The Religious Moderation Discourse in Social Media: Studies on Ach Dhofir Zuhry's Facebook and YouTube

There have been many studies discussing the use of social media for disseminating the religious ideology of both conservatism and radicalism. On the contrary, there have been a few studies that deal with how the moderate groups disseminate the discourse of religious moderation, whereas this topic is significant and needs to be discussed to view the strength and weaknesses as well as the contestation between each group. This article presents the production, distribution, consumption, and social practice of the religious moderation discourse throughout the content delivered by the figure from the groups of moderate Islam, from the Regency of Malang. The article is based on the discourse analysis of several pieces that have been produced by the figure and his team on YouTube and Facebook. The study shows that the production of religious moderation discourse in social media is carried out in two ways: conveying messages of religious moderation and countering narratives of conservatism and religious radicalism. The prospect of Islamic moderation discourse holds the opportunity to gain success in countering the narration of religious radicalism. However, the success of discourse contestation is defined by the strength of its distribution.

Keywords: Islamic moderation; Radical narration; Discourse analysis; Social media.

Author:
Agus Iswanto[1] iD
Moch. Lukluil Maknun[2] iD
Roch. Aris Hidayat[3] iD
M. Aji Nugroho[4] iD

Affiliation:
Badan Riset dan Inovasi Nasional[1,2,3]
Balai Litbang Agama Semarang[4]
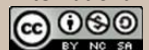
Corresponding author:
agus.iswanto83@gmail.com

Telah banyak penelitian yang membahas tentang penggunaan media sosial untuk menyebarluaskan ideologi keagamaan baik konservatisme maupun radikalisme. Sebaliknya, hanya sedikit penelitian yang membahas bagaimana kelompok moderat menyebarluaskan wacana moderasi beragama, padahal topik ini penting untuk dibahas guna melihat kekuatan dan kelemahan serta kontestasi antara masing-masing kelompok. Artikel ini menyajikan produksi, distribusi, konsumsi, dan praktik sosial dari wacana moderasi keagamaan di seluruh isi yang disampaikan oleh tokoh dari kelompok Islam moderat, dari Kabupaten Malang. Artikel didasarkan pada analisis wacana terhadap sejumlah konten yang telah dihasilkan oleh tokoh dan timnya melalui YouTube dan Facebook. Kajian menunjukkan bahwa produksi wacana moderasi keagamaan di media sosial dilakukan dengan dua cara: menyampaikan pesan-pesan moderasi keagamaan, menangkal narasi konservatisme, dan radikalisme agama. Prospek wacana moderasi Islam berpeluang meraih kesuksesan dalam melawan narasi radikalisme agama. Namun, keberhasilan kontestasi wacana ditentukan oleh kekuatan distribusinya.

Kata kunci: Moderasi Islam; Narasi radikal; Analisis wacana; Media sosial.

Introduction

Social media has become the means of facilitating the exchange of information, ideas, interests, careers, and other expressions through virtual communities and networks.[1] Studies show that several religious practices, starting from charity to other virtual activities, have been believed to strengthen faithfulness as such activities can be easily found over social media.[2] Social media provides a space for excitement, it can be transformed into a comfortable religious virtual discussion space,[3] praying room,[4] and even alternative media toward the authoritative narration of traditional religious preaching.[5]

Such social media also impacts the transformation of social religious discourse, especially about the dissemination of religion over social media.[6] Some studies have shown how social media can be used as a means for disseminating religious ideologies, such as fundamentalism,[7] radicalism,[8] and conservatism.[9] Unfortunately, there are few studies on how moderate groups disseminate the discourse of religious moderation, whereas this topic is significant enough to be discussed to view the strength and weaknesses of each group within their contestation.

We would like to discuss the production, distribution, consumption, and social practice of the religious moderation discourse that a young Muslim cleric from Kepanjen, the Regency of Malang, has pursued. Thus, in this article, we would like to uncover aspects of preaching by moderate groups on social media that have not been discovered by several studies[10] and look at the production, distribution, and consumption on the part of the figure from the moderate groups since there has not been any study

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[1] Jan H. Kietzmann et al., "Social Media? Get Serious! Understanding the Functional Building Blocks of Social Media," *Business Horizons* 54, no. 3 (2011): 241–251, http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2011.01.005.

[2] Michael J. Laney, "Christian Web Usage: Motivates and Desires," in *Religion and Cyberspace*, ed. Morten T Højsgaard and Margit Warburg (New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2005), 166–179.

[3] Pamela Jo Brubaker and Michel M. Haigh, "The Religious Facebook Experience: Uses and Gratifications of Faith-Based Content," *Social Media and Society* 3, no. 2 (2017).

[4] Pauline Hope Cheong, "Tweet the Message? Religious Authority and Social Media Innovation," *Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture* 3, no. 3 (2014): 1–19; Pauline Hope Cheong, "Religious Leaders, Mediated Authority, and Social Change," *Journal of Applied Communication Research* 39, no. 4 (2011): 452–454.

[5] Heidi Campbell, "Who's Got the Power? Religious Authority and the Internet," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 12, no. 3 (2007): 1043–1062.

[6] Iim Halimatussa'diyah, *Beragama Di Dunia Maya : Media Sosial Dan Pandangan Keagamaan Di Indonesia*, *Merit Report Indonesia*, vol. 1 (Tangerang Selatan, 2020), https://ppim.uinjkt.ac.id/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Merit-Report_Beragama-di-Dunia-Maya_072320.pdf.

[7] Karine Barzilai-Nahon and Gad Barzilai, "Cultured Technology: The Internet and Religious Fundamentalism," *Information Society* 21, no. 1 (2005): 25–40;

Robert Glenn Howard, "Enacting a Virtual 'Ekklesia': Online Christian Fundamentalism as Vernacular Religion," *New Media and Society* 12, no. 5 (2010): 729–744.

[8] Birgit Bräuchler, "Cyberidentities at War: Religion, Identity, and the Internet in The Moluccan Conflict," *Indonesia* 75, no. April (2003): 123–151, www.jstor.org/stable/3351310; Birgit Bräuchler, "Islamic Radicalism Online: The Moluccan Mission of the Laskar Jihad in Cyberspace," *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 15, no. 3 (2004): 253–271; Kieron O'Hara and David Stevens, "Echo Chambers and Online Radicalism: Assessing the Internet's Complicity in Violent Extremism," *Policy and Internet* 5, no. 4 (2015): 401–422; Imam Malik, Khoirul Anam, and Sukron Ma'mun, "Online Radicalism, When Online Surfing Leads to Suffering," *ESENSIA: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 21, no. 1 (2020): 109.

[9] Merlyna Lim, *Islamic Radicalism and Anti-Americanism in Indonesia: The Role of the Internet*, *Policy Studies*, vol. 18, Policy Studies (East-West Center, 2005); Leonard C Sebastian and Andar Nubowo, "The 'Conservative Turn' in Indonesian Islam: Implications for the 2019 Presidential Elections," *Asie Visions IFRI Center for Asian Studies* 106, no. March (2019).

[10] Wahyudi Akmaliah, "The Demise of Moderate Islam: New Media, Contestation, and Reclaiming Religious Authorities," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 10, no. 1 (2020): 1–24; Halimatussa'diyah, *Beragama Di Dunia Maya : Media Sosial Dan Pandangan Keagamaan Di Indonesia*, vol. 1, p. .

available yet on religious discussions over the cyberspace.[11] This figure is selected because we would like to identify the type of discourse production that many moderate figures have produced about the discourse of religious moderation. It is quite unfortunate that such a significant topic has not been much discussed on social media. Not to mention, the figures of discourse production in the social media who have been studied do not imply any relevance for the discussions within the study whereas it is important to discuss this topic to examine how the discourse has been produced by a figure who has not been extensively investigated on social media, unlike Gus Mus and Gus Baha, about the discourse contents and their prospects.

In addition, the figure that will be discussed in the study is Gus Dhofir who represents the group of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) young intellectuals and has not been known by the public in general. The reason why we selected Gus Dhofir as the subject of the study is that as a young intellectual, he is rarely mentioned in several studies on the topic of digital preaching.[12]

As the theoretical framework for the study, this article employs critical discourse analysis by Norman Fairclough,[13] religious moderation as conceptualized by the Ministry of Religion Affairs,[14] and Islam moderatism or *Islam wasatiyah*[15] as defined by scholars of Islamic studies. The study is based on several pieces of content produced and shared by the selected figure and his team through YouTube Channel and Facebook. YouTube and Facebook have been chosen because they are both capable of providing multimodal content with a longer duration. YouTube was chosen because 61.80 percent of Indonesians (274,9 million people) actively use social media in 2021, and YouTube has been the most popular social media platform among both Internet users and social media users, with a 93.80 percent usage rate, according to *WeAreSocial*. Through this study, we would like to argue that the discourses of religious moderation have the prospect of gaining the opportunity to battle the narration of religious radicalism, especially since social media enables the absence of hegemony in science.

A Short Biography of Achmad Dhofir Zuhry

Gus Dhofir was born in 1984. He is the *Kiai* of Pesantren Luhur Baitul Hikmah in the District of Kepanjen, the Regency of Malang. This *pesantren* was established in 2011. The students of this *pesantren* usually call themselves "Luhurian." Gus Dhofir also serves as the Principal of Al-Farabi School of Philosophy. He is also the one who established the school. Up to date, the number of students in Pesantren Luhur is 25 people, and all of them also pursue their higher education in the nearby universities, be it in the Kepanjen, the Regency of Malang, and the City of Malang, in addition to studying Al-Qur'an in *pesantren*. Although his *pesantren* has not been quite famous, this figure has indeed inherited the "royal bloodline" from the *Kiai* of a famous *pesantren* in Sidoarjo, the Province of East Java.

He studied the knowledge of Islam from a number of *pesantren* such as Pondok Pesantren Nurul Jadid in Paiton, Probolinggo, and

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[11] Halimatussa'diyah, *Beragama Di Dunia Maya : Media Sosial Dan Pandangan Keagamaan Di Indonesia*, 1:ix.

[12] Fridiyanto, M. Kholis Amrullah, and Muhammad Rafi'i, "Digitalisasi Nahdlatul Ulama : Dari Laku Tradisional Menuju Revolusi Digital," *AD-DHUHA : Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa Arab dan Budaya Islam* 1, no. 1 (2020).

[13] Norman Fairclough, *Language and Power* (London: Longman Group UK Limited, 1996).

[14] Tim Penyusun Kementerian Agama RI, *Moderasi Beragama* (Jakarta Pusat: Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama RI, 2019).

[15] Khaled Abou El Fadl, *The Great Theft: Wrestling Islam from The Extremist* (NSW and Toronto: Perfect Bound, 2005); Mohamamd Hashim Kamali, *The Middle Path of Moderation in Islam : The Qur'ānic Principle of Wasaṭiyyah* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

Pesantren Maslakul Huda in Kajen, Pati. He earned his undergraduate and graduate degrees from the Driyarkara School of Philosophy, Jakarta. It is this characteristic that makes this figure one of a kind. On the one hand, he has mastered Islamic knowledge and, on the other hand, he has also mastered the articulation of philosophical ideas, which he has delivered in several studies. At the same time, he has also written several books, and one of these books, titled *Peradaban Sarung: Veni, Vidi, Santri* (2018), has been best-selling. Not only that, he has written several articles for online portals such as *alif. id* and *NU Online*.

Discourse Production

Gus Dhofir directly manages all social media platforms with the assistance of Luhurian students. However, the content creation is handled by the social media team, which consists of three students. For *kajian tafsir tematik* (studies of thematic interpretation), the broadcast is aired every week through the Facebook account *NU Online*. After the broadcast is already aired through the Facebook Account, the record will be edited and then it will be uploaded onto the YouTube Channel Ach Dhofir Zuhry and Luhurian Kepanjen. *Kajian tafsir tematik* is usually based on the research by the team of NU Online on the hot issues in social media. After the research has been completed, the results are submitted to Gus Dhofir for thematic interpretation.

The pattern in delivering *kajian tafsir tematik* is as follows: the thematic interpretation begins with the reading of *ṣalawat Qur'aniyah*; afterward, the thematic interpretation proceeds to the reading of *al-Fatiḥah*; then, there is an introductory discourse before the discussion of the main theme of the thematic interpretation; next, the main theme of the thematic interpretation is thoroughly discussed; and the thematic interpretation ends with the question and answers session using Comment Section on

Facebook. Several themes are very relevant and contextual about the life of mankind, such as how to deal with the Covid-19 Pandemic and how to implement the new normal. As an alternative, other themes have been contextual with the festival days of the Muslims, such as fasting in Ramaḍān, Eid Mubarak, Eid al-Adha, Isra' Mir'āj, and Maulid Nabi Muḥammad SAW.

In addition, the discourse production is also performed through the other accounts. Some of *kajian tafsir tematik* are also uploaded in the Ach Dhofir Zuhry YouTube Channel and Facebook, and Luhurian Kepanjen Official. Some of the segments from these are also uploaded to Instagram. Currently, the Facebook account of *NU Online* only uploads *kajian tafsir tematik* whereas the discourse contents in the YouTube Content of Gus Dhofir and Luhurian Kepanjen Official cover a broader range of topics, such as mysticism (*taṣawwuf*); philosophy; and *tauhid*. In addition, events where Dhofir has served as a presenter or speaker, are also recorded and uploaded. On the Instagram account, brief and intriguing snippets from longer-form studies are posted.

The overall production process of the studies in the social media accounts that have been mentioned above is carried out by the students of Gus Dhofir. Before the record is uploaded, every piece of content must be approved by Gus Dhofir. After the approval has been given, the students start to upload. About the statement, the segments of the content videos are handled by a team consisting of three students. The team is assigned to take notes on the time in which they have found the interesting content from the studies by Gus Dhofir. Afterward, the contents that have been uploaded are downloaded again and edited to be adjusted with the content that will be created (an interview with the administrator of the social media account of Luhurian, June 17th, 2021). As an alternative, some contents have been intentionally created as a response to certain

issues. All of these activities are completely performed by the social media team, which is also the students of Luhurian Islamic Boarding School (*pesantren*). Before being aired on the social media account, the team members report the results of their work to Gus Dhofir to gain his approval. On this occasion, the role of the caretaker as the "gatekeeper" or the "filter" is implemented. Although the contents have been created by the team members, the final decision on the broadcast is still held by Gus Dhofir.

The Discourse of Religious Moderation

Gus Dhofir's social media accounts include some content that discusses religious moderation. The contents of religious moderation discourse can be divided into two categories. The first category refers to the contents that depict the "complete" study in the form of both live and recorded Qur'anic interpretation. The purpose of these contents is to spread the discourse while also serving as its documentation. The contents that belong to the first category can be further divided into three types namely: the contents that are broadcasted live through the Facebook account *NU Online*; the contents that are broadcasted on the Facebook account and the YouTube Channel of Ach Dhofir Zuhry and also in the Facebook Account and the YouTube Channel of Luhurian Kepanjen Official; and the contents that have been edited in such a way that they can be broadcasted through both Instagram and

Facebook accounts. Then, the second category refers to materials that address contentious issues, specifically discussions of or responses to criticisms of religious practices or viewpoints.

Furthermore, *kajian tafsir tematik* that has been broadcasted by *NU Online* in relation to the theme of religious moderation are: *Makna Jihad Menurut Al-Qur'an* (The Meaning of Jihad According to the Qur'an) [16]; *Kerjasama dengan Non-Muslim* (Cooperation with the Non-Muslim People) [17]; *Cara Kembali Al-Qur'an dan Hadits* (How to Return to the Qur'an and the Hadith)[18]; *Demokrasi Menurut Al-Qur'an* (Democracy According to the Qur'an) [19]; *Etika Bermedsos Menurut Al-Qur'an* (The Ethics of Using Social Media According to the Qur'an); and *Kedudukan Perempuan dalam al-Qur'an* (The Position of Women in the Qur'an)[20]. Before the discussion on the interpretation of the themes related to religious moderation, usually Gus Dhofir explains why those themes should be discussed. For example, in the introductory part of the discussion of *Demokrasi Menurut Al-Qur'an*, Gus Dhofir states that many people have argued that democracy comes from the West and the term has become tangled since it has been mixed with oligarchy and monarchy systems. Afterward, he starts to explain the concepts of democracy in the Qur'an.

The contents related to the theme of religious moderation can be found in two social media accounts. Besides NU Online Broadcasts,

[16] NU Online, "Kajian Tafsir Tematik - Makna Jihad menurut Al-Qur'an," 13 December, 2020, Facebook video. https://www.facebook.com/situsresminu/videos/144454487155024.

[17] NU Online, "Kajian Tafsir Tematik - Kerjasama dengan non-Muslim," 19 July, 2020, Facebook video. https://www.facebook.com/watch/live/?v=646956309252002&ref=watch_permalink.

[18] NU Online, "Kajian Tafsir Tematik - Cara kembali Al-Qur'an dan Hadis," 27 September, 2020, Facebook video.

https://web.facebook.com/situsresminu/videos/355676608905802.

[19] NU Online, "Kajian Tafsir Tematik - Demokrasi menurut Al-Qur'an," 8 December, 2020, Facebook video. https://web.facebook.com/situsresminu/videos/545638452958494.

[20] NU Online, "Kajian Tafsir Tematik - Kedudukan Perempuan dalam Al-Qur'an," 30 May, 2021, Facebook video.

https://web.facebook.com/421281377954375/videos/942952109606363.

the themes of religious moderation can be found on the YouTube Channel of Gus Dhofir. Those are as follows; *The Prophet Muhammad Has Battled the Caliphate: The Objection toward Ustaz Abdul Somad* [21] ; *Islam Nusantara is a New Religion: Misunderstanding toward Nahdlatul Ulama* [22] ; *Beware, watching the movie entitled The Santri will automatically turn you into infidels: the Objection toward Maaher At-Thuwailibi* [23] (all of the three video contents are the Top 5 videos that have been mostly watched); *Praying Amidst the Pandemic: How Should a Muslim Behave Himself*[24]; *Democracy should Intolerant to the Intolerance* [25] ; *Democracy VS Caliphate*[26]; *The Meaning of Jihad*[27]; and *Fight Radicalism*[28].

Tolerance is one of the indicators of the Ministry of Religious Affairs' concept of religious moderation.[29] This indicator is delivered in the content entitled *"Kerukunan dan Toleransi"* (Harmony and Tolerance) and *"Kerjasama Dengan Non-Muslim"* (Cooperation with the Non-Muslim People). The latter is, in fact, relevant to the concept of active tolerance instead of passive tolerance. The concept of active tolerance views diversity as a fragmented social fact that demands active involvement. Through such active participation, every disciple of

religion is not only required to accept the diversity and rights of the disciple of another religion but is also involved in efforts to understand the differences and similarities through intense social interaction to achieve the aspired harmony and unity in diversity.[30]

Religious moderation in the context of Islam is characterized by one's understanding of the Qur'an and hadith. The understanding of both sources also implies the interpretation of jihad within them. In this regard, the contents entitled *Cara Kembali Al-Qur'an dan Hadith* and *"Hijrah dan Kembali ke Qur'an-Hadits"* show how a Muslim understands the Qur'an and hadith, known to be mostly associated with the jargon "returning to the Qur'an." Both contents narrate how the Muslim people should return to the Qur'an and the hadith since they should be understood well to consider the textuality and the contextuality of both. Not to mention, the term "return" or *hijra* does not only entail a formal meaning but also a substantial meaning. Therefore, the concept "Returning to the Qur'an" also entails not only the textual meaning but also the substantial meaning.

Similarly, El Fadl[31] states that the moderate people admit that the Qur'an does make specific

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[21] Ach Dhofir Zuhry Official, "Nabi Muhammad Perangi Khilafah. Bantahan untuk UAS," 8 October, 2019, YouTube video. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LmyPjfCumT0&t=256s.

[22] Ach Dhofir Zuhry Official, "Islam Nusantara Agama Baru: Salah Kaprah tentang Nahdlatul Ulama," 20 August, 2019, YouTube video. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v-p3gsETuwI.

[23] Ach Dhofir Zuhry Official, "Awas, nonton film The Santri auto Kafir, Bantahan untuk Maaher At-Thuwailibi," 25 September, 2019, YouTube video. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iJk7qZP2V3E.

[24] NU Online, "Ibadah di Tengah Wabah: Bagaimana Seharusnya Sikap Seorang Muslim?," 24 March, 2020, Facebook video. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NOGC7kvBL_U.

[25] Ach Dhofir Zuhry Official, "Demokrasi Harus Intoleran pada Intoleransi," 3 December, 2019, YouTube video. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xEThJBsLiuQ.

[26] Ach Dhofir Zuhry Official, "Demokrasi VS Khilafah," 10 December, 2019, YouTube video. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w5E8oDNnbeY.

[27] NU Online, "Kajian Tafsir Tematik: Makna Jihad menurut Al-Qur'an," 13 December, 2020, Facebook video. https://www.facebook.com/situsresminu/videos/144454487155024

[28] Ach Dhofir Zuhry Official, "Tolak Radikalisme," 8 February, 2020, YouTube video. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h895a09hG5E

[29] Tim Penyusun Kementerian Agama RI, *Moderasi Beragama*, 43.

[30] Ibid., 84.

[31] Abou El Fadl, *The Great Theft: Wrestling Islam from The Extremist*, 126–156; Agus Iswanto et al., *Pemikiran*

decisions about several issues. However, unlike the puritan people who strictly implement the decisions, the moderate people tend to look for the ethical objective of the Qur'an toward these decisions. In addition, the moderate people pay attention to the specific context of these decisions (the textual and the contextual meaning, or, the general and the specific meaning along with the origin of the verses in the Koran and the hadith /*asbab al-nuzul* and *asbab al-wurud*). This is the implication of the responsibility and the duty that lay behind the creation of mankind since mankind has been awarded rationality. Thus, the main objective of the sharia for the moderate people is to serve humanity, which means enforcing the values of the deity in the world. Thereby, the objective of the sharia law is not to implement the details that have been apart from the consequence and the context of the dynamic social conditions, instead, the objective of the sharia law is to achieve the main ethical objective that reflects the essence of divinity on the world.

Similar argumentation is also delivered by one of the NU kyais, namely K.H. Achmad Siddiq.[32] According to him, the principles of *at-tawāsuṭ* in the domain of sharia are: (a) always holding firmly onto the Qur'an and the Sunnah by using a credible method and system through a normal course of action; (b) not using rational argumentation on the problems that have already had clear textual proposition (*qaṭ'i*), and (c) giving tolerance for the different opinions in the case of *ẓanniyat* issues (the issues which have not been strict nor certain) as long as the arguments do not go against the religious principles.

Departing from the understanding of the Qur'an and the hadith, the understanding of *jihad*, women, and ethics in using social media starts to develop. The issues of jihad, democracy, and women have long been discussed by the scholars of Islamic studies about the religious paradigm, while the issues of ethics in using social media belong to the contemporary problems. All of these discussions are based on the understanding of the Qur'an. Then, the discourse on *jihad* and women that Gus Dhofir has disseminated represents the perspective of religious moderation in Islam. In such discourse, it is asserted that *jihad* does not always mean being at war or even terror.[33] On the contrary, jihad can also mean a fair perspective on the role of women[34] and the principles of democracy that accommodate the value of deliberation in Islam.[35]

Discourse Distribution

In the beginning, the discourse contents are distributed by the account administrator. Then, the distribution of the discourse is carried out through the official accounts (Ach Dhofir Zuhry and Luhurian Kepanjen) and the website NU Online. However, the rate of content distribution is unequal. Not all the content that has been distributed on the *NU Online* website is also distributed altogether on the social media accounts of Ach Dhofir Zuhry and Luhurian Kepanjen. Despite this, the majority of the content that has been distributed through the NU Online Facebook account can also be found in the other two social media accounts. From this point, the article will focus on the account of Ach Dhofir Zuhry and Luhurian Kepanjen about the

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Moderat Dalam Karya Ulama Nusantara (Jakarta Timur: Balai Penelitian dan Pengembangan Agama Jakarta, 2015), 11–12.

[32] Achmad Siddiq, *Khittah Nahdliyah* (Surabaya: Balai Buku, 1980), 49.

[33] Abou El Fadl, *The Great Theft: Wrestling Islam from The Extremist*, 223.

[34] Kamali, *The Middle Path of Moderation in Islam : The Qur'ānic Principle of Wasaṭiyyah*, 194–196.

[35] Abou El Fadl, *The Great Theft: Wrestling Islam from The Extremist*, 191.

description and the explanation of the aspects of discourse distribution.

Based on an interview with the Account Administrator and the Analytic Feature Observation on the YouTube Channel of Ach Dhofir Zuhry within the last 28 days (June 17th, 2021), the main source of content distribution is "video recommendation." This implies that the content video by Ach Dhofir Zuhry can be found when people access certain videos that share similar topics. Then, the video content can reach the audience through the "search feature." In this feature, the video that appears on the screen directly reaches out to the audience on the home screen as they open their YouTube page. The statement is related to the search history, subscription, email update, and "watch later" feature.[36] Furthermore, the subsequent source of distribution is "YouTube search." This feature displays the keyword that the audience or direct visitors can use to access YouTube from the Google search engine. Then, "other YouTube feature" refers to the contents that have been present through YouTube remote or the features that most people have not figured out yet.

In addition, there is also the source of discourse distribution that comes outside of YouTube. The highest source of traffic is Facebook, followed by WhatsApp, Instagram, Telegram, and eventually Google. It can be assumed that many people visit the YouTube Channel of Ach Dhofir Zuhry after they have visited the Facebook account of Ach Dhofir Zuhry itself or the Facebook account of *NU Online*, which delivers his *kajian tafsir tematik*. Interestingly, WhatsApp has become the second external source for discourse distribution. Thus, it can be implied that the main source of discourse distribution in this regard is the WhatsApp Groups that share similar affiliations.

Twitter is a social media platform that has been overlooked in the distribution of discourse. Data Astramaya confirmed that this finding is quite unusual because Twitter has a faster rate of creating content and massively distributing that content so that it is discussed by the public. In comparison to the videos made by the figures who have gained public attention, such as Gus Baha for example, most of these videos are distributed through Twitter and that results in the discussion of those figures by so many people over the social media, under the expectation that the discussion can give enlightenment on the religious discourse over the social media. The videos of two prominent figures, Gus Baha and Gus Miftah, have been distributed over Twitter and this results in the trending topic in terms of moderate cleric figures. Thus, this can be one of the reasons why the video contents of Gus Dhofir have less striking force in comparison to those of either Gus Baha or Gus Miftah.

Another weakness that has been admitted by the account administrator team is the lower sense of solidity from the followers or the groups under the same affiliation in distributing the contents that have been created (an interview with the account administrator, June 17th, 2021). As a result, the contents have not been massively distributed. One of the account administrator team members even says that each follower creates his content and sometimes they forget or they are even unwilling to share the help in distributing the contents of one another. He further states that there used to be one group who helped distribute the content, but this group has been inactive recently, causing the administrator team to distribute the content on their own. Not only that, the opportunity to edit and distribute the content has become another peculiar obstacle (an interview with the account administrator, June 17th, 2021). The obstacle that

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[36] Fergus Baird and Katie Sehl, "How to Use YouTube Analytics and Track the Right Metrics," last modified 2021, https://blog.hootsuite.com/youtube-analytics/.

has been previously mentioned is acceptable since the members of the account administrator team have certain activities in their daily lives, especially their academic routines. On top of that, creating video content is not their main job.

Interaction between the Audience and the Discourse Creator

Departing from the analytics feature, we will focus on two YouTube accounts that broadcast the content of Gus Dhofir (Ach Dhofir Zuhry and Luhurian Kepanjen Official). Not all of the contents from the two YouTube accounts are related to the theme of religious moderation; however, there are still four themes in the Youtube account of Ach Dhofir Zuhry that are related to the theme of religious moderation. These videos contents are: (1) *"Ustadz Adi Hidayat Muhamamdiyah atau Wahabi"* (Ustadz Adi Hidayat Muhamamdiyah or Wahabi); (2) *"Penjelasan Zikir 'Hu' Dalam Tarekat"* (The Explanation of the 'Hu' *Zikr* in the *Tarekat*); (3) *"Ust Firanda. Benarkah Allah Ada Di Atas: Bantahan atas Kesesatan Akidah Salafi-Wahabi"* (Ust Firanda. Is That True that God Dwells Above: An Objection toward the Digression of Salafi-Wahabi Creed); and (4) *"Nabi Muhammad Perangi Khilafah. Bantahan untuk UAS"* (The Prophet Muhammad Has Battled the Caliphate: The Objection toward Ustad Abdul Somad).

In comparison, the content broadcast on the *NU Online* Facebook page has been identified as relevant to the theme of religious moderation. The highest consumption rate on the theme of religious moderation in *NU Online* Facebook can be found in the videos entitled *"Makna Jihad Menurut Al-Qur'an"* (The Meaning of Jihad according to the Qur'an), followed by *"Kerukunan dan Toleransi"* (Harmony and Tolerance). These findings show that the two video contents drew a lot of attention. Thus, it can be said that both themes always appear on the surface within the discussion about the practice of Islam in the context of Indonesia as a nation-state.

In addition to the findings in the account of NU Online, the consumption of the video contents of Gus Dhofir in his two social media accounts is provided. The content that has been most viewed is the one entitled *"Nabi Muhammad Perangi Khilafah: Bantahan Untuk UAS"* (The Prophet Muhammad Has Battled the Caliphate: The Objection toward UAS). The nature of the content is controversial, while the theme of the content itself is criticism or objection toward the perspective of UAS, with regards to the Caliphate. In a lecture that has been uploaded into a YouTube Channel named Minang Bertauhid, UAS states that The Prophet Muhammad SAW is unable to manifest the concept of *rahmatan lil 'alamin* through prophecy but it will be manifested through the enforcement of *"Khilafah 'ala Minhaj al-nubuwwah."* This lecture was delivered in the HTI (*Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia*) forum and was uploaded in 2018, while Gus Dhofir's response was given in 2019. In his response, Gus Dhofir objects to the perspective of UAS because, in his opinion, it is The Prophet Muhammad SAW himself who battles the Caliphate, namely the one that has been interpreted as the continuation of the empire that tends to be ethnocentrism-oriented. In addition, he further states that ever since his youth The Prophet Nabi Muhammad SAW has been able to resolve several conflicts and such an ability can also be interpreted as delivering grace (*raḥmat*). However, the aspect that should be given attention in this regard is that the controversial issues seem to be the ones that have gained much attention.

Another aspect that should be given attention is audience interaction. On this occasion, we focus on two accounts: *NU Online* Facebook, which broadcasts *kajian tafsir tematik* live, and Ach Dhofir Zuhry YouTube. The audience interaction is usually related to the

comments, the question-and-answer sessions (discussions), and the sharing sessions.

The comments in *kajian tafsir tematik* can be divided into four types, namely attendance, appreciation, statement (usually in the form of either agreement or disagreement), and (4) questions. The last type, question, appears since there is a session that has been especially devoted to answering the questions in the "Comment" section within the online study of thematic interpretation. Unfortunately, not all the contents can be discussed within the article. Therefore, the discussion within this article only deals with the contents that have been most viewed and commented on as having been displayed in Table 2 above. Then, the themes of the video content that will be taken as examples within the discussion are *"Makna Jihad Menurut Al-Qur'an"* and *"Kerukunan dan Toleransi."*

The interaction between the audience and the discourse creator seems to be more interesting when it comes to controversial discourse contents. These contents usually gain negative comments towards the argument that has been delivered through the contents. These comments can be categorized into three types, namely: (1) counter-discourse; (2) warnings or threats; and (3) blasphemy. First of all, through the counter-discourse, the audience strives to propose a discourse that has been different from the one that has been delivered by Gus Dhofir. An example of this type of comment can be found in the first comment for the first discourse. In this comment, it is apparent that the audience delivers several counter-discourse statements by referring to the texts of hadith translation or the opinions of *ulamas* toward a book. Then, the warning or threat can be found in the second comment of the second discourse, while the blasphemy can be found in the third comment of the first discourse.

The Socio-Cultural Practice Behind The Discourse

This section of the article deals with the cause behind the creation of the discourse that has been previously discussed and the implication of the discourse on the subsequence of social-cultural practice. Such causes can be found by viewing the situational, institutional, and social aspects within the construction of critical discourse analysis that has been proposed by Normal Fairclough.[37] The description of the colonial discourse and the interaction between the audience and the discourse creator is useful for explaining the argument that has been established within this section. According to Fairclough's perspective, discourse refers to the practice of displaying the social context in which the discourse has emerged to the surface, which implicitly reflects the ideology that has been defended.

1.   Situational Aspect

The situational aspect refers to the situation or the condition that triggers the creation of discourse. Based on the results of the interview (an interview with Gus Dhofir, May 24th, 2021), one day, Gus Dhofir was suggested by one of the NU figures in Jakarta to start broadcasting the online Koran recital. The figure said, "The elder *ulama* can only defend themselves since they can't strike back; therefore, the younger ulama should be the ones who strike back." At least it is that piece of the message that Gus Dhofir can recall.

The above quotation implies the presence of a "conflict" of perspective between two groups or even more. The contentious discourse themes demonstrate such conflict. One such conflict can be found in the response to the lecture by UAS with regards to the Caliphate and also his criticism of *Islam Nusantara* (Archipelagic Islam). According to Gus Dhofir (an interview on May

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[37] *Language and Power*, 25–27.

24th, 2021), in the study of thematic interpretation that is always broadcasted every Sunday evening, some of the themes have indeed been based on the topics that are generating the most hype within the social media. Consequently, the study of thematic interpretation is also based on the situational response to certain issues. At the same time, the situational aspect that implies discourse contestation is visible in numerous contents of controversial discourse as well as critical audience comments.

The contestation among the religious paradigms within social media has been explained by several experts. Indeed, social media has been turned into a tool of propaganda for certain Islamic groups that heedlessly promote radicalism.[38] In addition, social media has also been turned into a stage of contestation for a certain paradigm or ideology. [39] The ideological propaganda of certain Islamic groups has been more massive in cyberspace than in the real world, as has been asserted by several mainstream Islamic groups in Indonesia; as a result, the mainstream Islamic groups have become "threatened" by such massive online propaganda.[40] Thus, it can be said that it is this situation that becomes the cause behind the creation of Islamic moderation discourse, as has been depicted in the contents created by Gus Dhofir.

2. Institutional Aspect

This aspect is related to the institutional attitude of the discourse creator. In specific, this aspect is related to the affiliation of the discourse creator with certain institutions. Based on the results of the interview, a clear attitude has been stated by the one figure from NU since he has encouraged the discourse producer to deliver his studies over social media. This initiative is intended to serve as a way to "compete with" the Islamic discourses that have been produced by the radicalism-inclined Islamic groups, which tend to curse the disciples of other religions and even go against the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. As having been stated by Gus Dhofir himself, he is one of the LT NU caretakers in the Regency of Malang and this is more than enough to reflect his institutional affiliation.

Then, as Akmaliyah pointed out, the creation of such discourse implies the fear of massive propaganda of radical Islamist ideology on social media. On the contrary, the creation of such discourse instead clearly shows the role of NU as the moderate Islamic organization in competing with the Islamic groups that tend to go against the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia and also tend to embrace radicalism. In addition, it can also be stated that NU has been one of the organizations that carry out the discourse of Islamic moderation. [41] Thus, automatically, the figure of NU who becomes the "spokesperson" of the organization on social

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[38] Wai Weng Hew, "The Art of Dakwah: Social Media, Visual Persuasion and the Islamist Propagation of Felix Siauw," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 46, no. 134 (2018): 61–79; Gary R. Bunt, *Hashtag Islam: How Cyber-Islamic Environments Are Transforming Religious Authority* (North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 130–140; Yayah Khisbiyah et al., *Kontestasi Wacana Keislaman Di Dunia Maya: Moderatisme, EKstremisme, Dan Hipernasionalisme* (Surakarta: Pusat Studi Budaya dan Perubahan Sosial, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, 2018), 243–249.

[39] Akmal Mundiri and Moch Tohet, "Contestation of Religious Identity in the Cyber World: A Case Study of

Arrahmah.Com and VOA Islam Dealing with Religious Others on Facebook," *Walisongo: Jurnal Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan* 26, no. 2 (2018): 391; Ibrahim N Abusharif MS, "Cyber-Islamic Environments and Salafī-Ṣūfī Contestations Appropriating Digital Media and Challenges to Religious Authority" (University of Wales, 2019).

[40] Akmaliah, "The Demise of Moderate Islam: New Media, Contestation, and Reclaiming Religious Authorities," 6.

[41] Ahmad Najib Burhani, "Al-Tawassut Wa-l I'tidāl: The NU and Moderatism in Indonesian Islam," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 40, no. 5–6 (2012): 564–581.

media also pursues the campaign of similar discourse.

The institutional aspect is also apparent in the form of interaction and relations between the producer and the consumer. Departing from the previous description of the discourse, the relationship between the producer and the consumer is similar to that between the teacher and the student or between the patron and the client, which tends to be dominant in the "single voice." Therefore, such a situation gives birth to some kind of "the power of knowledge" upon the audience who has been paying attention to the discourse. However, some relations and interactions do not always depict the "patron-client" pattern, and such relations and interactions take the form of critical comments toward the discourse that the producer has delivered. The statement reflects the "inter-institution conflict," namely the conflict that involves the institution of discourse producer affiliation and the critical audience that persistently denies the discourse of Islamic moderation.

3. Social Aspect

The social aspect is understood as the macro aspect of the social context within Indonesian society. As a Pancasila Democracy country, Indonesian society has the right to the freedom of opinion in the public space, and this includes freedom of opinion in social media. Democratization has indeed allowed all groups to share their opinions. They have the right to freedom of expression and freedom of association to defend their opinions. Conservatism and radicalism-oriented groups benefit from this situation to "preach" their agendas. Their voices are much louder than those

of the moderate and progressive groups Post-New Order era of democratization.[42]

The massive wave of democratization, along with the wave of digital technology transformation, also spurs the freedom, discussion, and transmission of knowledge and ideology from one group to another. In this regard, the use of social media has become an important tool for the dissemination of knowledge and ideology, such as the ideology of the Caliphate[43] and the mainstream ideology of Islamic groups. NU is one of the mainstream Islamic organizations that has been more reactive in providing counter-discourse to the religious radicalism discourse.[44] It is to this organization that Gus Dhofir belongs.

Conclusion

The production of religious moderation discourse in social media is carried out in two ways: conveying messages and countering conservative and radical narratives. The two ways of producing the discourse show that moderates are trying to show the discourse of religious moderation on social media. Both types of production received comments from the audience, but the type of counter-discourse received more responses than the first. Yet, this religious knowledge production is not followed by a widespread distribution, preventing it from affecting the larger community.

By studying the discourse production that has been conducted, the prospect of Islamic moderation discourse holds the opportunity to gain success in countering the narration of religious radicalism. Since social media enables the absence of hegemony in knowledge. As a result, people have the freedom to mutually

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[42] Martin van Bruinessen et al., *Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam: Explaining the "Conservative Turn,"* ed. Martin van Bruinessen (Pasing Panjang, Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2013), 5.

[43] Hew, "The Art of Dakwah: Social Media, Visual Persuasion and the Islamist Propagation of Felix Siauw."

[44] Akmaliah, "The Demise of Moderate Islam: New Media, Contestation, and Reclaiming Religious Authorities."

search and share their knowledge without being under the hegemony of one group. Social media, especially YouTube, enables people or a group of people to undergo discourse contestation so that the dominance of certain discourse does not take place. The strength of the discourse production aspects and their distribution into both the inside and outside network define the success of discourse contestation.

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None of the authors of this study has a financial or personal relationship with other people that could inappropriately influence or bias the content of the study.

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All listed authors contributed to this article. Agus Iswanto is the chief of authors in this research article, wrote the original draft, conceptualized the study, and managed the project. Moch Lukluil Maknun contributed to collecting digital data. Roch Aris Hidayat contributed to data tabulation and article translation. Muhammad Aji Nugroho provided an analysis of this article.

Ethical Considerations
This article followed all ethical standards for research, without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

Data Availability
Data sharing does not apply to this article as no new data were created or analyzed in this study.

Disclaimer
The views and assumptions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the authors.

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