

Radical Shaming Ahead of the Aceh Regional Election: The Urgency of Religious Moderation in Instilling Ethical Values on Social Media

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Abstract

This article aims to analyze the phenomenon of *radical shaming* that has become prevalent ahead of the Aceh local elections, as well as the urgency of religious moderation in instilling ethical values on social media. *Radical shaming* refers to the practice of labeling certain individuals or groups as radical as a political tool to discredit them, particularly in Aceh, a region with a history of conflict and complex religious dynamics. This article falls under library research with a qualitative approach. The methodology used is descriptive analysis. The research findings conclude two main points. First, *radical shaming* has proven to be a tactic that exacerbates political and social polarization in Aceh, not only intensifying political competition but also undermining social cohesion. Second, the urgency of promoting ethical moderation through official institutions is crucial in preventing the spread of slander and disinformation on social media. Through a more structured and authoritative moderation approach, Aceh is expected to foster a more ethical and harmonious public sphere in the context of religion and politics.

Keywords: *Radical Shaming, Religious Moderation, Social Media*

Abstract

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis fenomena *radical shaming* yang marak menjelang Pilkada Aceh serta urgensi moderasi beragama dalam menanamkan nilai etis di media sosial. *Radical shaming* merujuk pada praktik tuduhan radikal yang digunakan sebagai alat politik untuk mendiskreditkan pihak tertentu, terutama di wilayah Aceh yang memiliki sejarah konflik dan dinamika keagamaan yang kompleks. Artikel ini tergolong dalam penelitian pustaka dengan pendekatan kualitatif. Metodologi yang digunakan adalah studi analisis deskriptif. Hasil penelitian menyimpulkan dua hal utama. Pertama, *radical shaming* terbukti sebagai taktik yang memperuncing polarisasi politik dan sosial di Aceh, yang tidak hanya memperburuk kontestasi politik tetapi juga merusak kohesi sosial. Kedua, urgensi sosialisasi etika moderasi secara otoritatif melalui lembaga-lembaga resmi sangat diperlukan untuk mencegah penyebaran fitnah dan disinformasi di media sosial. Melalui pendekatan moderasi yang lebih terstruktur dan diawasi oleh otoritas, Aceh diharapkan dapat menciptakan ruang publik yang lebih etis dan harmonis dalam konteks keberagamaan dan politik.

Kata Kunci; *Radical Shaming, Moderasi Beragama, Sosial Media*

INTRODUCTION

Aceh, with its long history and strong religious identity, often faces various socio-political dynamics that reflect tensions between tradition and modernity. The Aceh Regional Election frequently becomes a crucial moment where religious sentiments are intertwined with politics.¹ One phenomenon that has increasingly emerged ahead of the election is 'radical shaming,' which refers to the act of slandering or accusing someone, including political candidates, of being radical or extremist. This phenomenon often stems from differences in religious practices or political views. Radical shaming is carried out through various media, particularly social media, where the content disseminated is often provocative and inaccurate. This, of course, has detrimental effects on social order and democracy in Aceh.

Ideally, social media as a digital public space should serve as a platform for ethical discussion, where differing views are respected and information shared is based on facts. Election candidates and the public should be able to use these platforms to promote positive, constructive ideas. However, the reality is quite different. In Aceh, ahead of the election, social media often becomes a venue for slander, hoaxes, and hate speech. Groundless accusations of radicalism are frequently hurled at candidates with differing religious or political views, which is a common ethical violation.² For example, someone may easily be labeled as radical simply because their views on Islam do not align with a particular group or even due to minor differences in religious interpretation.

This issue is further exacerbated by the lack of regulation and oversight regarding the content circulated on social media. There is no specific 'administrator' or authority consistently filtering content to determine its truth or to evaluate whether it violates ethical norms. Unless reported by other users, harmful content continues to spread without any firm action being taken.³ The presence of 'radical shaming' not only taints the election process but also undermines the ethical and moral values that should serve as the foundation of society. This situation sharpens

¹ David Kloos, *Becoming Better Muslims: Religious Authority and Ethical Improvement in Aceh, Indonesia* (USA: Princeton University Press, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctvc77k9j>.

² Mursyidin Mursyidin et al., "The Metaphor of Aceh Language on Instagram Social Media: Potential and Threats of Hate Speech in the Public Space," *Retorika: Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, Dan Pengajarannya* 15, no. 1 (April 2, 2022): 1–11, <https://doi.org/10.26858/retorika.v15i1.23694>.

³ John McCarthy and Mulyadi Sumarto, "Distributional Politics and Social Protection in Indonesia: Dilemma of Layering, Nesting and Social Fit in Jokowi's Poverty Policy," *Journal of Southeast Asian Economies* 35, no. 2 (2018): 223–36.

polarization within the community, where candidates, instead of being assessed based on their capabilities and programs, are criticized due to baseless religious accusations.

Therefore, the focus of this research is on how the phenomenon of 'radical shaming' on social media ahead of the Aceh Regional Election is damaging democratic and social ethics. This phenomenon affects not only political candidates but also society, which becomes increasingly polarized by inaccurate radical narratives. Considering the importance of ethical values in social and political interactions, there is a significant urgency to instill religious moderation as a solution to this issue. Religious moderation can serve as a foundation for building communication ethics on social media so that differences in views no longer become a reason to spread slander or hatred.

This research aims to analyze the phenomenon of 'radical shaming' on social media ahead of the Aceh Regional Election and the urgency of religious moderation in instilling ethical values in digital communication. The study also seeks to identify strategies that can be implemented by the government, religious institutions, and society to combat the spread of radical content and raise awareness of the importance of ethics in social media communication. Thus, this research hopes to provide practical solutions in fostering a healthier and more dignified political environment in Aceh, particularly ahead of the election.

The study of radicalism, religious moderation, and ethical values in social media is not a new discourse, as many scholars have explored these topics using various approaches and methods. Tabroni and Idham, in their publication titled '*From Radical Labels to Moderate Islam: The Transformation of the Salafism Movement in Indonesia*,' have constructively discussed how the shift from radical to moderate views in the contemporary Salafi movement in Indonesia occurred through significant adaptation mechanisms. One key factor in this transformation is the strategic role of institutions such as Dewan Dakwah Islam Indonesia (DDII) and the Institute for Islamic and Arabic Studies (LIPIA), which promote dialogue and understanding of national and democratic values.⁴ This publication shares similarities with the author's study in the context of radical and religious moderation issues. The difference is that while the above publication focuses on exploring the transformation within the Salafi group, the author focuses more on exploring radical accusations and the importance of religious moderation in Aceh.

Salmiah Sapar et al., in their article titled "*Analisis Ujaran Kebencian dalam Komentar Wacana Politik Menjelang Pemilu 2024 di Twitter*," have systematically described how the increase in hate

⁴ Roni Tabroni and Idham Idham, "From Radical Labels to Moderate Islam: The Transformation of the Salafism Movement in Indonesia," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 13, no. 2 (December 31, 2023): 279–306, <https://doi.org/10.18326/ijims.v13i2.279-306>.

speech ahead of the 2024 election on Twitter is triggered by anonymity on social media, making users feel unidentifiable, thus making them more likely to comment with harsh and demeaning language. Additionally, polarization among supporters of different candidates creates an intense competitive atmosphere where insults and defamation are used to discredit opponents.⁵ The article above shares similarities with the author's study in the context of the rise of hate speech ahead of elections. The difference is that while the article above focuses on analyzing hate speech in general, the author focuses more on analyzing hate speech in the context of accusations of radicalism, heresy, deviance, or liberalism against political figures in Aceh.

Jasminto, in his work titled "*Etika Pendidikan Islam Berbasis Moderasi Beragama di Era Digital*," has excellently outlined the ethical challenges of education, particularly in the context of increasingly massive online activity. The article highlights the importance of religious moderation as an ethical control to counter fanaticism and debates in cyberspace that often ignore moral values. The author also offers solutions through an Islamic education model based on neo-Aristotelian theory, which provides a strong ethical foundation to shape virtuous behavior and moral vocabulary, relevant for creating harmony amid 21st-century diversity.⁶ The work above shares similarities with the author's study in the context of the importance of ethical education and the socialization of moderation in the digital era. The difference is that while Jasminto focuses solely on the dimension of Islamic education, the author focuses more on the realms of politics and nationalistic ideals.

After conducting various literature reviews, based on the author's analysis, no existing work specifically addresses "*Radical Shaming Ahead of the Aceh Local Election; The Urgency of Religious Moderation in Instilling Ethical Values on Social Media*." This research occupies a unique position compared to existing works, as studies related to religious moderation generally focus on radicalism or extremism issues in general, without highlighting specific phenomena like radical shaming in the context of local elections. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on the phenomenon of 'radical shaming' ahead of the Aceh Local Election, where radical accusations against political and religious figures become increasingly rampant, yet no study has thoroughly explored it. This phenomenon is important to study because it has the potential to influence public perception, exacerbate polarization, and create slander within society. In the digital era and social media rife

⁵ Salmiah Sapar, Andi Adam, and Rahmatiah Rahmatiah, "Analisis Ujaran Kebencian Dalam Komentar Wacana Politik Menjelang Pemilu 2024 Di Twitter," *Jurnal Pendidikan Tambusai* 8, no. 1 (March 25, 2024): 12464–79, <https://doi.org/10.31004/jptam.v8i1.14287>.

⁶ Jasminto Jasminto, "Etika Pendidikan Islam Berbasis Moderasi Beragama di Era Digital," *Proceedings of Annual Conference for Muslim Scholars* 6, no. 1 (April 15, 2022): 121–35, <https://doi.org/10.36835/ancoms.v6i1.404>.

with disinformation, ignoring this phenomenon could negatively impact the democratic process and social harmony.

The phenomenon of 'radical shaming' ahead of the Aceh Local Election can be analyzed through the lens of digital communication and social conflict theories. Social media provides an open space for the public to express opinions, but without clear regulation, it is often used to spread slander and accusations of radicalism.⁷ Social polarization due to differences in religious and political views in Aceh is often exploited to undermine political opponents through provocative and radical content on social media. The theory of religious moderation becomes important in addressing the spread of radical content.⁸ Religious moderation emphasizes the importance of balance and respect for differing viewpoints, promoting the application of non-extreme religious values.

In the context of Aceh, the socialization of religious moderation plays a role in countering content that disrupts social harmony, aiming to create a more peaceful and tolerant environment. Furthermore, the theory of communication ethics and legitimacy of authority explains the importance of regulation and ethical awareness in social media use. Social media users must be morally responsible for spreading accurate and non-misleading information⁹. The government and related institutions, such as the Ministry of Religious Affairs, can act as authorities to socialize religious moderation and social media ethics, thereby reducing the spread of radical content and maintaining order in information dissemination ahead of the Local Election.

METHODS

This article is categorized as library research with a qualitative approach. This approach is used to understand the phenomenon of radical shaming leading up to the Aceh regional elections (Pilkada) and the urgency of religious moderation in instilling ethical values on social media. The research focuses on gathering and analyzing relevant literature to depict the socio-political dynamics and communication patterns occurring on social media related to accusations of radicalism. The methodology employed in this study is descriptive analysis, aimed at describing and interpreting the radical shaming phenomenon and the importance of religious moderation. The research seeks to comprehensively illustrate the phenomenon through a literature review that supports the arguments presented.

⁷ Philipp Budka and Birgit Bräuchler, *Theorising Media and Conflict*, 1st ed., vol. 10 (Germany: Berghahn Books, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1tbhqdw>.

⁸ William Egginton, *In Defense of Religious Moderation* (USA: Columbia University Press, 2011), <https://doi.org/10.7312/eggi14878>.

⁹ Naveed Yazdani and Hasan S. Murad, "Toward an Ethical Theory of Organizing," *Journal of Business Ethics* 127, no. 2 (2015): 399–417.

The primary data sources for this research are scholarly journals published in the last 10 years, focusing on social media studies, Aceh's politics, and religious moderation. These journals provide a solid theoretical and empirical foundation for discussing radical shaming and religious moderation. Secondary data sources include books, magazines, online news, and other relevant articles, offering additional perspectives on Aceh's socio-political situation, social media development, and its influence on political communication patterns and religious practices. The study uses content analysis techniques, aiming to interpret the content and context of the data obtained. Validation testing is carried out using data triangulation, where results from various sources are verified and compared to ensure the consistency and validity of the findings. The final results of this analysis will be compiled into a comprehensive and systematic research draft, highlighting the urgency of religious moderation in addressing radical shaming ahead of the Aceh regional elections.

DISCUSSION

Political Perspective of Acehnese Society

The Acehnese society has a complex and troubled political history in its relationship with the government of the Republic of Indonesia (RI). This relationship is not only shaped by political factors but also deeply influenced by Aceh's social, cultural, and religious background. Dissatisfaction and distrust toward the central government have become deeply rooted in Acehnese society, creating ongoing doubts and skepticism.¹⁰ One of the main reasons for the often-tense relations between Aceh and the Indonesian government is a painful historical experience. When Indonesia gained independence, Soekarno, the first president, promised to make Aceh a special region governed by Islamic law (Sharia).

However, that promise was never fulfilled, leaving a deep sense of disappointment among the Acehnese. This unkept promise formed a historical narrative linking the central government with neglect and oppression. After the proclamation of independence, Aceh consistently supported the losing political side in national elections. This phenomenon shows that, although the people of Aceh have equal voting rights, they often feel marginalized in political decision-making.¹¹ This disappointment further strengthens anti-government sentiment in Acehnese society, which feels that its voices and aspirations are ignored and overlooked by the central government.

¹⁰ Ajidar Matsyah and Umar Bin Abdul Aziz, "Pasang Surut Hubungan Aceh - Jakarta Pasca MoU Helsinki," *Jurnal Adabiyā* 23, no. 2 (August 28, 2021): 255, <https://doi.org/10.22373/adabiyā.v23i2.10539>.

¹¹ M. Anzaikhan, Syamsul Bahri, and Sufrizal Sufrizal, "Adaptation of Religious Moderation: Dispersion of Wasathiyah Islam as the Treasure of PTKIN in Aceh," *Al-Qalam* 29, no. 1 (June 17, 2023): 38–50, <https://doi.org/10.31969/alq.v29i1.1242>.

This historical background is further exacerbated by political figures who exploit the dissatisfaction of Acehnese society for personal or group interests. Some politicians use strategies to reinforce negative narratives against the Indonesian government by continuously spreading hate speech. This rhetoric is often directed specifically at the central government, particularly those with ties to nationalist parties or descendants of Soekarno, who are seen as symbols of betrayal of past promises. This creates a political environment rife with conflict and hostility, where constructive dialogue and collaboration between Acehnese society and the government are often hindered.

Interested parties take advantage of this dissatisfaction to deepen the divide, hoping to gain greater political support from the Acehnese by diverting their attention from the fundamental issues that truly need to be addressed. The tension between Aceh and the central government is also evident in policy development that often lacks sensitivity to Aceh's social and cultural context. When the government implements policies without considering local values, resistance frequently arises from the Acehnese. This creates a recurring cycle, where the government feels alienated, while the Acehnese feel neglected.¹²

The political process in Aceh not only involves national issues but also highlights a strong local identity. The people of Aceh tend to prioritize their regional interests over national ones, which are often seen as threats to their culture and traditions. This creates a unique political dynamic, where debates about identity and autonomy become central.¹³ The Acehnese society's skepticism toward the central government is also influenced by injustices they have experienced in the past. In many cases, the people of Aceh feel that they have been victimized by various policies that do not consider their social and cultural impact. These injustices not only foster dissatisfaction but also strengthen a strong sense of identity within Acehnese society, further deepening political differences.

Radical Shaming and Social Media

Etimologically, Radical Shaming originates from two words: radical, meaning extreme or relating to something fundamental, and shaming, which means to embarrass or ridicule. Terminologically, Radical Shaming refers to the act of shaming an individual or group by highlighting or manipulating the radical aspects of their views or behavior. The term has emerged in the political arena as a form of verbal abuse or rhetoric aimed at discrediting opponents. Conceptually, Radical Shaming is

¹² Bambang Satriya, Andi Suwirta, and Ayi Budi Santosa, "Ulama Pejuang dari Serambi Mekkah: Teungku Muhammad Daud Beureueuh dan Peranannya dalam Revolusi Indonesia di Aceh, 1945-1950," *Insancita: Journal of Islamic Studies in Indonesia and Southeast Asia*. 4, no. 1 (November 2, 2019): 35–54, <https://doi.org/10.2121/incipit-jisisea.v4i1.1198>.

¹³ Jess Melvin, Sri Lestari Wahyuningroem, and Annie Pohlman, *Resisting Indonesia's Culture of Impunity: Aceh's Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, 1st ed. (Australia: ANU Press, 2023), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/jj.12639064>.

similar to body shaming, which involves humiliating someone for their appearance, but in the political context, it targets someone's beliefs, views, or actions that are considered radical to damage their public image.¹⁴

In Aceh, the phenomenon of Radical Shaming becomes increasingly prominent during political events, such as elections and local government races (Pilkada). Verbal attacks and structured negative campaigns are often used to tarnish the image of political opponents. A concrete example can be found in various local political events where organized smear campaigns are executed by parties seeking to undermine their rivals.¹⁵ These attacks not only target individuals personally but also exploit their radical past, often tying them to sensitive issues such as the implementation of Islamic law (Sharia) in Aceh or their connections with the central government. Social media has become an unchecked medium where Radical Shaming thrives. On these platforms, narratives highlighting the negative past of individuals or groups are often circulated to damage reputations.

As elections or Pilkada approach, political figures in Aceh are frequently subjected to accusations or defamation that spread rapidly online. A person's digital footprint, such as past statements or actions, is often dug up and circulated widely, with the aim of discrediting them in the eyes of the public. A notable example is Prabowo Subianto, a figure who has often been the target of Radical Shaming, particularly for his involvement during the conflict in Aceh. Past issues regarding Prabowo's role in military operations in Aceh are frequently brought up to stir resentment among the Acehnese public. The narratives disseminated through social media and smear campaigns aim to remind the public of past events that remain sensitive for many in Aceh. However, what is interesting is that when waves of support for Prabowo emerged in Aceh, the issue of Radical Shaming tended to subside. When Prabowo received wide support from Acehnese society, negative attacks against him diminished.¹⁶

This illustrates that Radical Shaming is often orchestrated by certain parties with political interests, rather than being based purely on truth or justice. When a targeted figure becomes a public favorite, these attacks are seemingly postponed or ignored. After Prabowo was endorsed by President Jokowi in various political agendas, especially leading up to elections, the Radical Shaming

¹⁴ Maria Devika Donita Dacosta, M. K. P. Abdi Keraf, and Yeni Damayanti, "Body Shaming with Acceptance of Body Shape in Female Students," *Journal of Health and Behavioral Science* 5, no. 1 (May 29, 2023): 150–58, <https://doi.org/10.35508/jhbs.v5i1.9231>.

¹⁵ Raja Marwazi and Siti Fatimah, "Demokrasi Dan Partai Lokal: Mencermati Dinamika Pemilihan Umum Di Aceh," *Politica: Jurnal Hukum Tata Negara Dan Politik Islam* 10, no. 1 (June 9, 2023): 70–82, <https://doi.org/10.32505/politica.v10i1.6134>.

¹⁶ Edward Aspinall, "Oligarchic Populism: Prabowo Subianto's Challenge to Indonesian Democracy," *Cornell University Press* 1, no. 99 (2015): 1–28, <https://doi.org/10.5728/indonesia.99.0001>.

phenomenon resurfaced. This time, past issues surrounding Prabowo's controversial history were brought back into the spotlight. Political actors who felt threatened by Prabowo's influence began reusing old narratives to diminish his credibility. Issues such as Prabowo's involvement in the Aceh conflict and alleged human rights violations became hot topics on social media once again.

The increased attacks on Prabowo following his alliance with Jokowi can be attributed to intensifying political competition. Those who felt their positions threatened by the Prabowo-Jokowi coalition resorted to all means to tarnish their opponents' image, including reviving past issues. Aceh, with its complex political history, became one of the regions where these narratives were easily disseminated. On the other hand, Radical Shaming in Aceh not only targets national figures like Prabowo but also local leaders with significant influence.¹⁷ These smear campaigns are often used by political rivals to undermine candidates with strong potential for electoral success.

Similar to the attacks on Prabowo, accusations of radicalism are often used to corner local figures with histories or ties to certain groups. The phenomenon of Radical Shaming in Aceh shows how social media can be used as a tool to shape public political perception. With the widespread circulation of unverified information, people can be influenced to view someone negatively solely based on their past actions that have been unearthed. This phenomenon not only damages the democratic process but also exacerbates political polarization within society.

Radical Content: Political Drama or Hidden Reality?

In recent years, social media in Aceh has become a medium filled with radical content, particularly exploiting the long history of conflict between Aceh and the Republic of Indonesia (RI). In the limitless digital world, radical narratives easily spread across various platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. A common characteristic of this content involves retelling past events, especially those related to the armed conflict between Aceh and the RI.¹⁸ These narratives are often presented in ways that stir public emotions, reminding them of past suffering and linking it to the injustices that may still be felt today.

A distinctive feature of this radical content is the use of religious narratives to justify political struggles. While the Aceh-RI conflict was primarily driven by political and economic issues, in the radical content circulating on social media, it is often reframed as a battle between religion (Islam) and a state perceived as un-Islamic. These narratives portray RI as an entity that failed to

¹⁷ Alda Marsya Ayudia, Wahyudi Joko Santoso, and Rustono Rustono, "Konstruksi Realitas pada Media Massa Detik.com dalam Berita Seputar Pendaftaran Calon Presiden 2024-2029 Pasangan Prabowo-Gibran," *Basastra* 13, no. 1 (May 5, 2024): 1–10, <https://doi.org/10.24114/bss.v13i1.54108>.

¹⁸ Putri Maulina, Raudhatun Nafisah, and Rachmatika Lestari, "Literasi Digital Masyarakat Aceh dalam Menggunakan Media Sosial Terhadap Isu-Isu Radikalisme," *Teungku: Jurnal Islam Pesantren, Pendidikan dan sosial* 1, no. 1 (August 11, 2022): 47–66, <https://jurnal.staidarulhikmah.ac.id/index.php/jip/article/view/3>.

respect Aceh's struggle to fully implement Islamic law. Such content encourages Aceh's people to question RI's commitment to Islam while rekindling memories of unfulfilled promises from the past.

Radical content on Aceh's social media frequently includes historical photos and videos from the conflict era. These visuals emphasize the significance of Aceh's struggle and are paired with messages urging the public to continue what is termed the 'unfinished fight.' Islamic symbols are often used extensively to garner sympathy, including Quranic verses, hadiths, images of mosques, and depictions of jihad fighters. While much of this radical content can be seen as a political strategy to gain public support, it is undeniable that some of it carries more dangerous intentions.¹⁹ These messages could potentially be used as tools to radicalize the Acehnese, especially the youth who are still searching for their identity and might feel frustrated by the political and economic conditions in the region. In this context, social media becomes a fertile ground for actors looking to plant radical ideologies under the guise of religion.

One of the reasons for the rise of radical content in Aceh leading up to elections is political. Politicians or certain groups often exploit the public's sentiments toward the past conflict as a tool to win the people's hearts. Radical narratives, though extreme, are frequently employed to create polarization in society. This polarization is then expected to benefit particular parties attempting to steer public opinion in favor of candidates or parties aligned with radical narratives. Political campaigns in Aceh often utilize radical issues to garner support. For instance, by spreading narratives that a particular candidate or party is not Islamic enough or lacks commitment to upholding Islamic law. This tactic is commonly used to discredit political opponents perceived to be more aligned with the central government or nationalist parties. Consequently, Acehnese people who still feel that they have not fully gained freedom or are dissatisfied with peace agreements like the Helsinki MoU could be swayed into supporting candidates viewed as more radical and anti-government.

Behind this political drama, however, lies an undeniable reality: some radical content on Aceh's social media may represent hidden intentions from groups genuinely aiming to separate Aceh from RI. These groups may no longer have the military strength they once did, but they still exist beneath the surface, spreading their ideology through social media. They aspire for Aceh to once again fight for independence, using religion as the primary justification. This covert radicalism

¹⁹ Jon Paisal, Hasnadi Hasnadi, and Anwar Anwar, "Strategi Ulama Dayah Dalam Penangkalan Radikalisme Pada Kalangan Santri," *Tazkir: Jurnal Penelitian Ilmu-Ilmu Sosial Dan Keislaman* 7, no. 2 (December 27, 2021): 207–20, <https://doi.org/10.24952/tazkir.v7i2.4460>.

does not typically manifest openly. They do not directly urge the public to take up arms, but through subtle narratives, they plant seeds of doubt regarding Acehnese loyalty to RI.²⁰ They promote the idea that Aceh should become an independent Islamic state, detached from RI, with Islamic law as the legitimate foundation. These messages often cite radical clerics or figures supporting separatist ideologies under the guise of religious struggle.

One group frequently mentioned in this context includes sympathizers of Darul Islam or the Free Aceh Movement (GAM), who still hold ideological influence despite their weakened military presence. Through social media, these groups attempt to recruit and radicalize Acehnese youth, instilling the belief that they have a moral and religious obligation to continue the struggle. They aim to stir dissatisfaction with Aceh's current political and economic situation, while emphasizing that only by separating from RI can Aceh once again thrive under the banner of Islam.

Although these groups may be small in number, the impact of their ideology on social media cannot be overlooked. They skillfully exploit loopholes in social media policies to spread their propaganda undetected by authorities. Additionally, they leverage the Acehnese diaspora abroad, many of whom still sympathize with the idea of Aceh's independence, to disseminate these radical messages to the people of Aceh. This issue becomes even more complex when linked to the fact that Aceh has special autonomy and implements Islamic law, setting it apart from other regions in Indonesia. However, the radical intentions behind this social media content clearly extend beyond just the application of Islamic law. They seek complete separation from RI, using religion as a shield. Therefore, the radical narratives on Aceh's social media are not merely a political issue but also represent a potential threat to national integration.²¹

In this situation, the government and security forces must be more vigilant in monitoring radical content on Aceh's social media. They must distinguish between mere political theater aimed at smear campaigns and content that genuinely holds the potential to become a radical movement threatening national stability. Furthermore, the Acehnese public must critically evaluate the information they encounter on social media. Not everything cloaked in religious rhetoric and the language of struggle is the truth—sometimes, it is merely a ploy to divide the nation.

The Urgency of Religious Moderation for the General Public

The urgency of promoting religious moderation among the general public has become increasingly important, particularly in the context of Aceh, a region with a long history of Islam and Sharia law.

²⁰ Aminah Aminah and Novita Sari, "Dampak Hoax di Media Sosial Facebook Terhadap Pemilih Pemula," *Jurnal Komunikasi Global* 8, no. 1 (July 29, 2019): 51–61, <https://doi.org/10.24815/jkg.v8i1.13565>.

²¹ Rini Marlina, Suraiya It, and Syarifuddin Syarifuddin, "Paham Radikal dalam Pandangan Tokoh Agama di Banda Aceh," *Jurnal Pemikiran Islam* 1, no. 2 (December 5, 2021): 190–207, <https://doi.org/10.22373/jpi.v2i1.11475>.

Religious moderation is not merely an abstract religious concept, but rather a guide for maintaining balance between strong beliefs and openness to diversity. It offers a middle path between extremism and excessive liberalism in religion, making it highly relevant in a society as diverse in thought and social background as Aceh.²² Furthermore, the general public, who are often the target of misinformation and hate-inducing content, urgently need an understanding of moderation to maintain social harmony and prevent horizontal conflicts.

In Aceh, this urgency is heightened by the political exploitation of religion, which often distorts public understanding of the true essence of Islamic teachings. Politics, being inherently pragmatic, sees many political elites prioritizing group interests over the sustainability of social peace. As a result, many politicians are reluctant to focus on educating the public through religious moderation, as they find that a uniform and extremist mindset is easier to control. This neglect has led to the general public in Aceh lacking critical awareness of the religious content they consume, especially in this digital era.

In the age of widespread social media, the general public in Aceh is often exposed to unfiltered content containing hate narratives, misinformation, and narrow religious interpretations. Such content is typically presented in engaging and easily accessible formats, making it quickly accepted without any verification or deeper reflection. This poses a serious challenge, as it erodes the values of religious moderation that should have been instilled from an early age. Promoting religious moderation through social media becomes a highly strategic solution to this issue, given that social media is one of the most effective platforms for quickly and efficiently delivering messages to the wider community.²³

Religious moderation is also essential in countering the rise of radicalism, which often flourishes in communities that lack a balanced understanding of religion. The general public, if not equipped with a moderate worldview, becomes more susceptible to radical teachings that emphasize exclusivity and violence in the name of religion. In many cases, radical groups exploit the ignorance of the general public to spread ideologies that disrupt social order and create tensions between groups. Therefore, it is crucial to strengthen the promotion of religious moderation as a preventive measure against the spread of radical ideologies in society.

²² Nirzalin and Yogi Febriandi, “Aswaja Mobilization and Intolerance: Sub-State Ideology, Religious Vigilantism in Aceh, Indonesia,” *Cogent Social Sciences* 8, no. 1 (December 31, 2022): 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311886.2022.2089382>.

²³ Elly Yuliawati and Ispawati Asri, “Religious Moderation: An Analysis of Understanding, Internet and Social Media Exposure and Social Interaction Systems,” *Jurnal The Messenger* 14, no. 2 (April 12, 2024): 158–79, <https://doi.org/10.26623/themessenger.v14i2.2812>.

The responsibility of promoting religious moderation does not lie solely with the government, but also involves various elements of society, including religious scholars, community leaders, educators, and social activists. These stakeholders must work together to convey the importance of religious moderation through various platforms, both in the real world and in the virtual space. Religious scholars, as respected figures with significant influence in Aceh, should take the lead in delivering messages of moderation to the public.²⁴ They play a key role in explaining that Islam is a religion that teaches peace, tolerance, and mutual respect, far removed from the violence or intolerance often propagated by extremist groups.

In addition to religious scholars, the government also plays a vital role in supporting and facilitating the spread of religious moderation among the general public. The government must establish policies that foster healthy interfaith dialogue. This can be achieved by strengthening moderate religious education in schools, providing inclusive discussion spaces, and supporting community initiatives that promote religious moderation. The government should also monitor and take firm action against the dissemination of hate-filled and radical content on social media. However, the biggest challenge in promoting religious moderation to the general public is how to shift mindsets that have been shaped over many years. In Aceh, for instance, the public tends to have very conservative views on religion, especially given the implementation of Sharia law in the region.

This makes the acceptance of the idea of moderation more difficult. Thus, efforts to promote religious moderation must be gradual and prudent, using approaches that are non-confrontational, focusing instead on explaining the essence of moderation as aligned with Islamic teachings. During this process, it is important to emphasize that moderation does not imply compromising religious values, but rather represents a deep and balanced understanding of religion. Religious moderation teaches believers to remain steadfast in their faith while being tolerant and open to differences. This message should be delivered in a way that is easy for the general public to understand, so they do not perceive moderation as a dilution of their religious identity. One effective approach is to use local narratives that resonate with the daily lives of the people.²⁵ For instance, connecting the concept of moderation with Aceh's local wisdom, which upholds values

²⁴ Ahmad Havid Jakiyudin, "Urgensi Literasi Moderasi Beragama Dalam Ruang Bermedia Sosial Perspektif Al Qur'an," *Jurnal Penelitian* 17, no. 1 (September 18, 2023): 105–30, <https://doi.org/10.21043/jp.v17i1.17148>.

²⁵ Imran Muhammad, "Fenomenologis Moderasi Beragama pada Madrasah di Aceh," *Jurnal MUDARRISUNA: Media Kajian Pendidikan Agama Islam* 12, no. 4 (December 31, 2022): 980–95, <https://doi.org/10.22373/jm.v12i4.17289>.

of tolerance and mutual cooperation. By doing so, religious moderation will not feel foreign or imposed, but rather as something that is already part of Aceh's cultural fabric.

The Importance of Promoting Ethical Values in Social Media Usage

Social media has become an inseparable part of modern life, including in Aceh. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok offer easy access and use, allowing people of all ages and backgrounds to interact quickly and effectively. Social media brings many benefits, such as effortless communication, instant access to information, and a platform for freely expressing opinions. In some cases, social media is also used for educational purposes, religious outreach, and building positive communities.²⁶ The popularity of social media in Aceh is undeniable, especially with the increasing number of religious leaders, public figures, and politicians utilizing these platforms to reach their followers and supporters. However, alongside these conveniences, there are darker aspects that often cause problems.

One of the major issues in social media usage is the lack of strict regulations or dedicated administrators responsible for filtering content to determine what is accurate and what is false. There is also no consistent moderation to ensure that content upholds moral or ethical standards. Unless content severely crosses the line, it is typically blocked or removed only after being reported by users. However, if no reports are made, harmful content such as misinformation, hate speech, or hoaxes can easily reach the public. This is particularly dangerous for the general public, who may lack the ability to critically verify the information they receive. One common ethical violation on social media is *radical shaming*. This involves accusations often made against individuals who practice religion in a way that differs from the mainstream, frequently used to discredit or undermine religious or societal figures.

These accusations are usually not based on solid evidence but are instead rooted in assumptions or even defamation. This phenomenon is highly dangerous as it can damage someone's reputation within seconds and create negative perceptions that are difficult to reverse, especially among the general public who quickly accept information from social media without verification. A clear example is the accusations made against Ustaz Abdul Somad when he visited the grave of a religious scholar. A video was deliberately edited and falsely accused him of committing *shirk* (idolatry) by supposedly praying to the grave. In reality, visiting graves is not considered *shirk* in proper Islamic teachings, and there was no evidence that Abdul Somad did what

²⁶ Putri Septi Pratiwi et al., "Moderasi Beragama dan Media Sosial (Studi Analisis Konten Instagram & Tik-Tok)," *Jurnal Dakwah dan Komunikasi* 6, no. 1 (June 24, 2021): 83–94, <https://doi.org/10.29240/jdk.v6i1.2959>.

was claimed.²⁷ However, because the video was edited and paired with misleading narration, many people believed it without seeking clarification or more accurate information. Consequently, this defamation spread widely among the public, tarnishing Abdul Somad's image as a respected scholar.

Another similar case involves the defamation of Qurais Shihab. At one point, he explained that even Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) would not be guaranteed entry into paradise without Allah's approval, a statement the Prophet himself made to his companions as a sign of humility. However, a content creator seeking attention clipped part of the video, leading people to believe that Qurais Shihab claimed "the Prophet Muhammad is not guaranteed entry to paradise," without providing full context. The edited video quickly went viral and caused a major uproar among the general public, with Qurais Shihab being falsely accused of being deviant, radical, and even a dangerous scholar.²⁸

Radical shaming also occurs within political contexts, especially in Aceh. When a moderate scholar, Tu Sop, ran for governor of Aceh, a barrage of defamatory accusations and radical labels appeared on social media. Tu Sop, known for his moderation and extensive knowledge, was accused of being radical and Wahhabi, baseless allegations likely propagated by political opponents or radical groups opposed to his candidacy. This illustrates how radical shaming has become a political weapon in the digital age, severely damaging democracy and society. The solution to these problems is to strengthen ethical standards in social media use. Content circulating on social media must adhere to clear ethical guidelines, including language usage, age appropriateness, and particularly with regards to accusations or false reports.²⁹ Education on the importance of verifying information before sharing it is also crucial. Social media users need to be taught to think critically about the information they receive and share, especially when it involves religious or political figures. Furthermore, governments and social media platforms must collaborate to monitor and take firm action against hate speech, defamation, and hoaxes.

Ethical behavior on social media is not just about refraining from spreading misleading content, but also about how we interact with others online. Social media users should avoid using offensive, derogatory, or disrespectful language, especially in discussions related to religion or politics. Provocative content only serves to inflame tensions and worsen polarization already

²⁷ Mariana, "Kebiasaan Ziarah di Bulan Safar, Ustadz Abdul Somad Jabarkan Makna Tawassul," Banjarmasinpost.co.id, 2022, <https://banjarmasin.tribunnews.com/2022/08/25/kebiasaan-ziarah-di-bulan-safar-ustadz-abdul-somad-jabarkan-makna-tawassul>.

²⁸ Didi Purwadi, "Ini Klarifikasi Quraish Shihab Soal Komentarnya 'Rasul Tidak Dijamin Masuk Surga,'" Republika Online, 2014, <https://republika.co.id/berita/nasional/umum/14/07/16/n8rzyk-ini-klarifikasi-quraish-shihab-soal-komentarnya-rasul-tidak-dijamin-masuk-surga>.

²⁹ Teuku Zulkhairi, *Paradigma Islam Wasathiyah Tu Sop Jeunieb* (Banda Aceh: UIN Ar-Raniry, 2023), <https://repository.ar-raniry.ac.id/id/eprint/29380/>.

present in society. Therefore, ethical content is essential to maintaining calm and balance in the digital space. It is also important to emphasize the need for stricter oversight of social media usage by minors.³⁰ Children and adolescents, who are often emotionally and intellectually immature, are particularly vulnerable to misinformation and hate speech on social media. They may not yet possess the ability to discern truth from falsehood, making them highly susceptible to harmful content. Thus, parental supervision and proper digital education are crucial in preventing the negative effects of social media on younger generations.

Authority Moderation: A Solution to Radical Shaming in Aceh

As a region with a majority Muslim population, Aceh has a homogeneous character that distinguishes it from the larger cities in Indonesia. In this context, religious moderation in Aceh presents a unique challenge. Unlike other regions in Indonesia that are more open to pluralism and diversity, Aceh has a very strong religious and cultural pattern. This strength of homogeneity often complicates the massive implementation of the concept of religious moderation.³¹ The people of Aceh tend to hold tightly to their religious and cultural identities, making the idea of moderation, which brings values of religious freedom and tolerance, seem contrary to deeply rooted traditions and beliefs.

The historical conflict between Aceh and the Republic of Indonesia adds complexity to the application of religious moderation. The long history of conflict in Aceh, from the war against colonization to disputes with the central government, remains etched in the hearts of many in Aceh. Furthermore, the reality that nationally elected presidents often do not represent the interests of the majority in Aceh creates distrust toward policies emanating from the central government. Many in Aceh view religious moderation as a political product or a government initiative that is deemed incompatible with local interests.³² As a result, the concept of religious moderation is often rejected or even suspected as a form of external political intervention.

Therefore, for religious moderation to be accepted in Aceh, it must take a different approach. One of the most ideal solutions is to promote a 'Moderation of Authority' program. This program aims to instill moderation values through official institutions under the auspices of the

³⁰ Fakhri Yusuf, Rasyidah, and Sakdiah, "Pendekatan Dakwah Kultural Dalam Mencegah Radikalisme Terorisme Di Kabupaten Aceh Besar," *Jurnal An-Nasyr: Jurnal Dakwah Dalam Mata Tinta* 10, no. 2 (December 31, 2023): 132–44, <https://doi.org/10.54621/jn.v10i2.710>.

³¹ Ummi Habibatul Islamiyah, "The Implementation of Islam Wasathiyah Thought in Dayah Darul Hikmah Islamiyah, West Aceh," *Konfrontasi: Jurnal Kultural, Ekonomi Dan Perubahan Sosial* 9, no. 2 (July 1, 2022): 376–84, <https://doi.org/10.33258/konfrontasi2.v9i2.227>.

³² M. Anzaikhan, Syamsul Bahri, and Sufrizal Sufrizal, "Adaptation of Religious Moderation: Dispersion of Wasathiyah Islam as the Treasure of PTKIN in Aceh," *Al-Qalam* 29, no. 1 (June 17, 2023): 38–50, <https://doi.org/10.31969/alq.v29i1.1242>.

Republic of Indonesia. Institutions such as the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag) and its subordinate entities, such as State Islamic Religious Colleges (PTKIN), Religious Affairs Offices (KUA), Religious Harmony Forums (FKUB), religious counselors, and local governments, can serve as effective channels to disseminate the ideas of moderation.³³ With support from these institutions, religious moderation can be socialized in a more directed and measurable manner, gaining strong legitimacy in the eyes of the community.

These institutions have a significant advantage because their employees, including civil servants (ASN), receive salaries and allowances from the government. This means there is a direct connection between the implementation of the moderation program and the sustainability of their jobs. This can motivate civil servants to adhere to the religious moderation policies and actively participate in their dissemination within the community. The fear of violating the moderation program, which could impact their employment, creates a natural compliance mechanism. In this context, socializing moderation through official authority institutions is more effective than informal socialization or mere public campaigns.

Additionally, monitoring and evaluating the implementation of religious moderation by civil servants is crucial. The obligation of government civil servants to socialize the importance of religious moderation to the wider community can be strictly regulated and monitored. This is useful for minimizing the phenomenon of moderation theater, where a civil servant formally supports religious moderation but acts contrary to the spirit of moderation within the community, such as spreading hatred against certain religious groups. With routine monitoring and evaluation of their duties, civil servants can genuinely become positive agents of change in promoting moderation values in Aceh.³⁴

Beyond institutional approaches, another effort that needs to be considered is the establishment of a digital police force tasked with overseeing activities on social media. This digital police would be responsible for reprimanding, advising, or reporting internet users who spread radical or intolerant content. In an era where social media is a primary medium for disseminating information and opinions, radicalism and intolerance can easily spread through online platforms. Digital police can serve as an initial filter to detect and take action against content that disrupts social order, especially regarding the spread of radical ideologies or slander against religious figures

³³ Rholand Muary, “Penguatan Moderasi Beragama Bagi Aparatur Sipil Negara (ASN) Kementerian Agama Dan Tokoh Lintas Agama di Sumatera Utara,” *Pelita Masyarakat* 4, no. 1 (September 6, 2022): 62–75, <https://doi.org/10.31289/pelitamasyarakat.v4i1.7748>.

³⁴ Meylani Anggraini and Winy Anggraini Putri, “Analisis Kebijakan Pemerintah Dalam Mendorong Praktik Moderasi Beragama di Masyarakat Indonesia,” *Nusantara: Jurnal Ilmu Pengetahuan Sosial* 10, no. 3 (June 9, 2023): 1430–38, <https://doi.org/10.31604/jips.v10i3.2023.1430-1438>.

and communities. Digital police could also collaborate with social media platforms to identify accounts or groups that actively spread radical content.

With a fast and responsive reporting system, such content can be quickly removed or blocked before it spreads further. Furthermore, users who violate regulations may receive warnings or even face sanctions according to applicable laws. This approach will not only help reduce the spread of radicalism in Aceh but also create a healthier digital environment conducive to civilized discussions. Additionally, digital literacy programs must be promoted to strengthen religious moderation in Aceh.³⁵ The community needs to be educated to be more critical in receiving and disseminating information, particularly regarding religion and politics. Understanding how to verify information before sharing it, along with awareness of the negative impacts of radical content, is crucial for curbing the spread of intolerant ideologies online. Digital literacy should also encompass knowledge of how to behave ethically on social media and how to handle provocations and slander that often arise in online discussions.

In the long term, the 'Moderation of Authority' program is expected to foster greater awareness of the importance of religious moderation among the people of Aceh. Through structured and systematic socialization by authoritative institutions, supported by strict oversight from digital police, religious moderation can be accepted as part of the daily life of Aceh's community without being seen as a political product or external intervention. Ultimately, the goal of this program is to create peace, harmony, and tolerance in Aceh, allowing the region to continue to develop within the framework of a harmonious unitary state.

CONCLUSION

The phenomenon of radical shaming has become a crucial issue in the political contestation, especially leading up to the regional elections in Aceh. Accusations of radicalism directed at religious and political figures not only exacerbate the local political atmosphere but also threaten the social and religious integration of Aceh's homogeneous society. This phenomenon is often spread through social media without adequate ethical control, leading to misinformation, defamation, and polarization within the community. The urgency of religious moderation in this context is vital for instilling ethical values in social media. With moderation, the spread of radical

³⁵ Syibran Mulasi, Syaibatul Hamdi, and Muhammad Riza, "Religious Moderation in Aceh: A Strategy for Implementing Islam Washatiyah Values in Acehnese Society," *Al-Adyan: Journal of Religious Studies* 4, no. 1 (June 4, 2023): 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.15548/al-adyan.v4i1.6067>.

accusations can be minimized, and the values of dialogue, tolerance, and interfaith harmony can be enhanced. Through the approach of official institutions (authoritative moderation) and strict oversight, it is hoped that efforts to socialize religious moderation can be effectively implemented, thereby creating a healthier, more conducive, and ethical political climate, both leading up to the regional elections and in social life in general.

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