

Religious moderation campaign: Student forms and strategies to build harmonization on social media

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Abstract

The increasing use of social media due to the development of technology and information gives rise to the influence of religious communication on social media. The use of social media is used for dogmatic interests, especially on issues related to the cultivation of certain religious concepts. The view of exclusivity that arises from the boundaries of the digital space is increasingly fertile with the scarcity of moderate Islamic symbols in the digital area. Moderation campaigns need to be carried out, one of which is through social media to establish harmony between religious communities. This study aims to determine how the shape and strategy of Muslim students in public universities in the city of Madiun. This research uses a qualitative descriptive type. The research method is through observation, interviews, and documentation. Data analysis techniques using Milles and Huberman and the validity of the data in the study using data triangulation. The results showed that the forms and strategies of student campaigns are: first, students build religious harmonization through status postings in the form of photos and videos on their social media; both students tried to stop posts that caused division and debate by not sharing. Third, students confirm the dissemination of information that is considered inappropriate through question and answer and discussion. Fourth is the creation of short-duration animated images for distribution. Harmonization in religion is an effort to create peace in every aspect of life.

Keywords: *religious moderation, student, social media*

Introduction

Social media was born with the explosion of information and the development of an increasingly advanced world of information technology. According to Hootsuite (*We Are Social*), in January 2020, social media in Indonesia was used by more than 160 million people; this indicates that in Indonesia, the number of users has increased by more than 12 million in just eight months (Kompas, 2020). Meanwhile, the growth of internet users reached 175.5 million by the beginning of 2020 (Republica.co.id, 2020).

The advantage of cross-platform social media is that it is accessible and can be connected through various digital means. The use of social media has a positive impact and a negative impact with multiple influences. On the positive side, the birth of social networks significantly impacts people's activities in various lives, ease of sharing information, buying and selling, and according to other needs. However, the negative side of social media is the emergence of hoaxes (Anwar, 2021b). Hoaxes are frauds who intentionally spread false information for specific interests (Silalahi et al., 2017).

The increasing use of social media for religious communication also affects the way of religion (Wibowo, 2019). Social media is also used for other dogmatic interests, especially on issues related to the cultivation of certain religious concepts. This is unavoidable, considering that religious expressions are permanently attached to media humans often use. Various studies show that many spiritual practices, from donations to virtual activities that are believed to strengthen faith, are easier to find (Hamdi et al., 2021). This is possible because social media is expressive, so it can be used to give and receive spiritual support, express beliefs, and introduce activities,

rituals, and religious understanding to others (Brubaker & Haigh, 2017). The spread of this entire religious understanding is widespread through social media. The ease and speed of access offered by social media is a free space for radicals to indoctrinate youth. For example, the emergence of the “Muslim Cyber Army Indonesia (MCAI)” account is a product of religious radicalism.

Religion as a spiritual center is a unifier that reconciles humanity, not a cause of division. Religion is often politicized to force the emergence of a shared understanding of religious teachings, thus developing an exclusive attitude. The view of exclusivity that arises from the barriers of the digital space is increasingly fertile with the scarcity of moderate Islamic symbols in the digital area. Although moderate ideology has a more significant proportion, the nature of its participation in the digital space is less than the more active conservative movement. The existence of minority groups is always in relation to and in conflict with the dominant group, namely those who enjoy high social status and a number of privileges. They develop a set of prejudices against minority groups in their society (Widada et al., 2021).

Hoax targets on social media are not only among adults but also among teenagers because of the massive use of social media, especially among students (Liestyasari et al., 2020). In the current pandemic conditions, students do online learning, so the internet and social media become their daily activities. Digitalization of communication through social media can encourage each individual to produce and digest information and news (Ariwibowo, 2017). The impact due to the spread of hoaxes can cause negative perceptions of the government, private sector, and individuals, which can cause unrest and the emergence of conflicts between groups.

In addition, the development of the media can have an increasing influence on the growing intolerance of the millennial generation or generation Z. Research from PPIM UIN Jakarta. Students and college students who do not have internet access have a high chance of having a high level of intelligence at 84.94%. At the same time, the remaining 15.06% of students do not have internet access. The data found that students and students generally learn about religion through the internet, be it through social media, blogs, or websites (Faisal, 2020).

In this era of 4.0 and society 5.0, an understanding of religious moderation needs to be presented from various perspectives. Religious moderation, closely related to diversity in Indonesia, has become one of the hot topics discussed lately. For the Indonesian people, variety is believed to be destiny. Indonesia is a country with ethnic, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious diversity that is almost unmatched worldwide. The basic idea of moderation is to look for similarities and not sharpen differences.

Literature Review

Religious Moderation

Moderation in Arabic is known as *wasath* or *wasathiyah*, equivalent to the word *tawassuth*, which has a meaning in the middle, *iltidal* (fair), *tawazun* (balanced). In Latin, moderation means moderation, which is not excessive, not lacking, or self-control (Fahri & Zainuri, 2019). *Wasathan* also means keeping from being uncompromising and even leaving the line of religious truth (Al-Asfahaniy, 2009, p. 869).

Moderation is a core tenet of Islam. Al-Asfahaniy defines *wasath* with *sawa'un*, the middle between two limits, justice, the centre, the standard, or mediocre. Moderate Islam is a religious understanding that is relevant in the context of diversity in all aspects, religion, customs, ethnicity and the nation itself (Darlis, 2017).

Based on the above understanding, it is concluded that religious moderation is a view or attitude that tries to take a middle position between two opposing and excessive perspectives so that one of the two attitudes in question does not dominate in one's thoughts and attitudes. The Ministry of Religion formulates indicators for religious moderation in the form of national commitment, tolerance, non-violence, and accommodation for local culture (Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2019, p. 43) namely; National commitment is an indicator of a person's perspective, attitude, and practice in religion compared to loyalty to the nation and recognition of Pancasila ideology and a sense of nationalism; Tolerance is an attitude of respect and does not interfere with the beliefs of others. So, tolerance is guided by the philosophy of giving space, spaciousness, and care; Non-violence is the perception of justice and security measures against a person or group. This action should be managed

ideologically to ward off hateful attitudes that encourage violence; Accommodating local culture indicates how a person's willingness to accept religion is adapted to local culture and traditions. An accommodative attitude to take in a friendly manner the local culture and traditions as long as they do not conflict with the central teachings of their religious beliefs.

In essence, Islam makes it easy for people to carry out the commands of Allah and His Messenger. A just and balanced and balanced attitude toward the principle of religious moderation can shape a person's three main characteristics, namely courage, wisdom, and purity, (Kementerian Agama Republik Indonesia, 2019) Moderation in Islam has the principles of justice (*'is*), balance (*tawazun*), and tolerance (*tasamuh*).

Social Media

Social media is part of a social network or social networking, a social structure formed from nodes that are tied with one or more special types of relationships, such as values, visions, ideas, friends, descendants, and others. Online social media, called online social networks, is not online mass media because social media has social power that greatly influences public opinion that develops in society. Sometimes, the definitions of "social media" and "social network" are often used synonymously.

Social media is "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and enable the creation and exchange of user-generated content. Social media / social media, also known as social networking, is part of new media. New media is a medium that offers digitization, convergence, interactivity, and development of networks related to message creation and message delivery (Watie, 2016).

Students

Students are people who study in universities; administratively, they are registered as university students (KBBI,2020). A student is gaining knowledge or studying and is reported to be undergoing education in one form of higher education consisting of academics, polytechnics, high schools, institutes and universities (Hartaji, 2012, p. 5).

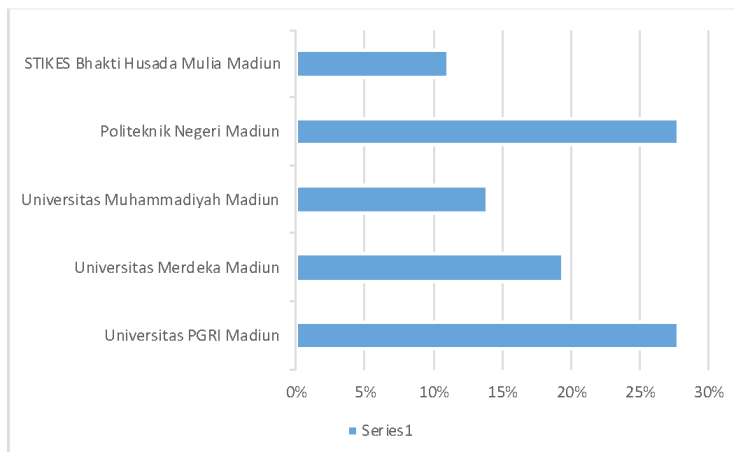
From the several definitions mentioned above, it can be concluded that Muslim students are people who adhere to the Islamic religion and are currently registered as students in universities. A student is categorized in the developmental stage aged 18 to 25 years. This stage can be classified from late adolescence to early adulthood, and in terms of development, the developmental task at this student age is to strengthen the establishment of life (Yusuf, 2012, p. 27).

Students' general characteristics, namely stability in their personality, began to increase due to reduced fluctuations in feelings. They tend to be steady and think. The most prominent feature of students is that they are independent and have predictions for the future, both in terms of career and love relationships. They will deepen their expertise in their respective fields to prepare themselves for the world of work that requires a high mentality. Meanwhile, the characteristics of students who follow technological developments are curious about technological advances. They tend to seek and even make the latest innovations in technology.

Methods

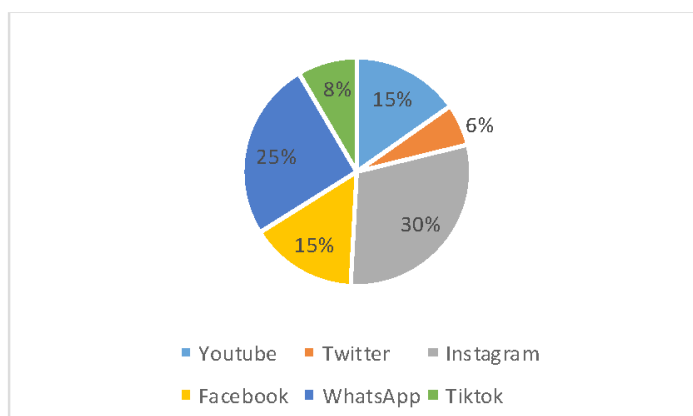
This study uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive type of research. Collecting data using interviews, observation and documentation. 36 students in Madiun became respondents in this study, as follows:

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents



Based on the picture above, it find that the general university students who became respondents came from 5 universities in Madiun City; as many as ten students each (28%) came from PGRI Madiun University and Madiun State Polytechnic, seven students (19%) came from Merdeka University Madiun, five students (14%) Muhammadiyah University Madiun, four students (11%) STIKES Bhakti Husada Mulia Madiun.

Figure 1. Gender of Respondents

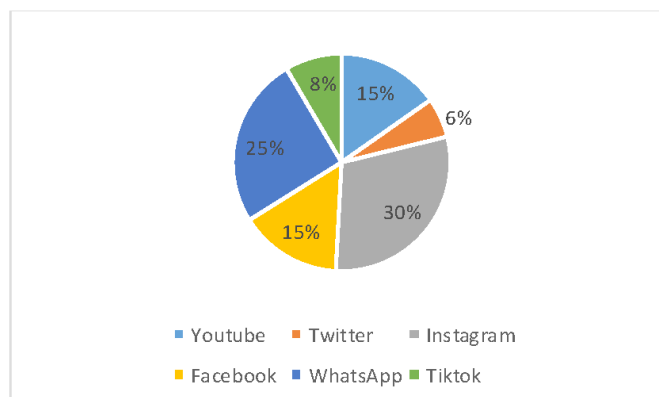


The data analysis technique used an interactive pattern of qualitative data analysis using the Miles and Huberman model: collection, reduction, conclusion and verifying.

Finding Research

Based on the search, respondents have various social media used in their daily life, as follows:

Figure 2. Social Media Used by Students



Students use social media in various activities, while in attaching religious moderation students have various forms and strategies to build harmonization, which are as follows:

The social media used by the research respondents, namely students, are Youtube, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp and TikTok. At the same time, the frequency of students using social media is every day with a tentative time. The frequency of using social media needs to be known to see how students spend the available time using social media (Hendrawati & Sriati, 2020). Students use social media in various activities, while in attaching religious moderation, students have multiple forms and strategies to build harmonization, which are as follows:

Make status posts in the form of photos and videos

Building harmonization as an effort to maintain harmony in all circles is used by students in the form of making status posts. The most used status posts on social media are Instagram and WhatsApp. The status posts are uploaded by students in the form of photos and videos describing the invitation's contents to build harmonization. The status in the form of pictures and videos is in the form of sentences that students write themselves/videos made by students themselves or take photos/videos of other people who are considered capable of campaigning for harmony between citizens who see the status.

This result is corroborated by the opinion that the media has undergone many changes, especially in media functions, so that directly or indirectly, the media has an impact on all information submitted to the public (Mildad, 2018). Students revealed that the narrative used in the religious moderation campaign is a sacred narrative that provides unity, not to divide.

After the reformation, the trend of religious conservatism in Indonesia continues to increase, especially in the digital space. Research results published in the Media and Religious Trends in Indonesia report in November 2020 showed that the buzz of conservatism dominated religious narratives on social media, accounting for a percentage (67.2%), followed by moderate (22.2%), liberal (6.1%) and Islamist (4.5%). %).

Stop the spread of posts that cause division

In efforts to build student harmonization in campaigning for religious moderation, in addition to making posts and raising their status on social media, students also stop the distribution of posts that are indicated to be able to cause division and debate among religious communities. The termination is done by students when they get a message. Students analyze the post's content; if the base is good and can seek harmony, the student will spread it. On the contrary, if it is indicated that the post's content causes debate and disagreement, the student does not participate in applying it.

Student behaviour is carried out to maintain national unity and integrity. Stopping debate among the public is done solely to build religious moderation (Anwar & Muhayati, 2021). Indonesia's largest Muslim population is often referred to as a moderate and democratic Islamic country. Indonesia is based on Pancasila's noble values, which have a pluralist face and high religious tolerance.

Confirming the dissemination of information deemed inappropriate through question and answer and discussion

Students made the confirmation by campaigning for religious moderation. The search found that when students find information on social media and think that the data can cause division and contain hoaxes, they confirm. Confirmation in Islam is called *tabayun*. *Tabayun* is a solution God gives in dealing with problems when information comes. *Tabayun* means researching the truth of something and not rushing into it. The *tabayun* process was carried out with questions and answers and discussions that were not easy to believe because the fact was not yet clear (Tsaniyah & Juliana, 2019) and was carried out with great hospitality and not harsh anymore.

The message becomes a very important element in supporting communication success in the campaign process. The letter can be written or oral, which contains symbols or symbols whose meaning is agreed upon. The spread of intolerance issues is increasing, especially through social media. This, of course, can be a big scourge for the creation of disintegration and damage the order of harmonious relations.

A previous study stated that social media has a big role in the spread of religious intolerance. Unbalanced reporting, taking one-way opinions, and mixing opinions and facts are the causes of multiple interpretations for recipients of information, which leads to misunderstandings and the emergence of intolerance (Sulastiana, 2017).

Campaigns must present educative, informative messages and influence target behaviour (Venus, 2004, p. 34). In an analogy, moderation is like a movement from the edge that always tends towards the centre or axis (centripetal). In contrast, extremism is the opposite movement away from the centre or axis, towards the outer and extreme (centrifugal). Like the pendulum of a clock, there is a dynamic movement, not stopping at one extreme outside but moving towards the middle. Improving the quality of religious piety strengthened by religious moderation based on tolerance, mutual understanding, mutual respect, respect for equality in the practice of their spiritual teachings and cooperation in the life of society, nation and state within the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia, based on Pancasila and the Constitution of the State Republic of Indonesia 1945 (Sinaga et al., 2022).

Creation of short animated images for distribution

Animated images of short duration are a strategy for students in campaigning for religious moderation. Students enjoy making short animated videos to be later distributed either through the YouTube channel or in community groups on social media. Technological advances have affected this life and cannot be avoided because science and technology provide many benefits and makes work easier (Mulyani & Haliza, 2021).

Freedom of expression in this era of openness also has implications for religious entities. On social media, anyone can easily talk about anything about religion. In addition to the positive aspects, such as the ease of finding spiritual information on social media, this also creates a negative factor, namely the presence of hate speech against religion.

The meaning of moderation and the characteristics of moderate da'wah, it can be defined that "moderate da'wah" is an effort to transform Islamic values through da'wah activities with the principles of *tasamuh* (tolerance), *tawazun* (balanced) and *ta'adul* (fair). This mode of da'wah is a new alternative to da'wah activities that are very much needed now, especially in the era of information disclosure (Anwar, 2021a). Moderate da'wah in the age of information disclosure will practically be able to straighten out the misinformation scattered on social media because most of the information related to Islam on social media today has a lot of negative tendencies.

Conclusion

Religion as a spiritual centre is a unifier that reconciles humanity, not a cause of division. Religion is often politicized to force the emergence of a common understanding of religious teachings, thus developing an exclusive attitude. Students use social media in various activities; students have multiple forms and strategies to build harmonization in the state and process of students in campaigning for religious moderation. First, students make religious harmonization through status posts in the form of photos and videos on their social media; both students try to stop the commands that cause division and debate by not sharing. Third, students confirm the dissemination of information that is considered inappropriate through question and answer and discussion. Fourth is the creation of short animated images for distribution. Furthermore, it is hoped that this research can develop by sharing research on religious moderation in the view of students.

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