

Muslim Millennial Youths Infusing Religious Moderation: A Case Study Approach to Investigate Their Attitude

Zulkipli Lessy

Universitas Islam Negeri Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Email : zulkipli.lessy@uin-suka.ac.id

Miftahur Rohman

Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Tarbiyah Bustanul ‘Ulum Lampung Tengah, Indonesia

Email : miftahur1rohman@gmail.com

Abstract : *One of the challenges for nurturing moderate values is to tame our extremism and fanaticism for becoming tolerant belief as extremism and fanaticism oftentimes trigger a blind submission to the religion, which may lead the belief to conservatism and radicalism. This study aims to investigate the attitudes of Muslim millennial youths in Lampung Province in perceiving moderate religious values. Employing the qualitative research method with a case study approach, the research solicited 16 Muslim millennial youths from a variety of youth groups, such as members of student organizations (Organisasi Siswa Intra-Sekolah or OSIS and Kerohanian Islam or Rohis), nationalist youth organizations, Muslim Students Association (HMI), and Campus Dakwah Institute (LDK) to gather their perspectives about the intra-religious relationship, leadership, and gender equality. The purpose of collecting their perspectives is to identify whether these youths are moderate or semi-moderate or whether they are radicalism or conservatism. The findings showed that levels of religiousness among these Muslim millennial youths are generally moderate and fairly moderate. However, some youth respondents were reportedly categorized as conservatism due to their responses that seemingly supported the issue of anti-non-Muslim leadership and anti-intra-religious relations. The study recommends, therefore, that moderate religious values should be promoted among Muslim millennial youths so that conservatism can be eradicated in order to infuse tolerance, moderation, and assertiveness to differences.*

Keywords: *Moderate Religious Values, Muslim, Millennial, Youth, Tolerance*

Abstrak : *Salah satu tantangan untuk memelihara nilai-nilai moderat adalah melalui pengalihan ekstremisme dan fanatisme ke arah toleransi karena baik ekstremisme maupun fanatisme seringkali memicu ketaatan buta pada agama, dan ini mengakibatkan munculnya kepercayaan yang konservatif dan radikal. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki sikap pemuda milenial Muslim dari beberapa organisasi kepemudaan di Provinsi Lampung dalam memahami nilai-nilai agama yang moderat. Dengan menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif plus pendekatan studi kasus, penelitian ini menjangkau 16 pemuda milenial Muslim yang merupakan anggota organisasi siswa, mahasiswa, dan pemuda, seperti*

Organisasi Siswa Intra-Sekolah atau OSIS, Kerohanian Islam atau Rohis, organisasi-organisasi pemuda nasionalis, Himpunan Mahasiswa Islam (HMI), dan Lembaga Dakwah Kampus (LDK), untuk mengetahui perspektif mereka tentang hubungan intra-agama, kepemimpinan, dan kesetaraan gender. Tujuannya adalah untuk mengidentifikasi apakah sikap keagamaan para pemuda ini moderat atau semi-moderat dan apakah mereka ini radikal atau konservatif. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa tingkat keberagamaan pemuda milenial Muslim ini umumnya moderat dan cukup moderat. Namun, beberapa pemuda dikategorikan berhaluan konservatisme karena sikap mereka mendukung anti kepemimpinan non-Muslim dan kontra hubungan intra-agama. Karena itu, penelitian ini merekomendasikan hendaknya nilai-nilai agama yang moderat dipromosikan di kalangan pemuda milenial Muslim agar sikap konservatif mereka diarahkan menjadi yang toleran, moderat, dan terbuka terhadap perbedaan-perbedaan.

Kata Kunci: Nilai-Nilai Agama Moderat, Muslim, Millennial, Pemuda, Toleransi

INTRODUCTION

Indonesian university campus movements (*harakah*) during the past few decades have shown activities of *Tarbiyah* groups especially those who affiliated with Ikhwanul Muslimin.¹ The phenomenon was inspired by the socio-religious movements that were initiated by the Ikhwanul Muslimin in Egypt in the early twentieth century. Flourishing in Egypt, the movements (*harakah*) have expanded to other countries, including the Palestinian Territory, Syria, Jordan, or Iraq. Also, the movements have a great impact on Southeast Asia region, including Indonesia, where some Muslims tend to adopt ideas and the ideology of the Muslim Brotherhood or Ikhwanul Muslimin, which are basically part of the Salafist.² In the 1980s throughout the 1990s, many Indonesian students completed their university degrees in Egypt and other Arab countries then returned to Indonesia. Some further developed the ideas of *Tarbiyah* movement in Indonesia's faith-based or non-faith-based university campuses. What they significantly establish is the *halaqah* (circle study) and *usrah* (family-like gathering) to facilitate the members to study Islam in

¹Diah Ariani Arimbi, "Politicizing Piety: Women's Rights and Roles in the *Tarbiyah* Movement in Indonesia." *Religious Studies and Theology* 36, no. 2 (2017): 228-244, <https://doi.org/10.1558/rsth.35160>.

²Rubaidi, "Variasi Gerakan Radikal Islam di Indonesia." *Analisis: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 11, no. 1 (2011): 33-52; Yon Machmudi, "The Middle East Influence on the Contemporary Indonesian 'Campus Islam'". In Norshahril Saat (ed.), *Islam in Southeast Asia* (Singapore: ISEAS, 2018).

depth and further to spread ideas of Islamic social welfare among the community. It is, thus, argued that the movement effectively flourishes on campuses, and one of the pioneers is Indonesian Muslim Student Action Union (KAMMI).³

While the *Tarbiyah* movement has shown its existence, some Islamic movements embrace moderate religious values similar to characteristics of true Islam, which over time Indonesian Muslims have practiced the values. As noted in the Ministry of Religious Affairs' National Medium-Term Development Planning (RPJMN) of 2020 to 2024, the Indonesian government has explicitly adopted the concept of moderate religious values in such a way that would strengthen Indonesia as a multicultural nation with numerous cultural, linguistic, faithful, societal, or political-ideological diversities.⁴ The formation of the RPJMN can be traced to the Keputusan Menteri Agama Number 328 Year 2020 on strengthening the program of religious moderation.⁵ In regard with the moderate program establishment, recently, Indonesian Muslims had written about the importance of tolerance, behavior in religious moderation, as well as living moderation (*mutawassith*), and this can also be tracked in works of Azyumardi Azra, Noorhaidi Hasan, Najib Kailani, or Rubaidi.

Nowadays, the moderation program has significantly increased to address extremism and intolerance. Under its supervision and support, the Higher Institutions of Islamic Education (*Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam*) of the Ministry of Religious Affairs promotes such moderate values. Thus, moderation in

³Joko Tri Haryanto, "Gerakan Moderasi Islam dan Kebangsaan di Kalangan Mahasiswa Perguruan Tinggi Umum." *Policy Brief* 4, no. 1 (2018): 5-14.

⁴Ministry of Religious Affairs, *Religious Moderation* (Jakarta: Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama, 2021); Abdulloh Sajjad Ahmad and Ismul Latifah, "Religious Moderation in Islamic Religious Practices Through Wasathiyah Concept." *Sunan Kalijaga International Journal on Islamic Educational Research* 5, no. 1 (2021): 72-84.

⁵Keputusan Menteri Agama Republik Indonesia Nomor 328 Tahun 2020 Tentang Kelompok Kerja Penguatan Program Moderasi Beragama Pada Kementerian Agama.

religious practices has become a priority program due to the fact that intolerance is considered an influencing factor that causes socio-religious conflicts.

Given the background of socio-religious conflicts, the intolerant seeds bloomed during the recent social conflicts in Indonesia, such as when Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (known as Ahok) became the governor of Jakarta, after substituting President Jokowi. Subsequently, societal conflicts intensely emerged when Ahok ran for the 2017 Jakarta gubernatorial election. Some members of fundamentalist groups that had a commitment since the beginning on prohibiting votes for non-Muslim leadership expressed disappointment against Ahok by taking demonstrations, and these were supported by many Muslim millennial youths. Referring to the events, Vedi R. Hadiz illustrates such a situation as it has to do with Islamic populism.⁶ Thus, there is a need to promote religious moderation, and in this vein, two largest Islamic socio-religious organizations, Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, according to many research authors, are pioneers of moderation and tolerance because they have inclusive visions.⁷ The argument for this thought is that the religious moderation is carried out to counter conservative groups that have little respect towards other groups, yet there is a tendency to ignore other Islamic groups.⁸ Accordingly, Dogedo and Witro found that religious moderation aims to ward off radical movements and terrorism, so what is needed is inclusivity, which is worth religious moderation.⁹ Furthermore, some Muslim scholars, such as Azyumardi Azra, argue that moderation means modernity, democracy, and plurality.¹⁰ Similarly, Hamdani of UNUSIA Jakarta asserts that the growing trend

⁶ Vedi R. Hadiz, "Islamic Populism in Indonesia: Emergence and Limitations," in Robert Hefner (ed.), *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Indonesia*, 296-306 (New York: Routledge, 2018).

⁷ Kastolani, Munajat and Abdullah Yusuf, "Back-To-Islam Versus Islamic Moderation Movements in Indonesia." *Hikmatuna: Journal for Integrative Islamic Studies* 6, no. 2 (2020): 27-38.

⁸ Hesse Jubba, Jaffary Awang and Siti Aisyah Sungkilang, "The Challenges of Islamic Organisations in Promoting Moderation in Indonesia." *Wawasan: Jurnal Kajian Agama dan Sosial Budaya* 6, no. 1 (2021): 44-54.

⁹ Subhan Hi Ali Dogedo and Doli Witro, "The Islamic Moderation and the Prevention of Radicalism and Religious Extremism in Indonesia." *Dialog*, 43, no. 2 (2020): 199-207.

¹⁰ Azyumardi Azra, "Indonesian Islam, Mainstream Muslims and Politics." Paper presented at Taiwanese and Indonesian Islamic Leader Exchange Project, The Asian Foundation in Taipei, Taiwan, October 26-31, 2016; Muhammad Zuhdi, "Challenging Moderate Muslims: Indonesia's Muslim Schools in the Midst of Religious Conservatism." *Religions* 9, no. 310 (2018): 1-15.

of radicalism, to some extent, has decreased a moderate facade of Indonesian Islam.¹¹

The study on religious moderation among Muslim millennial youths has been important currently, and support comes from contemporary studies that examine discourse in religious moderation, tolerance, peace, and coexistence in multiculturalism by rejecting extremism and disproving assumption that Islam is an intolerant religion. The position and role of youth in campaigning for understanding the concept of *wasathiyyah* can refer to research by Muhammad Nasir and Muhammad Khairul Rijal who examined in depth three *pesantren* institutions especially in embedding Islam *wasathiyyah* in the curriculum.¹² Research focusing on curriculum studies has many positive values for strengthening nationalism, building tolerance, avoiding violence while establishing peace, appreciating for local wisdom and prioritizing moderation.¹³ Other research revealed that the radicalization and the influence of extremism in deviant acts among Muslim millennial youths occur due to various domestic and international influences. In this context, there are two influences which each affects these millennials, and mostly religious radicalism arises within an orthodoxy and a congregation, and the influence of terrorism on behalf of religion is largely influenced by global politics.¹⁴

¹¹ Hamdani, "Religious Moderatism versus Conservatism in Indonesia: Controversy of 'Islam Nusantara' during Joko Widodo's Administration." *Tebuireng Journal of Islamic Studies and Society* 1, no. 1 (2020): 17-36.

¹² Muhammad Nasir and Muhammad Khairul Rijal, "Keeping the Middle Path: Mainstreaming Religious Moderation through Islamic Higher Education Institutions in Indonesia." *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 11, no. 2 (2021): 213-241.

¹³ Muhammad Nasir and Muhammad Khairul Rijal, "Keeping the Middle Path: Mainstreaming Religious Moderation through Islamic Higher Education Institutions in Indonesia." *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 11, no. 2 (2021): 213-241.

¹⁴ Benny Afwadzi and Miski, "Religious Moderation in Indonesian Higher Educations: Literature Review." *Ulul Albab* 22, no. 2 (2021): 203-231; Joko Tri Haryanto. "Gerakan Moderasi Islam dan Kebangsaan di Kalangan Mahasiswa Perguruan Tinggi Umum." *Policy Brief* 4, no. 1 (2018): 5-14.

These also have gained a big momentum for being blown up by social media, and it was constructed to be an Islamic identity or symbol that keeps developing over time due to multiculturalism lacks to take a fraternity role in nurturing some Muslims, especially but not limited to the marginalized and the less educated.¹⁵ Moreover, Islamic populism has emerged as the established order in response to Western popular cultures which dominated Indonesian social media in the 1990s throughout the 2000s.¹⁶ However, Islamic populism, to some extent, was unable to address Muslims' anxiety against injustice, marginalization, or alienation. At this point, this arouses social envy and feeling of being marginalized in the country.

Research has suggested the importance of promoting religious moderation among Muslim millennial youths because, in the past few years, Indonesia experienced the politics of symbol with which intolerant attitudes to others have increased considerably.¹⁷ In addition to the emergence of political sectarianism that embraces inclusively religious symbols, religious moderation is of paramount significant to be promoted.¹⁸ According to Ismatu Ropi, people are aware of the rise of religious liberalism because it defies the importance of religious symbols and sacred texts that serve as a foundation of morals.¹⁹ This phenomenon strongly indicates a continuing battle between Islamic symbolism and liberalism, and in this Islamtu Ropi argues that there is a contestation between the two opposing poles, sometimes causing confusion among youths.

¹⁵ Rizky Alif Alvian, "Ekonomi-Politik Aksi Bela Islam: Pluralisme Dalam Krisis?" *Maarif: Arus Pemikiran Islam dan Sosial* 11, no. 2 (2016): 53-70.

¹⁶ Najib Kailani, "Kepanikan Moral dan Dakwah Islam Populer: Membaca Fenomena 'Rohis' di Indonesia. *Analisis: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 11, no. 1 (2011): 1-16; Noorhaidi Hasan, "Education, Young Islamists and Integrated Islamic Schools in Indonesia." *Studia Islamika* 19, no. 1 (2012): 77-111.

¹⁷ Kunawi Basyir, "Fighting Islamic Radicalism Through Religious Moderation in Indonesia: An Analysis of Religious Movement." *ESENSIA* 21, no. 2 (2020): 205-219; Betria Zarpina Yanti and Doli Witro, "Islamic Moderation as a Resolution of Different Conflicts of Religion." *Andragogi: Jurnal Diklat Teknis Pendidikan dan Keagamaan* 8, no. 1 (2020): 446-457.

¹⁸ Demy Jura, "Religious Moderation: An Approach of Religious Life in Indonesia." *Jurnal Inovasi Penelitian* 1 no. 10 (2021): 2049-2055.

¹⁹ Ismatu Ropi, "Whither Religious Moderation? The State and Management of Religious Affairs in Contemporary Indonesia." *Studia Islamika* 26, no. 3 (2019): 597-601.

The main objective of the paper, hence, is to examine how do Muslim millennial youths respond to Islamists, and what is their position stance to respond to the juxtaposing poles. Youths are those who are in the midst of a maelstrom to deal with conflicts between liberalism and the presence of Islamic symbols in politics where they would certainly become a floating social segment if there are no firm principles that guide them, or influencing figures and role models whom they follow, as well as orthodoxies and congregations they conveniently settle in. The latter two mentioned, however, can include two largest Islamic social organizations, such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah, which have involved young people in their empowerment programs, and these organizations contextually reinterpret the importance of Islam *wasathiyyah* applied into the youths as the successors of the nation. They are avant-garde to counteract either radicalism or liberalism. This view is reflected in the work of Muhammad Nasir and Muhammad Khairul Rijal that examined the Muslim millennial youths in countering radicalism in school. It found that incorporating moderation in curriculum can guide youths into middle paths (*wasathiyyah*).²⁰ The curriculum is of important owing to determining to yield best good graduates. Research by Ekawati and Associates concluded that youth programs, such as soft-skill and self-development trainings, conducted by those two largest socio-religious organizations could minimize negative influences from extremism and radicalism youths might misbehave. However, it is worth noting that inclusive multicultural awareness in the curriculum of the Islamic Higher Education Institutions could minimize radicalism.²¹

²⁰Muhammad Nasir and Muhammad Khairul Rijal, "Keeping the Middle Path: Mainstreaming Religious Moderation through Islamic Higher Education Institutions in Indonesia." *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 11, no. 2 (2021): 213-241.

²¹Ekawati, M. Suparta, Khaeron Sirin, Maftuhah and Ade Pifianti, "Moderation of Higher Education Curriculum in Religious Deradicalization in Indonesia." *Tarbiya: Journal of Education in Muslim Society* 6 no. 2 (2019): 169-178.

Research revealed that Islam populism emerges as a new development that echoes jargons popularized by Islamic movement groups of non-orthodoxies to increase the number of followers and congregants. In favor of anti-Western symbol and its pop culture, these Islamic groups could converse interests of the increasing number of youths who are acquaint with the Western pop culture. To encounter this, they present Islam in a pop culture mode. As a result, it can introduce Islam to young people in order to search for a new alternative identity within the corridor of Islam.²² But the rise of Islamic populism leaves a legacy of rigid worldview to plurality and heterogeneity, two of the several good characters of the nation. Regarding this, in 2017-2019 the government under the former Minister of Religious Affairs, Lukman Hakim Saifuddin, initiated the religious moderation movement as part of the RPJMN that aims to address intolerance, exclusivity, radicalization, and extremism.²³

In order to manifest the intension, the government has encouraged each Islamic university to establish the Rumah Moderasi Beragama, which can facilitate campus to motivate, monitor, and implement the government's policies related programs of the RPJMN. Indeed, the Ministry of Religious Affairs has realized the RPJMN, which its inception was molded when Minister Lukman Hakim Saifuddin took the office as he made a breakthrough towards the realization. In 2020, Minister (Ret. General) Fachrul Razi issued Decision Letter Number 328 Year 2020 to point executive personnel that supervised and advocated for the establishment of religious moderation.²⁴ Nowadays, the Rumah Moderasi Beragama is found in most of Islamic universities.

Furthermore, Muslim millennial youths are of important for better future and a valuable community's asset because of their potential. Their recent legacies

²²Najib Kailani, "Kepanikan Moral dan Dakwah Islam Populer: Membaca Fenomena 'Rohis' di Indonesia. *Analisis: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 11, no. 1 (2011): 1-16.

²³ Ministry of Religious Affairs, *Religious Moderation* (Jakarta: Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama, 2021).

²⁴Ministry of Religious Affairs, "Keputusan Menteri Agama Republik Indonesia Nomor 328 Tahun 2020 Tentang Kelompok Kerja Penguatan Program Moderasi Beragama Pada Kementerian Agama."

have shown that many of them are literate in Islamic studies as their educational background is *pesantren*, but they continue their higher education in non-faith-based disciplines. The combination of Islamic studies and science related courses become invaluable credits to their self-preparation to be a future leader. Thus, the future of nation relies on either their achievement and the essential nature or types of youth. Accordingly, Muslim millennial youths are, to some extent, far from religious exclusivity and fundamentalism that are inclined to have relationship with extremism, *jihad*, or radicalism.

This study, therefore, aims to investigate what religious view the Muslim millennial youths embrace. More especially, the aim probes their attitudes in addressing the phenomenon of religious life in Indonesia in the midst of extremism and radicalism. In essence, observations and interviews are carried out to explore what and how Islamic millennial youths in Lampung Province respond to religious moderation (*wasathiyyah*).

METHOD

The study aims to investigate the views of Muslim millennial youths in addressing how they perceive religious moderation among Muslims. This study explores valuable data and presented important information through a case study approach to gain clear perception of Muslim millennial youths in Lampung Province. This study also examines their actualization in promoting moderate Islam through actions. Their perception and actualization certainly lean towards a better future.

The reason of using the case study approach because we suggest that 16 Muslim millennial youths recruited in the research had unique characteristics, such as backgrounds including affiliated organization and socio-religion. The case study focuses on the unique characteristics of a phenomenon that is not accounted for or explained by the positivist approach. Thus, the case study approach emphasizes

depth of analysis over breath. It focuses on developing a phenomenon and uses thick description to illuminate it.²⁵ Moreover, the case study approach assumes that exceptional examples of the phenomenon that yields the most textured data for qualitative analysis. This is because exceptional cases exaggerate core characteristics of a phenomenon and provide us with clear examples for the development of concepts used in the research. In this study, the use of case study approach analysis is advantageous when we focused on only 16 Muslim millennial youths from different youth organizations in Lampung.²⁶

This study involved two respondents from each Islamic student organization, such as Movement of Islamic Indonesian Students (PMII), Muslim Student Association (HMI), and Association of Muhammadiyah Students (IMM); two from each nationalist student organization and nationalist youth organization, such as Movement of Nationalist Indonesian Students (GMNI) and National Committee of Indonesian Youths (KNPI); two from youth organization such as Pemuda Pancasila (PP), and from organizations affiliated with *dakwah* or Islam propagation, such as Campus Dakwah Institute (or *Lembaga Dakwah Kampus*), the student organization boards like OSIS and Rohis, and *Jemaah Khilafatul Muslimin* (JKM). In general, respondents met the identity formation, either in terms of ethnic and religious organization or political affiliation. Although the study was conducted in Lampung, about 70 percent of respondents solicited successfully through interviews were ethnically Javanese, but they were born, grew up, and have lived in Lampung for their entire life. Anonymous respondents who were Javanese confessed that their family are homesteaders, who moved to Lampung in 1960s throughout 1970 and even before the years. A small percentage of respondents were Sundanese and Bantenese. Other respondents included natives of Lampung, Minangkabau people, Palembangese, Jakartans or Betawinese, and Bugis people or

²⁵Nollaig Frost and Deborah Bailey-Rodriguez. "Doing Qualitatively Driven Mixed Methods and Pluralistic Qualitative Research." In Sofie Bager-Charleson and Alistair McBeath (eds.), *Enjoying Research in Counseling and Psychotherapy*, 137-160. (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave, 2020).

²⁶Robert Mark Silverman and Kelly L. Patterson, *Qualitative Research Methods for Community Development* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2022), 9-11; Jennifer R. Ledford and David L. Gast, *Single Case Research Methodology: Applications in Special Education and Behavioral Sciences* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2018).

Makasarese. Also, there were respondents from a mixed marriage family, such as their mother is Javanese while their father is Lampungese or the vice versa.

Data was collected through in-depth interviews with representatives of student organizations involving 16 sampling of youth organizations representing both Islamic student and nationalist student organizations. Interviews were conducted with semi-structured questions related to the topic and were the open-ended ones which would allow a flexibility for respondents in expressing ideas, opinions, thoughts, feelings, and knowledge related to the topic.²⁷ The interviews solicited the Muslim millennial youths' thoughts and behaviors in response to the discourse, ideology, and practices of religious moderation that has been actually echoed in recent policies of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, especially the Islamic Higher Education Institution (PTKI). In the interviews, we used a smart phone that has a built-in voice recorder app and took a note of important points while providing backup in case the recorder failed.

Data analysis was carried out by transcribing the interviews and observations in verbatim after removing parts of the recordings that were not relevant to the purposes of the research and the questions. In regard with this, we attempted to make the meanings in responses given by respondents. This was made by reviewing in depth word by word, sentence by sentence, phrase by phrase, and paragraph by paragraph so that we understood implicit and explicit meanings.²⁸ In this regard, we cross-checked sources between the verbatim and recordings to ensure the validity of the data. The cross-checks were also done via triangulation between one source and another and between the interviews and observations. In

²⁷ Elizabeth G. Creamer, *An Introduction to Fully Integrated Mixed Methods Research* (Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2018); Charles J. Stewart and William B. Cash, Jr., *Interviewing: Principles and Practices* (Boston, CA: McGraw-Hill, 2003).

²⁸ Carol Grbich, *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Introduction* (Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2018).

doing so, we came up with themes of research findings after making data verification.²⁹

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Attitude of Muslim Millennial Youths Towards Religious Moderation

This section will address the battle of characteristics of each Muslim millennial youth group of their view towards social and religious problems, and in particular how religious moderation is applied. The study has yielded results that due to the battle of characteristics, each Muslim millennial youth group becomes flexible towards inclusion, which means an individual group can shift its stance from one to another as it is dependent on dissemination and reception of Islamic related values – whether moderate and semi-moderate. In brief, the Muslim youth organizations mentioned early strive to preach their views and ideology in order to seek for more influences.

Results show that we started from the OSIS and Rohis as mentioned early that their members are adherents of religious moderation because their members receive Pancasila and the UUD 1945 as their guide of life as a citizen. In an interview, one of the Rohis members stated:

Before the Pandemic, we often discussed many issues, including pros and cons ones, such as Mary Christmas greetings to Christians, or issues around women and leadership. Such discussion would open my horizon related to the controversial issues, which started from differing opinions. In my view, we need to respect the views of each.³⁰

Meanwhile programs and activities of the OSIS and Rohis got close monitoring from the school, where if not alumni, one was not allowed to involve in Rohis. Such monitoring relatively helps student activists develop their behavior and perception towards religious moderation. One of the Rohis activists mentioned:

²⁹ Anselm Strauss and Juliet Corbin. *Basic of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008).

³⁰ Lydia, member of Rohis and is an OSIS activist of SMAN in Bandar Lampung, an interview via Zoom, October 2020.

We often invited our senior instructors and IPPNU members or alumni who are now in charge of student organizations on campus. There are lots of interesting topics they shared with us, including the issue of leadership.³¹

The attitude towards religious moderation as mentioned by two informants, one of Rohis and the other of OSIS, was useful to mitigate the dynamics of contra-productive seeds that grow alongside with moderate values. In line with the discourse, Abu el-Fadl stated that to successfully manage controversial issues among multiculturalist society members can be a valuable asset for the formation of strong civil society based on tolerance and human rights.³² In the same vein, Hashim Kamali argued that moderation (*wasathiyyah*) is closely linked with sense of justice, meaning that it is contrary to extremism and radicalism.³³ In terms of the commentary and exegesis of the Qur'an, the concept of *wasathiyyah* generally relates a point of view, beliefs, and individual actions that create a collective perspective of religious. In this view, the collective perspective and practice are created by views and individual practice.³⁴ In analogy, the term moderation refers to movements leaning to the center (*centripetal*), whereas the term extremism moves towards outside and extreme (*centrifugal*).

As when interviews were geared towards Muslim university students, their dynamics was higher than the activist students of OSIS and Rohis because there were no rigid controls from lecturers, campus administration, or perhaps their family. For example, one student informant and is *Campus Dakwah Institute* (LDK)

³¹Ayyas, an OSIS activist from a private madrasah in Lampung Tengah, an interview via Zoom, October 2020.

³²Khaled Abou El Fadl, "The Orphans of Modernity and the Clash of Civilizations." In *Islam and Global Dialogue*, 199-208 (London: Routledge, 2016), 199-208.

³³ Mohammad Hashim Kamali, *The Middle Path of Moderation in Islam: The Qur'anic Principle of Wasatiyyah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 9.

³⁴ Frederick Denny, *An Introduction to Islam* (London: Routledge, 2015), 43.

activist declares that he rarely interacts with non-Muslim colleagues, but if he does is only limited to greeting when he meets them.

In terms of being friendship with non-Muslim colleagues on campus, I do not have problem. We establish relations if we necessarily need. Other than this, we discuss current religious theme issues with the activists.³⁵

In the interview with one the LDK activists, it is concluded that the attitude is categorized in semi-moderate, which is different from other interviewees of those from either nationalist youth organizations or Muslim Students Association (HMI), who have very moderate perception on intra-socio-religious relations. Accordingly, in building harmonious values amidst the pluralist society, divisions in terms of primordialism must be ignored. In fact, they must be dependent of dialogues and discussions with anyone regardless of religion, belief, and faith.

Based on the above view, it is then summarized that religious moderation is a behavior, perspective, or an attitude which refers to a justly balanced or middle way and avoiding extreme. It is eventually primary key to create a tolerance and harmony, both at level of local, national, and global through rejecting extremism and liberalism. It is eventually the key to create a tolerance and harmony, both at level of local, national, and global through rejecting extremism and liberalism. Accordingly, by rejecting extremism and liberalism, equilibrium is formed which leans to peace. Through the method, each of the religious adherents can respectfully treat the other, yet respect for and accept differences. Most important is that they live together peacefully and harmoniously.³⁶ Religious moderation, thus, guides society to accept a moderate view towards religion and belief, while leaving extreme attitude and abandoning unlimited liberalism. Thus, the students' view is compatible with our nation's situation, and their view must be framed to become a guidance in managing our society, which is pluralist and multiculturalist.³⁷

³⁵ Andi Setiadi, an LDK activist from a university in Lampung. The interview was conducted in March 2021.

³⁶ Ministry of Religious Affairs, *Religious Moderation* (Jakarta: Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama RI, 2021), 17-18

³⁷ Wildani Hefni. "Moderasi Beragama Dalam Ruang Digital: Studi Pengarusutamaan Moderasi Beragama Di Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam Negeri." *Jurnal Bimas Islam* 13, no. 1 (2020): 1–22.

Mainstream Values of Religious Moderation

Furthermore, it is hard to define religion wholly that cover all of belief and trust within a religion. Religion is eventually is not to define, but to illustrate. Surely there are two reasons why it is not easy to define. First, no one definition of religion covers all of schools (*mazhab*) and a variety of religious practice. Second, there are many definitions from experts, linguists, and approaches to use. Even though its definition is limited, there are numerous definitions of religion according to experts. As for psychological function, religion is the purpose of life. In terms of cognitive function, religion refers to information that has meanings. In terms of social function, religion is social identity of individual and a group of people in society. According to the perspective of ecology, religion is by means of recognizing nature. Also, religion is legally a set of moral rule and law and it is politically a legacy to leverage power.³⁸

Accordingly, religious believers appreciate others, acknowledge any religious difference, live alongside people peacefully and harmoniously.³⁹ Religious moderation hopefully gives rise to increase the people's way of thinking to be more moderat, not extreme and free to think without any limitations. This is of significant to study, discuss, and show or encourage as the frame to manage a plural and multicultural society in Indonesia.⁴⁰ Also individuals are able to show respect diversity wisely, foster tolerance, and always uphold justice.

In this study, Muslim millennial youths embrace a various perspective with moderate and fairly moderate category, even though at some point, it is worried that

³⁸ Lotte Kemkens, *On the Connections between Religion and Disaster: A Literature Review* (Yogyakarta: Center for Religious and Cross-cultural Studies, 2013), 10.

³⁹ Ministry of Religious Affairs, *Religious Moderation* (Jakarta: Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama, 2021), 17-18.

⁴⁰ Wildani Hefni, "Moderasi Beragama Dalam Ruang Digital: Studi Pengarusutamaan Moderasi Beragama di Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam Negeri," *Jurnal Bimas Islam* 13, no. 1 (2020): 1–22.

their religious orientation leads to a dramatic shift in immoderate Islam by cause of contributing factors. In general, almost all respondents agreed with moderate Islam, yet they have a variety of perception in regard with intern and intra-religious relationship, leadership, gender equality, and the way of thinking to encounter conservatism, radicalism, and extremism.

Perception Towards Gender Equality of and Rights to Leadership

In the social structure of society, women are often regarded as second-class under men. Such a construction of reasoning is the result of the patrimonial system that is still being preserved so that the role of women in the public sphere is relatively quiet and limited. This feminist discourse has received enough attention from academics. Historically, this study can be traced to the 1960s when feminists, such as Fatimah Mernissi, Amina Wadud, and a number of other figures began to voice the injustices that befell women.⁴¹

In the context of Indonesia, post-reform, the role of women is relatively more visible. They are given the right to voice, even occupy strategic positions in the government.⁴² In general, the informants in this study viewed leadership through two main perspectives, namely women's leadership and non-Muslim leadership.

First, women's leadership as a form of gender equality campaign is understood from two different perspectives by most of the informants: the pros, the cons, and between the two. For those who are against the argument that gender equality is contrary to the Qur'an as explained in Chapter al-Maidah verse 34, which emphasizes men as female leaders. One respondent stated:

It is mentioned in the Qur'an that men are leaders for women. Thus, there is no bargaining, including state leadership.⁴³

⁴¹ Juliane Hammer, "To Work for Change: Normativity, Feminism, and Islam," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 84, no. 1 (2016): 98–112; Fatimah Mernissi, *Women and Islam: An Historical and Theological Enquiry* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1990); Amina Wadud, *Qur'an and Woman: Rereading the Sacred Text from a Woman's Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

⁴² Kathryn Robinson, "Gender Culture and Politics in Post–New Order Indonesia," in *Routledge Handbook of Contemporary Indonesia* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2018), 309–321.

⁴³ An interview with Yoga, a *dakwah* activist in Bandar Lampung, October 12, 2019.

This opinion is at least expressed by Islamist and political Islamic informants. A more compromising attitude was voiced by the student council informant of OSIS. Although basically they have anxiety with the gender equality campaign which they think can lead to liberalism, as happened in Western countries, regarding leadership he does not completely reject it in certain situations.

My personal wise view is that a leader should be a man as stated in the Qur'an. But in certain cases, for example, we can choose a women candidate who is better among men candidates.

In contrast with the view of *dakwah* activist, a compromise attitude is shown by an informant of student organizations, such as GMNI, PP, PMII, and HMI that feminism should be supported as the forms of equal rights and social justice. Indeed, for some female informants with the nationalist ideology, gender equality has become our dream. Thus, women should take active roles in public sphere, and should have the equal opportunity as men do. In the perspective of social justice, women subordination to men should be reduced to strive for emancipation. A GMNI activist asserted:

Woman leadership is good. In GMNI, our chapter leader is a woman. Remember that Bu Megawati was once President of Indonesia although she is a woman. This is of course a good precedent for women emancipation in our future.⁴⁴

Second, non-Muslim leadership. All respondents from youth and student organizations with a nationalist or religious basis are of the view that non-Muslim leadership is based on the composition of the Indonesian population, not only those who are Muslim, but also the other religions who also have the same right to become leaders. The diverse composition of the population must be properly

⁴⁴ An interview with Rahmanita, a GMNI activist in Bandar Lampung, October 30, 2019.

accommodated. If the leader of this nation requires a certain religion, in the context of diversity and diversity it will lead to cultural uniformity that can injure tolerance and human rights.

In line with the aforementioned opinion, the respondents from among students represented by the student council have relatively the same perspective. They do not mind if an area with a Muslim majority population is led by someone from a non-Muslim minority. According to them, the benchmark for leader criteria is a person's performance. Because a credible, honest, and integrity figure is judged to be able to improve the welfare of the people rather than someone who looks good, but is just an image. The cases of many Muslim leaders who went to prison became a special note for them.

From a different point of view, most of the Islamist respondents expressed their disagreement with the narrative of non-Muslim leadership. The legitimacy of the verses of the Qur'an is the only basic for them to reject this concept of leadership. If it had become a common consensus, good integrity and capability were not the main criteria for them in choosing a leader (regent, governor, or others). The requirement to elect a leader must first be a Muslim, which is an absolute and inviolable condition.

Why do we choose a non-Muslim leader while there is a Muslim? This is clearly threatened in the Qur'an. In my view, our obligation is we do only elect them, and when they are in leadership position and they corrupt, it is of their faults.⁴⁵

It is quite clear that the barriers of primordialism, whether we realize it or not, are still the main basis for making choices. As mentioned in the previous discussion, the seeds of plural primordialism are found in the social conflict with ethnic backgrounds in this country. This problem is still a task for stakeholders, traditional and religious leaders, as well as law enforcement officers who are expected to carry out their respective duties and functions in accordance with the mandate of the legislation.

⁴⁵An interview with NS a dakwah activist in Lampung, October 2019.

Counter-Narratives of Conservatism, Radicalism, and Extremism

Extremist-racist behavior is a form of violence in the name of religion that is not justified by any religious teachings. These actions are considered vile and have no humanity, especially if they are carried out in Indonesia, which incidentally is a pluralistic and multicultural country. Thus, acts of terrorists, radicals, extremists, jihadists, or other forms of destructive acts must be prevented as early as possible in order to create peace and justice that places diversity and tolerance as the foundation so that violations of human rights, freedom of religion, justification of truth claims and discrimination in the name of religion, race, ethnicity, gender, and culture can be minimized.

In general, the Muslim millennial youth in Lampung Province who were the respondents of this research have almost the same perception regarding the narrative of radicalism and extremism. Based on the results of interviews with them, researchers found disengagement against radical and extreme actions among Muslim youth in Lampung. The Campus Dakwah Institute (LDK) activists, for example, to prevent the radicalism and extremism, they hold anti-radicalism seminars by presenting speakers from the Regional of Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI), Counter Terrorism Coordination Forum (FKPT), and scholars. This seminar is expected to provide broader insight regarding radicalism by viewing radicalism more objectively by not associating people with beards, robes, or veils (niqab) as the forerunners of terrorists. This is what the Campus Dakwah Institute (LDK) is campaigning to straighten out people's perspectives.

Two respondents of *Khilafatul Muslimin* also shared their thought, stating that the teacher becomes a figure who is quite influential in shaping his ideology. They recounted how they got to know the *dakwah* congregation because of the teacher's advice when he studied at a school in Lampung. The two teenagers were advised to take allegiance and join the *Khilafatul Muslimin* congregation in order

to find enlightenment, especially in the religious field. What is interesting to examine here is that the religious narrative used to attract the interest of these two youths is a fragment of the prophet's *hadith* which describes the division of Muslims in the future into 73 groups, leaving only one group that survived. One group is legitimized by the figure of the teacher with the *Khilafatul Muslimin* congregation. Inevitably, the two teenagers were interested.

In short, the Muslim Khilafatul Jama'at is an organization that aims to uphold the world's Islamic caliphate by carrying out Shari'a laws. This *dakwah* institution is based in Teluk Betung, Bandar Lampung and is led by a caliph named Abdul Qodir Hasan Baraja. *Khilafatul Muslimin* was born in 1997, starting with the pledge of two people in prison to the caliph. Baraja's leadership has lasted until now and was institutionalized by pinning the name *Khilafatul Muslimin*. Another historical fact revealed in this study is that Abdul Qodir Hasan Baraja was a close friend of Abu Bakar Ba'asyir while studying at the Gontor Islamic Boarding School. He was also involved in the establishment of the Al Mukmin Islamic Boarding School, Ngruki. In addition, Abdul Qodir Hasan Baraja also took part in the establishment of the Indonesian Mujahidin Council (MMI) in 2000, although was not an active member.⁴⁶

Based on interviews with activists of this *dakwah* organization, they understand that *hadith* is more inclined to literal-textual understanding. The textual interpretation can cause the text to lose its substantive meaning and will only produce an exclusive-literal understanding. Thus, the polarization of religious interpretation is unavoidable. As a result, the more rigid and rigid reasoning of thinking towards religious texts can lead to the growth of the seeds of radical and extreme ideology. The understanding of the texts of the holy verses of the Qur'an is intertwined with the relationship of one's paradigm of thinking towards radicalism and extremism. The verses of the Qur'an which become the legitimacy of their ideology are interpreted rigidly and textually. This literal interpretation

⁴⁶Al Chaidar, "Biografi: Ustadz Abdul Qodir Hasan Baraja." Accessed 20 November 2021 from the online portal of Khilafatul Muslimin: www.khilafatulmuslimin.com. About the Indonesia Mujahidin Council (MMI), see Rubaidi, "Variasi Gerakan Radikal Islam di Indonesia," *Analisis: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 11, no. 1 (2011): 33-52.

spawns segregation of texts with the intent of the text having the potential to distort meaning. This understanding of engagement looks very strong in this *dakwah* organization.

Based on the narratives of a number of *Khilafatul Muslimin* activists, this standard pattern is the result of the caliph's *ijtihad* which refers to authoritative sources in Islam. The membership system is also relatively strict, in which new members are required to pledge allegiance to the caliph at the regional level (*kemas'ulan*). Bai'at in this organization binds its members who are required to follow all applicable laws and regulations in the organization, including the obligation to deny legal products which they call *thaaghuut*. In addition to the negative side, this organization has a positive side, namely promoting non-violent persuasive *dakwah* methods with a role model. The pattern of recruitment of the *Khilafatul Muslimin* congregation does not look much different from other activities of *harakah*, namely by utilizing the existing facilities: friendship, recitation congregations, *dakwah* through the internet and social media, and publishing magazines. Such an understanding is in complete contradiction with the nationalists who strongly reject radical and extreme actions. Thus, here there is disengagement among nationalists against acts of radicalism and extremism

Characteristics of Socio-Religious Behavior

The actualization of moderation in religion expressed by the informants is not much different from the perspective of religious moderation that they perceive. In some informants of nationalist and religious organizations, for example, issues related to interreligious relations, leadership, and gender equality were accepted without rejection. These characteristics result in self-actualization in the arena of women's leadership, initiating inter-religious dialogue, as well as intra-religious dialogue. Such a socio-religious practices can be categorized as moderate.

Shifting to Islamic student organizations and Campus Dakwah Institute (LDK), self-actualization in various socio-religious activities is slightly different from nationalist-religious circles. On the other hand, they vehemently reject the notion of radicalism and extremism, but in dealing with issues of non-Muslim leadership and different schools of religious theology, they are very reactive. This is expressed in the form of rejections against the Shia and Ahmadiyah minorities in various discussion forums and not infrequently also manifests in the form of action. This kind of pattern is categorized as semi-moderate, although it is feared that in the future it could move in an anti-moderate direction.

The characteristics of Islam are also seen among students who in fact are currently studying in a number of schools and madrasas in Lampung Province. This is due to the influence from outside that they receive. Information technology as well as external tutors for student activities (Rohis and student councils) are vulnerable to infiltrating religious understandings that are totally contrary to the values of religious moderation. Private public schools are more susceptible to being influenced by the ideas of these Islamist groups than private religious schools. This is because private religious schools such as madrasah tsanawiyah and aliyah as well as integrated Islamic schools are generally under the auspices of certain religious organizations such as Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama, Tawaalib, Matlaul Anwar, or Islamic Pesantren (Boarding School). This means that the religious views and ideologies of these schools can certainly follow the umbrella organization. While most of the private public schools are owned by foundations that are not affiliated with any particular religious organization so that their religious teachers depend a lot on the extent to which the school filters their recruitment. But even so, in general in Lampung, both in public schools, state religious schools, private public schools, and private religious schools, the attitudes and behavior of student council or board (OSIS) and Islamic spirituality organization (*Kerohanian Islam* or Rohis) activists towards violence can still be categorized as semi-moderate.

Furthermore, conservative and fundamentalist tendencies can be seen in a number of sources from the *Khilafatul Muslimin* congregation. The different perspectives in capturing the meaning of the interpretation of the scriptures are not

responded wisely. This results in a desperate defense of something he believes in as well as looking at other opposing opinions subjectively. This textual-literal understanding resulted in a rigid attitude towards a more progressive religious interpretation. This pattern is very visible in the respondents of the *Muslim Khilafatul* congregation. If this understanding continues to be maintained, theological justification can occur with one-sided truth claims and tend to negate other opinions. If so, then the outbreak of communal conflict has the potential to occur. For this reason, understanding of religious texts should be done in a contextual and substantial way and the strengthening of conservatism in religion can lead to mutual truth claims as previously mentioned.

CONCLUSION

The analysis above shows that this study is to read the model and religious trends among Muslim millennial youths in Lampung for now and future. In general, this study found that attitudes and behaviour in millennial Muslim youth were moderat and fairly moderat category. Yet, it does not mean that there is no Islamist and liberal groups. As stated in the discussion, Islamist group exists with some implications of resonance.

The contestation between the Islamist groups and moderate Muslim indicates that moderate groups mostly dominate among Muslim youths. Either at the level of teenagers who are studying in high school or among university students, they have power in every line, whereby their opportunities are wide enough to spread their religious views and visions. Meanwhile, the Islamists move in the outskirts with relatively limited terrain. Therefore, this study concludes that currently Muslim millennial youths in Lampung Province are still dominated by those who hold firmly to moderate Islamic values. However, these moderate and fairly moderate groups still have to be on high alert. It is due to the local historical

context of Lampung, where *Komando Jihad* had a relatively strong influence, it was able to rise again, either through *Khilafatul Muslimin* or others.

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