



PROMOTING RELIGIOUS MODERATION AMONG INDONESIAN YOUTH: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF PKMB UIN AR-RANIRY'S INSTAGRAM

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Abstract

This study examines the strategic use of Instagram by the Center for Spirituality and Religious Moderation (PKMB) at UIN Ar-Raniry in promoting religious moderation among Indonesian youth. Employing a qualitative content analysis approach, the research analyzes all posts, stories, and interactive features published on the PKMB Instagram account over a six-month period, supplemented by comparative insights from other prominent moderation-focused accounts (@moderasi_beragama and @mubadalah.id). The findings reveal that PKMB employs a diverse range of content—including educational infographics, inspirational quotes from religious leaders, short videos, and interactive features—to communicate messages of tolerance, interfaith dialogue, and the rejection of extremism. Audience engagement patterns indicate widespread support for these messages, particularly when content is visually appealing, relatable, and accompanied by opportunities for direct participation. However, some critical responses highlight ongoing challenges related to skepticism and the negotiation of religious identity in digital spaces. The study concludes that youth-centered, dialogic, and visually dynamic strategies are especially effective in fostering digital engagement and internalizing values of moderation. These insights provide practical recommendations for educators and policymakers seeking to cultivate a more inclusive and harmonious society through digital religious outreach.

Keywords: *Social media, Instagram, religious moderation, youth, digital engagement, PKMB UIN Ar-Raniry*

A. Introduction

The emergence of social media has revolutionized patterns of communication, knowledge acquisition, and identity formation among the younger generation across the globe. Nowhere is this transformation more visible and impactful than in Indonesia, a nation that not only boasts the largest Muslim population worldwide but also a dynamic demographic structure, with a significant proportion of its citizens under the age of 30 (Pew Research Center, 2017). This digital revolution has brought about sweeping changes in social, cultural, and religious landscapes, placing young Indonesians at the epicenter of rapid technological and societal shifts.

Over the past decade, platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube have become embedded within the daily routines of Indonesian youth. Beyond

mere tools for entertainment or casual interaction, these platforms now serve as vital arenas for public discourse, the negotiation of values, and the dissemination of information—both factual and misleading (Wagiati et al., 2023; Fauzi, 2020). For many, social media has become a primary space not only to construct and perform their identities, but also to encounter and engage with complex issues including religion, politics, and cultural diversity.

While the digitalization of social life has created remarkable opportunities—enabling broader access to information, fostering creative expression, and building translocal networks—it has also introduced formidable new challenges. Among the most pressing is the phenomenon of religious polarization, fueled by algorithm-driven echo chambers and the unchecked circulation of provocative or inaccurate content. Multiple studies have shown that exposure to intolerant or extremist narratives on social media can heighten communal tensions and undermine the values of pluralism and coexistence that are foundational to Indonesian society (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Boulianne, 2009). This is further complicated by the often-anonymous nature of online interactions, which can embolden individuals to express views they might otherwise suppress in offline settings.

In this evolving landscape, the younger generation simultaneously represents both a group at risk and a wellspring of hope. On one hand, youth are among the most active social media users and, thus, highly susceptible to both positive and negative influences circulating online. On the other, their digital literacy, openness to new ideas, and capacity for critical engagement equip them to become agents of social transformation—particularly in efforts to promote religious moderation, tolerance, and inclusive citizenship (Hussain & Bilal, 2019; Halafouf & Singleton, 2020). The extent to which social media can be harnessed to reinforce these values, however, remains an open and critical question.

Despite a growing body of research on the intersection between youth, religion, and digital media, significant gaps persist. Much of the existing scholarship focuses on the dangers of online radicalization or the prevalence of hate speech, with less attention paid to the potential for proactive, institutional, or community-based digital interventions aimed at cultivating religious moderation (Campbell & Tsuria, 2021; Mujani, 2018). Furthermore, empirical analyses of concrete cases—such as university-led initiatives to engage young people in discussions about religious tolerance—are relatively rare in the Indonesian context.

This study seeks to address these gaps by examining the strategic use of social media, particularly Instagram, by the Center for Spirituality and Religious Moderation (PKMB) at UIN Ar-Raniry, Banda Aceh. As a university-based institution, PKMB occupies a unique position at the crossroads of higher education, religious leadership, and youth outreach. Its Instagram page, [@pkmbuinarraniry](https://www.instagram.com/@pkmbuinarraniry), has been developed as an interactive platform to advocate for religious moderation and to counteract the divisive tendencies often observed online. Through a combination of infographics, short videos, testimonials, inspirational quotes, and live discussions, PKMB aims to translate the

abstract values of tolerance and coexistence into accessible and engaging content tailored for a digital-native audience.

By analyzing the content strategies, engagement patterns, and thematic focus of PKMB's Instagram account, this research explores not only the opportunities but also the challenges encountered in promoting religious moderation via digital means. It investigates the extent to which such initiatives succeed in reaching and influencing their intended audiences, and what factors—educational background, social environment, or emotional response—facilitate or hinder the acceptance of moderate religious discourse among youth. Anchored in a content analysis approach and informed by theories of social identity and media effects, this study aspires to contribute both theoretically and practically. It offers empirical insights for scholars of religion and digital culture, while also providing actionable recommendations for educators, policymakers, and community leaders seeking to leverage social media for the cultivation of a more tolerant and inclusive Indonesian society.

B. Method

This study adopts a qualitative approach, utilizing content analysis to explore how social media—particularly the Instagram account managed by the Center for Spirituality and Religious Moderation (PKMB) at UIN Ar-Raniry—shapes and promotes the values of religious moderation among Indonesia's younger generation. The choice of this methodology is driven by the need to understand not only the overt messages communicated through digital platforms, but also the subtleties of how such messages are framed, received, and interpreted within the context of an evolving, youth-driven digital culture.

To ensure a focused and systematic inquiry, the primary data source comprises all publicly accessible content published on PKMB UIN Ar-Raniry's official Instagram account (@pkmbuinarraniry) over a six-month period, from October 2023 to March 2024. The unit of analysis includes posts, stories, infographics, short videos, inspirational quotes, and records of interactive sessions such as live discussions or webinars. In total, 85 main posts and 24 story highlights were identified and catalogued for detailed examination. By concentrating on this defined window of activity, the study seeks to capture both the variety and intensity of digital engagement around religious moderation. In parallel, content from two additional Indonesian Instagram accounts known for their advocacy of religious moderation—@moderasi_beragama and @mubadalah.id—was reviewed. This comparative perspective allows the study to contextualize PKMB's strategies and to highlight both unique and shared approaches to digital religious outreach.

Data analysis was guided by framing theory and informed by elements of social identity theory, enabling the research to uncover patterns in the construction and communication of moderation values. All content was coded thematically, with particular attention to the forms of religious moderation being promoted, the communicative styles employed, and the responses generated among the audience. The analysis further

considered metrics of digital engagement, such as comments, likes, and shares, as well as the substance and tone of user interactions. To ensure the credibility and reliability of findings, data coding was performed by two independent researchers before being cross-checked for consistency. Insights from this analysis were further triangulated with evidence from existing literature—academic articles, policy reports, and relevant books—that discuss the intersection of youth, digital media, and religious moderation in the Indonesian context.

C. Results and Discussion

1. Religious Moderation Content on PKMB UIN Ar-Raniry's Instagram

The Instagram account of PKMB UIN Ar-Raniry serves as a dynamic digital platform that consistently promotes religious moderation among Indonesia's younger generation. Throughout the study period, the account demonstrated a deliberate content strategy by sharing a variety of posts designed to educate, inspire, and engage its followers. The core themes conveyed through the account center on tolerance, interfaith dialogue, and the rejection of religious extremism—values that are consistently reinforced through different content formats.

A review of the posts reveals several primary categories of content, each with its own function in fostering religious moderation. Educational infographics are frequently used to distill complex ideas—such as the importance of tolerance, respect for diversity, and peaceful coexistence—into visually engaging and easily understandable messages. These infographics often address practical ways young people can practice moderation in their daily lives and avoid being drawn into divisive or intolerant discourse. Inspirational quotes from respected religious figures, including Dr. Lukman Hakim Saifuddin, Prof. Kamaruddin Amin, Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, and KH. Hasyim Muzadi, add legitimacy and broader resonance to the messages, encouraging followers to reflect on their own attitudes and beliefs.

Short videos and stories are utilized to document the real-world impact of PKMB's efforts, such as seminars, interfaith dialogues, and community outreach programs. These formats not only provide followers with relatable examples but also reinforce the idea that religious moderation must be lived and experienced, not just discussed in theory. The account also regularly shares documentation from collaborative events and social campaigns, further demonstrating a commitment to inclusivity and practical action. Interactive content, such as polls and Q&A sessions, invites audience participation, giving followers a direct role in ongoing conversations about tolerance and coexistence. To clarify the diversity of content and its alignment with the objectives of religious moderation, the following table summarizes the main categories found on PKMB UIN Ar-Raniry's Instagram during the research period:

Content Category	Description	Example Purpose
Educational Infographics	Visual explanations of tolerance, diversity, and peaceful coexistence	Simplify complex ideas; call to action

Inspirational Quotes	Words from well-known religious leaders supporting moderation	Add credibility and reflection
Short Videos/Stories	Footage from seminars, discussions, and social programs	Show real-life moderation in action
Social Campaigns	Documentation of collaborative interfaith or community events	Demonstrate inclusivity and cooperation
Interactive Features	Polls, Q&A sessions, and audience participation in stories	Increase engagement and reflection

The framing of these messages is overwhelmingly positive and inclusive. Rather than warning against the dangers of extremism in a confrontational manner, PKMB's approach emphasizes the benefits and practical realities of living out religious moderation. For example, infographics might encourage followers to "respect differences and build harmony among diverse communities," while stories and videos highlight successful examples of interfaith cooperation or student-led initiatives. By consistently presenting moderation as both a value and a daily practice, the account aligns its content with the aspirations and experiences of its youthful audience.

The multifaceted content strategy adopted by PKMB UIN Ar-Raniry reveals a sophisticated understanding of youth digital culture and the challenges of communicating religious values online. By combining visually appealing educational material, authoritative voices, and real-world documentation, the account effectively translates abstract principles of moderation into actionable and relatable messages. The deliberate use of interactive features further enhances audience engagement, fostering a sense of ownership and collective responsibility among followers. Importantly, the account's commitment to positivity and inclusivity ensures that the message of religious moderation is not only heard but also internalized as a shared social ideal.

2. Audience Engagement and Response Patterns

The effectiveness of PKMB UIN Ar-Raniry's Instagram campaign for religious moderation is reflected not only in the content produced, but also in the patterns of engagement and response it receives from its youthful audience. Over the observed period, the account demonstrated a consistently active interaction with followers through various forms of engagement, including likes, comments, story responses, and participation in polls or Q&A features.

Among the different types of content, educational infographics and inspirational quotes typically generated the highest number of likes and shares, suggesting that followers were receptive to messages that combined visual appeal with concise, authoritative statements. Short videos and documentation of live events, such as seminars and interfaith dialogues, tended to receive more detailed comments and prompted greater interaction in the form of discussion threads. Interactive features, such as polls in stories or question boxes, offered followers a chance to voice their opinions directly, often resulting in a diversity of perspectives and a sense of collective participation. The

following table summarizes key engagement patterns observed during the research period:

Engagement Type	Typical Content Associated	Observed Patterns	
Likes & Shares	Infographics, Quotes	High volume, signals positive reception and message resonance	
Comments	Videos, Documentation	Event	Mix of supportive and critical responses, discussion-oriented
Story Interactions	Polls, Q&A Sessions		Direct feedback, showcases diversity of youth perspectives
Live Participation	Webinars, Dialogues		Real-time engagement, creates sense of community

In terms of audience response, the majority of interactions reflected support for the ideals of tolerance and coexistence. Positive comments often expressed agreement with messages of moderation, appreciation for the clarity of information, or personal testimonials about the importance of harmony in daily life. For example, followers would leave remarks such as, *“This is what our generation needs—reminders to respect and accept differences,”* or, *“Thank you PKMB for sharing content that inspires us to be more tolerant.”* These responses indicate that the messaging resonates with the aspirations of many young Indonesians who seek constructive guidance in navigating religious diversity.

However, critical and skeptical responses were also present. Some followers questioned whether moderation dilutes core religious beliefs or expressed suspicion toward perceived attempts to reinterpret religious doctrine. These comments, while less frequent, point to the ongoing challenges faced in promoting moderation in an environment where identity and conviction are deeply personal and sometimes contested. A small number of discussions reflected hesitation or resistance, often motivated by a concern that calls for tolerance could undermine traditional values or be misinterpreted as religious relativism.

The diversity of engagement observed on PKMB’s Instagram account underscores the complexity of promoting religious moderation in the digital age. The positive reception of visually engaging, authoritative content demonstrates the effectiveness of combining educational and inspirational approaches when communicating with young audiences. The willingness of followers to participate in polls, share experiences, and engage in discussion suggests that interactive features play a crucial role in fostering not only understanding but also a sense of community and shared responsibility.

At the same time, the presence of critical responses should not be overlooked. These reactions highlight the importance of addressing skepticism head-on—through respectful dialogue, evidence-based education, and by showcasing real-life examples of moderation in practice. The mixed responses reveal both the potential and the limitations

of digital platforms: while social media can amplify messages of tolerance, it also opens the door to contestation and debate. Ultimately, PKMB UIN Ar-Raniry's strategy of encouraging open, participatory engagement aligns with the broader objective of fostering a culture of moderation—not by enforcing uniformity, but by creating space for dialogue, self-reflection, and critical inquiry. This approach ensures that the process of learning about religious moderation remains dynamic and responsive to the lived realities of Indonesia's younger generation.

3. Comparative and Theoretical Insights

To situate the findings from PKMB UIN Ar-Raniry's Instagram initiative within the broader landscape of digital religious moderation in Indonesia, it is important to compare its content strategies and audience engagement with other prominent accounts, such as @moderasi_beragama and @mubadalah.id. While each account shares a common commitment to promoting tolerance, peaceful coexistence, and countering extremism, their approaches vary according to institutional background and audience focus. PKMB UIN Ar-Raniry stands out for its educational, youth-oriented content that blends visually attractive infographics, inspirational quotes from leading religious figures, and documentation of student-focused events. The account's communication style is accessible, non-confrontational, and highly interactive, as seen in the frequent use of Q&A features, polls, and participatory story formats. In contrast, @moderasi_beragama adopts a more formal and policy-driven tone, frequently referencing official statements, government-led programs, and regulatory frameworks. This strategy, while authoritative, tends to focus more on information dissemination and less on dialogic engagement, resulting in lower audience participation in discussions. Meanwhile, @mubadalah.id leverages storytelling and personal narratives, offering a platform for diverse voices—including women, youth, and minority perspectives—which fosters a strong sense of intimacy and community engagement.

These differences are in line with findings by Boulianne (2009), who argues that digital civic engagement is strongly shaped by how content is framed and by the availability of interactive features that invite participation. PKMB's use of polls and open questions reflects best practices identified in digital literacy research, such as those described by Wagiati et al. (2023), who highlight the importance of dialogic and participatory learning models for effective youth engagement. Likewise, the emphasis on authentic testimonials and lived experiences, as seen in @mubadalah.id, supports Halafoff and Singleton's (2020) view that narrative and inclusivity are crucial for building trust and relevance in religious discourse.

From a theoretical perspective, these comparative findings reinforce the relevance of framing theory and social identity theory for understanding digital religious communication. PKMB's framing—positive, inspirational, and inclusive—aligns with the arguments of Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), who suggest that social media campaigns are most effective when they blend authority with approachability, credibility, and opportunities for genuine audience interaction. The presence of both strong support and

critical responses across all three accounts also mirrors observations by Hussain and Bilal (2019) and Mujani (2018), who note that while digital platforms can amplify messages of tolerance, they are also spaces for contestation, debate, and negotiation of collective identity.

Overall, the comparative analysis underscores that the success of digital campaigns for religious moderation is not only determined by message content, but also by how those messages are communicated, the degree of audience participation, and the extent to which the platform fosters an open and inclusive environment for discussion. PKMB UIN Ar-Raniry's youth-centered, interactive approach appears especially effective in attracting and sustaining engagement among university students and other young followers, while accounts like [@moderasi_beragama](#) and [@mubadalah.id](#) offer complementary models for addressing broader or more specialized audiences. These findings confirm that there is no single formula for promoting religious moderation online; instead, strategies must be tailored to the needs, expectations, and cultural context of each target community.

D. Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that the Instagram account of PKMB UIN Ar-Raniry functions as an effective digital platform for promoting religious moderation among young Indonesians. Through a carefully curated mix of educational infographics, inspirational quotes, event documentation, and interactive features, the account consistently communicates messages of tolerance, interfaith dialogue, and the rejection of extremism. The positive and inclusive framing of content, combined with frequent opportunities for audience engagement, has enabled PKMB to reach and involve its primary audience—university students and other youth—in conversations about moderation, respect, and peaceful coexistence. Audience responses to PKMB's content reflect a generally high level of support for the ideals of religious moderation, as evidenced by strong engagement with inspirational and educational posts. The use of interactive features such as polls and Q&A sessions has further encouraged participation and allowed for the expression of diverse perspectives. Nevertheless, some critical and skeptical responses indicate that challenges remain in addressing doubts about moderation and in ensuring that messages are interpreted in ways consistent with core religious values. The comparative analysis of PKMB with other major Indonesian accounts—such as [@moderasi_beragama](#) and [@mubadalah.id](#)—shows that while all contribute to the digital promotion of moderation, their strategies and impact vary according to their institutional context, communication style, and level of audience interaction. The effectiveness of PKMB's youth-centered and dialogic approach supports previous research on digital engagement, which emphasizes the importance of participatory, inclusive, and relatable messaging for building resilient and tolerant communities.

This research is limited by its focus on a single institutional account and a specific time period, as well as by its reliance on observable engagement metrics rather than in-

depth interviews or surveys. Future research could expand the scope by incorporating other social media platforms, longer observation periods, and more direct input from both content creators and followers. For practitioners and policymakers, the findings highlight the value of interactive and inspirational digital strategies for engaging youth audiences in conversations about religious moderation. Institutions seeking to promote tolerance and inclusivity should consider adopting similar approaches—emphasizing positive role models, interactive communication, and the creation of safe online spaces for discussion and reflection. In conclusion, the experience of PKMB UIN Ar-Raniry illustrates both the opportunities and the ongoing challenges of leveraging social media for the cultivation of moderation in religious life. By remaining adaptive and responsive to the digital habits and aspirations of young people, institutions can play a significant role in shaping a more inclusive, harmonious, and resilient Indonesian society.

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