



## Women's Language Features and Narcissistic Self-Presentation: A Sociopragmatic Analysis of Q&A Interactions in Gus Iqdam's Religious Forum

Rosita Ambarwati<sup>1</sup>, Heny Kusuma Widyaningrum<sup>2</sup>, Enhelyn Llaneza Morla<sup>3</sup>, Rara Risma Gressilya<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1-2,4</sup> Universitas PGRI Madiun Indonesia

<sup>3</sup> Ilocos Sur Polytechnic State College, Philippines

[rosita@unipma.ac.id](mailto:rosita@unipma.ac.id), [heny@unipma.ac.id](mailto:heny@unipma.ac.id), [ariswuryantoro@unipma.ac.id](mailto:ariswuryantoro@unipma.ac.id),

[morlaenhelyn@ispsc.edu.ph](mailto:morlaenhelyn@ispsc.edu.ph), [rara\\_2102109035@mhs.unipma.ac.id](mailto:rara_2102109035@mhs.unipma.ac.id)

### Abstract:

*This study examines women's language features and micro-narcissistic self-presentation in digitally mediated religious discourse, focusing on question-and-answer (Q&A) interactions in the online "Pengajian Sabilu Taubah" led by Gus Iqdam. Adopting a qualitative descriptive design with a sociopragmatic orientation, the study aims to explore how female participants use language to negotiate emotion, politeness, authority, and self-visibility in a publicly streamed religious forum. The data were drawn from five publicly accessible livestream recordings and were selected through purposive sampling based on the presence of direct interaction with female participants, extended utterances, and adequate audio-visual quality. Three women participants were analyzed as primary data sources, while two additional participants were used for confirmatory analysis. The primary research instrument was detailed discourse transcription, including lexical, prosodic, and paralinguistic features. Data analysis followed a theory-driven qualitative content analysis guided by Lakoff's framework of women's language and Pearson's functional classification, with data validation ensured through triangulation and confirmatory analysis. The findings show that women's language in the Q&A sessions is characterized by expressive-affective features, mitigation strategies, and response-oriented utterances that function to elicit recognition and maintain politeness toward religious authority. Furthermore, micro-narcissistic self-presentation is realized through subtle and socially acceptable linguistic practices, such as admiration-seeking expressions and self-referential narratives, rather than overt self-promotion. This study contributes to sociopragmatic and gender-based discourse research by highlighting women's linguistic agency in digital religious interaction and by conceptualizing micro-narcissism as an interactional phenomenon shaped by religious norms and public visibility.*

**Keywords:** digital religious discourse; micro-narcissism; sociopragmatics; women's language; Q&A interaction

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The evolution of digital media has changed how people relate to their religions, both how religions are promulgated and how people position themselves, discourse-wise, in public religions. In Indonesia, religious classes (*pengajian*) have moved beyond their physical and spatial locations to be mediated by various social media platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram. This shift has led to the concept of digital or mediatized religious communication, where religious communication is shaped by media affordances, audience visibility, and platform logics (Campbell, 2012; Hjarvard, 2016). As a result, religious communication in digital spaces functions not only as spiritual instruction but also as a form of public religious performance.

Studies on religious services offered via social media in the Indonesian context demonstrate the innovation of religious speakers in engaging online audiences. To attain audience engagement and maintain communion during online sermons, preachers increasingly employ expressive, emotive, and informal communication styles (Nuriana, 2024; Taufikin, 2025). In addition, the presence of cameras and remote audiences has been shown to encourage more animated interactions, audience-oriented speech, and performative behavior (Jansen et al., 2018; Suryani, 2023). These findings suggest that digital religious forums constitute dynamic interactional spaces rather than one-directional channels of religious instruction.

More recent studies further emphasize that digital religious communication is increasingly characterized by performativity, affective engagement, and audience participation. Research on live-streamed religious interaction highlights how audience visibility and real-time response opportunities shape discourse toward relational, expressive, and response-oriented communication (Wibowo, 2021; Azizah, 2022; Kurniawati, 2023). Interactive segments such as question-and-answer (Q&A) sessions therefore function as critical sites where meaning, identity, and authority are jointly negotiated by religious figures and their audiences.

While previous studies have predominantly focused on the discourse strategies of preachers, the linguistic behavior of the audience particularly women have received comparatively little attention. This gap is notable given that audience participation during Q&A sessions constitutes a central feature of live streamed religious events. Women participants are not merely passive recipients of religious messages; they actively contribute by articulating questions, expressing emotions, and positioning themselves in relation to religious authority and the broader online audience.

Research on gender and language has long suggested that women employ particular linguistic features such as hedges, intensifiers, emotive expressions, tag questions, and politeness strategies to manage interactional harmony and relational goals (Lakoff, 1975; Holmes, 1995). Studies in the Indonesian context further show that women's discourse in public and religious settings is shaped by cultural norms, power relations, and expectations of modesty and emotional restraint (Qorih & Rukmini, 2020; Fitriyah, 2022).

Recent studies have extended this line of inquiry by emphasizing the strategic and functional nature of women's language. Contemporary research demonstrates that women use mitigation, intensification, and affective expressions as pragmatic resources to negotiate authority, visibility, and relational alignment in public and institutional discourse (Lestari & Rukmini, 2021; Fitriyah, 2022; Sari, 2024). However, most of these studies are situated in offline or non-religious

contexts, leaving women's language use in digitally mediated religious interaction largely unexplored.

In religious contexts, women's linguistic behavior needs to be examined beyond propositional meaning to incorporate Sociopragmatic analysis. Politeness, modality, and mitigation are central resources through which female speakers negotiate authority and manage face within hierarchical religious interactions (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Pratiwi & Damanik, 2022). In digitally mediated settings, these dynamics are further intensified by public visibility, awareness of recording, and the performative demands of live-streamed interaction.

Alongside these developments is the growing discussion of micro-narcissism in digital communication. Unlike clinical narcissism, micro-narcissism refers to socially acceptable forms of self-presentation oriented toward attention, validation, and recognition in everyday interaction (Twenge & Campbell, 2009; Marcellino, 2020). In digital religious contexts, such practices may manifest subtly through emotional narratives, expressions of devotion, or response-seeking utterances that remain within the bounds of religious politeness and humility.

Recent scholarship further conceptualizes non-clinical narcissism as an interactional and situational phenomenon rather than a stable personality trait. The studies indicate that digital environments amplify micro-level self-presentation practices through public exposure, response-seeking, and audience feedback (Liu & Baumeister, 2021; Putri & Santoso, 2023; Pradana, 2024). However, this body of research has largely focused on social media or everyday online interaction, with limited attention to religious discourse as a sociopragmatic site of self-presentation.

Despite the growing body of research on women's language, digital religious discourse, and self-presentation, these strands of scholarship have largely developed in isolation. Studies on women's language rarely address digitally mediated religious contexts, research on digital religion tends to privilege preachers' discourse over audience participation, and studies of narcissism seldom adopt a sociopragmatic lens or consider religious interaction. Consequently, there remains a significant gap in understanding how women use language as a sociopragmatic resource for micro-narcissistic self-presentation in live-streamed religious Q&A sessions, particularly within the Indonesian Islamic context.

In response to this gap, the present study investigates women's language as a sociopragmatic resource for self-presentation in digitally mediated religious discourse, focusing on the Q&A sessions of the "*Pengajian Sabilu Taubah*" led by Gus Iqdam. By integrating theories of women's language, sociopragmatics, and non-clinical micro-narcissism, this study aims to elucidate how female participants negotiate emotion, politeness, authority, and visibility in a publicly streamed religious forum. Based on this focus, the study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What linguistic features of women's language are employed by female participants during the Q & A interactions in the "*Pengajian Sabilu Taubah*?"
2. What sociopragmatic functions do these linguistic features serve within the context of digitally mediated religious discourse?
3. How are micro-narcissistic self-presentation strategies linguistically realized by women participants while remaining socially and religiously acceptable?

By addressing these questions, this study contributes to sociopragmatic and gender-based discourse studies by foregrounding women's linguistic agency in digital religious interaction and by extending discussions of micro-narcissism into the domain of publicly mediated religious communication.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

This Literature Review is structured in alignment with the focus and research questions of the study, namely: (1) women's linguistic features, (2) the sociopragmatic functions of women's language, and (3) micro-narcissistic self-presentation in digitally mediated religious discourse. Accordingly, this section integrates foundational theories with recent empirical studies to provide a coherent analytical framework for the data analysis.

### **2.1 Women's Language Features in Public and Digital Discourse**

Early discussions of women's language are commonly associated with Lakoff's (1975) seminal work, which identifies a range of linguistic features such as lexical hedges, tag questions, intensifiers, expressive adjectives, and politeness strategies. Lakoff initially interpreted these features as reflecting women's marginalized social position within patriarchal structures, particularly in public and hierarchical communicative settings. Despite subsequent critiques of this deficit-oriented interpretation, Lakoff's framework remains influential for its systematic categorization of gendered linguistic features.

Later scholarship reinterpreted women's language features as context-sensitive and goal-oriented strategies rather than indicators of linguistic weakness. Holmes (1995) and Coates (2015) argue that hedging, intensification, and affective expressions function as interactional resources that enable speakers to manage solidarity, negotiate power relations, and maintain interpersonal harmony. From this perspective, women's language is better understood as a pragmatic means of participation within socially constrained interactions.

Recent studies published between 2021 and 2025 further emphasize the strategic role of women's language in public and institutional discourse. Empirical findings suggest that women deliberately employ mitigation, intensification, and emotional expression to negotiate authority, enhance visibility, and foster engagement (Lestari & Rukmini, 2021; Fitriyah, 2022; Sari, 2024). However, the majority of these studies are situated in offline or non-religious contexts, leaving women's language use in digitally mediated religious discourse relatively underexplored.

### **2.2 Sociopragmatic Functions of Women's Language**

A sociopragmatic approach conceptualizes language as social action whose meaning is shaped by context, social relations, and interactional goals. Within this framework, Pearson (1985) identifies several micro-level functions commonly associated with women's language, including expressing feelings and stances, seeking responses or validation, softening utterances, and sustaining conversational flow. These functions are particularly salient in public and hierarchical interactions where speakers must balance participation with deference.

In religious discourse, politeness strategies are crucial due to the presence of moral and spiritual authority. Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory explains how speakers mitigate face-threatening acts through indirectness and linguistic softening. Recent studies on Indonesian religious discourse indicate that women frequently combine politeness strategies with emotional

expression to maintain respect while remaining interactionally engaged (Pratiwi & Damanik, 2022; Nugroho, 2023). In digitally mediated settings, such sociopragmatic functions are intensified by audience visibility, recording awareness, and the performative nature of live-streamed interaction.

### **2.3 Digital Religious Discourse and Audience Participation**

The mediatization of religion has transformed religious communication into a public, performative, and interactive practice (Campbell, 2012; Hjarvard, 2016). Digital platforms facilitate dialogic forms of religious engagement through features such as live-streaming, real-time comments, and interactive question-and-answer sessions.

Recent studies highlight that live-streamed religious communication encourages audience-oriented and participatory discourse (Wibowo, 2021; Azizah, 2022; Kurniawati, 2023). In the Indonesian context, research on digital da'wah shows that although religious leaders remain central figures of authority, audiences increasingly participate through emotional responses, comments, and Q&A interactions (Nuriana, 2024; Taufikin, 2025). Nevertheless, linguistic analyses that specifically examine the language of audience members—particularly women—in spoken Q&A interactions remain limited, indicating a clear need for further investigation.

### **2.4 Micro-Narcissism and Linguistic Self-Presentation**

The concept of micro-narcissism emerges from the distinction between clinical narcissism and non-clinical, socially acceptable forms of self-focus and self-presentation (Twenge & Campbell, 2009). In discourse and communication studies, micro-narcissism is understood as an interactional practice oriented toward attention, validation, and recognition, often enacted through language (Mendiburo, 2017; Marcellino, 2020).

Rather than being treated as a stable personality trait, micro-narcissism is increasingly conceptualized as situational and discursively constructed. Language plays a central role in this process through personal narratives, affective expressions, and response-oriented utterances. Recent studies (2021–2025) suggest that digital environments amplify micro-narcissistic self-presentation due to public visibility, audience feedback, and interactional immediacy (Liu & Baumeister, 2021; Putri & Santoso, 2023; Pradana, 2024). However, existing research has largely focused on social media or everyday online interaction, with limited attention to religious discourse as a site of sociopragmatic self-presentation.

### **2.5 Analytical Positioning and Research Gap**

Based on the literature reviewed above, it is evident that studies on women's language, digital religious discourse, and micro-narcissism have largely developed in parallel rather than in integration. Research on women's language rarely addresses digitally mediated religious contexts, studies on digital religion tend to prioritize preachers' discourse over audience interaction, and investigations of narcissism seldom adopt a sociopragmatic perspective within religious settings.

In response to this gap, the present study positions itself at the intersection of these three domains by examining women's language as a sociopragmatic resource for micro-narcissistic self-presentation in live-streamed religious Q&A sessions. This analytical positioning enables a more nuanced understanding of how women negotiate emotion, politeness, authority, and self-visibility within publicly mediated religious interaction.

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design with a sociopragmatic orientation to investigate women's language and micro-narcissistic self-presentation in digitally mediated religious discourse. This approach was chosen because the study seeks to understand linguistic meanings, pragmatic functions, and interactional patterns as they naturally occur within a specific social and religious context, rather than to test hypotheses or measure variables quantitatively.

The data were drawn from five publicly accessible video recordings of question-and-answer (Q&A) sessions from the online "Pengajian Sabilu Taubah" led by Gus Iqdam, which were selected purposively based on the presence of direct interaction with female participants, the production of relatively extended utterances, and adequate audio-visual quality for transcription. From this corpus, three female participants were selected as the primary data sources because their interactions most clearly exemplified women's language features and self-presentation practices relevant to the research questions, while interactions involving two additional female participants were analyzed as supporting data to confirm the consistency of the observed patterns.

Data collection involved repeated viewing and verbatim transcription of the selected interactions, including not only lexical content but also prosodic and paralinguistic features such as pauses, intonation, emphasis, hesitation markers, discourse fillers, and observable emotional expressions in order to preserve the pragmatic and interactional dimensions of the discourse.

The analysis followed a theory-driven qualitative content analysis, guided by Lakoff's (1975) framework to identify women's language features and Pearson's (1985) functional classification to examine their sociopragmatic functions. Micro-narcissistic self-presentation was analyzed through linguistic indicators such as admiration-seeking expressions, validation-oriented questions, self-referential narratives, and identity-marking statements, which were interpreted sociopragmatically as forms of self-visibility that remain socially and religiously acceptable. To enhance methodological rigor and credibility, data triangulation was conducted across multiple video recordings and participants, and confirmatory analysis using supporting data was employed to ensure that the identified patterns were not isolated instances but recurring tendencies within the discourse.

### 4. RESULTS

#### 4.1 Overview of Findings

This research examines the discourse of women during the Q&A sessions of the "Pengajian Sabilu Taubah" and focuses on the data of three women out of five recorded interactions. It is found that women's discourse in this digitally mediated religion is characterized by expressive-affective forms, mitigation, in the service of politeness, and designed response-oriented interactional patterns. These elements of discourse serve the purpose of information transmission, but also of emotion regulation, the attainment of recognition, and socially acceptable self-presentation in a public religious setting.

#### 4.2 Women's Language Features Identified

Table 1. Women's Language Features and Sociopragmatic Functions

| No. | Women's Language Feature        | Data Example                       | Immediate Function                     | Sociopragmatic Interpretation  |
|-----|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|--|--|
| 1   | Lexical hedges / fillers        | <i>anu, nggeh, mawon</i>           | Filling pauses and softening utterance | Maintaining the conversational floor while indexing humility and respect |
| 2   | Tag questions                   | <i>Isnaini kan 2?</i>              | Seeking confirmation                   | Inviting interlocutor response and ensuring interactional engagement     |
| 3   | Intensifiers                    | <i>fans berat</i>                  | Emphasizing speaker stance             | Strengthening identity construction and increasing speaker salience      |
| 4   | Emphatic stress                 | <i>mbulett pisan, Gus</i>          | Intensifying affect                    | Displaying strong emotional involvement                                  |
| 5   | Expressive adjectives           | <i>guanteng, manis</i>             | Expressing evaluation or compliment    | Enacting positive politeness strategies                                  |
| 6   | Avoidance of strong swear words | <i>Ya Allah Gus yo mendal dewe</i> | Moderating emotional expression        | Allowing affective expression while adhering to sociocultural norms      |

Table 1 illustrates the marked features of these women's speech classifications, functioning as interactional resources as opposed to being mere statically employed gender features. When Politeness markers are deployed, there is an application of expressive adjectives and an implementation of emphatic stress which accounts for a pattern of an elevated affect being deployed at the same time as a deferent stance. That's how female speakers are able to defy the limits of culturally and religiously sanctioned compliance to an imposed order while communicating extreme emotionality. As in the illustration of the following example:

Excerpt 1

*"MasyaAllah YaAllah guanteng... guanteng gus njenengan niku."*

*("MasyaAllah, Oh God, you are handsome... you are handsome, Sir.")*

The religious expression (MasyaAllah YaAllah) as a means of communication boundless within the parameters of religion. This expression evidences positive politeness and for the purpose of constructing the public prominence of the speaker within a live streaming forum. Buffering as well as the markers of politeness also make it possible to engage without the threat of face loss:

Excerpt 2

*"kulo lenggah mawon gus... isin guedi... nggeh-enggeh."*

*("I will just sit here, Sir... I am very shy... yes, yes.")*

Even when the speaker communicates the shyness, this social move suffices to allow her to participate emotionally in openly visible interaction, thus allowing her to disengage from social risk.

### 4.3 Functional Distribution of Women’s Language

**Table 2.** Functions of Women’s Language (Pearson, 1985)

| No | Function                  | Freq | Percentage | Interpretation                          |
|----|---------------------------|------|------------|---|
| 1  | Express feelings          | 59   | 43%        | Q&A functions as affective performance  |
| 2  | Get response / validation | 36   | 26%        | Speakers orient toward acknowledgment   |
| 3  | Fill conversational gaps  | 24   | 17%        | Maintain interactional control          |
| 4  | Express uncertainty       | 8    | 6%         | Display humility and reduce face threat |
| 5  | Soften utterances         | 3    | 2%         | Maintain politeness                     |
| 6  | Start discussion          | 1    | 1%         | Limited by Q&A format                   |

The ability to articulate feelings and sentiments suggests that the Q&A session is more than an academic exercise; there is an emotional element. The considerable amount of response and validation seeking suggests that an interactional outcome is measured through Gus Iqdam’s public recognition and response. The sociopragmatic viewpoint suggests that the use of a discourse in public forums is to achieve recognition and validation rather than the mere exchange of information. The dominance of expressing feelings or opinions indicates that the Q&A sessions function as affective and performative interactions, rather than purely informational exchanges. Emotional expression signals sincerity and involvement, which are valued in public religious discourse.

Excerpt 3

*“Alhamdulillah sueneng gus, YaAllah kepengen meluk aku.”*

*(“Alhamdulillah, I am happy, Sir, Oh God, I really want to hug you.”)*

This strong affective expression becomes socially acceptable through religious framing and respectful address. At the same time, the high frequency of validation-seeking reflects participants’ orientation toward being acknowledged by a religious authority in front of a public audience.

Excerpt 4

*“Isnaini kan 2?”*

*(“Isnaini is number two, right?”)*

Here, the tag question functions as a response-inviting device, ensuring interactional uptake and symbolic recognition.

### 4.4 Micro-Narcissistic Self-Presentation in Women’s Language

**Table 3.** Linguistic Indicators of Micro-Narcissistic Self-Presentation

| No | Indicator          | Data Evidence                   | Linguistic Strategy   | Interactional Effect       |
|----|--------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| 1  | Admiration-seeking | “guanteng gus”                  | Expressive adjectives | Buildsrelational closeness |
| 2  | Validation-seeking | “Isnaini kan 2?”                | Tag questions         | Ensures response           |
| 3  | Identity display   | “kulo nge fans kaleh njenengan” | Self-labeling         | Highlights devotion        |
| 4  | Self-highlighting  | “pertama kali mbulett pisan”    | Personal narrative    | Legitimize presence        |
| 5  | Desire expression  | “pengen ngertos mas danu”       | Affect framing        | Sustains visibility        |

Based on self-reports and testimonials, micro-narcissism can be manifested in self-promoting behavior; however, this form of self-promotion is camouflaged in self-advocacy and socially acceptable variations of self-emphasis. Rather than overt self-admiration, self-promoting participants in the study enhanced their self-promotion by invitation through praise, emotional narratives, and initiations that triggered responses. This strategy allows women to draw attention and still remain within the bounds of pro-social stereotypes of restraint and delicacy. Therefore, micro-narcissism in this case should be considered an interactional phenomenon rather than a psychological characteristic. Micro-narcissistic self-presentation in this study is realized through subtle and culturally sanctioned linguistic practices. Rather than overt self-praise, participants foreground themselves indirectly through admiration, emotional narratives, and response-oriented speech.

Excerpt 5

*"kulo nge fans kaleh njenengan."*

*("I am a fan of you.")*

This utterance constructs an identity of devotion while implicitly highlighting the speaker's relevance. The self is foregrounded through relational alignment rather than direct self-assertion.

A similar pattern appears in Mbak Isma's utterances:

Excerpt 6

*"pengen ngertos mas danu."*

*("I want to get to know Mas Danu.")*

Excerpt 7

*"fans beratt."*

*("a very big fan.")*

The intensifier *beratt* strengthens affective stance and maintains interactional visibility while remaining socially acceptable.

#### **4.5 Integrated Discussion: High Affect and High Deference**

In all cases, the women's speech exhibited a sustained and uniform manifestation of high emotional expressiveness and high deference. Emotionally expressive language enhances the potential impact of the interaction, while the inclusion of politeness strategies keeps the emotional constraint within the bounds of the accepted religious framework. In a live stream situation, this pattern allows the female participants to balance emotion with authority and visibility.

This result builds on Lakoff's (1975) work by showing that features of women's language are influenced by the digital context and the audience. From a sociopragmatic perspective, attempting to elicit a response to a statement seems to be the primary object of the interaction in religious discourse within a media context. In addition, the research shows micro-narcissism can be self-presented through everyday language and contributing to studies of narcissism.

Across all interactions, women's language consistently combines high emotional expressiveness with high deference. Emotional expressions increase interactional salience, while politeness strategies constrain self-presentation within religious norms.

Excerpt 8

*"Iya pertama kali mbulett pisan gus."*

*("Yes, it is my first time and it was very difficult to get here, Sir.")*

The speaker focuses on effort in a way that showcases personal sacrifice and validates her presence without being immodest. This type of pattern in a live-streamed religious setting is a means for women to manage emotion, authority and self-visibility all at once.

Overall, the results are a contribution to Lakoff's (1975) framework showing that women's language features are influenced by digital performativity and situational awareness. In sociopragmatic terms, response-seeking is framed as the major interactional goal, and the micro-narcissistic self-presentation is demonstrated to be a linguistic rather than a psychological phenomenon.

## 5. DISCUSSION

This section elaborates the findings by situating them within broader discussions on women's language, sociopragmatics, and digital religious discourse. Rather than reiterating the results, the discussion interprets the findings by comparing them with previous studies and highlighting the theoretical and contextual contributions of the present research.

The analysis demonstrates that women participating in the Q&A sessions of the "*Pengajian Sabilu Taubah*" consistently employ linguistic features commonly associated with women's language, including hedges, intensifiers, expressive adjectives, tag questions, and politeness markers. This finding corroborates earlier research which argues that such features function as interactional resources rather than indicators of linguistic deficiency (Holmes, 1995; Coates, 2015). In the Indonesian context, Fitriyah (2022) similarly found that women's use of mitigation and emotive language in public discourse enables them to participate actively while maintaining social harmony. The present study extends these findings by demonstrating that similar strategies are deployed in digitally mediated religious interaction, where participants must simultaneously address religious authority and an unseen online audience.

From a sociopragmatic perspective, the dominant functions of women's language in this study—namely expressing emotions and seeking responses or validation are closely tied to the interactional goals of Q&A sessions. These results align with Pearson's (1985) functional classification and resonate with Pratiwi and Damanik's (2022) findings that women in religious discourse frequently combine emotional expression with politeness to manage face and authority relations. However, unlike offline religious settings examined in previous studies, the live-streamed context examined here intensifies response-oriented behavior. Public visibility and awareness of being recorded appear to encourage participants to frame their utterances in ways that invite acknowledgment from the religious leader, thereby enhancing interactional salience.

The findings also shed light on how digital mediation reshapes women's linguistic behavior in religious contexts. Consistent with studies on mediatized religion (Campbell, 2012; Hjarvard, 2016), the Q&A sessions function as performative spaces where interaction is oriented not only

toward information exchange but also toward emotional engagement and public recognition. Research by Nuriana (2024) and Taufikin (2025) highlights the increasing expressiveness of religious communication in Indonesian digital da'wah. The present study complements this line of research by shifting the analytical focus from preachers to audience members and by demonstrating that women actively adapt their language to the affordances and constraints of live-streamed interaction.

A central contribution of this study lies in its analysis of micro-narcissistic self-presentation as a sociopragmatic phenomenon. The data show that women's self-presentation is enacted through subtle and culturally acceptable linguistic practices, such as admiration-seeking compliments, self-referential narratives of effort or devotion, and validation-oriented questions. This finding supports Mendiburo's (2017) and Marcellino's (2020) argument that non-clinical narcissism is often discursively constructed rather than overtly expressed. Compared with Putri and Santoso's (2023) study of micro-narcissism in social media contexts, which reports more explicit self-branding and visibility-seeking, the present findings indicate that religious norms of humility and respect significantly constrain how self-presentation is linguistically realized.

Importantly, the coexistence of high emotional expressiveness and high deference observed in the data suggests that women navigate a complex interactional balance. Emotional language enhances visibility and engagement, while politeness strategies ensure alignment with religious expectations and hierarchical relations. This pattern echoes Sari's (2024) observation that women in public forums strategically manage affect and restraint to sustain participation without threatening social order. In the religious Q&A context examined here, this balance allows women to achieve self-visibility and recognition while remaining within the bounds of socially and religiously acceptable behavior.

Overall, the discussion underscores that women's language in digitally mediated religious Q&A sessions is multifunctional: it regulates emotion, maintains politeness, negotiates authority, and facilitates socially acceptable self-presentation. By integrating insights from women's language studies, sociopragmatics, and research on digital religion, this study contributes a nuanced understanding of how micro-narcissistic self-presentation operates as an interactional practice shaped by cultural norms, religious values, and media affordances. The findings thus extend existing scholarship by foregrounding women's linguistic agency in public digital religion and by demonstrating the contextual adaptability of women's language in response to evolving communicative environments.

### **5.1 Theoretical Implications**

The findings of this study offer several theoretical implications for research on women's language, sociopragmatics, and digital religious discourse. First, the study reinforces the argument that women's language features should not be interpreted as static gender markers, but as flexible interactional resources that are mobilized in response to specific communicative demands. In the context of digitally mediated religious Q&A sessions, women's use of hedging, intensification, affective expressions, and politeness strategies reflects a dynamic negotiation between emotional expressiveness and institutional restraint. This supports sociopragmatic perspectives that emphasize language use as contextually embedded social action rather than as a reflection of speaker deficiency.

Second, by situating women's language within live-streamed religious interaction, this study extends Lakoff's framework into a contemporary digital context. While Lakoff's original formulation emerged from face-to-face interaction, the present findings demonstrate that women's language features persist and adapt in environments characterized by public visibility, audience awareness, and media performativity. This adaptation suggests that gendered linguistic practices are not diminished in digital settings, but rather reshaped by technological affordances and interactional expectations.

Third, the study contributes to ongoing debates on narcissism by conceptualizing micro-narcissism as a sociopragmatic phenomenon rather than a psychological trait. The findings indicate that micro-narcissistic self-presentation is linguistically constructed through subtle, culturally sanctioned practices that align with religious norms of humility and respect. This perspective challenges dominant psychological approaches to narcissism by foregrounding discourse, context, and social regulation as central factors in self-presentation.

## **5.2 Methodological and Contextual Implications**

From a methodological standpoint, this study demonstrates the value of qualitative, discourse-based analysis for examining audience participation in digital religious contexts. The use of naturally occurring data from live-streamed Q&A sessions allows for the observation of spontaneous linguistic behavior that might not emerge in interview-based or experimental settings. The inclusion of prosodic and paralinguistic features in transcription further strengthens the analysis by capturing the affective and interactional dimensions of discourse.

Contextually, the findings highlight the importance of examining religious discourse as an interactive and participatory practice rather than a unidirectional transmission of doctrine. In the "Pengajian Sabilu Taubah", Q&A sessions function as a space where audience members, particularly women, actively negotiate their identities and social positions. This suggests that digital religious forums should be understood as sites of social interaction where authority, emotion, and self-presentation are continuously co-constructed.

The study also underscores the relevance of focusing on women as discursive agents in religious communication. By foregrounding women's linguistic agency, the research challenges assumptions that position female participants as peripheral or passive in religious settings. Instead, women emerge as active contributors who strategically employ language to gain recognition, express devotion, and participate meaningfully within institutional constraints.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

This study has examined women's language use in the question-and-answer (Q&A) sessions of the online "Pengajian Sabilu Taubah" through a sociopragmatic lens, with particular attention to micro-narcissistic self-presentation in digitally mediated religious discourse. By analyzing naturally occurring interactions between female participants and a religious authority figure, the study aimed to uncover the linguistic features, sociopragmatic functions, and self-presentation strategies employed by women in a public religious setting.

The findings demonstrate that women's language in the Q&A sessions is characterized by a consistent use of expressive-affective features, mitigation strategies, and response-oriented utterances. Linguistic features traditionally associated with women's language such as hedges, intensifiers, expressive adjectives, tag questions, and politeness markers are not used randomly,

but function strategically to manage emotion, maintain politeness, and invite interactional uptake from the religious leader. These features allow women to participate actively while respecting hierarchical and religious norms.

The study also reveals that micro-narcissistic self-presentation is realized through subtle and socially acceptable linguistic practices rather than overt self-promotion. Women foreground their presence through admiration-seeking expressions, validation-oriented questions, self-referential narratives, and identity-marking statements that emphasize devotion or personal effort. Such practices enhance self-visibility and recognition within the public forum while remaining aligned with expectations of humility and religious propriety.

Theoretically, this study contributes to sociopragmatic and gender-based discourse research by demonstrating that micro-narcissism can be understood as an interactional and linguistically constructed phenomenon shaped by cultural, religious, and media contexts. The findings extend existing theories of women's language by showing how its features adapt to the affordances of live-streamed religious interaction and public audience visibility. Practically, the study highlights the importance of considering audience language particularly women's contributions as an integral component of digital religious communication.

Despite these contributions, the study is limited by the scope of its data, which focuses on a small number of participants and a specific religious forum. Future research could examine a broader range of digital religious settings, include comparative analyses across platforms or religious traditions, or explore longitudinal patterns of audience participation. Such studies would further enrich understanding of gendered language use and self-presentation in evolving digital religious environments.

In a broader sense, this study underscores the need to reconceptualize audience participation in digital religion as a linguistically rich and socially meaningful practice. As religious engagement increasingly takes place in online and hybrid environments, attention to how language is used by non-institutional actors becomes crucial. By focusing on women's language in a live-streamed religious forum, this research highlights the evolving nature of religious communication and calls for further interdisciplinary inquiry into the intersections of language, gender, media, and belief

## 7. REFERENCES

- Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge University Press.
- Campbell, H. A. (2012). *Digital religion: Understanding religious practice in new media worlds*. Routledge.
- Coates, J. (2015). *Women, men and language* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Fitriyah, L. (2022). Women's language features in Indonesian public discourse. *Journal of Language and Literature*, 22(1), 45–58.
- Hjarvard, S. (2016). Mediatization and the changing authority of religion. *Media, Culture & Society*, 38(1), 8–17. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443715615412>
- Holmes, J. (1995). *Women, men and politeness*. Longman.
- Jansen, F., Sobieraj, S., & Kiper, A. (2018). The visibility of emotion in mediated interaction. *Discourse, Context & Media*, 25, 80–89. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2018.05.004>
- Lakoff, R. (1975). *Language and woman's place*. Harper & Row.

- Lestari, S., & Rukmini, D. (2021). Women's linguistic strategies in Indonesian institutional discourse. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 11(2), 245-257. <https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v11i2.34678>
- Marcellino, W. (2020). Narcissism and digital self-presentation: A sociocultural perspective. *Journal of Media Psychology*, 32(2), 65-74. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1864-1105/a000257>
- Mendiburo, A. (2017). Performative narcissism in everyday interaction. *Symbolic Interaction*, 40(3), 350-372. <https://doi.org/10.1002/symb.297>
- Nuriana, L. (2024). Digital da'wah and emotional engagement in Indonesian Islamic preaching. *Journal of Islamic Communication*, 9(1), 1-15.
- Nugroho, A. (2023). Politeness and affect in Indonesian religious discourse. *Journal of Pragmatics Research*, 15(1), 55-69.
- Pearson, J. C. (1985). *Gender and communication*. Wadsworth.
- Pradana, A. (2024). Micro-narcissism and audience visibility in digital interaction. *Discourse & Society*, 35(2), 214-230.
- Pratiwi, R., & Damanik, E. (2022). Politeness strategies in Indonesian religious discourse. *Journal of Pragmatics Research*, 14(2), 101-115.
- Putri, A. R., & Santoso, B. (2023). Micro-narcissistic self-presentation in Indonesian social media discourse. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 42(3), 287-304.
- Qoriah, S., & Rukmini, D. (2020). Gendered language use in religious interaction. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 10(2), 356-365. <https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v10i2.28591>
- Sari, M. (2024). Emotional expressiveness and gendered discourse in Indonesian public forums. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 28(1), 89-105.
- Suryani, A. (2023). Audience awareness and performativity in online religious forums. *Discourse Studies*, 25(4), 412-426. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614456231100214>
- Taufikin. (2025). Mediatized Islamic preaching and audience participation. *Journal of Islamic Media Studies*, 6(1), 21-37.
- Twenge, J. M., & Campbell, W. K. (2009). *The narcissism epidemic: Living in the age of entitlement*. Free Press.
- Wibowo, A. (2021). Audience participation in Indonesian live-streamed religious discourse. *Journal of Media and Religion*, 20(3), 145-158. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15348423.2021.1943679>