



The Role of Social Media in Spreading Religious Moderation Values

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Abstract

This research aims to explore the role of social media in disseminating information about religious moderation. Using qualitative methods and content analysis approaches, this study analyzes social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok as a strategic means of introducing, discussing, and promoting the values of moderation in religious life. The findings of the study show that social media provides a space for interfaith dialogue that allows individuals from different backgrounds to share their views and experiences. Educational and inspirational content, such as videos, articles, and online discussions, is an important instrument in strengthening understanding the importance of tolerance, mutual respect, and understanding between religious communities. Additionally, social media serves as a tool to counter extremism and intolerance, providing a platform for moderate voices to be heard.

Keywords: *Religious Moderation; Social Media*

Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi peran media sosial dalam menyebarkan informasi mengenai moderasi beragama. Dengan menggunakan metode kualitatif dan pendekatan analisis konten, penelitian ini menganalisis platform media sosial seperti Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, dan TikTok sebagai sarana strategis dalam memperkenalkan, mendiskusikan, dan mempromosikan nilai-nilai moderasi dalam kehidupan beragama. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan bahwa media sosial menyediakan ruang dialog lintas agama yang memungkinkan individu dari berbagai latar belakang untuk berbagi pandangan dan pengalaman. Konten edukatif dan inspiratif, seperti video, artikel, dan diskusi daring, menjadi instrumen penting dalam memperkuat pemahaman akan pentingnya toleransi, saling menghormati, dan pengertian antarumat beragama. Selain itu, media sosial berfungsi sebagai alat untuk melawan ekstremisme dan intoleransi, memberikan platform bagi suara moderat untuk terdengar.

Kata Kunci: *Moderasi Beragama; Media Sosial*

INTRODUCTION

Social media is an online media, where users can easily participate, share and create content including blogs, social networks, wikis, forums and virtual worlds. Blogs, social networks and wikis are the most common forms of social media used by people throughout the world. Another opinion says that social media is online media that supports social interaction and social media uses web-based technology that turns communication into interactive dialogue. Social media is "a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and which enable the

creation and exchange of user-generated content". Social networks are sites where anyone can create a personal web page, then connect with friends to share information and communicate. The largest social networks include Facebook, Myspace, and Twitter. If traditional media uses print media and broadcast media, social media uses the internet. Social media invites anyone who is interested to participate by providing contributions and feedback openly, providing comments, and sharing information quickly and unlimitedly (A. Rafiq, 2020).

Religious moderation means a middle way of religion so that a person is not extreme and does not overdo it when carrying out the teachings of his religion. Moderation provides two important meanings, namely: reducing violence and avoiding extremes. In Arabic, moderation is known as *al-wasathiyah* which means the best and most perfect, while people who practice it are called moderate. Religious moderation is an understanding that is taken from religious norms and rules and then applied in a fair and balanced manner without understanding a text in an excessive way. Moderation is the core teaching of Islam which provides religious understanding that is relevant to diversity in all aspects, including religion, customs, ethnicity and nation. (Wibowo & Nurjanah, 2021)

METHOD

The type of research used is qualitative research. Qualitative research is narrative research and tends to use analysis using a library research approach. The data collection process uses sources from various relevant journals or articles, the sources discuss the concept of the role of social media in spreading the value of religious moderation which is used as a reference, explains the root of the problem being discussed, namely by analyzing the value of religious moderation, then concludes the main problem using descriptive techniques about The Value of Religious Moderation in Character Formation, the Role of Socialmedia.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Role of Social Media in Religious Moderation

Media is the plural word for medium which means intermediary or intermediary, specifically media can be defined as a communication tool used to bring information to someone. Meanwhile, social media is an internet-based communication tool such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, Google, YouTube, Telegram and so on, which is used freely by people in self-actualization, finding out something, telling something, including building relationships with others. So, if media is an intermediary, then social media is a form of intermediary itself. Nowadays, social media has become a primary need that cannot be separated from a person's life because it is very effective in communicating and makes it easier for someone to access all the information they need. Of the many social media platforms, YouTube is one of the social media platforms most widely used by Indonesian people. This can

be seen from the results of a survey conducted by Jakpat in the first semester of 2021, showing that 82% of respondents accessed YouTube, so that YouTube was ranked first as the favorite platform accessed by Indonesian people, followed by Facebook and Instagram. because YouTube is considered a very informative and very entertaining medium.

In Indonesia itself, on October 14 2021, active social media users were recorded at 170 million people out of a total population of 274.9 million people, and of the 202.6 million internet users, there were 96.4% who accessed the internet using mobile phones with average usage. - the average is 8 hours 52 minutes, this is an increase of around 6.3% compared to 2020. Therefore, every individual must use social media optimally and wisely in an effort to bypass fundamentalist understanding. in this nation, because the media is effectively used for that. As Ike Atikah said, social media is able to build public opinion through various existing platforms, this is because the majority of people have used mass media to find out, learn and conclude things. So, if religious moderation content is massively promoted both dialogically and harmoniously, and pastoralism will be able to build other people's understanding about acceptance of other people, so that when conservative ideology emerges, society can consider it. By promoting religious moderation during this pandemic, where the whole community uses social media in their activities, it will be very helpful in preventing divisions based on religious axes (Saragih et al., 2021).

The concept of religious moderation refers to the attitudes and behavior of individuals or groups in carrying out their religious beliefs in a moderate or balanced way, without extremism or radicalism. Religious moderation implies tolerance, mutual respect, and avoiding attitudes of exclusivity and discrimination against groups or individuals with different beliefs. Religious moderation is very important in the context of religious pluralism and social diversity. Through religious moderation, individuals and groups can express their religious beliefs freely, without harming the interests and rights of other groups or individuals. In addition, religious moderation can minimize inter-religious conflict and promote peace and harmony between religious communities. In general, religious moderation contains the values of diversity, tolerance and cooperation between religious believers. This concept encourages every individual to respect and understand religious differences and to establish harmonious relationships with people who have different beliefs. Religious moderation is not only limited to the individual or group level, but can also be applied in various aspects of life, including on social media. In the context of social media, religious moderation includes individual attitudes and behavior in expressing opinions or views related to religion, as well as moderating comments or content that have the potential to trigger religious conflict or insult religious beliefs.

Social media has become a very important platform for people to communicate, interact and share information. However, rapid technological developments have brought negative consequences, including increasing intolerance and radicalism in society. One of the problems associated with the use of social media is that its use is often influenced by a narrow and intolerant understanding of religion. Most social media users do not understand the principles of religious moderation, so they are often involved in acts of intolerance and violence. Religious moderation in social media can be defined

as an individual's ability to treat others with respect, consider differences in religious beliefs, and communicate in a way that promotes tolerance and understanding between religious believers. This is important because social media has become a major source of information and social interaction, where people from various backgrounds and religious beliefs can interact and share their views openly. Understanding religious moderation in social media involves awareness of the importance of respecting other people's religious beliefs, and not taking actions that insult or degrade other people's religious beliefs. Apart from that, understanding religious moderation also includes the ability to recognize content that has the potential to trigger religious conflict and avoid sharing this content on social media (Saumantri, 2023).

Social media is currently used as a tool for various needs that are inevitable in all areas of life. This is marked by the increasing number of social media users. In fact, there are various benefits of social media, one of which is to convey important messages easily and quickly. Apart from that, the wide reach of social media makes it an effective platform for spreading messages of kindness. In fact, a previous study stated that currently, the phenomenon of cyberreligion (religious recitation on the internet) is being carried out intensively along with the development of da'wah through online media. The issue of moderation (wasathiyyah) is not just a matter or interest of individual people, but is also part of the affairs of many people, especially for the people and society. Every element of society actually works together to build a moderate and polite religious climate. Especially nowadays, when various ideas freely enter and influence increasingly extreme attitudes. They display various religious attitudes with arguments that are interpreted as very far from the true nature of Islamic teachings. Based on this phenomenon, all parties recognize the importance of moderation, but the problem is that its meaning, objectives and application are still unclear in society. (Hamdi et al., 2021)

Social media networks are considered the most effective and efficient modern communication tools, with a huge impact on their users. For urban middle class Muslim millennials, the use of social media has positive impacts such as making it easier to access information, making it possible to join global communities, and enabling self-development through these platforms. However, there are also negative impacts such as the spread of fake news (hoaxes), pornographic content, online intimidation (cyberbullying), data manipulation in the media, and the emergence of hateful rhetoric, and so on. Along with the emergence of various impacts from social media, Religious Moderation is needed as an effort to unite religious enthusiasm with national commitment. Apart from that, this also aims to invite Generation Z to build and implement an attitude of tolerance so that they do not fall into radicalism.

Information technology has a very vital role in accelerating the folding of space and time. The rise of easily accessible virtual worlds has led society to a paradoxical problem. On the one hand, society is in high spirits to renew and express Islamic identity, but on the one hand, various digital spaces are colored by religious narratives that are not objective, and even tend to contain fanaticist values that hate other groups. This is what is categorized as an Islamization cycle driven by the need for information on religious knowledge. The more religious a person is, the more they will prefer to read religious texts that tend to be Islamic, practical and pragmatic. The digital space of

information technology is used in mainstreaming religious moderation as a digital narrative, namely a religious narrative that is packaged in certain content well and systematically and then disseminated by digital information technology. Digital narratives are able to expand ways of life that were previously unimaginable, such as artificial life, networking, and real-time interaction. The digital space of information technology becomes a container for moderate life strengthening to be able to build identity and meaning in life. Therefore, information technology becomes a counter narrative to fight religious narratives that monopolize the truth. Heidegger (1971) said that technology can open, expand, and influence a person's patterns and ways of seeing, although on the one hand, on the other hand, it can also cause fear, dissatisfaction and imprisonment (Hefni, 2020).

Social Media and its Challenges in Spreading Religious Moderation Amidst Social Polarization

In maintaining religious moderation in this digital era, there are several challenges that must be faced, such as the increasingly growing spread of false information (hoaxes), which is an important topic to have in this discussion, where hoaxes are fake news or incorrect information that is deliberately spread to deceive or mislead others. Hoaxes are often spread via social media, websites, chain messages, or short messages, with the aim of spreading false information, creating confusion, or influencing public opinion. Hoaxes themselves are often created without evidence or reliable sources. Hoaxes often use sensational or controversial titles or narratives to attract readers' attention and get lots of clicks or shares. In addition, hoax creators often do not verify the veracity of information before spreading it. They can easily spread false claims without considering the impact. Hoaxes often have certain goals, such as influencing political opinion, causing panic, or harming certain parties. Thanks to advances in technology and social media, hoaxes can spread quickly throughout the world and go viral in a short time.

Apart from the spread of hoaxes, the next challenge in maintaining religious moderation is that increasing polarization and conflict between religious communities in cyberspace is a phenomenon that has been frequently discussed in recent years. The development of information and communication technology, especially the internet and social media, has opened the door to faster and wider global interaction between various religious and cultural groups. Although the internet brings many benefits, there are also several negative impacts that have strengthened polarization and conflict between religious communities in cyberspace. Some contributing factors include:

- a. Filter bubble: Algorithms used by social media platforms and search engines tend to display content that matches the user's preferences and views. This means a person will tend to be surrounded by people with similar views and news that confirms their beliefs. As a result, understanding of different views is limited, and polarization is further strengthened.
- b. Disinformation and hoaxes: The Internet enables the rapid and widespread dissemination of information. Unfortunately, there is a lot of disinformation and hoaxes that intentionally or unintentionally

mislead about religions and other groups. This false information can trigger conflict and tension between various groups.

- c. Online extremism: The Internet provides a platform for extremist groups to spread propaganda and recruit new sympathizers. This can strengthen polarization and lead to conflict between religious communities.
- d. Anonymous nature: In cyberspace, people can interact easily without their identity being revealed. This can cause hatred and insults to spread more easily without real consequences, exacerbating tensions between religious groups.
- e. Echo chambers: Internet users tend to engage in online groups that support their views, creating an environment where alternative views are ignored or ignored. This can strengthen extreme beliefs and deepen gaps between groups. Increasing digital and religious literacy is the key to dealing with inaccurate information or disinformation in the digital era.

Digital literacy is an individual's ability to access, understand, evaluate and use information found in the digital environment wisely. In dealing with inaccurate or false information about religious moderation in the digital era, digital literacy is very important. So the importance of digital literacy is developed with the aim and purpose of revitalizing better religious moderation. In the digital era, information can easily spread quickly. Digital literacy allows individuals to identify and evaluate the credibility of information sources. Learn to check whether sources are trustworthy, have authority, and are supported by valid facts. Apart from that, digital literacy helps individuals to understand the characteristics of fake news or hoaxes. They learn to recognize sensational headlines, unsubstantiated claims, or questionable links so they can avoid spreading inaccurate information.

Digital literacy also encourages individuals to verify information before sharing it. Learn to look for more sources or contextualize information before jumping to conclusions or spreading news. In this case, digital literacy helps individuals to recognize bias or imagery in the information they receive. They learn to seek out different points of view and seek objective information before forming an opinion. Digital literacy enables individuals to use content filtering tools effectively. Can set preferences and limit exposure to content that may be misleading or questionable. Through digital literacy, individuals can contribute to spreading positive content and religious moderation on social media and online platforms. Digital literacy can help spread messages of peace and tolerance to offset inaccurate or dangerous information(Ulfa, 2024).

Social Media Increases Religious Moderation in Gen Z Environments

The younger generation, known as Gen-Z, values individuality, welcomes competition, and relies heavily on technology to simplify their lives. Given their strong connection to gadgets and the internet, Gen-Z relies heavily on these tools to shape their learning methods and approaches. Getting accurate and reliable sources to understand and practice Islam correctly is very important, because the version of Islam currently popularized on social media may not be the authentic version of Islam. Given Gen-Z's closeness to technology, the use of digital platforms for outreach and dissemination of religious teachings is important. Therefore, it is very important to prioritize

the study of religious understanding, foster religious awareness, encourage Islamic experiences, and encourage the realization of piety in the Gen-Z community. Religious awareness is related to the deep spiritual dimension in the hearts of Muslims. Every individual who embraces Islam has this awareness and realizes it through sincere gratitude. The realization of religious awareness is achieved through fulfilling religious obligations. Haris Budiman explained that religious awareness is rooted in the holy words of the Koran, especially Surah Ar-Rum [30]: 30. Its meaning is a state of understanding, an innate understanding that humans have from birth, so they are able to recognize their true identity. its origin as a creation of Allah SWT and lives its life in accordance with the divine revelation of the Qur'an. Cultivating religious awareness and encouraging spiritual growth must begin in childhood and adolescence, and continue throughout adulthood until complete enlightenment is achieved. Therefore, it is important to instill religious teachings in children from an early age.

Generation Z is the generation that must be educated about religious moderation. This generation is vulnerable to the influence of radicalism and terrorism because they always follow technological developments and spend more time accessing social media such as looking for information via TikTok, Instagram and YouTube. So now content is starting to appear that explains religious moderation on TikTok, such as content about inter-religious tolerance on social media created by Kadam Sidiq, who is also a student. However, with the development of information that creates content about extremism that can damage religious moderation, such as the emergence of a film that went viral in Indonesia with the title *Flames of War* in which there is an act of murder. In the book *Religious Moderation* (Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia 2019), we can see how the development and steps of the government's campaign regarding religious moderation tend to be more administrative in nature and rely on conventional approaches. The process of implementing the program to strengthen religious moderation is carried out through three main strategies: first, socializing and disseminating the concept of religious moderation; second, integrating religious moderation into binding programs and policies; third, incorporating the perspective of religious moderation into the National Medium Term Development Plan (RPJMN) 2020-2024.

Implementing religious moderation among Generation Z is very important to ensure a harmonious life and avoid social division. Generation Z, born between 1995 and 2010, is a group that is very familiar with technology and the internet. They have a multitasking habit that makes them connected to various digital platforms simultaneously. The existence of technology that has shaped their thinking patterns and personalities influences the way they interact and understand various issues, including in a religious context. This generation, although similar to the millennial generation in terms of technological sophistication, needs special treatment to avoid the negative impact of unverified information and radical ideologies that they may encounter in cyberspace. Through social media, Generation Z has the opportunity to explore and build their identity in a very personal and dynamic way. They can create a profile that is not just a virtual representation, but also reflects their interests, style and values. Not only as a tool for expressing themselves, social media is also the main source of information for Generation

Z. They often use this platform to keep up with news developments, the latest trends and technological innovations. Social media, with its global reach and ability to connect individuals from diverse backgrounds, has become a highly influential tool in shaping public opinion, including attitudes towards religion. These platforms provide a space for users to share their ideas, experiences and views on various religious issues, which can significantly influence the perceptions of others. In a positive context, social media enables the dissemination of information that supports tolerance and understanding between religions, broadens perspectives, and promotes moderation by presenting a variety of views that support tolerance and diversity. (Azizah et al., 2024)

Seeing existing phenomena, religion becomes a shield to defend arguments for the interests of certain people or groups. It is very important for Muslims today to use 'ibrah and wisdom for a good social life. The Gen Z generation must pay attention to aspects that support self-knowledge, such as social, spiritual and emotional. In this case, the emotional aspect becomes a very important battle as a means of organizing and managing every internal control. Likewise with the social aspect, which is also important as a means of controlling external self-control. Both are the basis of the spiritual dimension. so that all parts reach the level of maturity, if perfect then the person is strong. In a country it is very important to have moderation in religion, especially as Indonesia is a mixed country with many variations, of course this can cause conflict between religions and between groups by enabling understanding how to carry out these four steps, as follows: First, use social media (Medsos) to spread the principles of moderate Islam. Second, involve the millennial generation in doing positive work in society. Third, there must be opportunities for dialogue with the millennial generation, both in schools, families and society to understand beliefs. Fourth, promote family work as a center for positive character development.

As the Gen Z generation, we are united to support harmony and support tolerance between religious communities, to strengthen the unity of the people. Do not hesitate to reject distrust and all forms of violence. Because rejecting both is the key to maintaining balance in maintaining civilization and creating peace. Using steps to maintain religious harmony and harmony will further strengthen the unitary state of the Republic of Indonesia that we love. Gen z must learn to accept and respond to updated religious messages or content on the Internet to avoid conflicts between religious communities. Don't let the first principle of Pancasila be violated because of the widespread access to religious knowledge that is easily accessible, Gen Z people are left to their own opinions, not free to criticize other people's attitudes and opinions and assume they are right, because they are. It is clear that every religion has rights in our country, Indonesia, according to the first law (Belief in One Almighty God). The Gen Z generation must be able to develop different views and religions in society by increasing civil dialogue between religions and involving the entire community to regulate community and cultural activities and beliefs, especially among the gen z generation (Atmaja & Nugroho, 2023).

CONCLUSIONS

Social media plays a strategic role in promoting religious moderation by fostering tolerance, harmony, and inclusive dialogue in a diverse society. Despite challenges such as misinformation, hate speech, and polarization, it has immense potential to influence positive attitudes, particularly among Generation Z. Strengthening digital literacy, critical thinking, and collaboration among governments, religious institutions, and social media users is essential. With active participation from all stakeholders, social media can serve as a powerful tool to propagate moderation, bridge differences, and cultivate a more peaceful and inclusive digital environment.

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