
THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS MODERATION ON LIFE SATISFACTION OF GENERATION Z MUSLIMS

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Abstract

Religious moderation is considered one of the crucial issues discussed by many parties. This circumstance is evidenced by varied rules and facts, making it an indicator of the nation's welfare. The lack of research that specifically addressed the correlation between religious moderation and psychological attributes was one reason why this study was conducted. Hence, the purpose of the present research was to determine the role of religious moderation on the life satisfaction of generation Z Muslim students. A quantitative design engaging a causal approach was employed to measure the significance of the role of religious moderation on the life satisfaction of generation Z Muslims. 453 respondents selected using the purposive sampling technique participated in this study. To collect the data, researchers administered two tested measuring instruments that indicated good psychometric properties. The regression analysis results revealed a significant impact of religious moderation on the life satisfaction of generation Z Muslim students. Meanwhile, the categorization of respondents confirmed that most of them had moderate and high levels of understanding of religious moderation. This study concluded that to achieve high life satisfaction, religious moderation should be considered as an essential aspect of social life. Religious moderation should be considered as a strategy for everyone to behave and be behaved, especially with regard to religious interactions. Correspondingly, the findings could be implied as a reference for policymakers at Islamic educational institutions in forming an awareness of the importance of religious moderation among generation Z Muslims studying at Islamic universities in Indonesia.

Keywords: Generation Z; Life Satisfaction; Muslim Students; Religious Moderation.

Abstrak

Moderasi beragama dianggap menjadi salah satu isu krusial yang menjadi pokok pembahasan banyak kalangan hingga hari ini. Situasi tersebut dibuktikan dengan banyaknya aturan dan fakta di lapangan yang menjadikan moderasi beragama sebagai indikator kesejahteraan suatu bangsa. Kurangnya penelitian dan kajian yang secara spesifik membahas hubungan moderasi beragama dengan atribut psikologis menjadi salah satu alasan studi ini dilakukan. Tujuan dari studi ini sendiri yaitu untuk mengetahui peran moderasi beragama terhadap kepuasan hidup mahasiswa muslim generasi Z. Desain penelitian kuantitatif dengan pendekatan kausalitas digunakan untuk mengukur seberapa besar peran moderasi beragama terhadap kepuasan hidup muslim generasi Z. Sebanyak 453 responden berpartisipasi untuk studi ini dipilih dengan menggunakan purposive sampling. Peneliti menggunakan dua instrumen pengukuran yang telah dilakukan uji coba dan menghasilkan properti psikometris yang baik. Hasil analisis regresi menunjukkan bahwa terdapat pengaruh yang signifikan dari moderasi beragama terhadap kepuasan hidup mahasiswa muslim generasi Z. Sementara itu, hasil kategorisasi responden menunjukkan bahwa mayoritas responden penelitian berada pada tingkatan pemahaman moderasi beragama yang sedang dan tinggi. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa untuk mendapatkan kepuasan hidup yang tinggi, maka moderasi beragama dapat menjadi salah satu aspek penting dalam kehidupan di bermasyarakat. Moderasi beragama harus dianggap sebagai strategi bagi setiap orang untuk bersikap dan berperilaku, terutama yang berkaitan dengan interaksi keagamaan. Hasil penelitian ini dapat diimplikasikan sebagai suatu rujukan bagi pemangku kebijakan di Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam untuk membentuk kesadaran pentingnya moderasi beragama di kalangan Muslim generasi Z yang menimba ilmu di setiap Perguruan Tinggi Keagamaan Islam yang berada di Indonesia.

Kata Kunci: Generasi Z; Kepuasan Hidup; Mahasiswa Muslim; Moderasi Beragama.

INTRODUCTION

The terminology of religious moderation is one of the topics getting so much attention in the social life of society in Indonesia today since it is perceived to have a significant role in realizing peace and security for individuals and groups. In addition, with its existence, appreciation for the guarantee of religious differences and teachings adhered to by individuals can be attained. These conditions make a person must position himself as a moderate, namely being in the middle, being a mediator and placing himself as an individual who upholds diversity (Hernawan et al., 2021; Mahrus et al., 2020). Thus, they can carry out their respective religious activities, manifesting religious moderation as a necessary component of social life (Abror, 2020; Natanael & Ramdani, 2021). In particular, it also provides clear limits to the community so they will not interfere with others' religious rights, including setting limits on doing the proper things according to their beliefs.

Conceptually, religious moderation is interpreted as a person's awareness and appreciation in encountering diverse situations, especially in recognizing any differences in the existing religious teachings. As explained by Akhmadi (2019), religious moderation is a movement based on deep awareness and understanding of religious diversity, whether for individuals or groups. Another view was expressed by Fahri and Zainuri (2019), who defined it as a movement positioning a person to be neutral to maintain balance and justice in religious behavior.

The importance of religious moderation has received mixed responses from the views of religious teachings in Indonesia. In Islamic studies, many experts argue that individuals' moderate attitudes should be taught early, starting from the scope of madrasas (Islamic educational institutions), families, and political and constitutional issues (Arif, 2020; Hefni,

2020). Furthermore, according to Sutrisno (2019), religious moderation is known by three terms in Islamic teachings: *tawassuth*, *i'tidal*, and *tawazun*. All three have similar meanings, namely the depiction of a person's position to behave lawfully toward religious diversity and differences. In addition, Christian teachings also emphasize that religious moderation is a task humans must carry out to maintain a prosperous life (Triposa & Yulianto, 2022).

In Buddhism, religious moderation must be internalized starting from the religious sermons in worship routines. Thus, the role of religious leaders is crucial in providing enlightenment for their followers (Purnomo, 2021). Besides, this attitude is included in the noble path to diminish greed and hatred (Paramita, 2021). In the philosophy of Hinduism, Subagiasta (2021) explains that religious moderation is interpreted as an easy and simple practice of carrying out positive activities since childhood that is strengthened by the context of local customs and cultures. Conclusively, all religions emphasize the importance of implementing religious moderation in human life.

The emergence of many cases and activities against the attitude of religious moderation in Indonesian society has disrupted its essential implementation for life, starting from the increasing number of cases of radicalism which often involve religion only to make it a scapegoat (Dewantara, 2019; Said & Rauf, 2015). Accordingly, intolerance and community conflicts are also viewed as a consequence of non-moderate individuals (Assyaukanie, 2018; Qodir, 2018). Some of the latest data obtained by researchers reveal that the level of intolerance and radicalism is predominantly found in young people (Praselanova, 2021; Rijal, 2021), who are assumed to be millennials and generation Z responsible as agents of peace and the future successors of the nation.

The problems related to radicalism and intolerance arising in society are undoubtedly contrary to religious moderation's fundamental values and philosophies. A good attitude of course directs individuals to conditions that are in accordance with the best choice. As explained in several studies that strengthen researchers to choose research respondents, namely the elaboration of attitudes, emotions and behaviors that are not integrated, they tend to take extreme actions so that more mature thinking is needed in seeing conditions more wisely (Hernawan et al., 2021; Mahrus et al., 2020; Nijo & Prasajo, 2020). Theoretically researchers identify that immature personal attributes and elaboration with the environment in which they grow and develop are some causes of the deviations of the values. Empirical studies conducted by many psychologists discover that attributes such as idealism, integrity, tolerance, and open-mindedness affect an individual's religious moderation attitudes and behaviors (Abdullah & Nento, 2021; Somer, 2014; Zakariyah et al., 2022).

Many scientific studies have investigated religious moderation in the past three years until today (from 2019 to 2022), indicating its significant urgency in human life. Such a conclusion is based on the results of researchers' reviews through the search engine or *Google Scholar* database, by which it was found that there were around 7,420 articles enclosing the keyword of religious moderation. It is predicted to keep increasing, especially with the growing number of people who consider religious moderation a necessary part of supporting today's life (Junaedi, 2019; Kosasih, 2019).

Furthermore, studies on religious moderation in millennials have been widely carried out. Wibowo (2019) began to identify *Facebook* as one of the effective social media to bring millennials closer to the appropriate use of technology, especially in delivering messages associated with religious moderation values. Wahyudi and

Kurniasih (2021) also corroborated that, for millennials, religious moderation literacy is needed to eradicate hoax information and hate speech, hereinafter known as millennial *jihad*. Meanwhile, other scholars discussed the concept of religious moderation of millennials in various contexts and levels of development, such as schools (Nisa et al., 2021), Islamic boarding schools (Azizah, 2021), and community activities in general (Musdalifah et al., 2021). Specifically, Azizah (2021) perceived millennials as spreaders of peace through religious moderation movements.

However, reviews on religious moderation in generation Z in Indonesia only acquired limited information. In the last three years, there were only three relevant articles explaining the strengthening of religious moderation values in generation Z (in the form of training) (Rizki, 2022), efforts to internalize tolerance (Habibah et al., 2022), and the correlation between virtual *da'wah* (proselytizing) and religious moderation (Kholis, 2021). Furthermore, several studies conducted in the context of Western countries had not explicitly mentioned the concept of religious moderation. However, they described it as a part of religious identities, such as research conducted by Joshanloo and Weijers (2016) on religion, income, and life satisfaction. Therefore, based on those previous studies, the literature engaging an in-depth investigation of religious moderation and psychological attributes in generation Z was still lacking. Eventually, researchers were interested in studying religious moderation regarding one of the psychological attributes known as life satisfaction. It was considered a research novelty because discussions that correlated religious moderation with life satisfaction were barely found in Indonesia.

The concept of life satisfaction is broadly discussed in psychology, as it examines the psychological picture of a person who feels satisfaction, happiness, and well-being. Diener et al. (1985)

explain that individuals require life satisfaction as evidence that all their activities are positive and beneficial for their development. Researchers' simple logic in the present study was based on the question of whether the existence of religious moderation, which is highly considered as an attitude to be taught and internalized in life, can make people genuinely experience satisfaction, especially for generation Z. Therefore, this research aimed to explore information regarding the role of religious moderation on the life satisfaction of generation Z Muslims.

The present study was also expected to provide benefits for policy development, especially at Islamic universities, in realizing and developing generation Z Muslim students who comprehend the necessities of religious moderation for multicultural and diverse social life.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employed a quantitative design engaging a causal approach, which in social science is known as an approach aimed at determining the causal factors of a thing or variable (Smith, 2013).

Research Respondents

The respondents of this study were undergraduate (*S1*) students of various faculties at the State Islamic University (*UIN*) Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, who were selected using a purposive sampling technique following the criteria predetermined by researchers (Smith et al., 2013). The selection of the research locus at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung was based on the results of research conducted by Fuad and Susilo (2019) which shows the level of intolerance on the campus is very high, even being included in the 2 most intolerant campuses of the 10 campuses surveyed. The results of the study suggest

that religious moderation needs to be increased in such situations. Therefore, researchers focus their research on these locations. The criteria in question were that the students belonged to Generation Z, individuals born in 1994-2009 or aged around 13 to 28 years (Dabija & Lung, 2019). In addition, they should be Muslim.

Research Instruments

Religious Moderation Scale

The first instrument administered to measure religious moderation was the Religious Moderation Scale developed by researchers at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung, referring to the indicators formulated by the Drafting Team of the Ministry of Religious Affairs (*Tim Penyusun Kementerian Agama*) (Natanael & Ramdani, 2021). The scale (Likert scale) consisted of 17 items with five answer choices, covering strongly disagree to strongly agree. Subsequently, the internal consistency value obtained was 0.804, indicating a good level of consistency or reliability for a study.

Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) – Indonesian Version

The second instrument in this research was the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), aiming to estimate an individual's life satisfaction and was developed in 1985 by researchers focusing on positive psychology (Diener et al., 1985). However, because all respondents were Indonesian citizens, researchers incorporated SWLS instruments translated by researchers in Indonesia (Novanto & Pali, 2019). The scale consisted of 5 items to measure life satisfaction and subsequently acquired a good reliability score ($\alpha = 0.795$), indicating that the instrument was feasible.

Research Procedure

The present study initially determined the research theme and explored the focus of the problem. Furthermore, researchers conducted literature reviews and searched for appropriate instruments in several supporting journals. The data collection process was carried out at various research locations (several faculties at UIN Sunan Gunung Djati), employing an online questionnaire containing informed consent sheets, demographic data, and religious moderation and life satisfaction measurements. The data obtained were analyzed using a simple regression analysis technique in *SPSS*. The analysis results can be seen in the results and discussion section below.

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction to Religion and Life Satisfaction

The Understanding religion is essential in social life, especially for countries with various religions, cultures, and patterns of religious behaviour (Habib et al., 2018). In the psychological approach, religion is constantly associated with life satisfaction as one of the indicators of human happiness. Previous research found that religion significantly correlated with and could positively contribute to an individual's life satisfaction (Stavrova et al., 2013).

One of the crucial things to be applied in the life of religious communities is the concept of religious moderation in various circles in order to strengthen the stability of national life. The growing issues on religious moderation are currently more focused on generation Z as the nation's future successors. A study by Primahendra et al. (2020) stated that generation Z Muslim students were in a critical period concerning agents of radicalism since it had infiltrated re-

ligious universities through extracurricular activities and ideological indoctrination of Muslim students.

Radicalism is frequently associated with the inability of individuals or groups to understand religion properly. Many media and literature reviews reveal the increasing number of affected people from various circles. Hence, strengthening the understanding of religious moderation is undoubtedly required to address this issue.

Demographic Descriptive Analysis

Table 1 provides a detailed description of the research respondents. There were more female participants than males. The age range was 17 to 25 years old, typical for undergraduate students, dominated by unmarried or single status. The largest number of respondents came from the Faculty of Sharia and Law, while the least was from the Faculty of Economics and Business. The disparity in the number of samples in each faculty does not have a big influence on the results of the study, because the purposive sampling technique can guarantee that good data can be obtained as long as the respondents who fill them out are in accordance with the specified characteristics (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Based on the semester of study, those who were most willing to be involved in this research were the first-year university students, precisely the second semester. Meanwhile, the large number of respondents in the first semester showed that their enthusiasm for participating in research was very high. Several studies have stated that in the early days of lectures, individuals will be faced with a period of adaptation so that they will be very vulnerable to getting a variety of diverse information (Means & Pyne, 2017; Morales, 2012; Zhou & Zhang, 2014). This supports the purpose of the study, because it is able to represent varied situations of religious moderation.

Table 1.
Frequency Distribution of Research Respondents

Demographics	Categories	Total	(%)
Gender	Male	125	27.6%
	Female	328	72.4%
Age	17 – 19	213	47%
	20 – 25	240	53%
Marital Status	Married	3	0.7%
	Unmarried	450	99.3%
Faculty	Adab and Humanities	32	7.1%
	Da'wah and Communication	40	8.8%
	Economics and Business	1	0.2%
	Social and Political Science	93	20.5%
	Psychology	53	11.7%
	Science and Technology	51	11.3%
	Sharia and Law	101	22.3%
	Tarbiyah and Teacher Training	5	1.1%
	Ushuluddin	77	17%
Semester	2 nd Semester	214	47.2%
	4 th Semester	124	27.4%
	6 th Semester	90	19.9%
	8 th Semester	17	3.7%
	10 th Semester	6	1.3%
	12 th Semester	2	0.4%

Categorization of Research Respondents

Researchers analyzed the categorization of research respondents to determine their level of religious moderation and life satisfaction. As a result, it was found that most of them were at a moderate level of religious moderation and life satisfaction (see table 2). Furthermore, the categorization also revealed an unexpected thing, in which 13.9% of respondents were included in the category of low level of religious moderation. It was in line with previous research, which also examined religious tolerance (as an indicator of religious moderation), in which more than 11% of UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung students were indicated to be intolerant (Meiza, 2018).

Table 2.
Categorization of Research Respondents

Categorization	Religious Moderation	Life Satisfaction
High	64 (14.1%)	62 (13.7%)
Moderate	326 (72%)	336 (74.2%)
Low	63 (13.9%)	55 (12.1%)

If referring to the results of the categories listed in table 2, the condition of the respondents varied into high, medium and low. These differences occur because psychologically individuals have different points of view and attitudes from the two variables. Some respondents who belong to the low level indicate that they do not have an optimal situation either in religious moderation or life satisfaction. However, the difference in these categories actually makes the data more normal because it is more varied and still dominated by the middle group.

Inferential Analysis

To perform the inferential test, researchers initially conducted a linearity test to prove that religious moderation and life satisfaction were linear and then continued with a regression test. The linearity analysis results showed a significance value of Deviation from Linearity of $0.421 > 0.050$, indicating that both research variables were linear. The primary analysis in this study incorporated a simple regression by which one independent variable and one dependent variable resulted in the following regression equation: *“Life-satisfaction = 6.478 + 0.207Religious_Moderation”*

Researchers obtained a value of $F = 29.098$ and a p-value of $0.000 < 0.050$, implying the impact of religious moderation on the life satisfaction of generation Z Muslims. This equation also confirmed that religious moderation contributed positively to student life satisfaction. The contribution given was known from the R-squared

value of 6.1%, while other variables could affect the rest.

Referring to the descriptive results presented in the findings section, the present research was considered relatively objective and able to generalize the results. The number of subjects, 453 people, indicated the sufficient amount of respondents that needed to be met in quantitative research. In addition, other data obtained by researchers, such as variations in faculty, semester, gender, and age, corroborated that the availability of research participants made the research results more objective and generalizable. The categorization in this study also illustrated that the two identified variables met the criteria for data diversity. Likewise, the dominance of respondents in the moderate and high categories indicated that generation Z students in this study experienced the two identified attributes.

Overall, the findings successfully addressed the objectives of the study. In this research, religious moderation positively affected the life satisfaction of generation Z Muslims. Theoretically, the construct of religious moderation is almost the same as that of other elements in psychology, such as religious tolerance, spirituality, respect for others, humility, appreciation of beauty, and other positive variables (Azis et al., 2021; Daheri, 2022; Hook et al., 2017). Hence, it eventually became an important indicator depicting these positive variables correlated with life satisfaction.

The inferential analysis results with the contribution of religious moderation showed a value of 6.1%, indicating that life satisfaction was highly determined by other factors not identified in this study, as described in the previously mentioned theoretical concept. The results of this small contribution indicate that religious moderation is not one of the predictors that determine life satisfaction for a student. Likewise, internal and external factors contrib-

uted significantly to improving an individual's life satisfaction. This assumption was reinforced by several previous studies discovering that the factors that significantly determined people's life satisfaction were economic resources and social status (Celik et al., 2018), daily activities and personal abilities (Khodabakhsh, 2022), physical and mental health (Chow, 2007), experiences in dealing with crises (Lue et al., 2010), and other relevant variables.

In contrast to the previously described factors, the discussion regarding religious moderation was still lacking, making it quite difficult to find research investigating a direct correlation between religious moderation and life satisfaction. Moreover, the prior studies only concentrated on religion in general without engaging a contextualization of the concept of religious moderation. This relatively limited contribution was also due to the constraints on aspects to be examined in the attributes of religious moderation, so it could not entirely reach the most profound psychological aspects found in the life satisfaction variable (Natanael & Ramdani, 2021).

The novelty of this research also became a part of the researcher's recommendations, namely to empower future studies by considering more corresponding variables, both those having the potential to lead to religious moderation and those determining life satisfaction. Religious moderation could still be perceived as a variable determining a person's life satisfaction. In addition, regarding the variation of respondents, the demographic variables were likely to be other indicators affecting the life satisfaction of generation Z Muslims.

CONCLUSION

The study findings portrayed the essence of religious moderation in realizing the life

satisfaction of generation Z Muslims. Furthermore, it could be used as a guideline to create a harmonious social life. This research also revealed the high level of religious moderation possessed by the respondents, who were all generation Z Muslims at one of the Islamic universities in Indonesia. Thus, researchers perceived that the present study respondents potentially maintained harmony in religious and cultural differences.

This research provided direct benefits for the development of psychological science, as it could be stated that religious moderation had only been discussed explicitly in this study and was also associated with psychological variables. Furthermore, it discovered the linearity of the frequently associated components: religion could improve individuals or groups psychologically. Research engaging the concepts of religion

and psychology could be combined into an interesting study to be explored in-depth.

The limitation of this study was that researchers only focused on religious and psychological variables. If it incorporates an investigation involving a sociological or anthropological perspective, further research might likely discover more interesting things along with more in-depth discussions. Future research needs to pay attention that religious moderation is not only at the level of belief but must be elaborated with action. This should encourage other researchers to examine religious moderation more specifically. The number of respondents in the present study was also considered limited because several faculties were only represented by a few people who were willing to participate.

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