

## Generation Z's Efforts to Seek Peace: Alternative Narratives of Religious Moderation on Social Media

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### Abstract

News and content regarding intolerance and radicalism still heavily color the social media world to this day. Cases of burning houses of worship, conflicts between religious communities, and discrimination against minorities are issues that seriously threaten peace. Therefore, alternative narratives of peace are needed to counter this narrative of intolerance. This study aims to examine alternative narratives regarding religious moderation carried out by the Literate Generation community. This research is a qualitative study with content analysis to examine how literate generations build alternative narratives on social media. For primary data obtained from the Literate Generation community with the activities it does. Secondary data from several books and scientific articles related to this research. The researcher argues that Generation Literate uses social media as an alternative space to counter intolerance and radicalism. The results of the study show that the literate generation tries to build alternative narratives of peace from local religious values and community traditions.

**Keywords:** *Generasi Literat, Religious Moderation, Peace, Social Media, Gen Z.*

### Abstrak

Berita dan konten mengenai intoleransi dan radikalisme masih secara masif mewarnai jagad media sosial sampai hari ini. Kasus pembakaran rumah ibadah, konflik antar umat beraagama dan diskriminasi terhadap kaum minoritas menjadi isu yang sangat mengancam perdamaian. Oleh karenanya, narasi-narasi alternatif perdamaian sangat diperlukan untuk menandingi narasi intoleransi tersebut. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji narasi alternatif mengenai moderasi beragama yang dilakukan oleh komunitas Generasi Literat. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif dengan *content analysis* untuk menelaah bagaimana Generasi literat membangun narasi alternatif di media sosial. Untuk data primer diperoleh dari komunitas Generasi Literat dengan kegiatan-kegiatan yang dilakukannya. Data sekunder dari beberapa buku maupun artikel ilmiah yang berkaitan dengan penelitian ini. Peneliti berpendapat bahwa Generasi Literat menjadikan media sosial sebagai ruang alternatif dalam meng-counter intoleransi dan radikalisme. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa generasi literat berusaha membangun narasi alternatif perdamaian dari nilai-nilai agama lokal dan tradisi masyarakat.

**Kata Kunci:** *Generasi Literat, Moderasi Beragama, Perdamaian, Media Sosial, Gen Z.*

## Introduction

This article discusses Z Generation Efforts to Seek Peace: Alternative Narratives of Religious Moderation. Bearing in mind that the word moderate in Islam is identified with a middle position (was then) between two poles/halau, namely the more radical conservative Islamic movement and contemporary Islam, which tends towards liberal.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, religious moderation must be understood as a religious attitude that balances two extreme poles. Hopefully, this balance can prevent fanaticism and excessive revolutionary views towards religion. Religious moderation is a mediator between two extreme religious sides, the ultra-conservative (extreme right) and liberal (extreme left) poles. Religious moderation is the key to creating tolerance and harmony at the local, national and global levels..<sup>2</sup>

Meanwhile, moderate is a derivative of moderation, which means not exaggerating or being moderate. In Indonesian, this word was then absorbed into moderation, which in the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI) is defined as reducing violence or avoiding extremes. The KBBI also explains that the word moderation comes from the Latin moderatio, which means moderation (no excess and no shortage). Moderation juxtaposed with the word religion, being religious moderation, this term means referring to an attitude of reducing violence or avoiding extremes in religious practice.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, religious moderation is also described as a balanced attitude towards implementing religious teachings internally and externally to outside/among religious adherents.<sup>4</sup> In another opinion, the characteristics of moderate Islam are explained as follows: a) behaving moderately (tawassut) while carrying out religious teachings; b) being tolerant, harmonious and cooperative towards differences of opinion; c) avoiding violence; d) prioritising dialogue; e) accommodate modern concepts that contain substantial benefits; f) reasoning based on revelation; g) interpreting the text contextually, and h) using ijthad in interpreting what is not in the Qur'an or Sunnah.<sup>5</sup>

The explanation above shows a religious attitude ideally guided by the Al-Qur'an and Sunnah without exaggeration. In the sense of practising religion comprehensively, understanding the text is balanced with the surrounding context, so we become polite. Islam itself is already moderate, so in terms of religious moderation, this is more related to religious followers. Followers of all religions must act moderately, especially Islam. The essence of moderation is reflected in the goal of the Islamic religion, namely rahmahtan li al-alamin, mercy for the universe and its contents.

Islam as rahmahtan li al-alamin is based on two main principles, namely balance and justice. Balance is interpreted as the middle point between the two sides, such as a balance

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<sup>1</sup> Mukhammad Abdullah, "Mengurai Model Pendidikan Pesantren Berbasis Moderasi Agama: dari Klasik ke Modern" 2 (2019): 20.Hlm.67

<sup>2</sup> Edy Sutrisno, "Aktualisasi Moderasi Beragama di Lembaga Pendidikan," *Jurnal Bimas Islam* 12, no. 2 (December 27, 2019): 323–48, <https://doi.org/10.37302/jbi.v12i2.113>. Hlm.330

<sup>3</sup> Kementerian Agama RI, *Moderasi beragama*, Cetakan pertama (Jakarta: Badan Litbang dan Diklat, Kementerian Agama RI, 2019). Hlm.1-2

<sup>4</sup> Muhammad Qasim, *Buku Moderasi Agama Integrasi Keilmuan.Pdf* (Makasar: Alauddin University Press, 2020).Hlm.40-42

<sup>5</sup> Toto Suharto, "Examining Moderate Understanding of Islam among Islamic Higher Education Students of State Islamic Institute Surakarta," *Teosofi: Jurnal Tasawuf Dan Pemikiran Islam* 9, no. 1 (June 2019), <https://doi.org/10.15642/teosofi.2019.9.1.60-80>.Hlm.65

between the text and the *ijtihad* of religious figures, rights and obligations, etc. Balance is positioned as a perspective to act thoughtfully and always side with humanity, justice and equality. Balance can be considered a form of perspective to do something in moderation, neither too much nor too little, neither liberal nor conservative. Furthermore, in the KBBI, the word "fair" is defined as 1) not biased/impartial, 2) siding with the truth, and 3) appropriate/not arbitrary. The word "referee", which refers to someone who officiates a match, can be interpreted as someone who is not biased but is more on the side of truth.<sup>6</sup>

In line with the two principles above, another opinion explains that peace must always go together with balance. Middle-way Islam is manifested as a movement that reconciles and prioritizes balance between the interests of the individual and society, past realities and prospects, between this world and the hereafter.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, in recognizing how strong and weak a person's moderate attitudes and understanding are, it is necessary to have indicators of religious moderation.

The Ministry of Religion's moderation book explains that there are at least four indicators of religious moderation. First, national commitment. National commitment emphasizes the extent to which a person's views, attitudes and religious practices impact loyalty to the fundamental national consensus, especially with the acceptance of Pancasila and the 1945 Constitution.<sup>8</sup> *Second*, tolerance. Tolerance refers to an open, open-minded, voluntary and gentle attitude in accepting differences. Tolerance is always accompanied by respect, accepting different people as part of ourselves, and positive thinking. *Third*, in Islam it is taught to love each other's living creatures. So, in every interaction in daily life, it is, of course, appropriate to avoid violence, both verbal and non-verbal (physical). Violence is often carried out in the name of *jihad* by several people or groups. *Jihad* has a broad meaning and the methods are varied, of which there are four methods that Muslims can use to carry out *jihad*, namely *jihad* with the heart, tongue, hands or sword.<sup>9</sup>

*Fourth*, cultural accommodating. Cultural accommodation here is interpreted as a view and an open, friendly attitude towards local traditions and culture, as long as it does not deviate from the guidelines of religious rules. So, accommodation here is also accompanied by rationality based on Islamic law.<sup>10</sup> One form of local cultural accommodation is manifested in the interaction of Islam with Javanese culture. Islam views culture into three categories. First, accept that there are no definite legal provisions, for example, regarding the size of the wedding dowry and mosque architecture. Second, change it if some elements conflict with Islam. For example, in the case of *nyekar*, previously *nyekar* was aimed at praying to the spirits of the ancestors. Then, after Islam came, the goal shifted to praying for people who had died and remembering death. Third, reject it if it is contrary to Islam, for example, the

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<sup>6</sup> Kementerian Agama RI, *Moderasi beragama*.Hlm.19

<sup>7</sup> Mohamad Hashim Kamali, *The Middle Path of Moderation in Islam : The Qur'anic Principle of Wasatiyyah* (New York: Oxford University Press., 2015).

<sup>8</sup> Kementerian Agama RI, *Moderasi beragama*.Hlm.43

<sup>9</sup> Budhy Munawar Rachman, *Reorientasi pembaruan Islam: sekularisme, liberalisme, dan pluralisme: paradigma baru Islam Indonesia*, Cetakan I (Pasar Minggu, Jakarta: Lembaga Studi Agama dan Filsafat : Paramadina, 2010).Hlm.885-886

<sup>10</sup> Kementerian Agama RI, *Moderasi beragama*.Hlm.46

burning of corpses in the Ngaben ceremony carried out by the Hindu community in Bali.<sup>11</sup>

Some of the explanations about moderation above can be ingrained directly in everyone without action movements to spread moderate values can be done in several ways, one of which is through social media. Social media can be understood as a tool for communicating and interacting and even a forum for education for every netizen. There are various types of social media today, including YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and TikTok.

Several previous studies regarding religious moderation on social media focused on religious moderation campaigns on Facebook, which require informative language and attractive packaging.<sup>12</sup> Another research conducted by Hamidah, et al discusses the revitalization of broadcasts regarding religious moderation on social media to build harmony.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, in a research article by Arum Wahyuni and Purbohastuti, information was obtained that the social media often accessed by millennials is Instagram.<sup>14</sup> However, research regarding religious moderation carried out by the Literate Generation community has yet to be found.

Therefore, this research wants to discuss how the Literate Generation Community can sow peace on social media through alternative narrative content. Alternative narratives are deliberately prepared to convey messages of peace to lead people's ideas and open up space for creating peace.<sup>15</sup> Researchers think that the content of alternative peace narratives on social media can be a solution and an effort to respond to or reduce the existence of intolerant acts and the spread of radicalism. Moreover, the spread of radicalism has developed in various ways, including through social media. So, in this case, there is a need to strengthen and produce more alternative narratives to respond to this phenomenon.

## Methodology

This research uses qualitative research methods. This research aims to holistically understand the phenomenon of something that occurs/is experienced by the object of research, for example, behaviour, perception, motivation, or action, through descriptions in the form of words and language in a particular natural context and by utilizing various scientific methods.<sup>16</sup> This research uses a content analysis approach to examine the object under study in more depth. Primary data was obtained from the Literate Generation community and their activities. Secondary data from several books and scientific articles related to this research.

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<sup>11</sup> Abdullah Faishol Syamsul Bakri, *Islam Dan Budaya Jawa* (Surakarta: Pusat Pengembangan Bahasa IAIN Surakarta, 2014).Hlm.48-52

<sup>12</sup> Wibowo, Ari. "Kampanye Moderasi Beragama di Facebook: Bentuk dan Strategi Pesan. *Jurnal Kependidikan dan Sosial Keagamaan*. 2019, 5(1).

<sup>13</sup> Hamidah, dkk. "Revitalisasi Syiar Moderasi Beragama di Media Sosial: Gaungkan Konten Moderasi untuk Membangun Harmonisasi". *Jurnal Intizar*. 2021. 27(1).

<sup>14</sup> Arum Wahyuni Purbohastuti, "EFEKTIVITAS MEDIA SOSIAL SEBAGAI MEDIA PROMOSI," *Tirtayasa Ekonomika* 12, no. 2 (October 31, 2017): 212, <https://doi.org/10.35448/jte.v12i2.4456>.Hlm.226

<sup>15</sup> Mardiasih, Kalis dan Ahmad Khadafi. *Panduan Menyusun Kontra-Narasi dan Narasi Alternatif Untuk Toleransi dan Perdamaian*. 2021: Wahid Foundation.

<sup>16</sup> Lexy.J. Moleong, *Metodologi Penelitian* (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2007).Hlm.5

## Results and Discussions

### Literacy Activities of Kreatif Generasi Literat

The Literat Generation community actively campaigns for positive values through creative literacy activities. Literat Generation is a volunteer-based community founded in 2017 in Jakarta by Mila Muzakkar. The Literate Generation Program focuses on 1) Peaceful Literacy. 2) Indonesian literacy to introduce diversity and tolerance. 3) Special literacy for children with disabilities. 4) Environmental literacy. 5) Parenting literacy for parents and teachers. Literate Generation volunteers come from various backgrounds, such as teachers, activists, students, parents, disability groups, and the private sector. The Literate Generation has developed in Palembang, Mamuju, West Sulawesi, Makasar and several other cities. Each region carries out its program independently. This community is very open to collaborating with any party who has the same vision and mission.<sup>17</sup>

If we observe it in social media, especially Instagram, it can be seen that the Literate Generation is an active community. Among the signs are the presence of followers, which has reached 6,405, and posts, which have reached 1,975. Postings also look routine and systematic. The creative way of presenting content also makes it attractive to netizens. This can be seen from several netizen comments in posts uploaded by the admin. Also, from observations, researchers found an active response from the admin, who seemed friendly. This can trigger netizens' motivation to learn and even implement what the admin uploaded regarding several peace narratives.

The Literate Generation has various programs to sow peace on social media. More specifically, in this case, the researchers limited it to several programs or activities carried out within around seven months from January to July 2022. The programs implemented were mapped into two, namely, online and offline. In this case, the focus is on programs presented online, either through online meetings or presenting content on social media.

Programs that are run online include the Peace Literacy Class (KLD) and alternative narrative posts on social media.

#### 1. KLD (Kelas Literasi Damai)

KLD, or Peaceful Literacy Class, is one of the significant programs organized by the Literat Generation involving youth throughout Indonesia. This activity is specifically for Generation Z, aged 16-27 years, who are active in various organizations (school/campus or social religious) from various religions/beliefs and actively use social media such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube and Twitter. This KLD was conducted with Muslimah Reformists, Protect Projek Indonesia and the European Union. Apart from that, the Literat Generation is also supported by media partners such as @narasi\_perempuan, @g\_inspirasi15, @Itmubali, @youth.id and @communitymudainspiratif. This KLD was held in various provinces in Indonesia, such as Central Java, Yogyakarta, West Java, Banten, Kalimantan and Papua. On February 12-13 and February 19-20 2022 Generasi Literat held a KLD which presented speakers who were involved in the peacebuilding movement and social media activists such as Musdah Mulia (Founder of the Mulia Raya Foundation), Syamsul Maarif (UGM Religion and Cross-Cultural Lecturer), Septiaji Eko Nugroho (Chairman of MAFINDO), Anick HT

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<sup>17</sup> "Tentang Generasi Literat," 2022, <https://indogiving.com/generasiliterat>.

(Founder of democracy. id) and Mila Muzakar (Founder of Generasi Literat). Activities are held from 09.30-14.30 on the above date. For the meeting room, the committee uses Zoom media. The choice was based on ease of use and how many people already know and use it.

While attending this class, Gen Z was given material related to tolerance and peace, analysis of conflict over religious beliefs and beliefs, and how to create peaceful content on social media in the form of counter-narratives and alternative narratives. The follow-up program to this event is that participants must create content on social media, either in mini-blogs, video graphics, TikTok videos, YouTube and so on. Participants who like writing can also convey their thoughts through short stories, essays and poetry, which will be made into an anthology book. While participating in KLD, participants also receive financial support from the organizing committee.

This KLD activity received good enthusiasm from the community, especially Gen Z. This is proven by their high participation in supporting and participating in this KLD program, numbering more than 150 participants. After the KLD event, many participants uploaded posts about peace on Instagram and TikTok, such as a video about facts about the Sundanese witan religion on reels, which was viewed by 1,341 people, a video about the value of peace in Central Java local wisdom, which was viewed by 1,074 people and a video about getting to know local religions in Indonesia which 3,270 people have viewed.



Figure 1. Literate Generation posts on Instagram about Kelas Literasi Damai (KLD)

## **2. Post alternative narratives on social media**

Generai Literat is very active in uploading posts on its Instagram social media. There are at least four ways to present content on Instagram.

First, by reviewing the book. It can be seen that there are several book review agendas carried out by the committee. Some of the books that have been reviewed include the titles *Everything that the Heavens Suck*, *Social Justice in Islam*, *Islamic Doctrine and Civilization*, *Islam, a Women-Friendly Religion*, *Time Management in Islam*, *Religious Harmony in Ideals and Facts*, *Critical Reasoning of Muslim Women*, *Reflections on Women, Humanity and Islam*, *Modern Islam and Indonesianness*, *Core Philosophy*, *When Religion Becomes a Disaster*, *Introduction to Environmental Education*, *Understanding Gender & Sexuality Diversity*, *a Contextual Interpretation of Islam*, and others.

Book review activities appear to be scheduled regularly with quite frequent intensity, even in the month of Ramadhan, eight book reviews were held in one month. The books dissected above at least seem to be mapped into two types of books, fiction and non-fiction. Furthermore, in terms of content, it is generally related to building a mindset in self-development, gender issues, nationality, and religious and environmental issues.

Second, sharing information (4 indicators). The Literat Generation Instagram account presents information in two directions. This is indicated by the presence of information that presents certain content as well as question and answer session content in the feed and Instastory. In terms of information, some interesting information is presented which is often little known, so it can trigger netizens to comment.

Content uploaded on the Literate Generation Instagram appears to be correlated with four indicators of religious moderation. Indicators of religious moderation point to cultural tolerance and accommodation.

In relation to the point above, this is realized by the existence of content that recognizes local religions or adherents of local wisdom beliefs and values in Indonesia. Like the post that the Literat Generation uploaded to its Instagram account on June 28 2022 entitled "Learning the Value of Peace Through the Bebie Tradition". In this post, information is presented regarding an introduction to the Bebie tradition, a farming tradition of the Muara Enim people of South Sumatra. Apart from that, this post also explains several values of peace contained in the Bebie tradition, such as people working together, upholding mutual cooperation, respecting each other, respecting each other and having a harmonious life.

A similar post was also uploaded by Generasi Literat on July 4 2022 entitled "Guys, let's learn the value of peace from Riau's local wisdom". In the post, a picture of the Pacu Track competition in the Singingi Regency area is displayed. Apart from explaining this tradition, the admin also shares 3 peacebuilding values that can be learned, namely friendship/communicativeness, respect for achievement, love of

peace. The language used in the post is casual language that is friendly for generation Z, such as the narrative of love and peace which reads:

When the love of peace has entered our souls, there will no longer be such a thing as being irritated if we lose and arrogant if we win. In fact, when we love peace, we will try to do the best for the people around us. And avoid disputes that will result in division. Oh yes... making peace is not only done with fellow humans, guys. We also have to make peace with our universe.

On March 25 2022, the Literat Generation also uploaded a post entitled "What are the Peaceful Values in Sundanese Local Wisdom?". The post explains the harmony of life according to the Sundanese view, which is known as "silih asah, silih asuh and silih asih" in an effort to handle conflict in society which becomes a coherent whole. This post received a positive response from netizens. He expressed his pride in being Sundanese, "I'm really proud to be Sundanese," to which the literate generation account replied, "Wow, that's great. Must be proud"



### Belajar Nilai Perdamaian Melalui Tradisi Bebie

**APA ITU TRADISI BEBIE?**  
Bebie adalah kearifan lokal bercocok tanam dan panen dilakukan oleh masyarakat setempat yang berkembang di Muara Enim, Sumatera Selatan.

**NILAI PERDAMAIAN**  
Penduduk saling  
•Berkerjasama  
•Gotong royong  
•Saling menghormati  
•Saling menghargai dan  
•Memiliki kehidupan yang harmonis.

**FUNGSI KEARIFAN LOKAL BEBIE**  
•Terima kasih kepada Tuhan Yang Maha Esa karena telah menyelesaikan pekerjaan panen dengan cepat dan  
•Atas keberhasilan panen.

**MAKNA KEARIFAN LOKAL BEBIE**  
Biasanya upacara akan diadakan dengan masyarakat setempat atau penduduk melaksanakan tradisi ini dengan duduk melingkar sambil memegang surat Yasin. Yasin kemudian mulai membaca doa syukur dan mengakhiri doa dengan makan bersama sebagai bentuk ucapan syukur.

Generasi Z Damai Untuk Indonesia Asyik #KelasLiterasiDamai #GenZToleran





Figure 2. Instagram Post of Generasi Literat about Local Wisdom

The posts on the Literat Generation account are not only related to tolerance and cultural accommodation. There are posts indicating national commitment. This

is as stated in the upload on June 1 2022, in the edition celebrating the birth of Pancasila. The founder of the Literat Generation said, "Pancasila no longer needs to be memorized. It needs to be believed and practised. "Continuing to learn, respecting everyone's choices, helping each other, and fulfilling good roles on social media are easy ways to practice Pancasila." This statement indicates the acceptance of Pancasila and the interpretation of it in the practice of daily life.

Furthermore, in relation to indicators of religious moderation against violence, it can be seen from the direct narrative, which can be seen from the program to recognize, prevent and fight violence against women as uploaded on March 19 2022. Then, there are indirect ones, such as some content about the introduction of wrongful diversity. The other one about the introduction of Warak Ngendog was uploaded on March 18, 2022, and was described as a multicultural icon of the city of Semarang. Warak Ngendog is a tradition that describes a combination of Chinese, Arabic, and Javanese philosophies related to welcoming the month of Ramadan.

Third, share literacy quotes. The quotes uploaded come from several quotes from figures and several administrators and founders of Generasi Literat. Quotes that come from character quotes, one of which is Gusdur's quote, which was uploaded on June 24 2022, about "The role of religion is actually to make people aware of the fact that they are part of the human race and part of the universe." In these quotes, it can be understood that religion exists to be a guide in world life. In Islam, this is in line with the concept of rahmatan lil 'alamin. Islam exists for the safety of human life and the universe, not only for Muslims. So it is necessary to maintain brotherhood, help each other and give love.

Furthermore, quotes from the founder of Generasi Literat (Milastri Muzakkar), "Going viral on social media seems to be the target of many people. Nevertheless, the intelligent young generation only chooses to go viral because their ideas and work are useful for other people." In these quotes, there is an emphasis on the younger generation to work and spread benefits to those around them.

Another quote uploaded on March 2, 2022, relates to the technical presentation of narrative content, which requires attention to understanding the content and the importance of visualization that matches the message. Ufaria Nabila conveyed, one of the content creators of the Literate Generation.

Fourth, ask questions. In relation to the question and answer heading, there are questions and answers which are presented directly with an open post and indirectly by presenting a little information and then, at the end, a reflection question. This question-and-answer model can trigger interaction between admins and netizens. This interaction can be in the form of responses to questions, and some convey experiences, ideas, criticism, or suggestions. So far, from the question and answer session, netizens have seen positive responses.

## Conclusion

The spread of radicalism and intolerance has spread in various ways, including through social media such as Instagram. As a response step, it is necessary to strengthen religious moderation for the wider public. Strengthening religious moderation can be done through the use of social media such as Instagram. This is what the Literat Generation community has implemented. This community presents several activities and content that contain alternative narratives related to religious moderation. At least the content on Instagram is divided into four things, namely book review titles, information sharing, literacy quotes and questions and answers. Through several of these activities, there are indications of the spread of alternative narratives in direct and indirect patterns. The direct pattern in the way of presentation relates to indicators of religious moderation with direct diction such as the words tolerance, non-violence and cultural acceptance of some of the content presented. Furthermore, indirect patterns are presented through question-and-answer sessions and quotes, such as in terms of the meaning of Pancasila, which correlates with indicators of religious moderation regarding national commitment.

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