arabic use and religious identity in Indonesia (Aawayed-Bishara, 2025; Yahya et al., 2021). Most of these studies discuss Arabic as a marker of religious identity, a medium of religious communication, or a component of Islamic education and language learning (Aawayed-Bishara, 2025; Ghuftron et al., 2025; Pujiati et al., 2025). These studies have provided important insights into the role of Arabic in Indonesian Muslim society. However, their discussions are generally limited to specific contexts and have not comprehensively synthesized how Arabic vocabulary is interpreted across various domains of social life.

Although previous studies have acknowledged that Arabic vocabulary carries religious, cultural, and social meanings, these discussions remain fragmented across different fields of study. Consequently, there is still limited understanding of how findings from these studies can be integrated to explain the broader relationship between Arabic lexical practices, socio-religious identity, and symbolic meaning in contemporary Indonesian Muslim society. Rather than proposing Arabic vocabulary as a new form of symbolic capital, this study synthesizes existing literature using the perspectives of Social Identity Theory and Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital to provide a more comprehensive conceptual understanding of how Arabic vocabulary has been interpreted as a symbolic resource in education, religious life, economic activities, and public communication in Indonesia.

This study seeks to examine Arabic vocabulary not merely as a linguistic phenomenon but as a socio-cultural resource through which religious identity and symbolic meaning are negotiated in everyday life. Specifically, this study investigates how Arabic terms are used, reproduced, and reinterpreted across various social spheres, including educational institutions, economic practices, worship activities, and public

discourse. Rather than assuming that Arabic vocabulary directly represents a fixed ideological position, this study focuses on how particular linguistic expressions become socially associated with religiosity, moral legitimacy, authenticity, and group belonging within existing sociolinguistic discourses.

In addition, this study explores how Arabic lexical practices may function as markers of solidarity, symbolic recognition, and collective identity among Muslim communities. By integrating Social Identity Theory (Turner et al., 1979) and Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital (1991), this study does not seek to develop a new theoretical model or modify existing theories. Instead, it uses these complementary perspectives as an analytical framework to synthesize findings from previous studies on Arabic language use in Indonesia. Social Identity Theory helps explain how Arabic vocabulary is associated with processes of identity formation and group affiliation, while Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital provides a perspective for understanding how language may be interpreted as a socially valued symbolic resource in different social contexts.

Accordingly, the theoretical contribution of this study lies in demonstrating that the relationship between language, identity, and symbolic capital is context-dependent. By synthesizing evidence from diverse social domains, this study shows that Arabic vocabulary may simultaneously function as a resource for expressing religious affiliation, negotiating collective identity, and acquiring symbolic recognition, while these meanings remain open to variation across different Indonesian Muslim communities. Therefore, this study extends the application of Social Identity Theory and Bourdieu's framework by highlighting the importance of socio-cultural context in interpreting the symbolic meanings attached to Arabic lexical practices, rather than treating these theoretical concepts as universally uniform across societies.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach using a traditional literature review design to examine the sociolinguistic role of Arabic vocabulary in shaping the socio-religious identity of Muslims in Indonesia (Snyder, 2019). A traditional literature review

was selected because it enables critical interpretation, conceptual synthesis, and contextual analysis of diverse scholarly discussions concerning language, religion, identity, and symbolic meaning. Unlike systematic reviews that emphasize rigid procedural protocols and statistical aggregation, this approach prioritizes interpretative depth and theoretical integration, making it particularly suitable for exploring complex sociolinguistic phenomena embedded within cultural and ideological contexts (Paul & Barari, 2022).

The data sources included academic journal articles, books, conference proceedings, and other relevant scholarly publications that discuss Arabic vocabulary, sociolinguistics, religious identity, symbolic power, and language practices in Indonesian Muslim society. This study primarily focused on publications produced between 2016 and 2026 to capture both contemporary developments and gradual shifts in the sociolinguistic meanings attached to Arabic vocabulary in Indonesia. The ten-year range was selected to provide a broader analytical perspective on the transformation of Arabic lexical practices across educational, religious, cultural, and digital domains, particularly during the rapid expansion of social media discourse and contemporary Islamic identity movements in Indonesia. In addition to recent publications, earlier foundational works were selectively incorporated to provide historical and theoretical grounding, particularly in discussions of sociolinguistics, Social Identity Theory, symbolic capital, and the historical influence of Arabic within Indonesian Islamic traditions. This combination allowed the study to examine contemporary linguistic developments while still considering longer historical continuities and changing social interpretations of Arabic vocabulary over time.

Data collection was conducted through systematic, repeated searches of various academic sources. The researcher utilized several databases, including Google Scholar, Scopus, ERIC, and ScienceDirect, as well as peer-reviewed journal publications relevant to sociolinguistics, religious identity, language ideology, and Arabic language studies. During the search process, several keywords were used, such as “Arabic vocabulary,”

“sociolinguistics,” “religious identity,” “language and Islam,” and “social identity theory.” The literature selection process was conducted through purposive sampling based on thematic relevance to the relationship among Arabic vocabulary, socio-religious identity, and symbolic representation. Studies were included when they provided theoretical discussions or empirical evidence relevant to the relationship between Arabic lexical practices and socio-religious identity, while publications lacking direct relevance to the research focus were excluded.

Data analysis was conducted using a qualitative approach, with meaning interpreted through thematic analysis. The analysis involved four stages: (1) identifying and organizing relevant literature, (2) coding recurring concepts related to Arabic vocabulary, identity construction, symbolic meaning, and social interaction, (3) grouping the codes into broader analytical themes, and (4) the resulting themes were interpreted using the analytical frameworks of Social Identity Theory and Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital to explain how Arabic vocabulary functions as a sociolinguistic resource within Indonesian Muslim communities. In the concluding stage of analysis, the selected studies were examined comparatively to identify recurring patterns, conceptual consistencies, and dominant sociolinguistic perspectives emerging from the literature. Particular attention was given to key analytical dimensions, including identity construction, symbolic legitimacy, collective affiliation, moral representation, linguistic distinction, and the social interpretation of Arabic lexical practices in both religious and public spheres. This thematic synthesis enabled a comprehensive understanding of how Arabic vocabulary contributes to the construction, negotiation, and representation of socio-religious identity in contemporary Indonesian society (Kushnir, 2025). To ensure the credibility and accuracy of the analysis, this study employs source and theoretical triangulation. This is achieved by comparing findings across studies and interpreting them through Social Identity Theory and the concept of symbolic power. Through this approach, the researcher can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between language use and the formation of socio-religious identity.

Furthermore, this method helps reduce the likelihood of subjective bias in data interpretation.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The Symbolic and Ideological Functions of Arabic Vocabulary in the Formation of Social-Religious Identity

Within the symbolic structure of the Muslim community in Indonesia, Arabic vocabulary holds a crucial position because it carries a deeper meaning than merely serving as a tool for communication (Yahya et al., 2021; Yuldasheva, 2023). Arabic lexical expressions are no longer limited to religious rituals or formal Islamic education but are increasingly used across a broader range of social domains, including interpersonal communication, educational institutions, worship spaces, economic activities, digital communication, and public naming practices (Pahlefi et al., 2025; Sakhiyya & Martin-Anatias, 2023). The widespread use of Arabic vocabulary demonstrates that language functions not only as a communicative instrument but also as a symbolic resource associated with religiosity, morality, legitimacy, and collective identity (Fuadah et al., 2025; Li et al., 2025). Several Arabic expressions that frequently appear in daily interactions among Indonesian Muslims are shown in the following table.

Table 1. The Arabic Vocabulary Use in the Socio-Religious Life of Indonesian Muslims

Arabic Vocabulary	Literal Meaning	Social Domain	Socio-Religious Function
Assalamu'alaikum	Peace be upon you	Daily communication, worship	An Islamic greeting expressing solidarity and respect
Alhamdulillah	Praise be to God	Daily communication	Expression of gratitude rooted in faith
Insha Allah	If God wills	Daily communication	Expresses submission to divine will
Hijrah	Migration	Social media, youth culture	Symbolizes personal religious transformation
Ukhuwah	Brotherhood	Community activities	Strengthens social cohesion among Muslims

Dakwah	Invitation/preaching	Public discourse	Promotes Islamic teachings and values
Akhi	My brother	Interpersonal communication	Creates solidarity among Muslim men
Ukhti	My sister	Interpersonal communication	Creates solidarity among Muslim women
Abi	My father	Family interaction	Replaces local parental terms with Islamic-oriented address forms
Ummi/Umi	My mother	Family interaction	Reflects Islamic-oriented family communication
Abah	Father	Family interaction	Expresses respect and Islamic cultural affiliation
Ustadz	Teacher	Education	Represents religious authority and knowledge
Ustadzah	Female teacher	Education	Represents female religious authority
Tarbiyah	Education/Nurturing	Education	Transmits Islamic values and character formation
Ta'lim	Teaching/Learning	Education	Refers to Islamic learning activities
Akhlaq	Morality	Education	Promotes ethical behaviour and character development
Adab	Proper conduct	Education and social interaction	Encourages Islamic manners and discipline
Halal	Permissible	Economy, business	Legitimizes products and services according to Islamic principles
Haram	Forbidden	Economy, daily life	Distinguishes prohibited practices and products
Amanah	Trustworthiness	Economy, business	Promotes ethical business conduct
Barakah	Blessing	Economy and daily life	Associates activities with divine blessing
Sharia	Islamic law	Economy and institutions	Provides religious legitimacy for economic practices
Zakat	Obligatory almsgiving	Economy and charity	Reinforces social responsibility and

				redistribution
Sadaqah	Voluntary charity	Economy and charity		Encourages generosity and social solidarity
Islamic school names (e.g., Al-Azhar, Al-Hikmah, Al-Irsyad)	Arabic-based institutional names	Education		Establishes religious legitimacy and institutional prestige
Mosque names (e.g., Al-Falah, Al-Ikhlas, Al-Huda)	Arabic-based religious names	Worship		Reinforces Islamic symbolism in public space
Arabic-based personal names (e.g., Muhammad, Ahmad, Fatimah, Aisyah)	Personal naming practices	Family and social life		Expresses religious affiliation and cultural continuity

Table 1 shows that the use of Arabic vocabulary in Indonesian Muslim society is discussed across diverse social domains, including education, religious activities, public communication, economic practices, and digital media. Although previous studies have examined these contexts separately, the overall pattern indicates that Arabic lexical expressions consistently carry meanings that extend beyond their communicative function. Across these domains, Arabic vocabulary is repeatedly associated with the expression of Islamic values, religious affiliation, and the representation of Muslim identity in everyday social contexts (Bassiouney & Walters, 2020; Muthoifin & Elbanna, 2026; Sausa, 2025).

When these findings are viewed collectively, they reveal that the social role of Arabic vocabulary cannot be adequately understood through a single institutional or linguistic context. Instead, Arabic lexical practices acquire different symbolic meanings depending on the social environment in which they are used. This broader interpretation demonstrates that Arabic vocabulary functions as a symbolic resource whose meanings are continuously negotiated through interactions among religious traditions, local cultures, educational institutions, and public practices within Indonesian Muslim society (Luthfi et al., 2026; Menéndez, 2025; Nisa' et al., 2025).

This interpretation is consistent with Social Identity Theory, which explains that language serves as an important marker of social categorization and group

identification (Turner et al., 1979). The repeated use of Arabic expressions in various social settings reflects collective efforts to express religious affiliation and reinforce a shared sense of belonging (Albirini, 2016). However, the reviewed literature also indicates that these identity processes are dynamic and context-dependent, since the meanings attached to Arabic vocabulary vary across communities with different educational backgrounds, religious orientations, and cultural experiences (Altman et al., 2025; Zhu, 2025).

In addition, Arabic vocabulary strongly influences what society considers right or wrong. In everyday conversation, Arabic terms are often used to support certain values, regulate polite behavior, and reinforce religious rules (Ilma & Rohmah, 2026). Here, language functions as a tool of social control to ensure that these values are upheld (Yahya et al., 2020). However, this situation has two sides to it: on one hand, the Arabic language can strengthen a sense of solidarity among fellow Muslims, but on the other hand, it can make non-Muslim groups feel alienated and create a new, subtle social hierarchy (Bourdieu, 1991). Thus, in this diverse country of Indonesia, the use of Arabic terms is not merely a matter of unifying culture, but also a battleground for competing influence and power (Al Shlowiy, 2022).

Based on the explanation above, we have developed a conceptual framework. This framework illustrates how Arabic vocabulary influences the formation of social and religious identity among Muslim communities in Indonesia, as shown below.

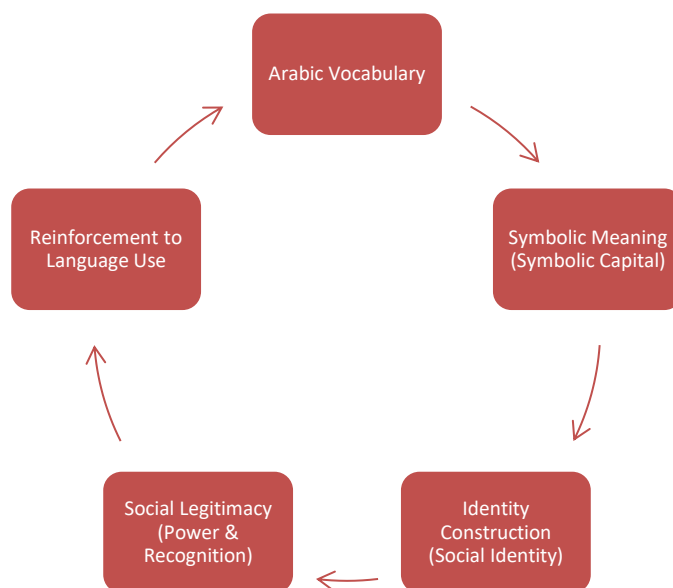


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of the Formation of Socio-Religious Identity through Arabic Vocabulary

The model developed in this study illustrates that Arabic vocabulary operates through interconnected and cyclical processes. Language is the primary means by which symbolic meaning is shaped; this meaning, in turn, influences the formation of social and religious identity, ultimately helping to establish social legitimacy. In this process, Arabic vocabulary is initially used in everyday communication and then evolves into symbols associated with piety, moral values, and an authentic Islamic identity.

These symbolic meanings are subsequently internalized by individuals through social identification, enabling them to position themselves within specific religious groups. When Arabic expressions are consistently used and accepted by society, this reinforces an individual's image as a person possessing credibility, moral authority, and religious legitimacy. This relationship is not one-sided, as established social legitimacy, in turn, reinforces the use and symbolic value of Arabic vocabulary. Thus, this model illustrates a cyclical relationship between language, symbols, identity, and social power, allowing Arabic vocabulary to be

understood as symbolic capital in constructing and maintaining socio-religious identity within a multicultural society.

The Form and Use of Arabic Vocabulary in Social-Religious Life in Indonesia

For Muslims in Indonesia, the use of Arabic vocabulary is widespread. This practice is not limited to everyday conversation but extends to other areas, such as naming children, naming institutions, and even trademarks. This phenomenon reflects a complex and evolving process of identity formation (Aditya et al., 2025; Burhani, 2025; K. Al-Naimat & Y. Al Suod, 2026). This situation reflects a complex and evolving process of identity formation. Rather than merely serving as tools for communication or formal identity, these expressions and names become markers revealing the direction of their beliefs and moral principles. This demonstrates that language here is performative, as the community actively constructs and displays its religious image through the words and names they choose (Ilma & Rohmah, 2026; Qassem et al., 2025; Worley, 2021).

Social Identity Theory demonstrates the extensive influence of the Arabic language in Indonesia. This is evident not only in everyday expressions such as *assalamu'alaikum* but also in endearment terms (such as *Akhi*, *Ukhti*, *Abah*, *Ummi*) and in the naming of places of worship and religious institutions (Akmalia & Faizin, 2026; Hajar, 2025). In the categorization stage, all forms of Arabic-based identity serve to distinguish Muslims from other groups (Turner et al., 1979). The choice of these terms and names indirectly creates social boundaries that clarify who belongs to the in-group and who does not (Eroglu Sager, 2021). Moving to the stage of social identification (self-recognition), the repeated use of Arabic expressions, titles, and names signifies a process of value internalization. Society no longer views the Arabic language merely as a tool for communication or a formal ornament, but has truly internalized its religious essence (Alsaawi, 2022; Rohmah et al., 2024). Ultimately, these elements of the Arabic language serve as

daily instruments that nurture, shape, and instill religious identity in social life (Brass, 2024).

However, the research findings also show that these social and ideological impacts stem not only from the way people speak Arabic but also from the decision to give Arabic-sounding names to people, places of worship, and even institutions (Kuipers & Askuri, 2017; Rumalean, 2025). In the context of social comparison, people who frequently use Arabic terms or institutions that use names from the Arabic lexicon can be indirectly perceived as more religiously devout and as possessing greater moral authority (Turner et al., 1979). This indicates that both speech and names can serve as symbolic markers, creating subtle new social hierarchies or castes within the Muslim community itself (Gonzalez-Dogan, 2022; Naska, 2024). Consequently, while this Arabic-based discourse and naming practice is beneficial for strengthening a sense of brotherhood among Muslims, it can, on the other hand, foster exclusivity and create social distance from other groups within a diverse society (Al Shlowiy, 2022; Mardi et al., 2025). This dynamic underscores that the use of Arabic terms, whether in spoken language or in attached names, must be viewed as an ongoing process of negotiation among ways of expressing one's identity, seeking recognition from society, and determining one's ideological stance (Alatas, 2021; Yul & Andrian, 2024).

Reproduction and Reinterpretation of Arabic Vocabulary in Multicultural Societies

Arabic vocabulary holds a unique position within Indonesia's diverse society. The language is no longer viewed merely as a language of worship but has become a social symbol that is deeply integrated into daily life (Aditya et al., 2025; Nawas et al., 2023). The use of Arabic terms is no longer limited to religious rituals alone but has expanded to everyday conversations, social media posts, and even popular cultural trends (Akmalia & Faizin, 2026; Alsaawi, 2022; Alshehri & AlShabeb, 2023). This expansion of function demonstrates that the Arabic lexicon is flexible

and continuously adapts to the times (Al Shlowiy, 2022). Ultimately, language serves as the primary medium through which religious symbols are disseminated, preserved, and integrated into society's culture (Zhu, 2025).

Viewed through the perspective of Social Identity Theory, the reviewed literature suggests that the use of Arabic vocabulary may reflect processes of identity recognition and group affiliation within particular Muslim communities. However, these processes should not be interpreted as representing a single pattern across Indonesian Muslim society. Indonesia's cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity contributes to different interpretations of Arabic lexical practices across regions and communities (Al Shlowiy, 2022; Rosowsky, 2019; Sausa, 2025; Turner et al., 1979). The reviewed studies indicate that Arabic vocabulary tends to acquire different symbolic meanings depending on religious orientation, educational background, social environment, and local cultural traditions. For example, in communities closely associated with pesantren, Islamic educational institutions, or urban Islamic movements, Arabic expressions are more frequently interpreted as markers of religious affiliation and shared Islamic values. In contrast, communities that maintain stronger local linguistic traditions may assign different meanings and functions to Arabic vocabulary according to their socio-cultural contexts (Blackwood et al., 2016; Gonzalez-Dogan, 2022; Gu & Coluzzi, 2025).

From this perspective, the repeated use of expressions such as *halal*, *shariah*, *ukhuwah*, and *kajian* should not be understood as universally conveying the same social meaning. Instead, their symbolic significance emerges through collective interpretation within particular communities (Mandal, 2018; Muttakin et al., 2026; Tamimi Sa'd, 2017). This interpretation is consistent with Social Identity Theory, which explains that linguistic practices contribute to processes of social categorization and group identification, while the forms and meanings of those practices remain dynamic and context-dependent (Turner et al., 1979). Therefore,

the reviewed literature portrays Arabic vocabulary not as a uniform marker of Indonesian Muslim identity, but as a symbolic resource whose meanings are continuously negotiated across diverse social and cultural settings (Lücking & Eliyanah, 2017).

These expressions are not merely decorative elements in speech but function as symbolic markers associated with religiosity, solidarity, and Islamic self-representation (Alsaawi, 2022; Muttakin et al., 2026). Nevertheless, the interpretation and social significance of these Arabic lexical practices may differ among Muslim groups and social settings. Certain communities may view the use of Arabic vocabulary as an important expression of Islamic authenticity and collective identity, while others may employ such expressions more selectively, depending on local cultural practices and communicative contexts (Allen, 2023; Luthfi et al., 2026; Rumalean, 2025).

On the other hand, the public's use of Arabic vocabulary is closely tied to reinterpretation. This study found that these terms often undergo shifts in meaning as they are adapted to contemporary social conditions (Fansuri, 2023; Visonà & Plonsky, 2020). Take the word *hijrah*, for example. This term, originally steeped in theological concepts or religious history, has now come to represent broader symbols, such as lifestyle changes, personal transformation for the better, and even trends in young people's social identity (Alshehri & AlShabeb, 2023; Lam & Mansouri, 2021; Lücking & Eliyanah, 2017; Rahman et al., 2021). This shift demonstrates that social groups actively process and redefine the meanings of language to align with the dynamics of modern culture (Turner et al., 1979). Consequently, the Arabic lexicon serves as a highly flexible symbolic resource for bridging the gap between past traditions and contemporary lifestyles (Luthfi et al., 2026).

Behind all this, this phenomenon also harbors its own tensions and complexities. The widespread use of Arabic terms can indeed strengthen

solidarity and a sense of belonging within a group. However, this also leads to ambiguity of meaning and ideological power struggles (Alnizar et al., 2025). As the meanings of certain words begin to shift, the line between pure religious teachings and mere social lifestyle becomes blurred. Consequently, various interpretations and differing understandings emerge within society (Awad et al., 2021; Blackwood et al., 2016; Razzaq, 2023). Furthermore, the deliberate selection of Arabic vocabulary is often used as a tool for displaying identity (symbolic distinction). This practice indirectly creates subtle social hierarchies or castes, where an individual is deemed more pious or of higher social status simply because of their language (Pujiati et al., 2025; Zakarneh & Mahmoud, 2025). Therefore, the habit of using and reinterpreting Arabic vocabulary should not be viewed merely as a unifying cultural activity. It is, in fact, a negotiation arena where identity, meaning, and the influence of power are constantly at stake within Indonesia's diverse society (Alshehri & AlShabeb, 2023; Mahfud, 2022; Nordin, 2026).

The Formation of Socio-Religious Identity

The formation of the socio-religious identity of Muslims in Indonesia through Arabic vocabulary is not a uniform process. Rather, this identity develops and is woven into various aspects of social life, with each sphere having its own function and symbolic meaning. Research findings indicate that Arabic terms serve as the primary vehicle for instilling religious values, reinforcing social norms, and publicly expressing group identity (Kulwicki, 2021; Shidiq et al., 2023). This demonstrates that identity-building is not merely an independent thought process occurring within each individual's mind (Allen, 2023). Rather, it is a tangible social phenomenon shaped by linguistic practices within specific institutions and cultures. At this juncture, Arabic vocabulary serves as the primary bridge linking language, religious belief, and the social order (Bourdieu, 1991; Fenton & Nurhajati, 2020; Lehtikoinen, 2026)

Field of Education

In the field of education, the use of Arabic vocabulary plays a significant role in shaping socio-religious identity through daily linguistic exposure, institutional culture, and religious learning practices within Muslim educational communities (Yuldasheva, 2023). The study's findings indicate that terms such as *ustadz*, *akhlaq*, *ta'lim*, and *tarbiyah* are not merely educational terms but also convey specific moral messages and ideological values (Abdullah & Machali, 2023). This demonstrates that schools, *madrasahs*, and *pesantren* function as structured social spaces in which Arabic vocabulary is systematically integrated into learning activities, institutional interactions, and character-formation processes (Awaluddin & Syahring, 2024; Gonzalez-Dogan, 2022).

From the perspective of Social Identity Theory, the repeated use of Arabic lexical expressions within educational institutions reflects processes of categorization and social identification, where members of educational communities become symbolically connected through shared linguistic practices (Turner et al., 1979). In *pesantren* communities and Islamic educational environments, Arabic vocabulary is often associated with religious knowledge, moral discipline, and Islamic intellectual traditions. Consequently, the consistent use of these expressions contributes to the internalization of religious values and strengthens collective socio-religious identity within particular educational groups (Turner et al., 1979). However, the meanings attached to Arabic vocabulary may vary across educational settings depending on institutional orientation, religious tradition, and socio-cultural background. In some educational communities, Arabic lexical practices are strongly emphasized as markers of Islamic authenticity and religious commitment, while in others they function more selectively within pedagogical and communicative contexts (Boland, 2020; Lehikoinen, 2026; Taisir et al., 2025).

Field of Economics

In the economic sphere, Arabic vocabulary serves as a symbolic resource that links religious values to market practices, commercial communication, and professional relationships within Muslim business communities (Mahfud, 2022). This study found that terms such as syariah, amanah, halal, and barakah are widely used in business branding, Islamic financial institutions, product promotion, and commercial naming practices (Arwani, 2017; Habiburrahim et al., 2020). These lexical expressions are commonly associated with ethical conduct, trustworthiness, religious legitimacy, and Islamic moral values in economic interaction. From the perspective of Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital, the use of Arabic vocabulary in economic activities demonstrates how language may function as a socially valued resource that contributes to credibility, recognition, and symbolic legitimacy within Muslim commercial environments (Bourdieu, 1991; Muassomah et al., 2025).

The use of Arabic terms in the business world reflects a process of social comparison. Through this approach, economic actors seek to distinguish themselves from competitors by showcasing a strong religious identity (Turner et al., 1979). However, the meanings and social functions attached to these expressions may vary depending on institutional background, business orientation, and socio-cultural context. In some communities, Arabic lexical practices are strongly associated with Islamic authenticity and moral responsibility, while in others they function more pragmatically as markers of religious branding and market differentiation (Nawas et al., 2023; Paden, 2023; Suleiman, 2019). This indicates that Arabic vocabulary in economic contexts contributes to the formation of distinctive socio-religious market identities within Indonesian Muslim society. At the same time, these practices illustrate how language, economic activity, and symbolic legitimacy become interconnected

within contemporary Muslim commercial culture (Al Sultan, 2026; Alnizar et al., 2025; Nawas et al., 2023).

Place of Worship

Places of worship represent one of the primary social domains in which Arabic vocabulary plays a central role in shaping socio-religious identity within Muslim communities in Indonesia (Alasmari et al., 2026; Arifianto et al., 2025). Findings indicate that Arabic terms used in prayers, sermons, religious gatherings, and religious studies, such as assalamu'alaikum, bismillah, alhamdulillah, insya Allah, dakwah, and ukhuwah, not only convey religious messages but also serve as symbols of shared membership and spiritual bonds among Muslims (Taufiq & Said, 2025; Yusuf & Putrie, 2022). These expressions function not only as religious language but also as symbolic markers associated with spiritual belonging, collective identity, and shared religious values. From the perspective of Social Identity Theory, the repeated use of Arabic vocabulary in worship practices reflects processes of social identification through which individuals reinforce their symbolic affiliation with Muslim communities and shared religious traditions (Tajfel, 1978).

Critically, however, this study also found that Arabic vocabulary is strongly integrated into the linguistic landscape of worship spaces, including mosque names, religious institutions, sermon terminology, and ritual expressions. Names such as Masjid Al-Ikhlâs, Masjid Nurul Huda, and Majelis Ta'lim frequently use Arabic lexical items to signify spiritual values, Islamic legitimacy, and religious authority in public space (Jarrah et al., 2025; Mdukula, 2026; Serrano Illán, 2026; Yusuf & Putrie, 2022). At the same time, findings suggest that the use of Arabic vocabulary in worship contexts may also be associated with symbolic distinctions within specific religious communities. Individuals or groups with stronger Arabic language skills are sometimes socially perceived as possessing deeper religious knowledge, greater spiritual authority, or a stronger commitment to Islam

(Ardhian et al., 2021; Gonzalez-Dogan, 2022; Nordin, 2026). From a symbolic power perspective, it shows how language can function as a socially valued resource that contributes to symbolic recognition and religious credibility in worship settings (Bourdieu, 1991). However, the meanings attached to Arabic lexical practices can differ across Muslim communities, institutional traditions, and socio-cultural contexts in Indonesia. Despite this variation, the continued use of Arabic vocabulary in religious practices remains an important means of strengthening collective religious identity, preserving spiritual continuity, and fostering a sense of togetherness among Indonesian Muslims (Aditya et al., 2025; Mardi et al., 2025; Rohmah et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

This study synthesizes the existing literature to demonstrate that Arabic vocabulary in Indonesian Muslim society carries meanings that extend beyond its communicative function. Across various social domains, including education, religious activities, economic practices, public communication, and digital interaction, Arabic lexical expressions are consistently interpreted as symbolic resources associated with religious affiliation, identity expression, and the representation of Islamic values. At the same time, the reviewed literature indicates that these symbolic meanings are context-dependent and vary according to educational background, religious orientation, institutional setting, and local socio-cultural traditions. Consequently, Arabic vocabulary should not be understood as representing a single or homogeneous Indonesian Muslim identity, but rather as a dynamic linguistic resource whose meanings are continuously negotiated within diverse Muslim communities.

The contribution of this study lies in providing an integrated sociolinguistic interpretation by bringing together findings that have previously been discussed across different disciplinary and social contexts. Through the complementary perspectives of Social Identity Theory and Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital,

this review highlights how language, identity, and symbolic meaning interact within the multicultural context of Indonesian Muslim society. Nevertheless, because this study is based on a traditional literature review, its conclusions are limited to the interpretation of existing scholarship. Future research is therefore encouraged to employ qualitative approaches, such as ethnographic studies, discourse analysis, or in-depth interviews, to examine how Arabic vocabulary is interpreted and negotiated in different local communities and social settings. Such studies would provide richer empirical evidence for understanding the dynamic relationship between language, socio-religious identity, and symbolic meaning in contemporary Indonesian society.

AI Declaration

The authors used Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools, specifically ChatGPT and Grammarly, solely for language editing, grammar correction, sentence refinement, and manuscript formatting during the preparation of this article. The AI tools were not used to generate, fabricate, or manipulate research data, conduct data analysis, develop theoretical arguments, interpret findings, or produce references and conclusions. All AI-assisted outputs were carefully reviewed, verified, and revised by the authors, who take full responsibility for the accuracy, originality, integrity, and content of this manuscript. This use of AI complies with the Publication Ethics and Malpractice Statement of the *Journal of Pragmatics Research*.

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