

Bringing Religious Moderation Insights to “TikTok Da’wah”

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Abstract: Preventing the spread of religious radicalism has remained popular issue in Indonesian nowadays. This is because Indonesia has long been vulnerable to Islamic radicalism ideologies. Many studies have revealed that young people have become the main target of the spread of Islamic extremist movement. This paper offers a textual analysis of ‘TikTok da’wah’ utilised by Muslim preachers to convey religious moderation teachings for young generation. In other words, it examines the use of Tiktok social media as a forum for mediating *da’wah* messages regarding religious moderation. The study results indicate that TikTok is an essential communication media for *mubaligh* to carry out *da’wah* for the millennial generation. In the hands of Islamic preachers, TikTok is likely to become a medium to build religious moderation insights amongs Indonesian youth.

Keywords: Religious moderation, *da’wah* media, TikTok, millennial generation.

Abstrak: Upaya deradikalisasi agama masih menjadi isu populer di Indonesia saat ini. Pasalnya, Indonesia masih dianggap rentan dengan gerakan radikalisme berbasis agama. Beberapa penelitian menyatakan bahwa kaum muda dan pelajar menjadi sasaran utama penyebaran gerakan radikalisme Islam. Tulisan ini menawarkan analisis tekstual tentang ‘TikTok dakwah’ yang dimanfaatkan para *da’i* guna menyampaikan ajaran moderasi beragama bagi generasi muda. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa *TikTok* merupakan media komunikasi esensial bagi *mubaligh* untuk melakukan aktivitas dakwah bagi generasi milenial. Di tangan para aktivis dakwah, *TikTok* menjadi media untuk membangun wawasan moderasi beragama yang efektif bagi kalangan pemuda Indonesia.

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Introduction

The current young generations use more diverse technologies such as tablets, smartphones, virtual headsets and several other media to get knowledge and daily activities. Research result of *We Are Social (Hootsuite) in 2020* stated that the average time spent by Indonesians accessing social media reaches 3 hours 26 minutes per day (aged 16-64 years) (Ikhsan, 2021). Social media that is experiencing rapid development and the most downloaded application in Indonesia is *Tik Tok*. It is undeniable that currently the TikTok application is widely downloaded and used by all people in the world, from children to parents.

In addition Sensor Tower's research which shows Tiktok is the most downloaded application worldwide in March 2021, with more than 58 million downloads (Chan, 2021). According to Priori Data (figure 2), Indonesia was ranked fourth as the country with the most downloads of non-game applications in June 2020 (Richter, 2020). Downloads are made via Amazon and Apple or Android gadgets. With this application, people can preach more flexibly and can follow the trends of the young generation to make it easier to understand, accept, and study.

Tik Tok application is actually not a new social media in Indonesia. Initially, in 2018 to 2019, *Tik Tok* has been well known as a negatively charged digital video-based application and considered as a stupid application that has ever been blocked by the Ministry of Communication and Information because it produced negative contents for children (Utama & Bestari, 2018). However, nowadays many young Muslim have used *Tiktok* for *da'wah* (Islamic preaching) such as Husain Basyaiban (Nabilah dkk, 2021) and to get religious information as well (Hikmawati, 2021).

Nevertheless, many studies have revealed that young people have become the main target of the spread of Islamist extremism ideology ((Wildan and Qibtiyah, 2020, Nisa, at.al, 2018). The research conducted by Center for Islamic and Community Studies (PPIM) State Islamic University (UIN) Jakarta in 34 provinces has pointed out that intolerance attitudes and the interference of radical ideology

insights among teachers and students are quite alarming, and in doing so young generation is the main target in the spread of radicalism. The younger generation's understanding of Islamic teachings is also still very shallow (Nisa, et.al, 2018). Therefore, teaching religious moderation insights among the younger generation becomes very important (Nurdin & Naqqiya, 2019). Further, research on religious moderation is becoming a current trend with the purpose of preventing the spread of Islamic radicalism and extremism in Indonesia (Salik, 2019; Mutawali, 2016; (Wildan and Qibtiyah, 2020).

It is very rare the academic literatures on religious moderation using *TikTok*. Therefore, this study examines the use of *TikTok* social media as a forum for channeling teachings about religious moderation through qualitative research approach

Tik Tok as a Da'wah Media

Da'wah is an effort made by humans consciously to remind good things in a wise and reassuring way to oneself and the surrounding environment or the wider public. In terminology, according to M. Quraish Shihab, *da'wah* is a call or invitation to awakening or an attempt to change the situation to a better and perfect situation, both for the individual and the community well known as *mad'u* (Thoharoh, 2010). *Mad'u* itself is a person or group commonly referred to as a congregation who is demanding religious teachings from a preacher, whether *Mad'u* is a person near or far, Muslim or non-Muslim, male or female (Marwantika, 2019).

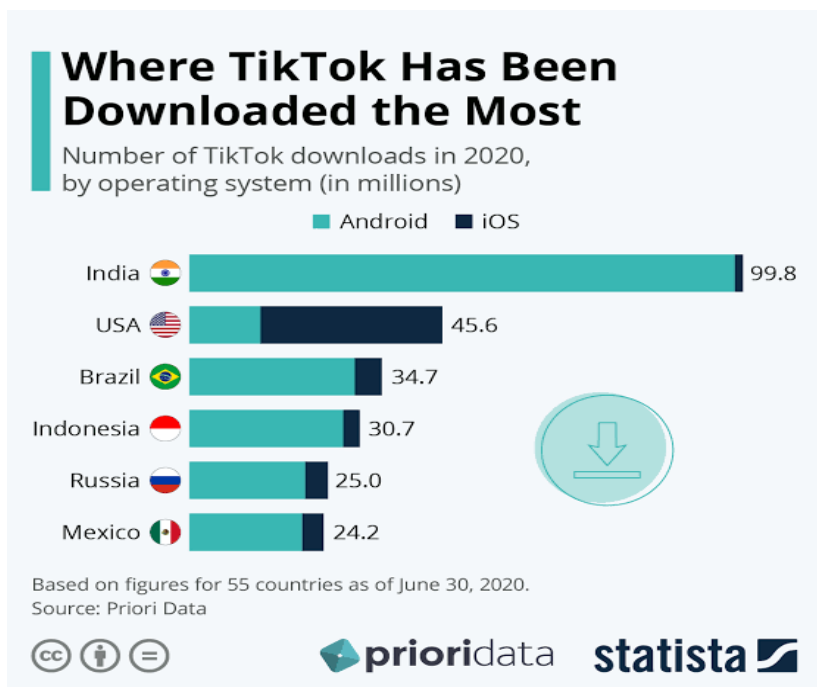
Meanwhile, *da'wah* media is a tool used to convey *da'wah* material (Islamic teachings) to *mad'u* (Aziz, 2019). In other words, *da'wah* media are everything that can be used or become intermediaries in the process of delivering messages from *mubaligh* or Islamic preacher to *mad'u* (Aminudin, 2018). *Da'wah* media is not limited using traditional ways, such as face-to-face meeting. *Da'wah* media encompass both traditional and new media, such as Instagram, Youtube, Twitter, TikTok, and so forth.

TikTok is one of the most downloaded applications by millions of people around the world today, including in Indonesia (see figure 1.)

The rapid development of the TikTok application from year to year is very significant. There are several reasons why the Tiktok application has become popular in Indonesia because (Yang, et al, 2019):

Video Duration. Short video and song have a closeness to reality in modern society because users need more information that is short and dense so that users don't get bored easily. Social media users can enjoy the videos they want because of the algorithm by which social media will present the content that users are interested in. This is also the reason why tiktok is suitable as a medium for preaching (Wang, 2020, p. 2).

Figure 1. ‘Order of countries with the most TikTok downloaders’



Video Features. Easy to make and deploy quickly. Compared to longer videos, short videos are easier for viewers to accept and easier for video creators to make. The ease of use of this feature can be put to good use for preaching.

Latest Trend Update Content. Tik Tok users are mostly young generation. They want to stay updated on something that is trending/viral. Content that is currently still a trend is beauty, fashion, sports, and music. By following this trend, we can insert messages/advices of da'wah through videos, for example, how Muslim fashion is in accordance with Islamic *syaria*'.

Influence effect. The more celebrities and influencers in Indonesia use Tik Tok application, the more people who follow it. A lot of people from celebrities to ordinary people have Tik Tok accounts at the moment. Users usually re-upload their videos on TikTok to other social media accounts. The magnitude of the influence on the use of TikTok and the ease with which the content is spread make this social media suitable as a medium for preaching (Hasiholan, et al, 2020, p. 75).

User Freedom. The Tik Tok application provides freedom for its users to express themselves. This is in accordance with communication theory which helps people to express themselves to others. This makes TikTok which incidentally is a suitable communication media as well as a preaching media.

Based on those characteristics, TikTok is regarded as suitable media for Islamic preaching. This main reason why it is a significant medium to be a *da'wah* platform because it can reach all levels of its users. Additionally, this application has the opportunity to create scientific literacy about Islam which is very much needed by the wide community. The trick is to present Islamic value content in accordance with the lifestyle of today's society (Hikmawati & Farida, 2021).

Religious Moderation and Social Media

Religious moderation and social media, including TikTok, are quite distinct entities, but they are inseparable from human life. Religious adherents be able to benefit from social media to spread religious teachings. Indeed, the Ministry of Religious Affairs Indonesia, has promoted content about religious tolerance through *TikTok*.

In regard with religious moderation, Indonesia is considerably famous country for its diversity in terms of culture, language, race,

ethnicity, and religion (Balitbang Kemenag, 2021). However, sometimes conflicts between humans, both physical and psychological violence, occur in Indonesia due to a lack of public awareness in understanding a difference, including religious based-conflict (Mubit, 2016). Therefore the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia designated 2019 as the "Year of Religious Moderation" (Sutrisno, 2019).

The word moderation comes from the Latin *moderatio*, which means moderate, balanced, not excess, and not lacking. According to the Big Indonesian Dictionary (*Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia*), the word moderation has two meanings: reducing violence and avoiding extremes. Thus, the word moderation that is juxtaposed with the word religion will become Islam can be said to be the opposite of hard-line Islam (Hoveyda, 2001, p. 53).

Quraish Shihab said the meaning of moderation was in line with *wasathiyah*. The term *wasathiyah* itself comes purely from Islam which is *wasatis*, where all of its teachings have the characteristics of moderation, therefore followers must be moderate. Moderate can be interpreted by being moderate in our beliefs, views, thoughts, feelings, and attachments (Husna & Thohir, 2020, p. 203). In addition, *al-wasathiyah* also means trying to take a middle position, balancing between two opposing ideas in a position that is equally acceptable to reason and does not hurt each other (Salik, 2019).

Islam emphasises the value of balance and logical thinking to be practiced in everyday life. Differences and diversity are should not be understood as conflict and enmity, but the social differences is a blessing, and plurality is something that Allah has deliberately created in order to encourage humans live in harmony in the world (Mutawali, 2016).

To combat radicalism and Islamist extremism in Indonesia, the Ministry of Religion uses social media as a tool for preaching with the aim of spreading moderate Islamic religious values. The Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia will increase counseling through social media to spread moderate religious values (Hasibuan, 2020).

The rapid flow of globalization and the increasingly sophisticated technology today makes it easier for us to access all information via the internet. *Mubaligh* (Islamic preacher) are likely to become outdated if they do not immediately adapt to these advances. The *mubalighs* are required to be able to master communication media because all information can be accessed through internet media in today's digital era (Aminudin, 2016, p. 345).

Sheikh Sulthan al-Umari in *Istikhdam al-Internet fi ad-Da'wa* has said that there are several important things that must be considered in preaching in cyberspace (Thaib, 2019, p. 105). *First* is fixing the intention. Preaching should not be meant to dissolve in debate. *Second* is to determine the vision and mission of *da'wah* in cyberspace. In this context, the *mubaligh* must understand that the essence of *da'wah* is to lead one to positive things and right way. *Third* is to show the noble values of Islam. *Fourth*, choosing quality content supervisors who are considered has competencies in the field of sharia and have extensive knowledge. This will help avoiding controversies content of *da'wah*. *Fifth*, to adjust the content to the needs of today's society.

Mediating the *Da'wah* Message on TikTok for Youth

Who exactly is called the young generation? For now, it is safe to say that the young generation is the millennial generation and generation Z. Millennials are the generation born between 1980 and 2000. They are called the millennial generation because they live in the millennium era where digital technology began to enter the living space (Hidayatullah, Waris, and Devianti, 2018). While generation Z is the generation born after 1995. Generation Z is usually called the internet generation or Igeneration which is more socially related through cyberspace. For generation Z, information and technology are things that have become part of their lives.

People not only use devices on the internet to interact, but also understand each other emotionally, resulting in a concept called internet emotionalization. Thus, it is not surprising that there are many updates to the collection of emoticons to videos on the internet (Prikhodko, et al, 2020). The content of social media users is very

possible to touch the emotional side of their followers. Furthermore, the content is not only consumed and stopped at one reader, but also can be distributed again by the audience to a wider network. These audiences can now be more active in commenting, spreading, and even manipulating media content according to their own emotional approach (Rahmawan, et al, 2019).

Social media today offers limited control, especially with the opportunity that users have to contribute to or even change the impression of others. In fact, the impression that other people make on social media users is influenced by the attractiveness of the user's friends, for example when someone else's content goes viral or manages to enter FYP, that person will justify any means so that it can go viral too (Hollenbaugh, 2021). FYP itself is an abbreviation of the phrase "For Your Page". Videos that enter the FYP are those that have a very large number of likes and views or are trending. Content creators often scramble to be able to appear as FYP on other users' homepages.

Content in social media is used to identify and quantify various formats and genres of information as a value-added component of the media. In social media, content plays an important and crucial role in disseminating information. This is further strengthened by the phrase: content is king. In addition, in social media the content is wholly owned and based on the contributions of users or account owners. When social media users choose reading material (favorite content such as politics, lectures, news, etc.), then they will tend to follow the information according to their taste, whether it is necessarily good or not. Understanding the characteristics of social media users is very important for the development of online *da'wah*. *Mubaligh* can interact effectively by understanding the interests of social media users for *da'wah* on certain themes (Briandana, et al, 2020).

It is suggested that a Muslim should maintain the image of Islam on social media. It is not allowed to let many videos about blasphemy against Islam circulating on FYP TikTok rather than the soothing *da'wah* content. The viral incident of TikTok content in 2020, namely a video that states that Islam is a bad religion, should not happen again. This content creation reasoned that the motive was only based

on sheer fun. The video he made has indeed been deleted, but because it has gone viral, the perpetrator has received public criticism. It is things like this that we must be aware of because certain elements may take advantage of this condition to divide the *ummah* in this country. Therefore, the existence of da'wah on TikTok, hopefully it can shift negatively charged videos.

The use of TikTok as a propaganda medium is not only intended to maintain the image of Islam but also to convey messages about religious moderation. Preaching through TikTok is also expected to "save teenagers" who are affected by TikTok negative content. This is because negative content, for example cyberbullying, has a negative impact on social media users, especially teenagers (Radovic, et al, 2017, p. 12). It would be nice for us to make the best use of the media by creating and/r spreading content that is positively charged. Positive content here means information that has a use value or benefit for the audience. *Da'wah* is certainly one of the positive content. In it can be inserted messages related to education, health, fashion, sports, and others, which lead to religious tolerance.

Islamic content in social media is all information related to Islamic values that are adapted to social media packaging. The form of the message conveyed can vary, depending on what content will be conveyed and what impression you want to leave (Irwandani, 2016, p. 177). *Da'wah* content can contain the latest phenomena seen from an Islamic point of view. It can also be content about daily prayer that we may think is trivial but could be new information for others. We can also create content about motivational words that are useful for social media users in general and TikTok in particular.

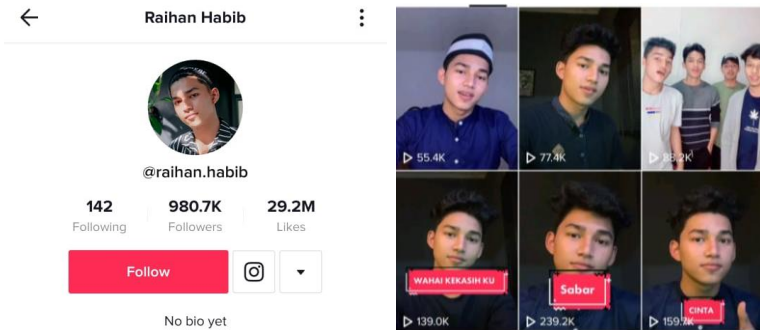
Many academics consider that the quality of TikTok content is very important. Quality of content encompasses ideas, accuracy of information, and video creation techniques. In terms of content ideas, the more creative people are in creating content, the more nitizens access it. Content needs to be tailored to the audience so that they feel relevant and can enjoy the content being shared (Hollenbaugh, 2021, p. 87). In short, content creator must understand social media followers.

Accuracy of information is also vital in creating content. It is related to ethics and norms in social media (Dewi, 2019). This prevents the spread of hoaxes and fake news, where Allah hates the spread of information that is not yet known for sure. Indeed, the credibility of users can fall when he spreads false information. The quality of video uploaded on TikTok is also very crucial to get people's attention.

Figure 2. 'Da'wah accounts on the TikTok application'

| TikTok Account | Followers | Likes |
|----------------|-----------|-------|
| @syam_elmarusy | 3,3m | 81,4m |
| @raihan.habib | 980,7k | 29,2m |
| @muslimvibes | 347,0k | 5,4m |
| @miu.zhr | 47,0k | 2,5m |
| @ziavaxery | 16,8k | 1,3m |
| @iamnisarr | 13,6k | 1,8m |

Current data has shown that many Muslim preachers has created account on TikTok using for *da'wah* to millennial generation. Many have succeeded to be influencers on TikTok with huge followers (see figure 2). Influencer is a concept to describe people who are considered to have the ability to influence other people or organizations. Self-influence is the ability to drive action and receive people's engagement on posts shared by powerful social influencers on social media or in real life (Arora, et al, 2019). An influencer is not always a celebrity, but everyone who can produce the contents that inspire the followers (Enke & Borchers, 2019), including Islamic preachers (*muballigh*). Raihan Habib is one of Islamic preachers who becomes an influencer through *TikTok*. He was born in Medan on September 17, 2002 and becomes one of the "*celeb TikTok@*" (celebrities who are famous on TikTok) by which sharing *da'wah* content to his followers. Raihan discusses daily life problems that usually occur amongst younger generation. Raihan is able to steal the attention of the public through a simple *da'wah* message, and meaningful preaching (*tausiyah*) style.

Figure 3. ‘Raihan Habib's Tiktok account and da’wa content’

Through his account @raihan.habib, he often uploads content in the form of prayers, motivation for teenagers, advice from great Islamic scholars, and prayers. Raihan has been active as a TikTok content creator since February 2020. As of April 2021, he already has 980.7 thousand followers and 29.2 million likes. The following are various kinds of *da'wah* content that Raihan Habib shares on his *TikTok* account:

Patient. Raihan says that when we are in a position of anger, disappointment, and heartbreak, it is better for us to be patient. Maybe Allah is testing His servant to increase his sense of patience. This may be a rebuke for His servant not to hope in anything other than Allah.

Good People/Right People. What Raihan says is that being a good person is still not enough. He gives an analogy that many people out there want to be rich but in the wrong way. Some are rich but become corrupt, some are rich but become drugs dealers. Therefore, be a righteous person because being a good person is not enough.

Absolute Fate. Raihan says that when everything is predetermined by Allah, then no matter how far a person goes, he will keep coming back. Vice versa, no matter how hard we hold on to someone, if we are not destined to be together, then he will stay away. These words are very suitable for teenagers who often feeling blue.

Obligation to Wear Hijab. When we find someone wearing a *hijab* but their attitude or behavior is bad, Raihan tells us to remind them.

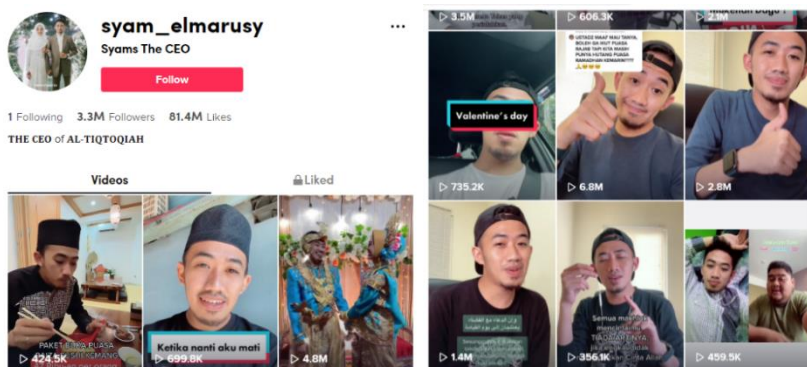
We should not be sarcastic or even insulting someone because of this, because obligations and actions cannot be equated. Wearing the hijab is an obligation while morality is a test for her.

Haram and Halal. *Halal* and unlawful acts are always side by side, depending on the intention. Raihan gives an example of a smartphone, which if it is used to watch da'wah video and to recite the Qur'an, it could be a reward for its users. However, smartphones can also be a cause of sin if we use them to vilify and insult someone through the media.

K POP. In the video he uploaded, Raihan answers a TikTok user's question about can we love K-POP. Raihan's answers that it is okay if we want to know the language, culture, and style of a country, but we better do not follow it because whoever follows a certain community, then he belongs to the people. In other words, he emphasizes that K-POP can be learned but can not be followed.

Five Prophet Muhammad's Ummah Who Do Not Enter Heaven. In this video, Raihan provides knowledge about the five people of the Prophet Muhammad who do not enter heaven. First, people who like to seek face to the authorities. Second, the complainants. Third, humans who sell women as prostitutes. Fourth, humans are unforgiving and arrogant. Fifth, people who are disobedient to their parents.

Figure 4. 'Ustadz Syam's Tiktok account'



Another *muballigh* who becomes famous influencer on TikTok is Ustadz Syamsuddin Nur Makka, well known as Ustadz Syam. He also uses the TikTok application to share *da’wah* messages. He is popular among Indonesian people as he is one of the preachers on TV program named *Islam Itu Indah*. Ustadz Syam starts joining this application in January 2021 with account @Syam_elmarusy. He currently has 3.3 million followers and 81.4 million likes. The way he constructs the *da’wah* messages on *TikTok* follows the current, namely using casual language style that is dominantly used by youth. Videos that are often shared are about prayers, Islamic and *tausiyah*. He also often participates in responding to booming/trending phenomena. Jama'ah *Al-tiqtoqiah* (a play on TikTok's followers) is a term commonly used by Ustadz Syam to greet his audience on *TikTok*. Responses from *TikTok netizens* are very good that can be seen from the replies of the *netizens* which are mostly positive.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the research, it can be concluded that the spread of religious moderation values need to be conducted in a creative and fun way, for the younger generation as target audience in particular. *Mubaligh* (Islamic preachers) nowadays need to take advantages of various social media, including *TikTok*. Indeed, *TikTok* as one of the social media applications that has been downloaded by millions people around the world has become an alternative *da’wah* media chosen by Indonesian Islamic preachers to convey *da’wah* messages. Moreover, *TikTok* can be a *da’wah* media used for spreading moderate Islamic teachings, particularly for younger Muslim generations.

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