

The Idea of Moderate Islam in the Media Space for the Social Construction of Religious Moderation in Indonesia

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Abstract

Social media space can shape social construction, including being able to construct moderate Islamic ideas. However, the embodiment of the media space promoted by moderate Islam in shaping the social construction of religious moderation is still questionable. This study aims to discuss the idea of moderate Islam in the media space for the social construction of religious moderation in Indonesia. This study uses a qualitative approach by applying the descriptive-analytical method. The formal object of this research is the theory of social construction, while the material object is the idea of moderate Islam. The scope of research is the social media space. The rest of this research's context is the social construction of religious moderation in Indonesia. The results and discussion in this study indicate that the social construction of religious moderation in Indonesia is formed based on the social construction of digital media which is framed by moderate Islamic ideas in the social media space of Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. This study concludes that the idea of moderate Islam in the media has manifested in Indonesia's social construction of religious moderation. This study recommends that Islamic institutions and organizations manage the social media space creatively and innovatively as a solution to mainstreaming religious moderation in Indonesia.

Keywords: Islam; Media space; Moderation; Social construction.

Abstrak

Ruang media sosial dapat membentuk konstruksi sosial, termasuk bisa mengonstruksi gagasan Islam moderat. Namun, pengejawantahan ruang media yang diusung Islam moderat dalam membentuk konstruksi sosial moderasi beragama masih dipertanyakan secara serius. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk membahas gagasan Islam moderat dalam ruang media untuk konstruksi sosial moderasi beragama di Indonesia. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan menerapkan metode deskriptif-analitis. Objek formal penelitian ini adalah teori konstruksi sosial, sedangkan objek materialnya ialah gagasan Islam moderat. Adapun lingkup penelitian yaitu ruang media sosial. Selanjutnya, konteks penelitian ini yakni konstruksi sosial moderasi beragama di Indonesia. Hasil dan pembahasan dalam penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa konstruksi sosial moderasi beragama di Indonesia terbentuk berdasarkan konstruksi sosial media digital yang dikerangkai oleh gagasan-gagasan Islam moderat pada ruang media sosial Twitter, Instagram, dan Facebook. Penelitian ini menyimpulkan ternyata gagasan Islam moderat dalam ruang media telah mewujudkan dalam bentuk konstruksi sosial moderasi beragama di Indonesia. Penelitian ini merekomendasikan kepada lembaga dan organisasi keislaman untuk melakukan pengelolaan ruang media sosial secara kreatif, inovatif, dan solutif dalam pengarusutamaan moderasi beragama di Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: Islam; Ruang media; Moderasi; Konstruksi sosial.

INTRODUCTION

Social media space can shape social construction. The social media space is a virtual or digital social media construction (Nurhadi & Irwansyah, 2018). It forms social construction in real (Sulistianti & Sugiarta, 2022), primarily through a dialectical process (Berger & Luckmann, 1991). Moderate Islam (Ginting et al., 2021; Nijo & Prasajo, 2020), which extreme groups usually opposed (Azisi, 2022), has successfully created social media constructions. However, the embodiment of the media space promoted by moderate Islam in shaping the social construction of religious moderation is still questionable. The building of a social system of religious moderation, which is becoming mainstream in Indonesia, requires the application of social construction theory (Hefni, 2020) as the subject of the social construction of moderate Islamic media, especially in a media space full of religious languages (Fakhruroji et al., 2020). The struggle for meaning is still ongoing (Azisi, 2022). Therefore, this research considers it important to discuss the idea of moderate Islam in the media space for the social construction of religious moderation in Indonesia.

Several researchers have carried out some previous research on moderate Islam in the media space and views on religious moderation. Azisi, Ali Mursyid (2022) studied religious-ideological movements that focused on the conflict over what "democracy" means between extreme Islamic groups and moderate Islamic groups. Extreme Islamic groups are associated with exclusivity, excess, and textualism. In contrast, moderate Islamic groups are more pluralist, dynamic, contextualist, and tolerant in their approaches to electoral politics and democracy, particularly in social media. This research limits extreme Islamic groups to Salafi-Wahhabi and Gema Pembebasan. At the same time, moderate Islam is represented by Nahdlatul Ulama (NU). Both have their perspective and basis for addressing democracy on social media. Then, Setia and Iqbal's writings (2021) about the internet adoption by Nahdlatul Ulama through their YouTube channel, NU Channel. This research breaks down the stigma that NU is a traditionalist organizational movement that is slow to adopt modern products, such as the internet. This research also concludes religious moderation campaigns on YouTube channels such as through lectures, films, and contemporary issues.

Furthermore, Akhmaliah's research (2020) on the response of Islamic organizations in Indonesia, NU, and Muhammadiyah in the virtual public space complements this previous study. She outlined how these two mass organizations respond to the presence of the internet as an opportunity and a threat. The two mass organizations offered their patterns. NU was identified as highly reactive, while Muhammadiyah was identified as responding casually.

Some of the studies above discuss the dynamics of movements in social media. However, they do not specifically explain how the internet can construct an idea, such as the idea of moderate Islam, even though it is essential so that the process of mobilizing moderate Islamic ideas spreads to all groups. Utilizing the internet to internalize the concept of moderate Islam is a significant work in efforts to counter radicalism narratives on social media. Therefore, this research is important, especially to fill the gap.

The theoretical framework needs to be arranged as a logical flow of this research. This logical flow will be directed at overcoming the main problem in this research, namely that moderate Islam is in the media space for the construction of religious moderation in Indonesia. The description of the frame of mind, a chart is presented figure 1:

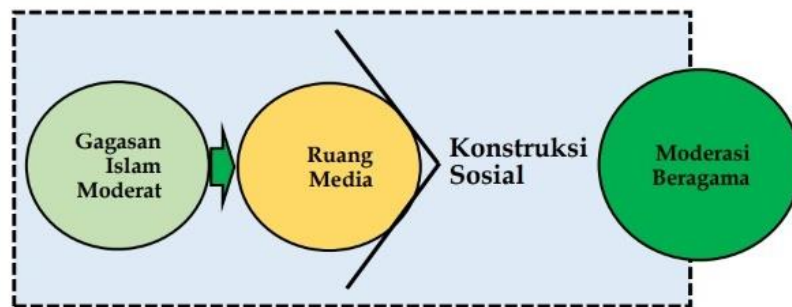


Figure 1 Theoretical Framework

According to the Great Dictionary of the Indonesian Language (KBBI), ideas result from thoughts or ideas (Setiawan, 2021). Meanwhile, being moderate is always avoiding behavior or disclosure that is extreme or tends towards a middle dimension or path (Setiawan, 2021). Thus, moderate Islam means the result of Islamic thoughts or ideas that always avoid extreme behavior or expressions or tend towards a middle dimension or path. The position of the middle way of moderate Islam is understood as trying to be a meeting point between the extreme right and the extreme left (Alawi & Maarif, 2021). Instead, the idea of moderate Islam is presented with the term *al-muwājahah* which means providing a solution or setting the best example (Sodikin & Ma'arif, 2021). Therefore, moderate Islam is seen as a teaching that can keep up with the times and does not leave behind teachings afterward (Ginting et al., 2021).

The concept of moderate Islam has been a characteristic of Islam in the archipelago (Wahyudi, 2018) or a characteristic of Indonesian Islam, which is different from Islam in other parts of the world (Suharto, 2017). Moderate Islam is reflected in social-religious organizations in Indonesia, which have made a valuable contribution to the survival of tolerance in the national arena in particular and the world in general (Abdurrohman, 2018). Furthermore, messages of moderate Islam are an effort to *amar ma'rūf nahî munkar* (do good, avoid evil) activities, which have the dimension of *rahmatan lil âlamîn* (being mercy to the world) which are produced innovatively in a digital context (Fakhruroji et al., 2020). Media space is a term for social media public space (Mastori & Islamy, 2021), which is often mentioned in today's era of advances in information technology.

Social media space, known as electronic or digital space (Hefni, 2020), is used by individuals and groups to convey various things, including religious ideas with religious language (Fakhruroji et al., 2020; Hefni, 2020; Jasmine, 2021). The community forms the social media space, and in turn, the social media space plays a role in shaping society (Marpaung & Irwansyah, 2021). Social construction or "building" of social reality is possible as a subject formed through social media, referred to as the social construction of mass media (Bungin, 2000). Media content is essentially the result of the construction of reality by using language as its primary device (Suryadi, 2011). Before media space existed, it seemed that this social space was a social product that was socially produced by users, in this case, the community (Santoso, 2015). However, after the proliferation of social media, a social construction of technology and new media was formed (Nurhadi & Irwansyah, 2018). So it is clear that the media space plays a significant role in shaping social construction (Sulistianti & Sugiarta, 2022).

Religious moderation is one of the prominent moderate Islam in the media space. Religious moderation is a tolerant attitude (Husna, 2022). It means that religious moderation is a perspective (Khamim, 2022) regarding *wasathiyah* (being in the middle) (Rohmah & Badriyah, 2022) as a concept that is considered to be able to connect religious communities (Hananto, 2022). In the Islamic world, it is a form

of effort to instill the value of Islamic moderation in religion (Hidayah, 2022). In Indonesia, religious moderation is a major issue and is the program orientation of the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia (Yusuf & Mutiara, 2022). The moderate Islamic notion of religious moderation, which is the subject of mainstreaming in the digital space (Hefni, 2020), as a space for the struggle for meaning (Azisi, 2022), has significantly shaped the social construction of peaceful and peaceful religious life in Indonesia.

The theoretical foundation of this study uses Peter L. Berger's social construction theory. This theoretical foundation is an analytical knife in discussing the main research topic, namely the idea of moderate Islam in the media space, especially moderate Islam related to religious moderation in its embodiment as a social construction in Indonesia. Peter L. Berger's social construction theory, according to Mizan (2016), is accurate when it examines the roots of the religious community system created by the community by examining whether or not the religious community system arises from personal knowledge and influence or vice versa (Mizan, 2016).

Based on a study of Peter L. Berger's theory of social construction, the social system of religious communities is formed on the dialectic between humans and their socio-cultural world. In this case, society is a product of humans, and humans are products of society. Berger and Luckmann (1991) believe there is a dialectic between individuals creating society and society creating individuals (Berger & Luckmann, 1991). Meanwhile, this dialectical process occurs through externalization, objectivation, and internalization (Berger & Luckmann, 1991; Mizan, 2016). Externalization, as the first stage, is the process in which humans pour their humanity into the world of their environment so that, in turn, their world becomes a human world. The second stage of the process begins when the world created through externalization strengthens itself further and reaches humans as an independent facticity. In reality, so that the objective world does not become foreign to the humans who have created it, it must be endeavored to become part of human subjectivity as part of the subjective structure of consciousness. At this level, internalization is the third stage of this dialectical process (Berger & Luckmann, 1991; Mizan, 2016).

Berger and Luckmann's (1991) theory of social construction in the concept of *tahamul 'ada al-hadits* (Soetari, 2005) attempts to realize *Sunnah* in society as a form of social construction for Muslims. A scientific work always requires a formal object, namely a theoretical subject that discusses the object of discussion, and material objects, namely material that is discussed by a formal object (Parluhutan, 2020). Peter L. Berger's theory of social construction will be better understood through the concept of *tahamul 'ada al-hadith*, which in this study occupies a position as a formal object. Meanwhile, the idea of moderate Islam becomes its material object. The social media space is the locus or scope where moderate Islamic ideas first appear. Moreover, the context of this research is the social construction of religious moderation in Indonesia.

Therefore, this study aims to discuss the idea of moderate Islam in the media space for the social construction of religious moderation in Indonesia. Theoretically, this research aims to have implications as an initial study of the idea of moderate Islam in the media space for the social construction of religious moderation in Indonesia. Practically, this research aims to have implications for more serious development in the study of the idea of moderate Islam in the media space for the social construction of religious moderation in Indonesia.

RESEARCH METHOD

The research methods include five things, namely approaches and methods, types of data and data sources, data collection techniques, data analysis techniques, and time and place of research (UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, 2020). This research uses a qualitative approach using a descriptive-analytical method (Darmalaksana, 2020). This type of research data is qualitative data which is not statistical figures. The primary sources of this research include social media accounts on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook and literature sources on moderate Islam, media space, social construction, and religious moderation. Secondary sources of this research include references related to the main topic from articles, books, and other research documents. Data collection techniques in this study were carried out through observation online and literature study. Data analysis techniques are carried out through inventory, classification, and data analysis (Darmalaksana, 2020). This research does not specify the time and place because it is not experimental research but thought research, even though the data is based on empirical facts on social media Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook.

Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook profiles, as well as literary works on moderate Islam, media environments, social construction, and religious moderation, serve as the study's primary sources. References to the primary issue are found in articles, books, and other research publications as secondary sources for this study. Online observation and literature reviews were used as the data collection methods in this study. Data analysis techniques are inventory, classification, and data analysis (Darmalaksana, 2022). Although the data in this study is drawn from empirical facts on social media sites like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, it does not specify the time or location because it is not an experimental study but rather research of ideas.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Metaverse of Moderate Islam in Social Media Space

Metaverse is a new term in the digital world that does not yet have a consistent meaning (Indarta et al., 2022). In simple terms, the metaverse can be interpreted as futuristic ideas about the use of media space, including social media, which were initially virtual, electronic, and digital, to become as if they were real in responding to various challenges and future needs. Social media here include Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. This presentation is not the time to discuss the history of these social media but will show moderate Islamic accounts in the social media space as a form of the pre-metaverse as figure 2.

Figure 2 shows social media accounts on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. Searches on these social media use the keyword "Moderate Islam" at 19.00 WIB., July 10, 2022. These social media accounts appear, specifically Moderate Islam and other names that intersect or intersect with moderate Islam and Progressive Islam. The presentation in Figure 1 is only an example because there are many accounts related to moderate Islam on each social media. Some of these accounts were followed by 12 thousand followers (followers). Several accounts appear to be connected or integrated between Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. Some display images containing text commonly referred to as memes, some display audio-visual videos, and most are expressions about various moderate Islamic ideas. On some accounts, the owner or account holder interacts with the audience through questions about topics the account holder is presenting or through audience comments in reaction to news items. Institutions, organizations, or groups are the owners of some of these accounts, while individuals are the owners of others. Although many accounts appear inactive and have no recent updates, many other accounts are still active and have up to

21 thousand posts. Again, these are only a few samples of recent search results for moderate Islamic accounts.

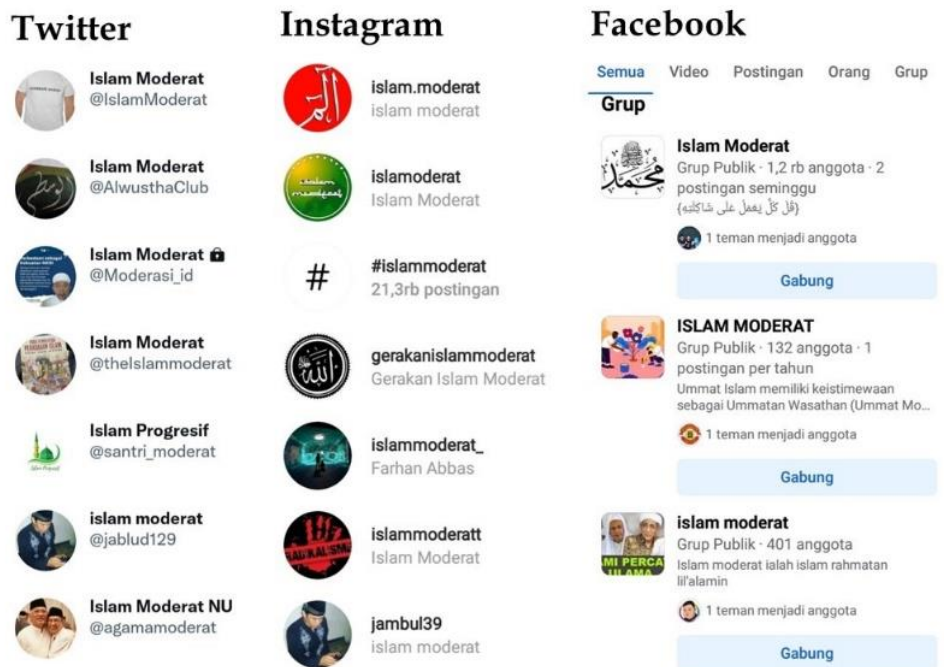


Figure 2 Moderate Islamic Accounts on Social Media

Externalization, Objectivation, and Internalization of Moderate Islamic Ideas in the Media Space

Moderate Islamic ideas in social media spaces, such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, will shape the actual reality in the social system. This assumption is built on the social construction theory of Berger and Luckmann (Berger & Luckmann, 1991). It is because, in the beginning, Berger and Luckmann formulated social construction theory, not pointing to mass media such as television, especially digital social media, as forming social reality. They state that the individual constitutes society, and the individual is constituted by society. It is a dialectic process that occurs through externalization, objectivation, and internalization (Berger & Luckmann, 1991).

The social construction theory of Luckmann, to read social media space, is basically the process of individuals and society forming social media space. Conversely, individuals and society shape the reality of social media space. Researchers agree that social media space, which is a digital open space for the public (Hefni, 2020), will be used by individuals and groups to access and simultaneously convey various things, including religious ideas (Fakhruroji et al., 2020; Hefni, 2020; Jasmine, 2021). Thus, it is clear that individuals and society form the media space while simultaneously playing a significant role in shaping individuals and society (Marpaung & Irwansyah, 2021).

Luckmann's social construction theory seems easier to understand through the theory of hadith science. It is not because the writer concentrates on the science of hadith and Islamic jurisprudence.

However, it is also necessary to prove that earlier theories from Islamic literature have similarities with Peter L. Berger's theories which appeared later. In the treasures of hadith science, there is what is called the theory of *tahamul' ada al-hadith* (Soetari, 2005), namely the process of transmission through *tahamul* (reception), *dhabtun* (maintenance), and *al-'ada* (delivery) of *khobar* (news) or *information* (Soetari, 2005). In this case, the process of externalization, objectivation, and internalization in social construction theory (Berger & Luckmann, 1991) means exactly the same as *al-'ada* (delivery), *dhabtun* (maintenance), and *tahamul* (acceptance) in the theory of *tahamul' ada al-hadith* (Soetari, 2005). In other words, *al-'ada* is externalization, *dhabtun* is objectivation, and *tahamul* is internalization. Thus, it turns out that Peter L. Berger's theory of social construction can be understood from the theory of Islamic treasures that appeared earlier.

Peter L. Berger, when compiling the theory of social construction, did not designate social media as a form of society. Similarly, the *tahamul' ada al-hadith* theory does not designate social media as a form of society. Because in the classical Islamic period in the 8th century, there were no social media. However, the theory of *tahamul' ada al-hadith* undoubtedly results in *Sunnah* in the ongoing (Soetari, 2005). Meanwhile, Peter L. Berger's theory produces social construction (Berger & Luckmann, 1991). *Sunnah* can also be understood as a social construction at a certain level.

In media spaces like Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, moderate Islamic views are initially created to be posted, uploaded, or shared. These posts or uploads are the outcomes of externalization in social construction theory (Berger & Luckmann, 1991) and *al-'ada* in the theory of hadith transmission (Soetari, 2005). The audience or general public then accesses, reads, or reacts to the idea of moderate Islam in the media space; this reading is referred to as objectivation in social construction theory (Berger & Luckmann, 1991) and *dhabtun* in hadith transmission theory (Soetari, 2005). According to social construction theory, objectivation ultimately leads to the idea of moderate Islam going through the process of internalization once more in the social media space (Berger & Luckmann, 1991). In conclusion, when the dialectic takes place: individuals and society create media space, and conversely, the media space creates individuals and society with moderate Islamic ideas.

There is a dialectic between the propagators of moderate Islamic ideas in the media space, such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook, and the readers of moderate Islamic ideas obtained from these social media spaces. According to social construction theory, this dialectic occurs through externalization, objectivation, and internalization (Berger & Luckmann, 1991). Likewise, *Sunnah* as a Muslim social system is formed through externalization (*al-'ada*), objectivation (*dhabtun*), and internalization (*tahamul*). It is also clear that this dialectical process, in turn, plays a major role in shaping the social reality of Muslims with moderate Islamic ideas in real life.

The Idea of Moderate Islam in the Media Space as a Shaper of the Social Construction of Religious Moderation in Indonesia

The idea of moderate Islam in social media is broadly the idea of religious moderation. As previously emphasized that religious moderation is a word view (Khamim, 2022) and a tolerant religious attitude (Husna, 2022) based on the principle of *wasathiyah* (Rohmah & Badriyah, 2022), where this idea can create harmony and peace between religious communities (Hananto, 2022). Proponents of moderate Islam have mainstreamed this idea of religious moderation in the media space, such as Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook.

Initially, the social construction of mass media was formed (Bungin, 2000), and even the social construction of technology and new media (Nurhadi & Irwansyah, 2018) headed toward the metaverse

(Indarta et al., 2022). The contents of construction include ideas of religious moderation from moderate Islamic groups as the antithesis of extreme Islam (Azisi, 2022), where media content is essentially the result of reality construction using language as its essential tool (Suryadi, 2011). It is mentioned in the context of religious language that moderate Islamic messages are sought as steps to *amar ma'rûf nahî munkar*, which are based on the core principles of the ideals of *rahmatan lil âlamîn*, in which artistically and innovative it developed in the form of transmitting media content (Fakhruroji et al., 2020). So it starts with content in the media space, then forms the construction of digital social media (Bungin, 2000; Nurhadi & Irwansyah, 2018). This metaverse social construction, called media space, will play a major role in shaping social construction (Sulistianti & Sugiarta, 2022).

Indeed, before media space existed, social space was a social product socially produced by society (Santoso, 2015). However, apart from being a social media construction, the media space will also shape social construction (Sulistianti & Sugiarta, 2022). As mentioned earlier, that society is a human product through externalization. Then, through objectivation, society becomes a reality *sui genesis*, unique (Mizan, 2016). Through internalization, humans become a product of society. It means there is a process of pulling out (externalization) so that it appears as if it is outside (objectivation). Then there is a process of being drawn back in internalization so that something outside seems to be inside. This fact demonstrates that society is a product of the individual, and through the externalization process, it transforms into an objective reality. Through the internalization process, humans also become products of society (Mizan, 2016). The *tahamul' ada al-hadith* process works similarly in that what is accepted begins as a textually formal hadith (Soetari, 2005). However, it is externalized in the form of *Sunnah* in the Muslim community system after institutionalization. The sublime values that come from objectivation and subjectivization are externalized. This dialectic also applies to the development of social media, not just to actual social alone.

After the dialectical process occurs and runs, justification and value are formed (Mizan, 2016). Of course, the values understood and implemented in society are very diverse, with various sources. For example, it comes from moderate Islamic ideas and extreme Islamic ideas (Azisi, 2022). In addition, there are sources from religion, customs, laws, norms, culture, and others. Even so, among many values that become human references for behavior, there must be some values that have firmness and, at the same time, hope to give direction to life. These values give something to humans that is not found in other values. Based on the thoughts of Peter L. Berger, a value that can provide more orientation when compared to other value systems is religion. For Peter L. Berger, religion can provide answers and hope for peace when humans encounter extreme events. Here, what is called "inner orientation," which is in the system of religious values, is not found in other systems. Thus, religion provides a sociological reference and faith in human actions and behavior (Mizan, 2016). Religious moderation is a form of effort to instill the value of Islamic moderation in religion (Hidayah, 2022).

In Indonesia, religious moderation is a central issue and is the program orientation of the Indonesian Ministry of Religion (Yusuf & Mutiara, 2022). Religious moderation, as the central issue of moderate Islam, is presented in an *al-muwājahah* manner to provide solutions or set the best example (Sodikin & Ma'arif, 2021). Moderate Islam understands the idea of religious moderation as a teaching of values following the times without leaving behind the teachings afterward (Ginting et al., 2021). In this position, moderate Islam chooses a middle path that seeks a meeting point between the extreme right and the extreme left (Alawi & Maarif, 2021). Moderate Islam, along with its various ideas, is reflected in social-religious organizations in Indonesia and has contributed to the survival of tolerance in the national and world (Abdurrohman, 2018). It was emphasized that moderate Islam is a characteristic of Indonesian Islam, which cannot be found in other parts of the world (Suharto, 2017). So far, moderate Islamic views

are characteristic of Islam in the archipelago (Wahyudi, 2018). It turns out that the concept of moderate Islam, particularly concerning religious moderation incorporated into the digital space (Hefni, 2020), as a setting for the pursuit of meaning (Azisi, 2022), appears to have had a significant impact on social construction in the way that religious people in Indonesia who fight for peace live their lives.

Even so, posting religious moderation ideas on moderate Islamic accounts on social media still needs a touch of development in the future metaverse landscape (Figure 1). Some accounts do repost or re-sharing other people's content, not content production, as seen in Facebook media. Also, on Twitter media, there are more retweets in the sense of re-sharing posts. In Instagram media, moderate Islamic accounts share more reels, which are not necessarily videos that result from the account holder's creativity and innovation. In moderate Islamic accounts, dialogue is also rare, even though the dialogue is a means of intelligence. Even so, it must be admitted that moderate Islamic accounts in the social media space have contributed to Indonesia's socio-religious moderation.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the idea of moderate Islam in the media space has materialized in the form of the social construction of religious moderation in Indonesia. The results and discussion in this study indicate that the construction of religious moderation in Indonesia is formed based on the social construction of digital media framed by moderate Islamic ideas in the social media spaces of Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. Theoretically, this research can be an initial study of the idea of moderate Islam in the media space for the social construction of religious moderation in Indonesia. Practically, this research is useful for the development of the study of the idea of moderate Islam in the media space for the social construction of religious moderation in Indonesia. This research has limitations without conducting field studies through interviews, so this is an opportunity for further research for more measurable empirical studies. This research recommends that Islamic institutions and organizations manage social media space creatively and innovatively and provide the solution to Indonesia's mainstreaming of religious moderation.

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