The Perception of Millennial Generation on Religious Moderation through Social Media in the Digital Era

Suci Ramadhanti Febriani\(^1\) & Apri Wardana Ritonga\(^2\)
\(^1\)Universitas Islam Negeri Imam Bonjol, Padang, Indonesia
\(^2\)Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim, Malang, Indonesia
wardanaapri90@gmail.com

**Abstract**

The phenomenon of learning religion through social media is rife among the millennial generation. This is an opportunity for the internalization of religious moderation in the millennial environment. This study aims to reveal the millennial generation's perception of religious moderation through social media. This study uses a qualitative research design with case study methods, while data collection techniques include interviews, observation, and documentation integrally with data analysis techniques through the theory of Milles and Huberman. This study shows that the millennial generation's perception of the implementation of religious moderation can be internalized through social media intermediaries with video, reading articles, and intensive persuasion strategies from social media content owners. The research findings illustrate that the phenomenon of the implementation of religious moderation in the millennial generation can be improved through the distribution of religious materials that are relevant to modern issues without reducing the essence of religious education. This study recommends further research to examine the effectiveness of understanding religious moderation in the younger generation in dealing with pluralism in Indonesia.

**Keywords**: Millennial Generation; Religious Moderation; Social Media; Pluralism
Perspektif Generasi Milenial Dalam Moderasi Beragama Melalui Media Sosial di Era Digital

Abstrak

Kata kunci: Generasi Milenial; Moderasi Beragama; Media Sosial; Pluralisme
INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of pluralism is the main topic for religious education in Indonesia. It is caused by the construction of the background of the Indonesian people who are diverse in ethnicity, religion, and culture.\(^1\) Encouragement for moderation and reinforcement of religious moderation in the community needs to be echoed more broadly, so education about religious moderation is carried out evenly throughout the country.\(^2\)

One of the efforts to internalize religious moderation in the digital era is the implementation of the teachings of mutual respect between human beings.\(^3\) Through an attitude of tolerance, it is hoped that the millennial generation can have religious tolerance which can have an impact on religious harmony holistically, thereby minimizing conflicts and triggers of violence in the name of religion\(^4\), following the function of religion to spread the teachings of goodness, peace, and tranquility in living life.\(^5\)

The facts show that there are still seeds of radicalism that are growing in the millennial generation. This is evidenced by the


rampant violence between schools, brawls, and the development of ideologies that are contrary to religious teachings. In addition, the rise of extreme ideologies that develop among the millennial generation has an impact on intolerant attitudes, such as feeling that they are in the right group and blaming other groups who are not in the same group as them. Through this phenomenon, moderate values need to be increased in social media as a medium that has the opportunity to suppress radical doctrines intensely.

The process of internalizing the values of religious moderation is also needed through various social media such as YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram. This phenomenon can be shown that many da'wah accounts provide content for religious moderation. It is caused by the intensity of using social media is currently very high, especially among the millennial generation. Currently, various information and education have been spread through various social media platforms, so these media can provide an important function in the process of internalizing the values of religious moderation.

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Social media acts as a medium that explores the latest issues. News and information that develops on social media is a critical issue for users who are generally the millennial generation. This indicator is an opportunity for the millennial generation to study online-based religious learning, including topics related to religious moderation. This study can also be acculturated through multicultural and multidimensional Indonesian culture. This is an approach from a socio-religious perspective to provide insight and information regarding the importance of religious moderation values in Indonesia.

Previous research has shown that the availability of social media is required to play an active role in balancing information about religious moderation or decreasing the index of conflicts in the name of religion. In addition, interested persons can take advantage of and express intolerant actions on social media. The intensity of the spread of negative news has an impact on the high threat of inter-religious conflict. So concrete steps are needed, such as the

actualization of moderate values in the print media,\textsuperscript{17} so that the threat does not have a broad impact on intolerant attitudes.\textsuperscript{18}

Based on the facts before, related research is needed on the perception of internalizing the value of religious moderation through social media. On that basis, this study aims to reveal the values of religious moderation that develop on social media and the response to religious moderation on social media. Thus, the research results can provide a concrete approach to the process of internalizing religious moderation through social media.

\textbf{METHOD}

This study used a qualitative descriptive approach to explore in-depth and holistic information related to the formulation of the problem. The research method used is a case study on the millennial generation about their perception of religious moderation on social media such as Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram. Observations were made on social media accounts that have followers of more than 3000 people, including @nuonline_id, @maktabah_turmusy, @ulamaperempuancer, @literasiquran, @mozaik_islam, @tausiyahu_. This is because the public's attention is very high on the publication of the \textit{da'wah} account. The informants of this study were taken randomly among millennials who have entered the age of 18-25 years, and those who are studying in college. Process data retrieval using Google Drive which is distributed online via WhatsApp Group. The number of research informants was 40 people who gave critical statements and answers to the 31 questions given. The research questions posed to the informants were divided into three main

\textsuperscript{17} Dudung Abdul Rohman, “Peran Media Cetak Dalam Narasi Moderasi Islam Indonesia [The Role of Print Media in Indonesia’s Islamic Moderation Narrative],” \textit{Anida (Aktualisasi Nuansa Ilmu Dakwah)} 20, no. 1 (2020): 23–45, https://doi.org/10.15575/anida.v20i1.8868.

\textsuperscript{18} Arifianto, “Islamic Campus Preaching Organizations in Indonesia: Promoters of Moderation or Radicalism?”
themes, namely sources of religious learning on social media, content studied, and understanding of religious moderation.

The collected data is then analyzed through three steps; data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion or data verification.\textsuperscript{19} The final step is the process of validating the data using triangulation of data and data sources by utilizing other data to check or compare the data found in the research field.\textsuperscript{20}

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Portrait of Social Media Support for Religious Moderation

Using social media for the community is proof of the progress of human civilization. Social media can be defined as a group of internet-based applications that are built on the development of information and technology Web 2.0 and allow the creation and exchange of \textit{user-generated content}.\textsuperscript{21} Social media is an important part that cannot be separated in everyday life. Because apart from being a demand in the 4.0 era, social media has become an electronic communication tool where users can form online groups to share messages, ideas, and information, and are equipped with various features such as video services and \textit{microblogging}.\textsuperscript{22}

Today, the millennial generation is the largest social media user in the form of \textit{YouTube}, \textit{Instagram}, \textit{Facebook}, and \textit{TikTok}. In addition to

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conveying information, *YouTube* is here to meet the needs of its consumers, both as a propaganda medium and as a learning medium. *Instagram* is an application with a platform for uploading and sharing photos, videos, and social networking services online and allows users to take pictures and videos with certain features. *Instagram* users can also share posts to various other social media networks such as *Facebook*, *Twitter*, and *WhatsApp*, so it is said that *Instagram* is a social media that is easily accessible for finding information. While *Facebook* is widely used for the description of photos, videos, and other information in detail and descriptive. Until now, *Facebook*'s activities have been developed with various interesting features, and can even be used as a medium for commercial activities such as buying and selling e-mail. 

Researchers received 40 data from informants through a questionnaire. A total of 29 people answered that they had heard the term religious moderation and understood the concept well, while 11 others stated that they had never heard of the term religious moderation. This illustrates the lack of literacy regarding the concept of moderation for millennials in the digital era. Of the 40 responses from informants collected, *YouTube* became the popular media used by millennials to study religious knowledge with 87.2%, followed by *Instagram* and online articles with 30.8%, and *Facebook* is the third at 15.4%. In addition to the social media above, millennials also seek information on the religious realm through discussions with people.

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who understand religion, from books, TikTok applications, and WhatsApp messages, each with 2.6%. Thus, it is concluded that the presence of YouTube is seen as important to provide religious education to its users.

The use of social media in Indonesia in the last 2 years has increased significantly, this is proof that the development of science and technology has been felt by the wider community. The Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (or Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia abbreviated APJII) survey noted that active users of internet services in Indonesia in 2018 were 171.17 million or 64.8% of the total population of Indonesia of 264.16 million people, increasing rapidly in 2019-2020 to 196.71 million active internet users or 73.7% of Indonesia's total population of 266.91 million people.26

![Figure 1: Education level of internet users in Indonesia Source: Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia27.](image)

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27 Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia.
The survey also explained that social media in the form of Facebook was used more by 65.8%, followed by YouTube 61.0%, Instagram at 42.3%, Twitter 10.0% and LinkedIn 2.1%. The results of a survey conducted by Digital 2021, explained that YouTube is the most popular social media in Indonesia. 93.8% of Indonesia's population aged 16-64 admitted to using the YouTube video service as a medium of information. Followed by WhatsApp as the second most popular social media with usage of 87.7%, Facebook 85.5%, and Twitter 63.6%.

![Figure 2. Use of social media platforms in Indonesia](https://example.com/image)

**Figure 2.** Use of social media platforms in Indonesia

Source: Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia

The survey in Figure 2 confirms that apart from being a medium of communication, social media is a tool for people to seek information. Kosasih noted that using of social media is based on the following: user participation, social media has the principle of information disclosure, interaction with content, connectedness with fellow social media users.

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28 Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia.

Millennial Perception of Moderation Campaign on Social Media

The role of social media is expected to be a contributor to the delivery of information on the concept of moderation properly. So that the millennial generation as the biggest consumer of social media can easily understand the concept of moderation in question. Called the millennial generation because they grew up when the internet was born.

When the informants were asked about the content used to access religious knowledge, 89.7% answered that they learned religious knowledge from videos on YouTube, 48.7% used scientific articles as references to study religion, from inspirational films 10.3% and 2.6% used reviews and other user feeds as content for learning religious knowledge on Instagram.

![Figure 3. Content that millennials learn on social media](source: Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia)

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32 Asosiasi Penyelenggara Jasa Internet Indonesia.
Figure 3 states that millennials textually do not seek moderation studies on social media, but contextually millennials use social media to explore attitudes (morals) in real life and when using social media. This attitude is then transformed into a moderate attitude that is well ingrained in the millennial generation. It can be presented that the moral material occupies the highest position as content that is widely studied by millennials, which is 35.9%. So, if it is detailed, as many as 87.5% of informants claim to have received education on the values of religious moderation on social media.

Not only that, but the informant also stated that he was ready to support the religious moderation campaign through social media. Because the presence of social media makes it easier to convey important information that everyone needs. The response of one of the informants can be described below:

"Religious moderation campaigns through social media are very appropriate because in today’s era all community activities are anchored on social media. Starting from children to adults, all of them are active in social media (YES, Informant, 2021)".

"In social media, there is still a lot of extreme content and things that are not following religious social guidelines, so the concept of religious moderation needs to be disseminated on social media to balance these extreme contents (MD, Informant, 2021)".

"Putting moderation material on social media is a great initiative. But more importantly, social media users must be wise in using social media as a medium for learning and da’wah, so that there is no misunderstanding of the da’wah content that is widely spread on social media. So, choosing a credible social media site and an Ustaz who is qualified in his field is a step that must be taken in social media (IJ, Informant, 2021)".

Not in line with the opinion above, other millennials stated that they rejected the use of social media as a religious moderation

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campaign tool. This is based on the massive negative content found on social media. So that the negative content must be resolved first before loading the moderation concept material into social media. As stated by the informant below:

“\textit{I consider that the multi-moderation campaign on social media is inappropriate. Because social media is not all true other words contain a lot of hoax elements. It would be better if the material for religious moderation was taken from religious books and books (IH, Informant, 2021)}.”

"\textit{The discourse is not correct. Because social media presents a religious understanding. Diverse religious understandings are prone to causing disputes and chaos among others and between religious communities in Indonesia (SAP, Informant, 2021)}”.

“\textit{There are still many millennial social media users in Indonesia who cannot distinguish content that is worthy of being used as a way of life and content that can divide unity and harmony between religious communities. So that if the concept of religious moderation is published in social media, it is feared that it will become a new problem in the use of social media (AY, Informant, 2021)}”.

The millennial generation's perception of religious moderation in social media can be described in the table below:

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|l|}
\hline
Informant & Statement \tabularnewline
\hline
NH & Religious moderation is a person's point of view moderately, namely understanding and practicing religious teachings without being extreme, both extreme right and extreme left. \tabularnewline
\hline
HYS & Not \textit{bullying} on social media, not spreading hoaxes, not commenting to demean others are also part of the attitude of religious moderation. \tabularnewline
\hline
RD & The ability of a social media user to not quickly \textit{judge} the information received, but to clarify and filter any information related to religious matters. \tabularnewline
\hline
AD & Religious moderation is a process of understanding religion in a balanced and fair manner. When understanding religion on social media, our point of view of understanding must be \tabularnewline
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Millennial perceptions of moderation}
\end{table}
balanced. That is looking for information in depth is something that can prevent us from bad behavior.

SRA

In the past, people received information through radio, then television. And now it has become more sophisticated, namely social media. The idea of religious moderation is well socialized on social media, the ulama, intellectuals, or Kiai must adjust their da'wah language according to the community's language skills.

Source: Primary data.

The concept of moderation in table 1 is interpreted that the urgency of moderation can be embedded in the soul of the millennial generation. With such rapid technological developments, there has been a shift in the meaning of religious moderation to become more complex and broader. When the Ministry of Religion launched the theme “Religious Moderation for Community Togetherness” at the National Working Meeting in Jakarta on 23-25 January 2019, it was hoped that the presence of moderation would be able to strengthen the diversity between religious communities in Indonesia. However, in the use of social media, the meaning of "moderation" is directed to a peaceful individual attitude towards the content accessed and towards other social media users.

When viewed from the meaning above, there are several functions inherent in the process of delivering moderate messages on social media: (a) Information, collection, storage, processing, dissemination of news, data, images, facts, messages, opinions, and comments needed to be able to understand and act clearly on environmental conditions and other people to make the right decisions (b) Socialization (correctional) (c) Motivation (d) Debate and discussion (e) Education (f) Advancing life (g) Entertainment, dissemination of signals, symbols, sounds, and images from drama.

dance, art, literature, music, sports, fun, groups, and individuals (h).
Opportunity to obtain various messages and information between individuals, groups and between nations.35

With these functions, voicing a moderate attitude in social media can only grow healthy and run well if it is carried out widely and plays a role in life. If the entire domain is fulfilled, then the millennial generation can become a digital society that is smart in managing information content produced on social media.36 Their souls will also mature and metamorphose into an independent generation that can manage, interpret, and critically evaluate social media.

Efforts to inculcate the values of moderation in social media are an option that must be studied carefully so that millennials do not get out of the demands of a moderate attitude in the easy dissemination of information. The millennial generation needs the education to be moderate in social media, as the following informants respond:

Table 2. Millennial Perceptions of Moderating Content on social media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informant</th>
<th>Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FK</td>
<td>Moderation education needs to be published on social media. Because now we live in the age of technology, anything we want to know can be searched through the internet. With the millennial interest in religious information being so great, moderate understanding needs to be instilled in the millennial community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IS</td>
<td>The importance of educating millennials with moderated content to avoid being exposed to false information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LY</td>
<td>Today, many millennial people misunderstand the attitude of religious moderation, it is easy to blame other people's</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

36 Supratman and Wahyudin, “Digital Media Literacy to Higher Students in Indonesia.”

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demands before delving deeper into differences of opinion in religion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IJ</th>
<th>The current generation cannot be separated from social media, so it is known as &quot;digital native&quot;. Through social media, they can access the study and information they want anytime and anywhere. A good understanding of moderation will keep them from doing things that belittle others.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PS</td>
<td>Social media makes it easy for someone to provide false information. Wisely using social media is a behavior that must be done. Being wise doesn't mean you have to leave social media.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AD</td>
<td>Social media can influence the thinking of its users. The attitude of moderation must be well ingrained to fortify the bad things from using social media.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Primary data.

For now, and in the future, the religious moderation movement promoted by the Ministry of Religion is finding its momentum. Mapping religious moderation is important in managing religious life in a plural and multicultural Indonesian society.37 It starts with a moderate way of thinking for the millennial generation when surfing social media. The formulation of religious moderation messages on social media must reflect informative and persuasive messages.38 Informative means the message is based on data and facts, at least social media users can make posts containing information about the values of religious moderation. Next, the message must have an allure that influences or persuades the emotions of readers or other social media users. Messages do not have to be in written form but can be in the form of videos or illustrative images.

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38 Wibowo, “Kampanye Moderasi Beragama Di Facebook: Bentuk Dan Strategi Pesan [Religious Moderation Campaign on Facebook: Message Forms and Strategies].”
CONCLUSION

This research has implications for the moderation attitude of the millennial generation in social media to be one of the important efforts to build to help stabilize the use of social media as a source of information. The millennial generation is required to be wise in using social media in sorting and selecting any information received, so as not to be trapped in a muddy puddle of misinformation. This study shows that the millennial generation's perception of the implementation of religious moderation can be internalized through social media intermediaries with video shows, flyers calling for moderation, and intensive persuasion strategies on social media such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. The research findings illustrate that the phenomenon of the implementation of religious moderation in the millennial generation can be improved through the distribution of religious materials that are relevant to modern issues without reducing the essence of religious education. This study recommends further research to examine the effectiveness of understanding religious moderation in the younger generation in dealing with pluralism in Indonesia.

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