



Redefining Religious Moderation Education for Urban Muslim Youth

Wasisto Raharjo Jati^{1✉}, Hasnan Bachtiar²

¹ National Research and Innovation Agency, Jakarta, Indonesia

² Deakin Univerisity, Melbourne, Australia

ABSTRACT

Religious moderation has been a government policy since 2015, aimed at countering radicalism and extremism. However, the hierarchical implementation of the program has led to the labeling of "moderate" and "conservative", and the policy's understanding remains unclear among the community, especially the middle class and youth. Despite the government's campaign, intolerance persists. This research aims to review the religious moderation policy and explore how urban Muslim youths could contribute to religious moderation education. The method involves in-depth interviews with urban Muslim youths in Manado and Semarang and critical analysis of relevant documents. The findings suggest that urban Muslim youths prioritize religious moderation through intensive dialogue and gatherings. Current educational practices should incorporate these informal approaches to be more effective. The inclusion of urban Muslim youths in religious moderation education appears to be a promising way to encourage religious moderation in Indonesia. This highlights the need for religious moderation implementation to be responsive to public aspirations.

ABSTRAK

Moderasi beragama telah menjadi kebijakan pemerintah sejak tahun 2015. Penerapan program ini merupakan respons untuk melawan potensi radikalisme dan ekstremisme yang berkembang di ruang publik. Namun pelaksanaan program yang dianggap hierarkis menimbulkan label "moderat" dan "konservatif". Selain itu, pemahaman terhadap kebijakan moderasi beragama belum sepenuhnya diketahui dan dipahami oleh masyarakat, khususnya kelompok menengah dan kelompok pemuda. Oleh karena itu, praktik intoleransi masih tetap ada meski pemerintah telah melakukan kampanye moderasi beragama. Menindaklanjuti berbagai latar belakang permasalahan tersebut, maka tujuan penelitian ini berupaya mengkaji kebijakan moderasi beragama dan bagaimana generasi muda dan muslim perkotaan dapat terlibat dalam pendidikan moderasi beragama dengan caranya sendiri. Metode penelitian yang digunakan disini adalah metode penelitian kualitatif dengan pengumpulan data primer melalui wawancara mendalam sedangkan data sekunder melalui analisis dokumenter kritis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa generasi muda Muslim kelas menengah memiliki pemahaman tentang moderasi beragama yang mengutamakan dialog dan silaturahmi yang intensif. Hal ini menyimpulkan bahwa keterlibatan umat Islam perkotaan dan generasi muda dalam pendidikan moderasi beragama nampaknya lebih efektif dan efisien dalam mendorong semangat moderasi beragama di Indonesia. Lebih penting lagi, hal ini berimplikasi pada penerapan moderasi beragama yang harus melibatkan aspirasi masyarakat.

 OPEN ACCESS

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received:
28-11-2023
Accepted:
30-04-2024

KEYWORDS:

religious moderation, urban muslims, young people, tolerance, interfaith dialogue

KATA KUNCI:

moderasi beragama, muslim perkotaan, kaum muda, toleransi, dialog antaragama

Introduction

Indonesia is one of the countries with the highest level of religiosity in both Asia-Pacific region and globally. The release of a survey entitled *A Changing World: Global Views on Diversity, Gender Equality, Family Life and the Importance of Religion* by the Pew Research Center in 2019 shows various percentages in various indicators (Pew Center, 2019). In the same vein, the latest Religious Harmony Index survey shows that there has been strong support for religious harmony maintenance, especially tolerance and moderation (Setara Institute, 2021; Sila & Fakhrudin, 2020). As for the first indicator, namely 1) the influence of religion in society, almost 83 percent of Indonesians believe that religion has an extraordinary impact on their lives. The second indicator is 2) the increasing influence of religion in making life decisions, 83 percent of Indonesians say that religion is one of the preference considerations. The third indicator is 3) the increasing influence of religion in the state, 85 percent of Indonesians agree that there is a more religious role in influencing the process of being a state and nation. The increase in religiosity is certainly an interesting study because it depends on the grand narrative that directs it. By paying attention to various facts about the high intensity of religiosity, the influence of religion becomes so significant in social life. It is also in line with the intensification of Islamization in the public space. (Mujiburrahman, 2007).

It has been widely established within consensus of literatures that various educational paradigms in religious setting sometimes underscores the formal situation. This may not prompt inclusive setting since there remains inherent religious barriers. Therefore, instead of encouraging strict religious understanding. It may helpful to encourage religiosity. This rise of religiosity adoption has attracted many scholars to further investigate it. It basically has closely link with the rise of Muslim middle class whom mostly are young people. the latter group arguably has different religious different understanding with previous generations. As the older generation studies religious teachings based on guidance of ulama, the current generation seems to be "independent" in perceiving religious values (Iswanto, 2020; Sodikin & Ma'arif, 2021). Moreover, it can direct binary things either self-perception of religiosity / progressiveness or hidden conservatism. These two basically represent youth people's view on religion currently. As the source of information can be accessible from anywhere and anytime, this has made up their mind the role of religion in life. While the hidden conservatism seems to be possible affecting the young people, there is a sign that young people nowadays acknowledge more pluralism values in life. This attitude might be rational especially they aware of latest polarisation impact. It drives more young people to embrace inclusivity values.

Previous studies have showed that the implementation of religious moderation policies need to be improved, especially how to break down the values itself (Febriani & Ritonga, 2022; W. Jati, 2023; Subchi et al., 2022). This evidence basically shows that the role of inclusive education in campaigning religious moderation is urgently needed (Abdullah & Nento, 2021; Mahsusi et al., 2023; Mukhibat et al., 2024). Concerning on this issue, the education for religious moderation is not only merely formal curriculum, but how civil society especially young people and urban muslims can involve (Jubba et al., 2022). This becomes gap from previous research whom only focused on the formal implementation (Kozin et al., 2014; Saifullah, 2014). In line with previously mentioned arguments, the novelty that would be resulted in in this research is to reveal how the role religious moderation education in shaping religious moderation among Muslims urban and young people. This research underscored the novelty itself is information gap especially theory and practice framework specially religious moderation implementation.

From this above debate, this highlight the need of inclusive and empirical religious moderation understandings that may affect especially young people. This may revise the previous debate that focused on the curriculum aspect.

One latest research shows that religious moderation spirit is already nurtured especially within young the middle-class Muslim. The middle-class Muslim would like to define and adopt their own version of religious moderation (Wasisto Jati et al., 2022). However, it is also important to remember that the intolerant attitude also still matters specially in both internal and external believers (Fealy, 2016; W. R. Jati, 2017). Regarding these both different sides, the position of this research would like to highlight the empirical religious moderation expression that addressed by young people and urban muslims. This would be pioneer of the islamic studies whom concern with religious moderation that focused on the alternative expression and feedbacks from below especially in Indonesian case.

Methods

This research used qualitative method that explored social phenomenon through participant lens. More specifically, this research uses four types of data collection strategies including observation, in-depth interviews and focus group interviews, text data (comments), audio & visuals from digital media, and library research (Creswell, 2016). These method enables to make reserch design that oriented findings and its triangulation.

This research was conducted through fieldwork as the primary data and documentary analysis as the comparative/ secondary data. This fieldwork research was conducted in mid 2022 by having in-depth interviews with various informants such as academia, NGO activists, and youth people activists in Manado and Semarang. These regions arguably have high rate of tolerance index in Indonesia according to the several survey results. Moreover, these regions also have number of interfaith volunteers by young people. In this case, the researchers were the active participant while obeserving the targeted young people group as the research subject. During the fieldwork, the researchers used snowballing method to find out link and match information and networking from one informant to other informants. This was very helpful to understand the big picture of research topic. This also verified the information so that the researchers were able to gain richful data. After having relevant data from fieldwork, the processes of data analysis need to be rigorously reviewed especially filtering out the information from fieldwork..

While the secondary data itself used the large number of relevant literatures such as journals, books, and proceedings. By critically reading those stuff, it helped to find the gap between previous and current research. All the data then filtered to find out the link and match per each argument especially debates. After gathering fieldwork data, we then triangulated with other relevant sources to put each finding in order into a draft.

Results and Discussion

Religious Moderation: Current Situation

The idea of religious moderation substantively has been existing for long centuries ago in Indonesia. It was initially started with the inter-religion relationship such as Hindu & Buddha, Islam & Hindu, and Islam & Christian. This inter-religion relationship reflected

the mutual interaction between different believers by respecting each other. It has resulted in various local wisdom that taught living together in differences. One of most common religious moderation practices is *silaturahmi* (communal bonding) that still underway recently especially celebrating the holy day of certain religion. These surely revealed that religious moderation has strong local roots in Indonesia. Especially several local wisdoms have taught people to respect the differentiations (Susmihara, 2017; Mubarak and Rustam, 2019; Najib and Fata, 2020).

The religious moderation is not something new within Indonesian context. Regardless of having official status in public policy, the religious moderation has been long underway in informal implementation. It has been widely believed that the root of religious moderation was the local wisdom that already ingrained in society. For example, *pela gandong* in Molucca, *manyama braya* in Bali, *kitorang basudara/ ciptaan Tuhan* in Northern Sulawesi, and others. Aside from that, the most common practice is the centuries-old practice of extending *silaturahmi* (communal bonds). These series of religious moderation values have ingrained influences in society, especially family upbringing modes. However, there should be underlined that these local wisdom values decline to affect social interaction currently. Therefore, the current young people would like to revive it through recent interfaith dialogue campaigns.

The link between local wisdoms on religious moderation and young people lies at how young people take inspiration from old values and shaping it into the current religious moderation movement (Purwanto et al., 2019; Sumarni, 2019; Suprpto, 2020). It is important to note that main point of religious moderation is how to acknowledge differentiation and how to be equal in diverse condition. These two points that often come up in young people's mind recently (Gaffar et al., 2022; Saridudin & Ta'rif, 2021; Shaleh et al., 2023). As the information is accessible through social media, they become open-minded on diversity and pluralism (Wahyuni, 2019; Wasisto Jati et al., 2022). These has impact on the way they understand diversity and pluralism. The young people version of religious moderation basically relies on day-to-day activities that involves many young people.

In Islam generally, there are four main principal values in shaping religious moderation such as *tawasut* (in-between), *iktidal* (upright in the middle), *tawazun* (balanced), and *tasamuh* (tolerant). These four principles basically have roots from the congress of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) in 1984 whom adhere the national ideology of Pancasila and the current unitary state system is final and in line with Islamic values (Arifin et al., 2019). As the biggest Islamic organization in Indonesia and even in the world, NU wanted to ensure the balanced relationship between state leaders (umara) and Islamic scholars (ulama) through religious moderation. This intention also showed there is no contested stance between religious and nation commitment. More importantly, Nahdlatul Ulama also advocated for the indigenisation of Islam that could make Islam engaged with the local culture. From these primary concepts basically prompts people to bear moderate and inclusive attitude in their mind. More importantly, when it comes to the religious expression, the believers should be calm and moderate – not being exaggerate with chauvinistic attitudes (Prasetawati and Asnawi, 2018; Aji, Mukri and Zahrotunni'mah, 2020; Najib and Fata, 2020; Syamsurijal, Jati and Halimatusa'diah, 2022). These above-mentioned original religious moderation concepts treat all human (theist or atheist) are equal because it emphasises humanity rather than religiosity aspects. Consequently, it brings religion to be humanist instead of doctrinal in society. It could able to attract people to be respectful in diversity context.

Obviously, the main substance of religious moderation is to encourage people especially believers to be sincere in interacting with others. This aim in line with the pioneering values of religious moderation such as inclusivity dan pluralism. In addition, it should promote reinterpretation religious text that account for modernity. From these various values, it seems that religious moderation would be a civic norm that able to mingle religiosity and modernity in the same capacity. As a civic norm, religious moderation wants to remind people avoiding the term “majority” and “minority” because it will harm diversity(Burhani, 2014). Besides, the religious moderation also treats people in equal position regardless of their faith and belief (Muller and Seligson, 1994).

When it comes to the policymaking process, the religious moderation has consisted of 4 notable principles such as national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and acceptance of religious traditions (Saifudin, 2019). From these principles, the religious moderation basically would like to maintain balanced position between nationalism and religiosity expression. Both should be equal. More importantly, the acknowledgement of locality is another important to underline. These values bring religious moderation to be a social norm that affects social interaction. Furthermore, the ministry itself employed many Islamic state universities to set up the house of religious moderation. This is supposed to be a think tank that produced religious moderation discourses for member of society. However, it seems the ministry relied on the role of facilitators to train religious moderation practices in society(Cesur & Mocan, 2018; Cusack, 2021; Dhewayani, 2016).

Although, the religious moderation has main intention to make tolerant society, there remains problem that already ingrained in public space. It also to be main challenges for religious moderation implementation. There are two type of problem that should be underlined here. the first one is the minorities stigma especially non-Muslim in predominantly Muslim area and minorities Muslim in non-Muslim area. the second one is the “within Islam problem”. This latter problem basically shows the classical inter religious theologies rivalry among Muslim in Indonesia. Thus, accordingly it becomes the obstacles for the religious moderation policy in society (Jati, 2017a, 2023; Raharjo Jati, 2022).

These inter-religious Islamic theologies friction has resulted in not all Muslim itself also accept religious moderation policy. It is also likely that religious moderation does not bring all people to equal. Instead, there remains a stigma for whom already classified as the conservatives. This stigma becomes the critical point regarding implementation of religious moderation policies. It targeted to curb extremism and radicalism especially focusing on the role of returnees and its sleeper cells. As Indonesia has been longstanding fighting terrorism at home, the religious moderation itself is a part of counterterrorism campaign. It is designed to present inclusive religious understanding rather than jihadist or other hardliners propaganda(Emanuilov and Yashlavsky, 2011; Everton, 2016; Nuraniyah, 2018; Jati, 2021) .

As the radicalism and extremism have been under control, the religious moderation policy seems to be social border that grouped people to be moderate and conservative / hardliners. These might be happened since the intolerant attitudes still prevalent in society. the latter groups have been accused by the government to be mastermind behind those intolerant practices. Surely this accusation made the religious moderation could not reach the conservatives since the latter reluctantly join the program. Consequently, the current religious moderation program runs partially that may affect those who are being categorized “moderate”, but received little attention from “conservatives” (Savirani, 2020). These binary categorisations may have impact on how to nurture inclusivity and pluralism as polarisation still remains(Raharjo Jati, 2022).

The role of Interfaith Communication Forum (FKUB) actually has a pivotal role in nurturing religious moderation in each Indonesian region. However, it does not mean that every FKUB has excellent performance to guide moderation. It should be bearing in mind that state actors also have limited capacity to guard religious moderation. Therefore, this condition make government relying on the role of NGO or other informal groups to carry out religious moderation (Savirani, 2020). It is important to note that the influence of those non state actors such as religious organisation is important shaping the way religious moderation runs. Usually, the member of Islamic organisations whom being invited as the member of FKUB is equal. But in reality, there is one or two organisation that somewhat are influential to shape religious moderation.

The previous explanations showed that the current religious moderation has been running in top-down approach. It has resulted in the reluctant responses from the people especially Muslim middle class and young generations. Basically, they have bottom-up approach to maintain diversity and pluralism. While the Muslim middle class should be in line with religious values, the young generation seems to have cross-religious understanding in order to build up tolerance and interfaith dialogue. Especially, they realised that the divisive society still prevalent due to polarisation in the last 2019 election campaigns. Therefore, it drives them to be pluralist to avoid further social frictions (Mietzner, 2020; Prasetyawan, 2014; Rakhmani & Saraswati, 2021).

These above explanations have been long concerns for the younger generation. As they perceived that top-down religious moderation does not effectively reach out the grass roots level, it called for their advocacy to campaign interfaith dialogue. Moreover, the younger generation whom mostly millennials and generation Y would like to revise it according to their belief. It seems to them that the root of intolerant practices is the excessive religious expression and majoritarian feelings. In another word, they would like to push egalitarianism as one of foundation values within religious moderation.

Following up aforementioned arguments, this research would like to rethink the implementation of religious moderation in grass-roots level. More importantly, this study wants to comparatively investigate the perception of religious moderation between Muslim middle class and youth generation that mostly from millennials and y generations. Specifically, this paper wants to underline why Muslim middle class should be main frontrunner for the interfaith dialogue campaign in Indonesia.

The Relationship between Muslim middle class and young people in Interfaith Dialogue Commitment

The interfaith dialogues issue has been rising again after 2019 election in Indonesia. Most of the people already aware of the polarization that affected dearly in their life. Previously, Indonesia underwent series of heated mass mobilization on behalf Islamic defending action. This has resulted in the increasing intolerant attitude within polarized society context. Eventually, it has directly impact on the stigma Muslim and non-Muslim in social interaction. Previous recent research showed that unwelcome response to live in with other believers in same neighborhood or refusing to attend funeral because of different political choice are the examples. While this stigma has not been scattered around the archipelago, this has signaled red alert for the Indonesian diversity and pluralism.

Concerning on the previous heated identity polarization, the Muslim middle class whom driven by young people would like to embrace interfaith dialogue. Although the Ministry of Religious Affairs has officially endorsed religious moderation into public

policy, the current generation has own definition and understandings. This surely becomes the alternative option for public to empirically understand religious moderation. It is important to note that there is differentiation in perceiving religious moderation between ministry and the current generation. While the former dealt with deradicalization and extremism, the latter itself dealt with the intolerant attitudes in society. These different views seem to be big issues since they want to nurture religious moderation at grass root level.

Amidst above different intention, Muslim middle-class group wants committed to the religious moderation especially they want to curb intolerant attitudes as mentioned earlier. The important thing that they should dealt is “within Islam problem”. This becomes critical problem because Muslim could tolerate with different believers but not for inter Islamic relation. Certainly, moderating Muslim with same theological root is more accessible rather than moderating Muslim with different theological teachings. More specifically for the Muslim middle class itself, religious moderation might be applicable in same group with same teachings that mostly Sunni. But it could be intolerant with other Muslims whom share different teachings such as Shiite, Ahmadiyah, and others. This condition surely made every Muslim middle-class group have own collective religious moderation rather than universal religious moderation. In addition, due to having own moderation definition and practices, it may result in slight debate to what extent Muslims could be tolerant with certain things.

By contrast, the young generation especially millennials and Z generation seems to present genuine values of religious moderation. Both generations would like to reverse the religious moderation understandings by Muslim middle class. They also want to highlight empirical and informal approach rather than top-down one by Ministry of Religious Affairs. These might fit in with their youthful aspirations. In general, the young people are likely more expressive in practicing religious moderation (Iswanto, 2015; Saefullah, 2017). Most of them basically had pluralist upbringings since childhood period. For example, they befriended with different believers and may be familiar with other religious rituals. These upbringings become the basic knowledge to expand religious moderation when they are adult. Furthermore, the millennials and Z generation also mostly digital natives. It may make them are more rational in understanding religion because they could access information directly than following the religious leaders. As a result, they may have great sense of humanity in daily life.

With regards to the practicing religious moderation, dialogue often to be common practice. by spending time together, it will melt down the prejudices and stigma that already unanswered among young people. In addition, visiting the worship place is another thing to do among youth people. It is important to underlined that they were not practicing its religion. Instead, they advocated for the moderate mindset in expressing their religiosity in the public space. Although Indonesia is predominantly Muslims, it is important to bear in mind that Indonesia also host other official religions and faith. Therefore, having open-minded and informed consent is important as the base of religious moderation.

There are numerous interfaith young groups that has been around in Indonesia. They have various background in terms of ethnicity and religions. For the Muslims itself, those whom labelled conservative due to wearing niqab are willingly to join interfaith campaign. These may open eyes largely that even though conservatives have strict religious understandings, but the young conservative generations are likely informed and inclusive. It also breaks the stigma that the interfaith dialogue could be accepted if the conservatives reluctantly join it.

It is important to note the role of Gusdurian in every Indonesian region. This community basically would like to nurture the pluralism and inclusivity seeds from Gus Dur. These two primary values were the legacy of Gus Dur that still existing today. It has inspired many young people to spread out interfaith dialogue whom had been long campaigned by Gus Dur during his life. Nowadays, many young interfaith defenders took inspiration from Gusdurian setting up their own interfaith groups in each home regions. Certainly, this would be main key to attract attention from millennials and Z generation involving with interfaith dialogue.

Potentials of Indonesian Muslim Middle Class as Agent of Religious Moderation

The most important fact in discussing the position of faith and Islam within Indonesian Muslim middle class is religious expression dilemma. This is related to the rationality quality of the Muslim middle class which is still at the learner level. However, they also try to appear to exist as true Muslims. This dilemma was particularly happened due to the absence of religious leaders' guidance. These conditions that make the Muslim middle class vulnerable to changes in their religious preferences between being conservative or moderate. Becoming one of the two choices certainly has logical consequences for religious life in Indonesia. Especially in the heterogeneous context of Indonesia, then the expression of Islam certainly needs to get special attention. Therefore, this dilemma becomes a main reason why religious moderation should be nurtured in this group.

The emergence of both conservative and moderate preferences indeed shows a constellation of fights over Islamic discourse in the public sphere. As mentioned earlier, this problem basically showed that "within Islamic problem" still imminent affected Muslim middle class. This condition influences the direction of the development of Islamic da'wah, especially in urban areas. These conservative preferences are closely related to the emergence of a wave of Islamization, especially after the fall of the New Order. This Islamization is related to the desire of Muslims to be able to exist both socially and politically after experiencing many repressive experiences during the New Order regime. However, the current Islamization that developed later did not lead to a power struggle, but rather to uphold morality in social interactions. This strategy is generally used to re-popularize Islam as the main values and norms of society. Surely the way to popularize Islam should be in line with diversity and pluralism. However, in reality, sometimes the islamization has different path with religious moderation.

The above problem surely shows the obstacle for the religious moderation campaign in Indonesia. The strengthening of Islamic conservatives in Indonesia's Muslim middle-class population is part of an effort to purify and safeguard the rules contained in the Qur'an and Hadith. With the spirit to achieve salvation in the afterlife, conservative Islam through sharia and halal has become a strong enough attraction for the Indonesian Muslim middle class to be interested in becoming true Muslims. This condition makes the moderate position a marginalized discourse. The moderate model and style fronted by Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah have not been adaptive and contextual to the needs of the Indonesian Muslim middle class who are more pragmatic in viewing religion. The existence of the safety factor in the afterlife becomes a conservative discourse in attracting the interest of these new Muslims. This may result in the afterlife-oriented religiosity among Muslim middle class.

The marginalization of moderate discourse in shaping Islamic discourse in the public space, slowly then rises. Even more so when the emergence of various waves of violence

in the name of religion which mainly injures the level of humanity. This has developed into a kind of turning point for moderate discourse to be able to appear again as the main Islamic discourse. However, it is necessary to have some kind of practical discourse that can embrace the Indonesian Muslim middle class so that they don't go too far into conservatism again. This can then be realized by encouraging the principles of pluralism and tolerance as the main pillars. Therefore, the need of revising religious moderate that in line with modernity value.

In short, the emergence and strengthening of moderate discourse is an effort to restore moderation, tolerance, and also pluralism as social values in society. This means that the spirit of Islamization that is currently developing does not need to receive a reactive and resistant response, but rather the narrative is changed. What previously emphasized that Islamic preferences must be at the forefront, in this moderation of religion was later changed to be more lenient that Islam must be a mercy to the universe by protecting non-Muslims and also the majority. Modernism itself is widely believed can increase the essence of religious moderation because mostly Muslim middle class adopt modern lifestyle. The tabulation below attempts to show the desired discourse transition in the context of the Indonesian Muslim middle class.

Table 1. The Shift of Religious Moderation among Indonesian Muslim Middle Classes

No	Conservative Discourses		Moderate Discourse
1	<i>Jihad fi Sabilillah</i>		Moderate Attitude
2	Pro Sharia & Halal		Islam as a Blessing
3	<i>Islam and Ulama Defending Actions</i>	Shift of Discourse	Tolerance movement
4	NKRI Goes to Sharia		Pluralism
5	Same Faith with the Leaders		Fair Leader

Source: summary of fieldwork data

The shift in table 1 basically is an early attempt to socialize religious moderation within Muslim middle class. As this groups get affected the heated identity campaign, it is a time to turn their religiosity pattern. Previously the hardliner understanding has shaped the religiosity pattern among middle class. Therefore, moderate Islamic values should change it into the narration of inclusivity and pluralism.

Referring to the development and changes in Islamic discourse, it is more targeted at efforts to reduce "extreme" and "intolerant" tensions in conservative Islamic discourse(Hadiz, 2019; Mietzner & Muhtadi, 2020). These two things have dominated Islamic discourse in recent periods. The implication that followed was the image of Islam, especially Indonesian Islam, which was tarnished because it was attached to acts of violence in the name of religion(Wright, 2016). Besides that, the image of Indonesian Islam also later became Islam that was not friendly to outsiders. Even though such a narrative is in contrast to the narrative of Indonesian Islam which has been echoed at regional and global levels that Indonesian Islam is moderate Islam. This narrative revitalization is being tried to be raised by revising several items of conservative discourse which have already infested the ummah, especially the Indonesian Muslim middle class. Thus, moderate Islamic discourse can reappear as a leading discourse and restore the balance between traditionalism and modernization.

As presented in table 2 above, several aspects that are considered to have conflictual values such as "jihad" and "defense" were then revised so that Islam returns to its position as the middle religion, namely the religion that appears as the protector of all groups (Ida et al., 2023; Robinson, 2017; Syafiq, 2019). Because of that, then, the moderation factor is suppressed so that the implementation of Islam can appear more lenient and open. Moreover, the expression Islam in Indonesia is different with Arab countries, which tend to be homogeneous in identity. The emphasis on moderation is important in order to restore Indonesian Islam that is adaptive to pluralism without any identity friction (Al Makin, 2016; Azharghany et al., 2020). The emergence of the phrase jihad as well as the act of defending is also related to the expression of narcissism that has been described previously. However, the two phrases gradually developed into current muslim generation in Indonesia

Apart from that, the emphasis on sharia has become a debate in the implementation of both conservative and moderate Islamic discourses. This is because the enforcement of sharia is absolute and mandatory for adherents of Islam. However, various negotiations need to be considered bearing in mind that sharia enforcement could be an option that is mandatory for Muslims but not mandatory for non-Muslims. This option is part of an effort to revise the conservative narrative that sharia is for both Muslims and non-Muslims. This is in line with the fact that Islam does not have strong doctrines that force all people, especially minorities.

The Religious Moderation Movement Stages among Youth People

The young people movement on religious moderation basically is not against the state policy. Instead, they want to make up religious moderation can be accepted among their peers. Rather than involving with intensive academic discussion, the young people seem to be practical in implementing religious moderation. This can enable swiftly reaching out youth people without any constraints. In short, religious moderation that runs informally is effective than formal religious moderation line.

In general, the implementation of religious moderation itself has different responses especially from young people whom mostly generation millennial and Z. Rather than following the module from ministry, they have own understandings and its practices to implement religious moderation. The way they engaged with religious moderation campaign through own experience with differences. It could be family upbringing and social environment that shape young people' thoughts. It also responses the state policy on religious moderation that could not run smoothly in public spaces. Therefore, it prompts young generation to set up religious moderation movement (Saihu, 2021).

It has been widely believed that the way the young generation expressing their interfaith dialogue is diverse. In general, these various engagement with religious moderation basically shows how young people being committed to the both inter-religious and intra-religious relationship. Another reason is the role of civil society organization that regenerate next interfaith dialogue campaigner also important that affects young people. It is important to note that there is on and off commitment among young people stick with religious moderation values. Therefore, these stages are the best example to understand how young people generation sticks with peace and tolerance building (Qomar, 2021; Saifudin, 2019; Saihu, 2021; Shihab, 2019).

From above two reasons, it would show the different level of religious moderation activism among young people. These different levels have been reflected from those three case studies in Manado, Semarang/Salatiga, and Yogyakarta. There are three classifying

stages to delve into religious moderation activism for young people. First, early stage that shows how young people merely understand religious moderation in a form of discussion and sharing. Second, intermediate that shows engagement with religious moderation has been not only socialization, but also advocacy for those minorities. Lastly, third, advanced shows how religious moderation could bring young people to put concern with humanitarian aids such as women and children welfare and peacebuilding issues. These three stages actually follow up basic findings from fieldwork in those three cities.

In line with above, the early stage is close to the Manado case. The youth involvement within the religious moderation still around academic circle. The young people still find out religious moderation as the way to bridge in different religious understandings among them. Through the intense discussion, they would like to curb the previous stigma that already ingrained in their mind regarding certain religion. As a result, after attending series of inter-religious discussion, it can nurture tolerance and pluralism seeds in the grass-root level. Therefore, they are expected to be agent of religious moderation for their peers and families. For example, discussion forum such as Forum Mahasiswa Lintas Agama (cross-religion student forum) that held regularly by taking place in different campuses. The member itself mostly are the third or fourth semester students whom derives from various campuses such as IAIN Manado, IAKN Manado, Sekolah & Seminari Filsafat, etc.

The intermediate level basically means the young people's engagement with religious moderation has been transition and moving forward not only religious moderation, but also other issues. This means, the practices of religious moderation have transitioned from academic discussion to the advocacy works. For example, religious minorities protection from persecutions, cross-religion prayer events, joint committee for the religious holiday, security assistance for the religion celebrations. These series of religious moderation advocacy reflect the mutual relationship within interreligious interaction. This situation fits in the young people activities in Semarang / Salatiga.

The advanced level shows the religious moderation activities has reached out various issue engagement and cadre system. The cadre system runs through the establishment of center or courses that resulted in future peacemakers' generation. In addition, the understanding of religious moderation empirically engaged with humanitarian issues such as social aids, education, and even healthcare. It likely like public service. The advanced religious moderation also shows that there also long-standing commitment of religious moderation agenda to preserve pluralism commitment.

Conclusion

This research concludes several new findings regarding the involvement of public groups in religious moderation efforts. Key findings include the role of inclusive religious moderation in activating youth moderation and the effectiveness of young people in reaching their peers. The research highlights multiple reasons why religious moderation implementation needs revisiting.

The study reveals that both Muslim middle-class individuals and youth have unique understandings of and approaches to interfaith dialogue. While the former group is still transitioning towards moderation following a decline in identity-based tensions, the latter has demonstrated a strong inclination towards pluralism and inclusivism from the outset. The research underscores the importance of civil society involvement in revisiting religious moderation strategies. Theoretically, religious moderation should involve open-minded and welcoming responses to differences in public spaces.

Empirically, this study shows that successful religious moderation depends on fostering acceptance of differences and encouraging interaction.

To achieve religious moderation in public spaces, there needs to be a shift in orientation towards nurturing these values. Especially among millennial and Gen Z youth, who are driven by tolerance values, there should be efforts to mobilize them to spread these values widely. The study's implications for religious moderation among government and civil society are: (1) Government should welcome grassroots aspirations and accommodate urban Muslims and young people as partners in implementing religious moderation policies. (2) Civil society should actively campaign for religious moderation through inclusive education, such as open dialogue forums.

References

- Abdullah, A. H., & Nento, S. (2021). Constructing religious moderation in Islamic higher education. *Al-Ulum*, 21(1), 166–186. <https://doi.org/10.30603/au.v21i1.2084>
- Al Makin. (2016). *Challenging Islamic Orthodoxy Accounts of Lia Eden and Other Prophets in Indonesia*. Springer.
- Arifin, M., Abdullah, I., & Ratnawati, A. T. (2019). Contestation between Puritan Islam and Kejawen in the Urban Yogyakarta of Indonesia. *Al-Albab; Vol 8, No 2 (2019)*. <https://doi.org/10.24260/alalbab.v8i2.1460>
- Azharghany, R., Siahaan, H., & Muzakki, Akh. (2020). Alliance of Ummah in Rural Areas: A New Perspective on Islamic Populism in Indonesia. *Religious: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama Dan Lintas Budaya; Vol 4, No 4 (2020)*. <https://doi.org/10.15575/rjsalb.v4i4.10476>
- Burhani, A. N. (2014). Treating minorities with fatwas: A study of the Ahmadiyya community in Indonesia. *Contemporary Islam*, 8(3), 285–301. ProQuest One Academic. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11562-013-0278-3>
- Cesur, R., & Mocan, N. (2018). Education, religion, and voter preference in a Muslim country. *Journal of Population Economics*, 31(1), 1–44. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00148-017-0650-3>
- Cusack, C. M. (2021). A new spiritual marketplace: Comparing new age and new religious movements in an age of spiritual and religious tourism. In *The Routledge Handbook of Religious and Spiritual Tourism* (pp. 79–89). Routledge.
- Dhewayani, J. (2016). Managing Religious Diveristy in Indonesia: Policy and Reality. In D. Sofjan (Ed.), *Religion, Public Policy, and Social transofrmation in Southeast Asia* (Vol. 1, pp. 71–99). Globethics.net Focus 33. <http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12424/166523>
- Fealy, G. (2016). The Politics of Religious Intolerance in Indonesia: Mainstream-ism Trumps Extremism? In T. Lindsey & H. Pausacker (Eds.), *Religion, Law and Intolerance in Indonesia*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315657356>
- Febriani, S. R., & Ritonga, A. W. (2022). The perception of millennial generation on religious moderation through social media in the digital era. *Millah: Journal of Religious Studies*, 313–334. <https://doi.org/10.20885/millah.vol21.iss2.art1>
- Gaffar, A., Amir, A., & Akbar, A. (2022). Tracking Religious Moderation Discourse Content on Student. *Edukasi: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Agama Dan Keagamaan*, 20(3), 279–291. <https://doi.org/10.32729/edukasi.v20i3.1460>
- Hadiz, V. R. (2019). The ‘Floating’ Ummah in the Fall of ‘Ahok’ in Indonesia. *TRaNS: Trans -Regional and -National Studies of Southeast Asia*, 7(2), 271–290. Cambridge Core. <https://doi.org/10.1017/trn.2018.16>
- Ida, R., Ilahiati, N. K., & Saud, M. (2023). Media discourse on Islamic women jihadists in Indonesia: Islamic radicalism post-Arab Spring. *Feminist Media Studies*, 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14680777.2023.2171083>

- Iswanto, A. (2015). Literatur Aktivistis Rohani Islam di Sekolah Menengah Atas (SMA). *Edukasi: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Agama Dan Keagamaan*, 13(3), 387–405. <https://doi.org/10.32729/edukasi.v13i3.248>
- Iswanto, A. (2020). Kiai Sebagai Patron dan Sponsor Praktik Multiliterasi di Pesantren Pada Era Media Digital. *Edukasi: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Agama Dan Keagamaan*, 18(3), 287–301. <https://doi.org/10.32729/edukasi.v18i3.657>
- Jati, W.R. (2024). *Preferensi Pemilih Politik Muslim Indonesia Kontemporer*. Kompas.
- Jati, W. (2023). Dampak Populisme Agama dalam Pemilu Kepala Daerah: Pengalaman Pemilihan Gubernur DKI Jakarta 2007-2017. *Dialog*, 46(2), 255–268. <https://doi.org/10.47655/dialog.v46i2.752>
- Jati, W. (2023). The Religious Moderation for Indonesia Muslim Middle Class: Challenges & Solutions. *Penamas*, 36(1), 18–34. <https://doi.org/10.31330/penamas.v36i1.647>
- Jati, W. R. (2017). Radikalisme Politik Kelas Menengah Muslim Indonesia Pasca Reformasi. *Miqot*, 41(1), 192–208. <http://dx.doi.org/10.30821/miqot.v41i1.309>
- Jubba, H., Awang, J., Qodir, Z., Hannani, null, & Pabbajah, M. (2022). The contestation between conservative and moderate Muslims in promoting Islamic moderatism in Indonesia. *Cogent Social Sciences*, 8(1), 2116162. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2022.2116162>
- Kozin, W., Nuruddin, N., & Rais, M. (2014). Evaluasi Kebijakan Madrasah Ibtidaiyah Negeri sebagai Satuan Kerja Kementerian Agama. *Edukasi: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Agama Dan Keagamaan*, 12(3), 353–364. <https://doi.org/10.32729/edukasi.v12i3.92>
- Mahsusi, M., Hudaa, S., Nuryani, N., Bahtiar, A., & Subuki, M. (2023). Identifying Values of Religious Moderation Through Learning Activities. *Al-Qalam*, 29(1), 61–70. <http://dx.doi.org/10.31969/alq.v29i1.1205>
- Mietzner, M. (2020). Populist Anti-Scientism, Religious Polarisation, and Institutionalised Corruption: How Indonesia's Democratic Decline Shaped Its COVID-19 Response. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 39(2), 227–249. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1868103420935561>
- Mietzner, M., & Muhtadi, B. (2020). *The Myth of Pluralism: Nahdlatul Ulama and the Politics of Religious Tolerance in Indonesia*. *Journal Article*. <https://doi.org/10.1355/cs42-1c>
- Mukhibat, M., Effendi, M., Setyawan, W. H., & Sutoyo, M. (2024). Development and evaluation of religious moderation education curriculum at higher education in Indonesia. *Cogent Education*, 11(1), 2302308. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2024.2302308>
- Prasetyawan, W. (2014). Ethnicity and Voting Patterns in the 2007 and 2012 Gubernatorial Elections in Jakarta. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 33(1), 29–54. <https://doi.org/10.1177/186810341403300103>
- Purwanto, Y., Qowaid, Q., Ma'rifatini, L., & Fauzi, R. (2019). Internalisasi Nilai Moderasi Melalui Pendidikan Agama Islam di Perguruan Tinggi Umum. *Edukasi: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Agama Dan Keagamaan*, 17(2), 110–124. <https://doi.org/10.32729/edukasi.v17i2.605>
- Qomar, M. (2021). *Moderasi Islam Indonesia*. IRCiSoD.
- Raharjo Jati, W. (2022). Polarization of Indonesian Society during 2014-2020: Causes and Its Impacts toward Democracy. *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial Dan Ilmu Politik; Vol 26, No 2 (2022): November*. <https://doi.org/10.22146/jsp.66057>
- Rakhmani, I., & Saraswati, M. S. (2021). Authoritarian Populism in Indonesia: The Role of the Political Campaign Industry in Engineering Consent and Coercion. *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 18681034211027885. <https://doi.org/10.1177/18681034211027885>
- Robinson, G. E. (2017). The Four Waves of Global Jihad, 1979–2017. *Middle East Policy*, 24(3), 70–88. <https://doi.org/10.1111/mepo.12287>
- Saefullah, A. (2017). Bacaan Keagamaan Aktivistis Kampus di Universitas Negeri Jakarta. *Edukasi: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Agama Dan Keagamaan*, 15(2), 183–206.

<https://doi.org/10.32729/edukasi.v15i2.313>.

- Saifudin, L. (2019). *Moderasi Beragama*. Kemenag.
- Saifullah, S. (2014). Konsep Pendidikan dalam Pemikiran Ibnu Sahnun dan Al Qabisi. *Edukasi: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Agama Dan Keagamaan*, 12(3), 429–440. <https://doi.org/10.32729/edukasi.v12i3.97>
- Saihu, M. (2021). Pendidikan Moderasi Beragama: Kajian Islam Wasathiyah Menurut Nurcholish Madjid. *Andragogi: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam Dan Manajemen Pendidikan Islam*, 3(1), 16–34. <https://doi.org/10.36671/andragogi.v4i01.151>
- Saridudin, S., & Ta'rif, T. (2021). Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter Professional-Religius Pada Jamaah Majelis Taklim Shirotol Mustaqim Semarang. *Edukasi: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Agama Dan Keagamaan*, 19(3), 317–332. <https://doi.org/10.32729/edukasi.v19i3.1002>
- Savirani, A. (2020). Post-Election Politics in Indonesia: Between Economic Growth and Increased Islamic Conservatism. *Southeast Asian Affairs*, 2020, 136–153. <https://www.muse.jhu.edu/article/754744>
- Setara insitute. (2021). *Ringkasan Eksekutif Indeks Kota Toleran 2021*. Setara Institute for Democracy and Peace.
- Shaleh, S., Haryani, E., Indrawan, D., Fashimado, Z., & Sumirat, Y. (2023). Model Pengawasan Internal dan Pemberdayaan Untuk Mendorong Penguatan Moderasi Beragama di Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Negeri Authors. *Edukasi: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Agama Dan Keagamaan*, 21(2), 243–254. <https://doi.org/10.32729/edukasi.v21i2.1685>
- Shihab, Q. (2019). *Wasathiyah; Wawasan Islam tentang Moderasi Beragama*. Lentera Hati.
- Sila, M., & Fakhrudin. (2020). *Indeks Kerukunan Umat Beragama Tahun 2019*. Litbangdiklat Press.
- Sodikin, A., & Ma'arif, M. (2021). Penerapan Nilai Islam Moderat Dalam Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Islam di Perguruan Tinggi. *Edukasi: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Agama Dan Keagamaan*, 19(2), 187–203. <https://doi.org/10.32729/edukasi.v19i2.702>
- Subchi, I., Zulkifli, Z., Latifa, R., & Sa'diyah, S. (2022). Religious moderation in Indonesian muslims. *Religions*, 13(5), 451. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13050451>
- Sumarni, S. (2019). Pengelolaan Pendidikan Inklusif di Madrasah. *Edukasi: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Agama Dan Keagamaan*, 17(2), 148–161. <https://doi.org/10.32729/edukasi.v17i2.631>
- Suprpto, S. (2020). Integrasi Moderasi Beragama dalam Pengembangan Kurikulum Pendidikan Agama Islam. *Edukasi: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Agama Dan Keagamaan*, 18(3), 355–368. <https://doi.org/10.32729/edukasi.v18i3.750>
- Syafiq, M. (2019). Deradicalisation and Disengagement from Terrorism and Threat to Identity: An Analysis of Former Jihadist Prisoners' Accounts. *Psychology and Developing Societies*, 31(2), 227–251. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0971333619863169>
- Wasisto Jati, Halimatusa'diah Halimatusa'diah, Syamsurijal Syamsurijal, Gutomo Aji, Muhammad Nurkhoiron, & Riwanto Tirtosudarmo. (2022). From Intellectual to Advocacy Movement: Islamic Moderation, the Conservatives and the Shift of Interfaith Dialogue Campaign in Indonesia. *Ulumuna*, 26(2). <https://doi.org/10.20414/ujs.v26i2.572>
- Wright, J. D. (2016). More Religion, Less Justification for Violence: A Cross-National Analysis. *Archive for the Psychology of Religion*, 38(2), 159–183. <https://doi.org/10.1163/15736121-12341324>
- Yilmaz, Ihsan; Bachtiar, Hasnan; Smith, Chloe; Shakil, Kainat (2024). Fluctuating Populism: Prabowo's Everchanging Populism Across the Indonesian Elections. Deakin University. Report. <https://hdl.handle.net/10779/DRO/DU:25546804.v1>