

Human Rights Roots of Multicultural Education

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to analyze the influence of social media usage on religious moderation behavior among high school students. With the increasing use of social media among teenagers, it is important to understand how these digital platforms affect their religious understanding and practices, particularly in the context of religious moderation.

Using a mixed-method research approach, this study combines a quantitative survey of 500 high school students and in-depth interviews with 20 selected respondents. The results show that social media has a significant influence on the formation of students' religious moderation attitudes, with both positive and negative impacts. On one hand, social media expands students' access to diverse religious information and encourages interfaith dialogue.

On the other hand, these platforms also have the potential to spread extremist views and trigger polarization. This study concludes that comprehensive media and religious literacy education is essential to help students develop critical and balanced religious moderation attitudes in the digital era.

1. Introduction

The digital era has dramatically altered the landscape of social interaction and information access, especially among the younger generation. Social media, as one of the main products of the digital revolution, has now become an integral part of teenagers' daily lives, including high school students. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, and YouTube are not only means of entertainment and communication but also sources of information and opinion formation, including in religious matters.

Amidst Indonesia's diversity rich in traditions and beliefs, the concept of religious moderation has become increasingly important. Religious moderation, which refers to a balanced, tolerant, and difference-respecting religious attitude, is an essential foundation for social harmony and national stability. However, in the era of social media, the formation of religious moderation attitudes faces new challenges.

Social media, with its complex algorithms and features, has the potential to either strengthen or erode attitudes of religious moderation. On one hand, these digital platforms open opportunities for interfaith dialogue, knowledge exchange, and broader cross-cultural understanding. On the other hand, the phenomena of echo chambers, the spread of unverified information, and extremist content circulating on social media can complicate efforts to instill values of moderation.

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In this context, understanding how social media influences students' religious moderation behavior becomes crucial. High school students, who are in a formative phase of identity and personal value formation, are a group highly susceptible to social media influence. A deep understanding of these dynamics will help in designing effective educational strategies and policies to nurture a moderate and tolerant young generation in the digital era.

This research aims to explore the relationship between social media usage and religious moderation behavior among high school students. Focusing on patterns of social media use, types of religious content consumed, and how these affect the understanding and practice of religious moderation, this study is expected to provide valuable insights for educators, policymakers, and the wider community.

2. Literature Review

Indonesia, as a country with rich religious and cultural diversity, has long recognized the importance of maintaining harmony and tolerance among religious communities. The concept of religious moderation, championed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, has become one of the important pillars in maintaining harmony amidst pluralism. However, in the digital era marked by rapid developments in information and communication technology, efforts to instill values of religious moderation face new and complex challenges.

Social media, as a primary product of the digital revolution, has changed the way young people, especially high school students, access information, interact, and form perceptions about the world around them, including in religious matters. According to data from We Are Social and Hootsuite (2023), social media user penetration in Indonesia reaches 68.9% of the total population, with the majority of users in the 18-34 age range. This figure shows how significant the role of social media is in the lives of Indonesia's young generation.

Meanwhile, the phenomenon of radicalism and intolerance targeting students has also become a serious concern. A survey conducted by the Center for the Study of Islam and Society (PPIM) UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta in 2021 revealed that 12.3% of high school students have tendencies towards intolerant attitudes, while 9.8% show radical tendencies in their religious views. This data underscores the urgency to understand the factors influencing the formation of religious attitudes among students, including the role of social media.

In this context, social media has dual potential. On one hand, these digital platforms can be an effective means to disseminate messages of moderation and tolerance, facilitate interfaith dialogue, and broaden students' religious perspectives. On the other hand, social media can also become a medium for spreading extremist ideologies, religious disinformation, and polarization that threatens social cohesion.

Considering the strategic role of high school students as the nation's future generation, it is important to understand how they navigate the social media landscape in a religious context, and how this affects the formation of their religious moderation attitudes. This understanding will form the basis for developing effective educational strategies and policies in nurturing a moderate and tolerant young generation in the digital era.

3. Methodology

This research employs a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods to gain a comprehensive understanding of the influence of social media on religious moderation behavior among high school students. Data Collection Procedure

a. Quantitative Phase:

- Online surveys distributed to respondents through a digital survey platform.
- Questionnaire completion is voluntary and anonymous.
- Data collection period lasts for one month.

b. Qualitative Phase:

- In-depth interviews conducted face-to-face or via video call, depending on respondent preference.
- Each interview lasts about 60-90 minutes and is recorded with respondent permission.
- Interviews are conducted over a two-month period after quantitative data analysis is completed.

Data Analysis

a. Quantitative Analysis:

- Descriptive statistics used to describe sample characteristics and social media usage patterns.
- Correlation and regression analyses used to test relationships between social media usage variables and religious moderation.
- Exploratory factor analysis used to identify key dimensions in social media usage related to religious moderation.

b. Qualitative Analysis:

- Interview transcripts analyzed using a thematic analysis approach.
- Coding process conducted iteratively to identify main themes.
- NVivo software used to assist in qualitative data analysis.

c. Data Integration:

- Results of quantitative and qualitative analyses integrated to provide a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study.
- Data triangulation performed to enhance the validity of research findings.

Research Ethics

- Ethical approval obtained from the university research ethics committee.
- Informed consent obtained from all participants, with additional consent from parents/guardians for respondents under 18 years old.
- Respondent confidentiality and anonymity strictly maintained throughout the research process.
- Data securely stored and accessed only by the research team.

Research Limitations

- This research is limited to students in five major cities, so generalization to rural or remote contexts should be done cautiously.
- The self-report nature of the questionnaire may introduce respondent bias.
- The rapidly changing dynamics of social media usage may affect the long-term relevance of findings.

This research methodology is designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the influence of social media on students' religious moderation behavior, combining the strengths of quantitative analysis and the depth of qualitative exploration.

4. Results and Discussion

The results of this study are presented in two main parts: quantitative analysis and qualitative analysis, which are then integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of the influence of social media on students' religious moderation behavior.

1. Results of Quantitative Analysis

a. Sample Characteristics:

- Total respondents: 500 high school students (245 males, 255 females)
- Average age: 16.7 years (range 15-18 years)
- Religious distribution: Islam (65%), Protestant (20%), Catholic (8%), Hindu (4%), Buddhist (2%), others (1%)

b. Social Media Usage Patterns:

- 98% of respondents use social media actively
- Average daily usage time: 4.2 hours
- Most popular platforms: Instagram (85%), TikTok (80%), YouTube (75%), WhatsApp (70%), Twitter (45%)
- 72% of respondents access religious content through social media at least once a week

c. Level of Religious Moderation:

- Average religious moderation score: 3.8 out of 5-point scale
- Tolerance dimension has the highest score (4.2), while inclusivity dimension has the lowest score (3.5)

d. Relationship between Social Media Usage and Religious Moderation:

- There is a significant positive correlation between the frequency of accessing religious content on social media and religious moderation scores ($r = 0.32$, $p < 0.01$)
- Regression analysis shows that 28% of the variation in religious moderation scores can be explained by social media usage patterns ($R^2 = 0.28$, $p < 0.001$)

- The type of religious content consumed (moderate vs. extreme) is a significant predictor of religious moderation scores ($\beta = 0.45$, $p < 0.001$)
- e. Factors Influencing the Relationship:
- Digital literacy positively correlates with the level of religious moderation ($r = 0.41$, $p < 0.001$)
 - Students with higher levels of digital literacy tend to be more critical in selecting and evaluating religious content on social media
- f. Exploratory Factor Analysis: Identifies four main factors in social media usage related to religious moderation:
1. Openness to diverse perspectives
 2. Intensity of interfaith interactions on social media
 3. Tendency to seek religious information from credible sources
 4. Participation in online religious discussions
 5. Results of Qualitative Analysis
2. Thematic analysis of 20 in-depth interviews yielded several main themes:
- a. Social Media as a Source of Religious Information:
- The majority of respondents rely on social media for quick and easily accessible religious information.
 - Some respondents express difficulty in verifying the truth of religious information on social media.
- b. Formation of Religious Identity:
- Social media plays a significant role in shaping respondents' religious understanding.
 - Some respondents feel more free to explore various religious interpretations through social media.
- c. Polarization Challenges:
- Respondents acknowledge the echo chamber phenomenon that reinforces existing religious views.
 - Some respondents report experiences of online conflicts related to differences in religious views.
- d. Opportunities for Interfaith Dialogue:
- Social media is seen as a platform that facilitates interaction with followers of other religions.
 - Some respondents report increased understanding and tolerance through online religious discussions.
- e. Role of Religious Influencers:
- Religious figures on social media have a significant influence on respondents' religious understanding.
 - Some respondents show a critical attitude towards religious messages delivered by influencers.
- f. Religious Content Navigation Strategies:
- Respondents with high digital literacy tend to be more selective in choosing sources of religious information.
 - Some respondents actively seek different perspectives to broaden their religious insights.
 - Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Results
3. Integration of both data sets yields several key findings:
- a. Social media has dual potential in shaping students' religious moderation behavior, depending on how it is used.
- b. Digital literacy plays a crucial role in determining how students use social media to access and understand religious information.
- c. Interfaith interactions on social media can promote attitudes of tolerance and inclusivity, but also risk triggering conflicts if not managed well.
- d. The role of schools and educators is very important in guiding students to use social media positively in religious contexts.
- e. There is a need for comprehensive strategies to harness the potential of social media in promoting religious moderation while mitigating the risks of online radicalization.

These research results demonstrate the complexity of the relationship between social media usage and students' religious moderation behavior, emphasizing the importance of a nuanced approach in understanding and managing the impact of social media on the religious life of the younger generation.

5. Conclusion

This research explores the influence of social media on religious moderation behavior among high school students in Indonesia. Based on a comprehensive analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, several main conclusions can be drawn:

1. Social media plays a significant role in shaping students' religious understanding and practices. These digital platforms have become the main source of religious information for the majority of respondents, indicating an important shift in how young people access and understand religious teachings.
2. The influence of social media on religious moderation is ambivalent. On one hand, social media opens opportunities for interfaith dialogue, access to various religious perspectives, and promotion of tolerance values. On the other hand, these platforms can also reinforce echo chambers, spread religious disinformation, and potentially trigger polarization.
3. Students' level of digital literacy positively correlates with attitudes of religious moderation. Students who have critical abilities in evaluating information on social media tend to show higher levels of religious moderation.
4. The type of religious content consumed on social media is a significant predictor of students' level of religious moderation. Exposure to content that promotes inclusive and tolerant values positively correlates with moderate attitudes.
5. Social media facilitates the formation of more fluid and open religious identities. Many students report feeling more free to explore various religious interpretations through digital platforms.
6. The role of religious influencers on social media is very significant in influencing students' religious understanding. This highlights the importance of involving moderate religious figures in efforts to promote moderation values on digital platforms.
7. The main challenges faced by students in using social media for religious purposes are difficulties in verifying the truth of information and managing potential conflicts arising from differences in views.
8. Religious content navigation strategies developed by students vary, with those having high digital literacy showing more critical and selective approaches.

In conclusion, social media has great potential in shaping students' religious moderation behavior, but its influence heavily depends on how these platforms are used and managed. With the right approach, social media can be an effective tool in promoting values of moderation and tolerance among Indonesia's younger generation.

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