EXAMINING THE MODERATE UNDERSTANDING OF ISLAM AMONG HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS OF THE STATE INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC STUDIES SURAKARTA

Toto Suharto
State Institute of Islamic Studies Surakarta, Indonesia
E-mail: tosuh71@gmail.com

Abstract: The study of radicalism among students of the State Institute of Islamic Studies (IAIN), Surakarta, showed a significant increase within the recent decade. Hence, this article attempts to analyze the level of moderate understanding of these students with a survey that involved 100 persons. The past educational background of each student was deeply explored to figure out the basics of their religious understanding. Meanwhile, qualitative and quantitative designs were employed to measure their understanding of moderate Islam. The results of the study showed that the students of IAIN Surakarta had a moderate understanding of Islamic teachings, according to an outcome of 87%. The high value was because the majority of the respondents had graduated from madrasah and pesantren, which had strongly emphasized cultivating moderate religious doctrines. This outcome was different from that of general high school graduate students, where they learned the doctrines from Rohani Islam or Rohis. Also, it was discovered that the Rohis commonly hold radical and intolerant religious doctrines. This is understandable as this community tends to understand Islamic doctrines textually, scripturally, and differently from the teachings promulgated by pesantren and madrasa.
Keywords: Understanding level; moderate Islam; Islamic Higher Education; students.

Introduction

According to the Directorate General of Islamic Education, the realization of an excellent and moderate system is the central vision of Islamic education. In general, the education system should serve as a

world reference in the integration of religion, science, and technology.[1] From this vision, it is evident that the realization of moderate Islamic education is a subject of interest. Strengthening moderate Islam is important because education is a strategic instrument in counteracting radicalism. This is meant to depict Islam as friendly, tolerant, moderate, and respectful.

Moderate Islamic education can be developed through education strategies that accommodate aspects of plurality and multiculturality. According to Ali, pluralist-multicultural insights in religious education help learners to appreciate the significance of differences, respect, sincerity, communication, openness, and trust, increasing faith and piety.[2] Therefore, measuring the level of moderate understanding of Islam among Islamic Higher Education (IHE) students is necessary. It helps to determine the effect of education policy launched by the Ministry of Religious Affairs can have a positive impact on strengthening moderate Islam in Indonesia.

Most studies about IHE students focus on radical understanding. A survey by the Center for Islamic and Community Studies (*Pusat Pengkajian Islam dan Masyaraka*t) of UIN Syarif Hidayatullah in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2017 showed that radicalism and intolerance among students have strengthened. With 11,917,538 respondents, it was found that 58.5% had a radical religious view, respectively 51.1% and 34.3% intolerant internally and externally.[3] In the same year, the National Intelligence Agency (BIN) also researched the spread of radical understanding among students. The results showed that 39% of students had been exposed to radical understanding. This condition is undesirable because it threatens the future of the Republic of Indonesia.[4]

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[1] Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Islam, *Rencana Strategis Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Islam Tahun 2015-2019* (Jakarta: Dirjen Pendis, 2015), 28.

[2] Muhamad Ali, *Teologi Pluralis-Multikultural: Menghargai Kemajemukan, Menjalin Kebersamaan* (Jakarta: Penerbit Buku Kompas, 2003), 102.

[3] Rangga Eka Saputra, "Api Dalam Sekam: Keberagamaan Generasi Z", *Convey Report*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2018), 1-49. See also Didin Syafrudin and Ismatu Ropi (eds.), *Gen Z: Kegalauan Identitas Keagamaan* (Jakarta: PPIM UIN Jakarta, 2018), 6-8.

[4] Setara Institute, "Wacana dan Gerakan Keagamaan di Kalangan Mahasiswa: Memetakan Ancaman atas Negara Pancasila di Perguruan Tinggi Negeri", *Ringkasan Eksekutif*, 31 Mei 2019, 2.

Zainuddin studied the campus Islamic activists in Malang and concluded that there were two groups of students with diametrically different views. These included the fundamentalist Islamic activist group who were pro-Khilafah and jihadist, and moderate Islamic activist with an open attitude towards any government of the government, as long as the state can guarantee justice, truth, welfare and other benefits for its citizens.[5] Suharto and Assagaf showed that there was a religious mentoring program on the IHE campus. It was part of the Tarbiyah Movement, which cadre through *halāqah*, *usroh*, *Mantuba*, *mutābaah*, and other teaching styles. This program facilitated the ideology of the Tarbiyah Movement which unsuccessfully strengthened moderate Islamic religious understanding because it was based on the ideological-political nuance.[6]

According to the Setara Institute, the high level of radical understanding among higher education students is attributed to the rampant development of exclusive religious movements. The Setara Institute studied qualitative discourse maps and religious movements among students in 2019, established that ten state universities in Indonesia still develop discourses and exclusive religious movements. These include the Salafi-Wahabi, the *Tarbīyah*, and the *Tahrīrīyah* movements.[7] Nurudin recommends strengthening the values of peace in the learning process on campus the solution to limit the rise of religious radicalism among higher education students.[8]

Since the previous studies focused more on revealing the level of a radical understanding, it is vital to consider moderate understanding as well. This aspect is emphasized in this context because it is the character of Indonesian Islam.[9] In academic studies,

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[5] M. Zainuddin, "Konstruksi Sosial Aktivis Muda Islam Kampus tentang Jihad dan Negara Islam di Kota Malang", *Laporan Penelitian Kompetitif Bidang Sosial Keagamaan*, UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, 2014, 66-67.

[6] Toto Suharto dan Jafar Assagaf, "Membendung Arus Paham Keagamaan Islam Radikal di Kalangan Mahasiswa PTKIN", *al-Tahrir: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (2014), 157-180.

[7] Setara Institute, "Wacana dan Gerakan Keagamaan", 9.

[8] Nurudin, "Basis Nilai-Nilai Perdamaian: Sebuah Antitesis Radikalisme Agama di Kalangan Mahasiswa", *Harmoni: Jurnal Multikultural & Multireligius*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (2013), 64-82.

[9] According to Burhanudin and van Dijk, with moderate character, Indonesian Islam can actually be a model for the diversity of Islam throughout the Muslim world. Jajat Burhanudin and Kees van Dijk (eds.), *Islam in Indonesia: Contrasting Images and Interpretations* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013), 11.

moderate and radical Islam are often juxtaposed. For instance, Nurjannahs dissertation which was later published as *Radical versus Moderate*, for example, compares these two terms.[10]

This study is a preliminary survey that examines the level of moderate understanding of Islam among the State Islamic Institute of Surakarta (IAIN Surakarta) students. This institution is chosen because it is located in an area that encourages radicalism,[11] though it is considered to have a strategic role in strengthening moderate Islam. Recent studies show that *Solo Raya* has been ideal for militia groups that are likely to carry out acts of radicalism and terrorism.[12] The research of the Research Institutions and Community Service (LPPM) Universitas Nahdlatul Ulama Indonesia (UNUSIA) was recently presented at the "Discussion of Transnational Exclusive Islam Spreading on State Campuses" in the Faculty of Social and Political Science Sebelas Maret University on May 23, 2019. Their research shows that the IAIN Surakarta is among eight state universities in Central Java, where exclusive Islamic groups develop rapidly. This condition, if left unchecked, may foster radicalism among students.[13]

This is a descriptive study that takes the form of a survey[14] with mixed methods for various purposes. The research design chosen was exploratory,[15] where the researcher first used a qualitative method to determine the important variables that underlie moderate Islamic phenomena in the documentation, and then inform them quantitatively with a questionnaire to measure their level of understanding.

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[10] Nurjannah, *Radikal vs Moderat: Atas Nama Dakwah, Amar Makruf Nahi Mungkar dan Jihad (Perspektif Psikologi)* (Yogyakarta: Aswaja Presindo, 2013).

[11] Muhammad Wildan, "Mapping Radical Islam: A Study of the Proliferation of Radical Islam in Solo, Central Java" in Martin van Bruinessen (ed.), *Contemporary Developments in Indonesian Islam: Explaining the "Conservative Turn"* (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2013), 190- 223. See also Ridwan al-Makassary *et al.*, *Benih-benih Islam Radikal di Masjid: Studi Kasus Jakarta dan Solo* (Jakarta: CSRC-UIN Jakarta, 2010).

[12] Abdil Mughis Mudhoffir, "Islamic Militias and Capitalist Development in Post-Authoritarian Indonesia", *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol. 47, No. 4 (2017), 495-514.

[13] "Peneliti UNU Ungkap Kelompok Islam Eksklusif Merebak di 8 PTN" in https://news.detik.com/berita-jawa-tengah/d-4562815/(Accessed on January 24, 2019).

[14] Jack R. Fraenkel and Norman E. Wallen, *How to Design and Evaluate Research in Education* (New York: McGraw-Hill Inc., 2009), 14 and 21.

[15] Ibid., 560.

Moderate Understanding of Islam

Al-Qur'ān refers to Muslims as *ummah wasaṭa* (Q.S. al-Baqarah [2]: 143), which means people are "middle", "moderate", just, and "best". Hanafi interprets moderate (*al-wasaṭ*) as a method of thinking, interacting, and behaving in a balanced way while addressing two conditions. This is meant to align the attitudes with Islamic principles and community traditions, including balanced in creed, worship, and morals.[16] Moderate and moderatism are conceptual nomenclature that is difficult to define. Religious groups or scientists contest these terms, and therefore, it is interpreted differently, depending on who and in what context it is understood. This is challenging since the Classical Islamic does not recognize the term "moderatism". Usage and understanding of it usually refer to the equivalent of several words in Arabic, including *al-tawassuṭ* or *al-wasaṭ*, *al-qisṭ*, *al-tawāzun*, and *al-i'tidāl*. According to Hilmy, there are several characteristics of Islamic moderatism, including the following 1). Non-violent ideology in propagating Islam; 2) adopting the modern way of life with its all derivatives, including science and technology, democracy, human rights and the like; 3) the use of rational way of thinking; 4) contextual approach in understanding Islam, and; 5) the use of *ijtihād* (intellectual exercises to make a legal opinion in case of the absence of explicit justification from the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth). Those characteristics, however, can be expanded into several aspects, such as tolerance, harmony, and cooperation in different religious groups".[17]

Ali interpreted moderate Islam in the Indonesian context as "those who do not share the hard-line visions and actions". With this interpretation, moderate Indonesian Islam refers to the Islamic community which emphasizes normal behaviour in implementing Islamic teachings, being tolerant to differences in opinion, avoiding violence, and prioritizing thought and dialogue as its strategy. These are the mainstream of Indonesian Islam, although their strategic movements to moderate religion and politics are still considered limited. Ideas such as "Indigenous Islam", "Rational Islam", "Progressive Islam", "Transformative Islam", "Liberal Islam",

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[16] Muchlis M. Hanafi, *Moderasi Islam: Menangkal Radikalisasi Berbasis Agama* (Jakarta: Ikatan Alumni al-Azhar dan Pusat Studi al-Quran, 2013), 3-4.

[17] Masdar Hilmy, "Whither Indonesia's Islamic Moderatism? A Reexamination on the Moderate Vision of Muhammadiyah and NU", *Journal of Indonesian Islam*, Vol. 7, No. 1, (2013), 27.

"Inclusive Islam", "Tolerant Islam" and "Plural Islam" can be categorized as moderate. This class can also include ideas of the re-actualization of Islam, the nationalization of Islam, the desacralization of Islamic culture, or contextual *ijtihād*.[18]

In contrast to Ali, who emphasized the substance of moderate Islamic character, Burhani interpreted moderate Islam for the Indonesian context to refer more to the meaning of the language, precisely "mid-position between liberalism and Islamism". People or organizations that are in the middle of liberalism and Islamism are moderate.[19] Therefore, Indonesia's moderate Islam is neither liberal nor Islamist.

Some of the views described imply that several things, including the following, characterize moderate Islam; (a) behaving normally (*tawassuṭ*) while implementing religious teachings; (b) being tolerant, harmonious and cooperative on differences of opinion; (c) avoiding violence; (d) prioritizing dialogue; (e) accommodating modern concepts that contain substantial benefits; (f) reasoning based on revelation; (g) interpreting the text contextually, and (h) using *ijtihād* in interpreting what is not in the Qur'ān or Sunnah. These eight characteristics of moderate understanding of Islam can be expanded into twelve characteristics, including that understanding that;

No.	Characteristics of Moderate Understanding of Islam
1.	In practising Islamic teachings, it is necessary to behave normally, not to underestimate and not to complicate.
2.	Islam is a religion that is tolerant of differences of opinion.
3.	The harmony of different opinions is part of Islamic teachings.
4.	Islam has a cooperative view of differences.
5.	Islam is a religion that does not fuel violence.
6.	Islam prioritizes dialogue in resolving different views.
7.	Islam is a religion that respects modernity for the benefit of

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[18] Muhamad Ali, "Moderate Islam Movement in Contemporary Indonesia" in Rizal Sukma and Clara Joewono (eds.), *Islamic Thoughts and Movements in Contemporary Indonesia* (Jakarta: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2007), 198-199.

[19] Ahmad Najib Burhani, "Pluralism, Liberalism, and Islamism: Religious Outlook of the Muhammadiyah Islamic Movement in Indonesia" (Thesis--University of Manchester, 2007), 16.

	the people.	
8.	Islam contains the notion of democracy which includes benefits for the people.	
9.	Islam is a religion that upholds human rights.	
10.	Islam encourages religion to reason based on revelation.	
11.	In interpreting the texts of Qur'ān and Sunnah as sources of Islamic teachings needs contextual interpretation.	
12.	Islam is concerned with the use of *ijtihād* in interpreting what is not contained in the Qur'ān or Sunnah.	

Moderate Islam is not extreme or radical and does not emphasize violence in implementing its concept of Islam. Liberal Islamic or Islamist groups is not categorized as moderate Islam in case they are against *raḥmah*. This is the nature of *raḥmah* for moderate Indonesian Islam, which is more theological in meaning.[20] The concept of moderate Islam is used as a framework to determine the tendency of moderate Islamic understanding for IHE students.

The Level of Moderate Understanding of Islam among Students

Respondent questionnaire data regarding their understanding of moderate Islam. Table 1.1 shows the twelve indicators with respective scores.

Table 1.1
Respondents Questionnaire Scoring
on Moderate Understanding of Islam

No.	Indicators of Moderate Understanding of Islam	Scoring (out of 500)	Percentage
1	Behaving normally in worship	456	91.2
2	Tolerance against dissent	477	95.4
3	Harmonious to differences	440	88
4	Cooperative towards differences	427	85.4
5	Avoiding violence	429	85.8
6	Prioritizing dialogue	417	83.4
7	Appreciating modernity	425	85
8	Recognizing the benefits of democracy	425	85

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[20] To exploring the meaning of moderate Islam theologically, not politically, see Ahmad Najib Burhani, "*al-Tawassuṭ wa-l I'tidāl*: The NU and Moderatism in Indonesian Islam", *Asian Journal of Social Science*, Issue 5-6, (2012), 564-581.

9	Upholding human rights	456	91.2
10	Thinking rationally based on revelation	415	83
11	Interpreting the texts contextually	427	85.4
12	Using *ijtihād*	419	83.8
	Total	5213	

In table 1.1, the lowest score is on indicator no. 10, which is 415 (83%), and the highest score is in indicator no. 2, with 477 (95.4%). If averaged, a score of 5213: 12 = 434.4 (rounded up to 435) is achieved. In case a percentage is made; it gives 435: 500 x 100% = 87%. Therefore, the score of respondents moderate understanding of Islam is 435 (87%). From the assessment made, the percentage falls in the level of good category, which ranges between 80%-100%. This means that the respondents have a moderate understanding of Islam with a level of good category, which is between the Quite Good Category (60%) and the Very Good Category (100%).

Several reasons explain what the "good" category means in the moderate understanding of Islam for IHE students. *First*, individuals behave normally in implementing Islamic teachings, neither excessive nor underestimate. According to Dawood *et al.*, the term moderate (*al-wasaṭīyah*) implies kindness, justice, and balance in carrying out all aspects of Islam. This is achieved by avoiding rigid and excessive attitudes (*ifrāṭ*), and at the same time avoiding disregarding approach (*tafrīṭ*).[21] Therefore, fairly implementing religious teachings is not *ifrāṭ* or *tafrīṭ*. Several attitudes that are not moderate, including *al-mutashaddid* and *al-ghuluw*. *Al-mutanaṭṭiūn* relate to those who are extreme in religion and go beyond limits while *al-mutashaddid* is a person who complicates and burdens himself in religion, leaving behind the relief that God has given. The *al-ghuluw* is an extreme and excessive attitude in religion, which has destroyed nations before. In practising religion, the Prophet likens it as one who glues small pebbles sufficiently in his grasp, with no need to throw large stones that cannot be grasped.[22] According to Afroni, *al-ghuluw* is the seed for the birth of religious extremism, which is characterized by being

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[21] Mohamed Mohamed Emam Dawood *et al.*, *Moderat dan Prinsip Kemudahan: Ikhtiar dalam Meluruskan Terorisme dan Faham Takfir*, trans. Cecep Taufikurrahman *et al.* (Yogyakarta: Idea Press, 2017), 8.

[22] Ibid., 13-18.

fanatics towards a certain view, prejudice against others, and infidelity. All these attitudes are forbidden since Islam places more emphasis on the values of glory, peace, harmony, and balance, by prohibiting extreme actions, transgressing, fanatic, and violence.[23]

Second, tolerance against dissent is critical. According to Armstrong, "Islam is a tolerant religion and upholds pluralism".[24] This view is related to religious freedom based on al-Baqarah: 256, where there is no compulsion in embracing Islam, al-Māidah: 69 about mutual respect for cultural differences, and Hūd: 118-119 about differences as Sunnatullah.[25] Differences, in general, are often identified with distinct opinions due to various perspective. Differences, in essence, are Sunatullah, which becomes a problem in case it causes conflict, which then raises divisions and disputes. For moderate Islam, this difference of opinion can be resolved by way of deliberation. Differences contain positive values, though they might be negative if accompanied by disputes. The negative difference had detrimental impacts on previous people.[26]

Third, harmonious to differences. The term "harmonious" means (1) good, peaceful, and not quarrelsome since it is related to friendship; and (2) unite in heart or agree. Therefore, it means living together in harmony and agreement, as well as to deal with differences. According to Nazmudin, "harmony" refers to a pillar that gives peace and prosperity to its inhabitants. It could mean an atmosphere of brotherhood and togetherness among all people, even though they differ in ethnicity, religion, and class. Indonesia is a multicultural society in which harmony needs to be appropriately maintained. As social beings, humans need cooperation with others in meeting their needs, both material and spiritual. Therefore, Islam encourages people to work together and help (*ta'āwun*) each other in

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[23] Sihabuddin Afroni, "Makna Ghuluw dalam Islam: Benih Ekstremisme Beragama", *Wawasan: Jurnal Ilmiah Agama dan Sosial Budaya*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2016), 70-85.

[24] Karen Amstrong, "Kata Pengantar" in John L. Esposito, *Masa Depan Islam: Antara Tantangan Kemajemukan dan Benturan dengan Barat*, trans. Yuliani Liputo (Bandung: Mizan, 2010), 11.

[25] See Andi Eka Putra, "Islam Toleran: Membangun Toleransi dengan Jalan Spiritual", *KALAM*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (2016), 381-402.

[26] Dawood *et al.*, *Moderat dan Prinsip*, 44-55.

terms of goodness. In social life, Muslims can relate to anyone without limitations on race, nation, and religion.[27]

Fourth, cooperative towards differences. Cooperative can be interpreted as being willing to cooperate and help. Cooperating in differences means being ready to collaborate and help one another, even with different people or groups. According to Dawood *et al.*, one of the most important characteristics of Islamic moderation is the existence of rules on social interaction and cooperation. Islam makes other adherents as part of the social building in which all people have the same rights and obligations in society. The Prophet gave three examples of social interactions with other adherents, including Jewish, Christianity and other Abrahamic religions, as evident in the Medina Charter. "It is very apparent to us in the text of the Medina Charter, how Islam acknowledges other people and acceptances them, respect and cooperation with them, and respect for the special things they have".[28] Therefore, moderate Islam sees the need for cooperation attitude even though with different people. The relationship of Muslims with other people is a very real example of Islamic moderation. Islam has an important principle in this collaboration, which states that every human being has the same rights and obligations from the perspective of law.

Fifth, avoiding violence. Islam is a religion that does not tolerate violent acts. Today there are terms related to violent acts and terrorism, including *al-ghuluw* which means to cross the line, *al-taṭarruf* meaning extremism, *al-unf* or an aggressive attitude to disturb, and *al-irhāb* which means to terrorize and intimidate. Islam, as a doctrine of revelation, does not encourage people to commit acts of violence and terrorism. It is a religion that teaches love and peace and only allows war when Muslims are wronged and need to face the enemy.[29] For this reason, moderate Islam does not tolerate any acts of violence.

Sixth, prioritize dialogue. The term dialogue is commonly used in various literature on interfaith relations. It can be understood as an encounter and two-way communication that presupposes one another in an equal position. Dialogue needs to be understood in the broadest

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[27] Nazmudin, "Kerukunan dan Toleransi Antar Umat Beragama dalam Membangun Keutuhan Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia (NKRI)", *Journal of Government and Civil Society*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2017), 23-39.

[28] Dawood *et al.*, *Moderat dan Prinsip*, 58.

[29] Ibid., 131-133.

sense so that it can accommodate the potential that needs to be developed. When people of different faiths meet and greet each other, there is a dialogue between religious communities. Amid a pluralistic society, a dialogue approach is critical to establish excellent communication.[30] In Islamic tradition, then it is something that always happens historically. For instance, in Mecca, before the Hijra, the Prophet and his companions had a dialogue with the Arab Pagans and Christians. When migrating to Habasyah, Jafar bin Abdul Muttalib had a dialogue with Christians and also with King Najasyi who at that time was a Christian. In Medina, the Prophet had a debate with the Christian delegation of Najran. Therefore, dialogue needs to be prioritized in dealing with various problems of interfaith relations. This is because its purpose is to examine the causes that encourage disruption in religious relations, and at the same time to find ways that help improve peaceful relations between them.[31]

Seventh, appreciate modernity. According to Jainuri, the term "modern" refers to the characteristics or nature and time that relates to the Western industrial era of the 16th century (general history of the West) and the 19th century (the history of Islam). Modernity is a product of modernization, while modernism is an understanding which proposes that nature, character, and culture produced through modernization are the best examples that need to be applied in today's life. In its development, these terms are not only used to identify the symbols of modern industrial products but also to identify behaviour and ways in which people solve the problems. Modernist people have several characteristics, including high mobility, literacy, planning, rational, accepting change, long-term orientation, efficient, open-minded, adaptable, pluralist, tolerant, and see the success of history as a worthy achievement and therefore can be used now. In Islam, modernization can be found in the term *tajdīd*. This is based on the text of hadith narrated by Abu Daud that "Allah will send people in early every hundred years of the man/groups who will perform *tajdīd* for the religion of these people".[32] This means there is guidance from the Prophet to carry out and uphold values containing elements of modernity which are useful for human life. For moderate

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[30] Putra, "Islam Toleran", 387-378.
[31] Nazmudin, "Kerukunan dan Toleransi antar Umat Beragama", 38.
[32] Achmad Jainuri, "Tradisi dan Modernitas: Mencari Titik Temu", Paper presented at *Musyawarah Nasional Tarjih Ke-28*, on 27 February-1 March 2014 in Palembang.

Islam, modernity is not an obstacle, let alone a threat. Islam is a religion that respects modernity and benefits all people in every places and time.

Eighth, recognize democracy. One indication of understanding moderate Islam is having a positive view of the democratic governance system. Historically, democracy emerged in the state and society relations, especially after World War II, when Islamic countries struggled against colonialism. Democracy is thus not an original concept derived from Islamic but Western civilization.[33] However, according to Hidayat, there is a positive theory that connects democracy with transcendental values, called theo-democracy. Based on this theory, religion strongly supports the process of democratization, both political, economic and cultural. All religions have emerged and developed to protect and uphold human dignity. The actualization of this mission is the realization of justice and independence for its adherents. For this reason, democracy and democratization are a necessity for the realization of justice and independence. Although religion does not systematically teach the practice of democracy, it has always been an ethos, spirit and doctrinal content for the growth of democratic life.[34] In the Islamic context, the concept of "*mushāwarah*", which emphasizes the need for tolerance, taking and giving, and mutual respect in the process of democracy is critical.[35] For moderate Islam, democracy is not a problem, as long as it contains benefits for people to uphold its substantial values.

Ninth, uphold human rights. Human rights in the Islamic view are inherent and fundamental as a mandate and gift of God that needs to be guarded, respected, and protected by every individual, society or

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[33] Toto Suharto, "Teo-Demokrasi Berbasis Pertanggungjawaban: Studi Komparatif atas Respons S.M. Zafar dan Mehdi Bazargan tentang Sistem Pemerintahan Islam", *Walisongo*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (2014), 40-41.

[34] Komaruddin Hidayat, "Agama sebagai Kekuatan Moral bagi Proses Demokratisasi" in Franz Magnis-Suseno *et al.*, *Dari Seminar Sehari Agama dan Demokrasi* (Jakarta: P3M-FNS, 1994), 68-72.

[35] Interesting discussion about the relationship between democracy and Islam, whether democracy has a proper place in Islam; whether the messages of democracy are in accordance with Islamic teachings; and whether Islam itself has the same rules as democracy, and how democracy in Indonesia, see Kiki Muhamad Hakiki, "Islam dan Demokrasi: Pandangan Intelektual Muslim dan Penerapannya di Indonesia", *Wawasan: Jurnal Ilmiah Agama dan Sosial Budaya*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2016), 1-17.

country because it is related to the primary protection and security of each human. There are differing views on the conception of human rights in Islam. Some refused while others accepted it with some notes. According to Jauhar, moderate Islamic groups view human rights as a new solution taken from Islamic teachings as a necessity in modern times. The Medina Charter and the Universal Islamic Declaration on Human Rights in 1981 are evidence of Islam's acceptance of the concept of human rights.[36]

Tenth, reasoning based on revelation. The number of Muslims around the world in 2000 reached 1,188,000,000. Of this number, 1,002,000,000 (84.34%) were followers of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamāah, while the other 15.65% consists of other groups, such as Shiites.[37] This data shows that followers of Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamāah constitute the majority group. In almost all Islamic countries, both in Asia and Africa, Muslims are adherents of Sunnī schools, and therefore it is right to say that Islamic societies throughout the world are Sunnī followers. The Sunnī view of the relation of reason and revelation is imperative. According to Wardani, Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jamāah in Islamic theology it is often identified with the Asharīyah understanding, which positions theology in the realm of synthesis and takes the middle way (moderation: *tawassuṭ, tawāzun, i'tidāl*) between the understanding of Mu'tazilah's rationalism and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbals textual traditionalism.[38] Therefore, it is called "Moderate Theology", which selects the theological understandings that existed at the time, and then only what is right and matches its theological nuances.[39] One proof of the moderation of the Ash'arīyah theology is the harmony of reason and revelation. For Ash'arīyah, rationalism is not enough to understand religious texts, nor is it enough to comprehend religious

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[36] Najid Jauhar, "Islam, Demokrasi, dan HAM: Sebuah Benturan Filosofis dan Teologis", *Jurnal Ilmu sosial dan Ilmu Politik*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (2007), 41-43.

[37] Quoted from Ahsin Sakho Muhammad, "Sikap Moderat Ahlussunnah Wal Jamaah dalam Masalah Teologi dan Politik" in Nuhrison M. Nuh (ed.), *Peranan Pesantren dalam Mengembangkan Budaya Damai* (Jakarta: Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kemenag RI, 2010), 49.

[38] Wardani, *Studi Kritis Ilmu Kalam: Beberapa Isu dan Metode* (Banjarmasin: IAIN Antasari Press, 2013), 120-121.

[39] Hamzah Harun al-Rasyid, "Abu Hasan al-Asyari: Penggagas Teologi Moderat dalam Islam" in http://hamzah-harun.blogspot.co.id/2012/01/teologi-moderat.html (Accessed on December 20, 2017).

texts without the help of rationalism. This is the importance of reasoning based on revelation in the view of moderate Islam.

Eleventh, interpret the text contextually. The universal messages of the Qur'ān often deal with the diverse realities of social life. A textual-contextual approach in understanding the Qur'ān, as a form of text relations and context in harmony, not just a textual or just a circumstantial approach is needed. The textual approach usually focuses on language grammatically to raise a literal understanding. In contrast, the contextual approach seeks to understand a text by tracing the context of its use at the time when the text emerged, then comprehend interdisciplinary using modern sciences.[40] The textual approach only brings up literalistic interpretation patterns, in which the Qur'ān needs to be a reference, even though modern needs and contexts have changed and differed from the context when the Qur'ān was revealed. Consequently, the meaning of the Qur'ān is seen as clear and fixed, which needs to be applied everywhere at all times. Elucidation of this concept is usually made by Salafi groups who generally use the *jihādī* interpretation model. The contextual approach, in addition to paying attention to the linguistic meaning of the text of the Qur'ān, also emphasizes the importance of looking at the socio-historical context of the revelation of the Qur'ān (past context), and the present (present context), which includes analysis with contemporary issues such as gender equality, human rights, and globalization. This contextual interpretation is usually made by progressive groups using the *ijtihādī* interpretation model.[41] For moderate Islam, what is needed is an interpretation based on textual-contextual, which is carried out simultaneously. The resulting interpretation is neither the Salafi nor the Progressive models. The relation of Islam and the tradition of Islamic thought are therefore closely interwoven and interconnected. Understanding Islam without the support of contextual mastery of the intellectual heritage of the predecessors makes it difficult to reach the point of perfection. Therefore, the textual-contextual approach is a necessity for moderate Islam.

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[40] M. Solahudin, "Pendekatan Tekstual dan Kontekstual dalam Penafsiran al-Quran", *Al-Bayan: Jurnal Studi Al-Quran dan Tafsir*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (2016), 115-130.

[41] Yusuf Rahman, "Penafsiran Tekstual dan Kontekstual terhadap al-Quran dan Hadith (Kajian terhadap Muslim Salafi dan Muslim Progresif)", *Journal of Quran and Hadith Studies*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (2012), 297-302.

Twelfth, using *ijtihād*. According to Muqtedar Khan, what distinguishes moderate Islam from militant Islam is the issue of *ijtihād*. Khan writes:

> "I believe that moderate Muslims are different from militant Muslims, even though both of them advocate for the establishment of societies whose organizing principle is Islam. The difference between moderate and militant Muslims is in their methodological orientation and in the primordial normative preferences that shape their interpretation of Islam. For moderate Muslims, *ijtihād* is the preferred method of choice for sociopolitical change while the military jihad is the last option. For militant Muslims, military jihad is the first option, and *ijtihād* is not a choice at all. *Ijtihād*, narrowly understood, is a juristic tool that allows independent reasoning to articulate Islamic law on issues where textual sources are silent. The unstated assumption is that when the texts have spoken, the reason must be silent. Nevertheless, moderate Muslim intellectuals see *ijtihād* as the spirit of Islamic thought that is necessary for the vitality of Islamic ideas and civilization".[42]

For moderate Islam, *ijtihād* is something that needs to be done when the problems of contemporary humans are not found clearly, either in the text of the Qur'ān or the Sunnah.

The level of moderate understanding of Islam in the good category is achieved since the majority of the respondents in this study (55%) were *Madrasah Aliyah* (MA) graduates, and 10% of them were *pesantren* alumni. Religious education institutions under the Ministry of Religious Affairs, such as *Madrasah Aliyah* and/or *pesantren*, are institutions concerned with strengthening the understanding of moderate Islam. There is no extracurricular activity in Islamic religious studies called *Rohis* (*Rohani Islam*). Rosidins research on *Rohis* in Cirebon indicated that *Rohis* was held in High School (SMA) by involving the Halaqoh activists, though under the OSIS banner. The reference to religious material taught by *Rohis* is linked to Wahhabi understandings such as the *Tiga Landasan Utama* of Muḥammad b. Abd al-Wahhāb, and books such as *Waspada terhadap Bidah*, *Kesempurnaan Islam dan Bahaya Bidah*, and *Kembali ke Manhaj Sunnah*. Essentially, *Rohis* is an organized form for the Islamization of the

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[42] M. A. Muqtedar Khan, "Islamic Democracy and Moderate Muslims: The Straight Path Runs through the Middle", *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (2005), 41.

SMA movement, whose appearance is highly linked to the support of DDII and LDK. The preaching movement in SMA has become an essential channel for the spread of fundamentalism, especially the Salafi-Wahhabi ideology, which is generally against the Islamic religious understanding in Indonesia.[43]

Also, Islamic religious learning in SMA is different from *Madrasah Aliyah* or *pesantren* in terms of curriculum content. In 2016, the Pusat Pengkajian Islam dan Masyarakat of UIN Syarif Hidayatullah studied the alleged content of intolerant teachings and violence in textbooks on Islamic Religious Education (PAI) published by the Ministry of Education and Culture used in schools in Indonesia. This study established that there are teachings of intolerance in the textbooks, which is characterized by blaming different opinions or practices of worship, promoting one opinion without presenting others, and containing negative views about other people. These PAI textbooks do not contain the teachings and messages of Islam in with Indonesian national values. For this reason, these textbooks are considered to be contradictory to Indonesian Islam.[44] A recent study by Hasniati found that there are radical values in the PAI textbooks of high schools published by the Ministry of Education and Culture, Erlangga and Yudhistira. The PAI SMA textbooks from these three publishers contain the contents of tolerance and democracy. However, they still contain a material of radicalism, primarily published by the Ministry of Education and Culture.[45]

It is necessary to emphasize that there has been an "infiltration" of radicalism in the PAI (Islamic Religious Education) textbooks of SMA (Senior High Student), which is certainly not in harmony with the character of moderate Indonesian Islam. For Suharto, it is important to compile PAI textbooks that reflect moderate Islam. The

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[43] Didin Nurul Rosidin, "Muslim Fundamentalism in Educational Institutions: A Case Study of *Rohani Islam* in High Schools in Cirebon", in Jajat Burhanudin dan Kees van Dijk (eds.), *Islam in Indonesia: Contrasting Images and Interpretations* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013), 215-226.

[44] Pusat Pengkajian Islam dan Masyarakat UIN Jakarta, "Tanggung Jawab Negara terhadap Pendidikan Agama Islam", *Policy Brief*, September 2016, 1-8. See also Abdallah, "Exclusivism and Radicalism in Schools: State Policy and Educational Politics Revisited" *Studia Islamika*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (2016), 625-632.

[45] Hasniati, "Analisis Muatan Radikalisme dalam Buku Teks PAI SMA" (Magister Thesis--Sekolah Pascasarjana UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, 2017), 119.

education curriculum needs to shun radicalism completely. Educational institutions are required to filter out these works, both print and online, to ensure they are not taught in educational institutions in Indonesia.[46] For this reason, IHE students are in a good category when it comes to moderate understanding of Islam. This is possible because Islamic religious education in SMA, apart from religious doctrine through *Rohis*, contains intolerant and violent curriculum content, which "infiltrate" the PAI teaching materials. Therefore, the assessment category of Good for the understanding of moderate Islam is more influenced by the educational background of the respondents, the majority of which are graduates of madrasa or *pesantren*.

Concluding Remarks

The preliminary survey on the level of moderate understanding of Islam among IHE students had several implications. *First*, of the twelve indicators of moderate Islamic understanding presented in the survey, the average respondent had a Good level of understanding with a score of 435 or 87%. *Second*, the majority of moderate respondents are graduated from madrasah or *pesantren*. This is so because madrasa or *pesantren* as Islamic institutions in which they are educated before, put a strong emphasis on cultivating moderate religious doctrines. This is different from that of general high school graduate students in which they learn the Islamic doctrines from *Rohani Islam* (*Rohis*). *Rohis* activists commonly hold radical and intolerant religious doctrines and tend to understand Islamic doctrines textually and exclusively; different from that of Islamic teachings promulgated by madrasa and *pesantren*.

This study, therefore, implies that madrasa students who proceed to IHE have a good understanding of Islamic moderation. When UNUSIA's research mentioned that some IHE students had an exclusive understanding, in this context, this survey suggested the need for affirmative policies to strengthen their understanding of Islamic moderation on campus. Seen from an educational background, IHE students who graduate from madrasa or *pesantren* in fact already have a good understanding of moderate Islam

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[46] Toto Suharto, "Indonesianisasi Islam: Penguatan Islam Moderat dalam Lembaga Pendidikan Islam di Indonesia", *al-Tahrir: Jurnal Pemikiran Islam*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (2017), 172.

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