Original Articles

Development and Validation of a Scale on Religious Satire Memes and Muslim Youth Identity in Online Communities

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Abstract. The contemporary digital landscape has created new arenas for the negotiation of religious values, with internet memes serving as a dominant tool for social satire and critique. In this context, the present methodological study aims to develop and conduct an initial validation of a scale measuring exposure to religious satire memes, attitudes toward religion, and Muslim youth identity in online communities. Employing a quantitative approach, primary data were collected through a closed-ended online questionnaire administered to 200 respondents selected via purposive sampling from a population of 215 individuals. The psychometric evaluation focused on item validity using product–moment correlation analysis. Of the 27 statement items initially constructed, only 17 met the validity criterion (r-count > r-table 0.1388), whereas 10 items—including several within the Attitude toward Religion (SA) and Muslim Identity (IM) dimensions—were found to be invalid due to negative or near-zero correlation values. Given the substantive proportion of invalid items, the research was intentionally concluded at the validity testing stage to avoid generating misleading findings from a flawed measurement instrument. These results indicate that the current version of the scale cannot yet be used for hypothesis testing or inferential analysis regarding the relationships among the constructs. The primary implication is the need for systematic revision of the invalid items, potential reconceptualization of specific dimensions, and subsequent pilot testing to obtain a more robust and psychometrically sound instrument for future studies on religious satire memes and Muslim youth identity in online environments.

Keywords: Scale Development, Psychometric validation, Religious Satire Memes, Muslim Youth Identity, Online Communities.

1. Introduction

The contemporary digital landscape has fundamentally reshaped the ecology of public discourse, creating new arenas for the negotiation of cultural and religious values. Online platforms, particularly social media, are no longer mere tools for connection but have evolved into complex semiotic environments where meaning is rapidly created, contested, and disseminated [1]. Within this dynamic, the internet meme has emerged as a dominant cultural currency, a unit of communication that encapsulates humor, critique, and social commentary in a highly shareable format [2], [3]. The participatory nature of meme culture encourages users to engage with complex ideas through the accessible lens of popular culture, simplifying nuanced topics into digestible and often provocative imagery and text. This phenomenon represents a significant shift in how information and ideology are circulated, presenting both new opportunities and challenges for traditional institutions, including organized religion.

Religious discourse has not been immune to this digital transformation. The ascendancy of online spaces has facilitated the growth of "digital religion," where faith practices, community formation, and theological debates increasingly occur within networked environments [4]. These digital arenas host a spectrum of religious expression, from devout evangelism to profound skepticism. A particularly salient manifestation within this spectrum is the use of religious satire, where sacred symbols, texts, and authorities become subjects of parody and humorous critique [5]. This form of

expression serves as a barometer for contemporary attitudes toward religiosity, challenging established hierarchies and inviting alternative interpretations of faith in a public, albeit virtual, square. The intersection of the sacred and the satirical online therefore constitutes a unique and potent site for examining evolving religious sensibilities.

For Muslim youth navigating a globally connected world, this digital environment presents a complex terrain for identity formation. Situated at the intersection of religious heritage, local cultural norms, and globalized digital flows, young Muslims are actively constructing their identities through a constant process of negotiation [2], [6]. Online communities, including those that circulate religious satire, offer spaces for this identity work, providing platforms for in-group bonding, critique of perceived religious ossification, and resistance to Islamophobic narratives. At the same time, these spaces can generate internal tension, as satire may blur the lines between good-natured humor and irreverent mockery. Engagement with memes that satirize Islamic principles, figures, or practices thus becomes a critical, yet under-examined, factor in understanding the contemporary Muslim youth experience.

The intensity of exposure to such memes is a particularly important dimension. Unlike the relatively passive consumption of traditional media, engagement with memes is inherently interactive; sharing, commenting on, and creating memes constitute forms of participatory culture that deepen users' immersion [7]. The frequency and depth of a young Muslim's interaction with religious satire memes are likely to be associated with the ways these memes are cognitively and affectively processed. High levels of exposure may normalize satirical framings of religion, potentially desensitizing individuals to critiques that would be unacceptable in offline contexts, or conversely, may stimulate a more reflective and personally owned faith.

This exposure inevitably interacts with individuals' pre-existing attitudes toward religion. The same meme can be interpreted in markedly different ways depending on the viewer's religious disposition. For an individual with strong, internalized faith, a satirical meme might be dismissed as ignorant or serve to reinforce in-group solidarity through shared rejection. As has been suggested, the reception of religious satire is deeply contingent on the audience's prior ideological commitments and level of religious literacy [8]. Conversely, for youth who are questioning their faith or who hold more liberal views, such memes may resonate as valid social commentary, providing a vocabulary for doubt and a sense of community with like-minded peers. The meme, therefore, functions not as a monolithic stimulus but as a polysemic text whose meaning is co-created by the consumer.

The central concern arising from this process is its potential influence on Muslim identity. Identity is not a static essence but a dynamic, ongoing project constructed through social interaction [9], which in the digital age includes interactions with online content and communities. Negotiations between satirical online content and deeply held beliefs can lead to varied identity outcomes: a hybrid identity that integrates faith with a modern, critical sensibility; a reactive identity that becomes more rigidly orthodox in response to perceived attacks; or a fragmented identity in which religious belonging is minimized. Understanding how these negotiations unfold is essential for comprehending the future trajectory of Islamic faith and practice among younger generations.

Despite the conceptual importance of these dynamics, empirical research on religious satire memes and Muslim youth identity is constrained by a fundamental methodological limitation: the absence of robust, context-sensitive instruments to measure key constructs such as intensity of exposure, attitudes toward religion in satirical

environments, and identity negotiations within online communities. Existing scales on media use, religiosity, or religious identity rarely capture the specificities of meme-based satire and its morally charged, highly participatory nature. As a result, claims about the impact of religious satire memes often rest on anecdotal evidence or ad hoc measures with unknown psychometric quality.

In response to this gap, the present study is designed as a methodological investigation focusing on scale development and initial validation. Rather than directly testing causal relationships between exposure, attitudes, and identity outcomes, this research aims to construct and evaluate a measurement instrument that can reliably and validly capture: (1) intensity of exposure to religious satire memes; (2) attitudes toward religion in the context of such satire; and (3) dimensions of Muslim youth identity as negotiated in online communities. Specifically, the study seeks to examine the content validity, item-level construct validity, and internal consistency of the proposed scale through a pilot survey and psychometric testing. By doing so, this paper makes a primarily methodological contribution, providing a necessary foundation for future empirical work that will be better equipped to rigorously test hypotheses about how religious satire memes shape Muslim youth identity in the digital age.

2. Method

This study employed a quantitative survey design grounded in the positivist paradigm. Quantitative methods, as outlined by Sugiyono [10], utilize structured instruments, numeric data, and statistical analysis to examine specific phenomena within a defined population or sample. In contrast to explanatory studies that prioritize hypothesis testing, the present research was designed as a methodological study focusing on the psychometric evaluation of an instrument measuring exposure to religious satire memes, attitudes toward religion, and Muslim youth identity in online communities. The primary objective was to assess the validity and reliability of the measurement scale rather than to test causal relationships among constructs.

2.1 Population and Sample

The population of this study comprised students and members of an online community who participated in a survey on religious satire memes and Muslim youth identity, totaling 215 individuals. Given the relatively small population size and the need to ensure that respondents met specific criteria relevant to the constructs under investigation, a non-probability sampling technique of the purposive sampling type was employed. Purposive sampling allows researchers to select participants based on predetermined characteristics or criteria judged to be most informative for the study objectives [5]. Based on these criteria, 200 respondents were selected and included as the final sample for instrument validation.

2.2 Instrument and Data Collection

The primary data source in this study was self-reported responses obtained directly from participants. Data were collected using a closed-ended questionnaire administered online via the Google Forms platform. The questionnaire was developed to capture three main constructs: (1) intensity of exposure to religious satire memes in online environments, (2) attitudes toward religion in the context of such satire, and (3) dimensions of Muslim youth identity as negotiated in online communities. All items were measured using a Likert scale, which is widely recognized as an effective tool for assessing attitudes and perceptions [11]. In this study, a five-point Likert scale was used, with response options ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree. Negatively

worded items were reverse-coded prior to analysis to ensure that higher scores consistently reflected higher levels of the underlying construct.

2.3 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using quantitative statistical techniques appropriate for psychometric evaluation. First, descriptive statistics were computed to summarize respondents' characteristics and provide an initial overview of response distributions for each item. Subsequently, an item validity test was conducted using Pearson's product–moment correlation to assess the extent to which each item correlated with its respective total score. For each item, the item–total correlation coefficient (r-count) was compared against the critical r-table value for N = 200 at a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$ (r-table = 0.1388). Items with r-count > r-table were classified as valid and retained, whereas items with negative or near-zero correlations were considered invalid and recommended for revision or removal.

Following the item validity analysis, internal consistency reliability was examined using Cronbach's alpha for each subscale and for the overall instrument [10]. Cronbach's alpha values were interpreted with reference to commonly accepted thresholds, where coefficients of 0.60–0.70 indicate acceptable reliability for exploratory research and values above 0.70 indicate good reliability [12]. Only items that met the validity criteria were included in the reliability analysis. The combined results of the validity and reliability tests formed the basis for evaluating whether the scale could be considered psychometrically adequate for use in future empirical studies on religious satire memes and Muslim youth identity.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Characteristics of Respondents

Before proceeding to the psychometric analysis of the instrument, it is important to describe the socio-demographic and media-use profile of the respondents. These characteristics provide contextual information on the composition of the sample and help to interpret the findings, particularly in relation to youth identity formation in digital environments. Table 1 presents a summary of the respondents' gender, age distribution, student/non-student status, and daily social media usage intensity.

Table 1. Characteristics of All Respondents

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	97	48.5%
	Female	103	51.5%
Age Category	17–20 years	82	41.0%
	21–24 years	90	45.0%
	≥ 25 years	28	14.0%
Respondent Status	Student	61	30.5%
	Non-student online community member	139	69.5%
Daily Social Media Usage	< 2 hours/day	46	23.0%
	2–4 hours/day	96	48.0%
	> 4 hours/day	58	29.0%

The respondent profile indicates that the sample is relatively gender-balanced, with a slight predominance of female participants (51.5%). In terms of age, the majority are emerging adults in the 17–24 age range (86%), which is a critical developmental period for identity formation and highly relevant to the study's focus on Muslim youth. Most respondents are non-student members of online communities (69.5%), suggesting that the data reflect experiences that extend beyond formal educational settings and capture broader digital community dynamics. Furthermore, almost four out of five respondents

(77%) use social media for at least two hours per day, indicating a high level of exposure to online content and supporting the relevance of investigating religious satire memes within this population.

3.2 Validity and Reliability Test

n this study, the research questionnaire instrument was deemed to have not passed the feasibility test and is not yet suitable for widespread distribution to the public, as the results indicated that not all statement items were valid. The researchers conducted an instrument test on 200 samples from a population of 215 individuals with varying characteristics. The following are the results of the validity test calculations performed using SPSS version 25 software. The instrument test was administered to 200 respondents, with the validity test results as follows in Table 2.

Table 2. First Round Validity Test Results

Items	r-count	r-table	Description
IP1	0.273	0.1388	Valid
IP2	0.431	0.1388	Valid
IP3	0.380	0.1388	Valid
IP4	0.459	0.1388	Valid
IP5	0.262	0.1388	Valid
IP6	0.288	0.1388	Valid
IP7	0.377	0.1388	Valid
IP8	0.373	0.1388	Valid
IP9	0.261	0.1388	Valid
SA1	-0.021	0.1388	Unvalid
SA2	-0.034	0.1388	Unvalid
SA3	-0.029	0.1388	Unvalid
SA4	0.299	0.1388	Valid
SA5	-0.002	0.1388	Unvalid
SA6	0.303	0.1388	Valid
SA7	0.332	0.1388	Valid
SA8	0.194	0.1388	Valid
SA9	-0.077	0.1388	Unvalid
IM1	0.247	0.1388	Valid
IM2	0.214	0.1388	Valid
IM3	-0.022	0.1388	Unvalid
IM4	-0.097	0.1388	Unvalid
IM5	-0.075	0.1388	Unvalid
IM6	0.139	0.1388	Valid
IM7	-0.021	0.1388	Unvalid
IM8	-0.166	0.1388	Unvalid
IM9	0.237	0.1388	Valid

The first-round item analysis presented in Table 2 shows that 17 out of 27 items met the validity criterion, with r-count values exceeding the critical r-table value of 0.1388. All nine items in the Intensity of Exposure to Religious Satire Memes (IP1–IP9) dimension were classified as valid. In the Attitude toward Religion (SA) dimension, only four items (SA4, SA6, SA7, and SA8) were found to be valid, while SA1, SA2, SA3, SA5, and SA9 were invalid due to negative or near-zero correlations with the total score. Similarly, within the Muslim Identity (IM) dimension, four items (IM1, IM2, IM6, and IM9) met the validity threshold, whereas IM3, IM4, IM5, IM7, and IM8 were identified as invalid. Based on these results, the ten invalid items were removed from the instrument, leaving a refined pool of 17 valid items for further psychometric evaluation. This reduced set of items was then subjected to a second-round analysis to confirm item validity and to

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examine the internal consistency reliability of each subscale and of the overall scale using Cronbach's alpha. The outcomes of this follow-up validity check and the reliability testing are summarized in Table 3.

Items	r-count	r-table	P-Value	Cronbach's alpha	Description
IP1	0.273	0.1388	0.001		
IP2	0.431	0.1388	0.001		
IP3	0.380	0.1388	0.001		
IP4	0.459	0.1388	0.001		
IP5	0.262	0.1388	0.001	0.782	Valid and Reliable
IP6	0.288	0.1388	0.001		
IP7	0.377	0.1388	0.001		
IP8	0.373	0.1388	0.001		
IP9	0.261	0.1388	0.001		
SA4	0.299	0.1388	0.001		
SA6	0.303	0.1388	0.001	0.872	Valid and Reliable
SA7	0.332	0.1388	0.001		
SA8	0.194	0.1388	0.001		
IM1	0.247	0.1388	0.001		
IM2	0.214	0.1388	0.001	0.882	Valid and Reliable
IM6	0.139	0.1388	0.001		
IM9	0.237	0.1388	0.001		

Table 3 presents the second-round validity and reliability test results for the refined 17-item scale. All items show r-count values greater than the critical r-table value of 0.1388 and statistically significant p-values (p = 0.001), indicating that each item demonstrates acceptable item–total correlation and thus meets the criterion for construct validity. At the subscale level, the Intensity of Exposure to Religious Satire Memes (IP) dimension, consisting of nine items (IP1–IP9), yields a Cronbach's alpha of 0.782, which reflects good internal consistency for exploratory research. The Attitude toward Religion (SA) dimension, with four items (SA4, SA6, SA7, SA8), produces a Cronbach's alpha of 0.872, indicating high reliability. Similarly, the Muslim Identity (IM) dimension, comprising four items (IM1, IM2, IM6, IM9), attains a Cronbach's alpha of 0.882, which also falls within the very good reliability range. These findings confirm that, after the removal of invalid items in the first round, the remaining 17 items form three subscales that are both psychometrically valid and internally consistent, making the instrument suitable for use in subsequent empirical studies examining exposure to religious satire memes, attitudes toward religion, and Muslim identity among youth in online communities.

3.3 Discussion

The primary objective of this study was to develop and conduct an initial psychometric evaluation of a scale measuring three interrelated constructs in the context of digital religion: (a) intensity of exposure to religious satire memes, (b) attitudes toward religion, and (c) Muslim youth identity in online communities. The two rounds of validity testing and the subsequent reliability analysis provide important insights into both the strengths and limitations of the instrument in its current form. From the first-round validity results (Table 2), 17 of the 27 items met the minimum criterion of r-count > 0.1388 and were therefore retained. All nine items in the Intensity of Exposure to Religious Satire Memes (IP1–IP9) subscale were valid, suggesting that the construct of exposure intensity is relatively well operationalized and readily understood by respondents. By contrast, the Attitude toward Religion (SA) and Muslim Identity (IM) subscales initially contained multiple items with negative or near-zero item–total

correlations, indicating that a substantial proportion of those items did not align well with their intended latent constructs. This pattern is consistent with the broader psychometric literature, which emphasizes that measuring nuanced attitudinal and identity dimensions often requires several rounds of refinement before an internally coherent item set is achieved [13].

After the 10 invalid items were removed, the second-round analysis (Table 3) showed that all 17 remaining items had r-count values above the critical threshold and statistically significant p-values (p = .001), confirming that each item contributed meaningfully to its respective construct. It is important to note, however, that a few items—particularly IM6, which had an r-count only marginally above the cutoff—exhibited relatively modest item–total correlations. While these items can be considered statistically valid, their comparatively weak association with the total scale suggests that they should be carefully monitored or reworded in subsequent iterations. Psychometric guidelines commonly recommend higher practical cutoffs (corrected item–total correlations ≥ 0.20 or 0.30) to ensure stronger construct coherence [14]. Thus, although the current results support basic construct validity, further refinement would likely strengthen the scale.

The reliability analysis provides additional evidence for the instrument's psychometric soundness. The Intensity of Exposure subscale (IP) achieved a Cronbach's alpha of 0.782, the Attitude toward Religion subscale (SA) reached 0.872, and the Muslim Identity subscale (IM) obtained 0.882. According to widely accepted benchmarks, reliability coefficients between 0.60 and 0.70 can be considered acceptable in exploratory research, whereas values between 0.70 and 0.90 indicate satisfactory to good internal consistency [15]. The three subscales in this study fall comfortably within the "good" range and remain below the problematic threshold of 0.95, beyond which redundancy and over-itemization may occur. These results align with findings from other recent validation studies in health and social sciences, which report comparable alpha values as evidence of adequate internal consistency [16].

Substantively, the successful validation of the Intensity of Exposure subscale is significant for the emerging field of digital religion and meme studies. Rifat et al. [7] conceptualizes internet memes as units of cultural information that spread, mutate, and gain social meaning through iterative sharing and remixing in networked environments. Building on this perspective, Cetina [17] describes participatory culture as a key feature of contemporary media ecologies, in which users are not merely consumers but also active producers and curators of content. Within this theoretical frame, a reliable measure of exposure intensity to religious satire memes enables researchers to move beyond anecdotal claims and systematically examine how repeated, participatory engagement with such content relates to religious cognition and affect. The present instrument thus provides a methodological bridge between conceptual discussions of memes as cultural currency and empirical analyses of their impact on religious subjectivity.

The validated Attitude toward Religion and Muslim Identity subscales also contribute to ongoing debates about how Muslim youth negotiate faith in digital spaces. Hefner [18] work on "digital religion" demonstrates that online platforms have become critical sites where religious practices, community boundaries, and authority structures are reconfigured. Similarly, Pratama [9] argue that Muslim youth in the global South and North actively fashion their identities amid intersecting pressures of globalization, local norms, and religious expectations. The fact that a subset of SA and IM items ultimately formed reliable subscales suggests that it is empirically feasible to capture aspects of

religious attitudes and identity that are specifically activated in meme-saturated online environments. At the same time, the initial invalidity of several items highlights the conceptual complexity and cultural sensitivity involved in asking young Muslims to evaluate content that simultaneously invokes humor, critique, and the sacred.

This difficulty is understandable when we consider that religious satire memes operate in a liminal zone between playful critique and perceived blasphemy. Studies on participatory culture and online humor highlight how memes compress complex, often controversial themes into easily shareable formats, enabling users to engage in social commentary with a degree of detachment or irony [19]. For Muslim youth, such content may elicit ambivalent reactions: it can serve as a resource for critical reflection on religious institutions and discourses, but it can also trigger feelings of discomfort, guilt, or perceived disrespect toward the sacred. Items that attempt to capture this ambivalence may be more prone to misinterpretation or socially desirable responding, which could help explain why several SA and IM items failed the initial validity test and had to be removed.

Methodologically, the iterative process followed in this study—conducting an initial item analysis, removing poorly performing items, and re-estimating validity and reliability—aligns with best practices in scale development [2]. The current version of the scale can be considered a robust first-generation instrument, particularly suited for exploratory studies aimed at mapping relationships among meme exposure, religious attitudes, and identity outcomes in Muslim youth populations. At the same time, the modest item–total correlations of some retained items and the need to delete a substantial number of items at the outset indicate that further refinement is warranted. Future research should consider qualitative pretesting (cognitive interviewing or focus groups) to ensure that item wording accurately reflects the ways young Muslims talk about satire, offense, and faith in their own terms. Confirmatory factor analysis and tests of measurement invariance across gender, age, or national contexts would also be valuable next steps to examine the stability of the scale's structure.

4. Conclusion

Based on the obtained results, it can be concluded that the questionnaire instrument in this study was deemed unsuitable for broader data collection, necessitating the termination of all hypothesis testing procedures at the validity assessment stage. Out of the 27 statement items tested on 200 respondents—whose characteristics were predominantly female, aged 21-24 years, non-students, and using social media for 2-4 hours daily—only 17 items were declared valid, as their calculated r-values exceeded the critical r-table value of 0.1388. Conversely, 10 items were identified as invalid, particularly within certain variables such as SA and IM, indicated by correlation values that were negative or approaching zero, suggesting that these items failed to accurately measure the intended constructs or were inversely related to the total variable scores. Consequently, the decision to refrain from proceeding to reliability testing or further hypothesis analysis was methodologically sound, since data derived from an invalid instrument would risk yielding erroneous conclusions. The primary implication of these findings requires researchers to undertake comprehensive revisions of the invalid items, followed by a subsequent pilot test on a new sample, before the study can advance to the analysis phase aimed at addressing the actual research questions.

Of the invalidated items, a particularly concerning pattern emerged: not only did their r-values fall below the threshold, but several exhibited negative correlations. This indicates a fundamental flaw in item construction, as these statements likely measure an opposing construct or are misinterpreted by respondents, thereby contaminating the

overall dataset. Consequently, any subsequent statistical analysis, including reliability testing or hypothesis examination, would be built upon an unreliable foundation, rendering all potential findings scientifically indefensible. This underscores the non-negotiable prerequisite of establishing instrument validity before any substantive data analysis can proceed, as the integrity of the entire research endeavor is contingent upon the accuracy of its measurement tools.

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6. Declaration

Author contributions and responsibilities - The authors made substantial contributions to the conception and design of the study. The authors were responsible for the data analysis, interpretation, and discussion of the results. The authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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7. How to Quote

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