

## **PUNCHLINE TWEETS: NEGOTIATING RELIGIOUS MODERATION ON INDONESIAN SOCIAL MEDIA**

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**Abstract:** *When a statement enters the public domain such as social media, it will have many implications for the discourse and critical context that accompany it. Likewise, with debates on social media Twitter that intersect with religious understanding such as radicalism, there are funny line accounts present that try to break the high tension of cyber warfare. This study aims to describe how Twitter accounts openly negotiate the educational values of religious moderation on social media. By using a web-based social phenomenology approach, this study uses a qualitative descriptive method. Twitter account @NUgarislucu was chosen as the data source and data was collected through online documentation. While the analysis uses critical discourse analysis from Teun A. van Dijk. The results reveal that punchline tweets have been used to negotiate educational values of religious moderation through the integrated principles of tawassuth, tasâmuh, and tawâzûn. Negotiations were carried out with various themes, including (1) religious conversion, (2) religion and suicide bombings, (3) religion and political identity, (4) religion and the political order of the khalâfah., and (5) religion and nationalism. Thus, the findings reinforce the notion that the delivery of religious content which is often considered heavy and boring is more acceptable to netizens through humor.*

**Keywords:** *Punchline Tweets; Education Values; Religious Moderation; Radicalism*

### **Introduction**

Astrid Bötticher<sup>1</sup> argues that there is often an overlap in the use of the terms extremism and radicalism. This intersection of understanding has led the Indonesian government to consider replacing the term radicalism with 'religious manipulators'. However, it is important to note the remark from the Erasmus program module, an international program that facilitates cross-cultural learning, that radicalism serves as fertile ground for the development of extremism towards terrorism.<sup>2</sup> In its process of representation, radicalism is seen as the initial stage, extremism as indoctrination,

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<sup>1</sup> Astrid Bötticher, "Towards Academic Consensus Definitions of Radicalism and Extremism," *Perspectives on Terrorism* 11, no. 4 (2017): 73-77.

<sup>2</sup> Erasmus+, "MODULE 2: Identifying Radicalization Behaviour," in *Radical Online Education: KA2 Strategic Partnership in the Field of Youth*, 2017, 1-17, [https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/toolbox\\_tool\\_download-file-2030/ROE\\_module\\_2.pdf](https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/toolbox_tool_download-file-2030/ROE_module_2.pdf).

and terrorism as the manifestation of violence. Radicalism disrupts the public sphere and provokes unrest, being considered one of the most severe threats to the world.<sup>3</sup>

The assumptions of the Tunisian researchers - Rekik, Jamoussi, and Ben Hamadou - were conveyed in response to the fact of radicalization infiltration, especially radical messages on social media. The release of the Indonesian Digital Report by Hootsuite in 2019 stated that social media users in Indonesia had penetrated 56% (150 users) of the total population of Indonesia, and in 2020 reached 59% (160 users), of the total population (population) of 272.1 million.<sup>4</sup> If the warnings of Indonesian Institute of Sciences's researchers that terrorists were initiated by receiving messages of radicalism on social media<sup>5</sup>, then Rekik et.al's warning above cannot be ignored.

Winter et.al.<sup>6</sup> adds that the internet and social media play a crucial role in the process of radicalization and the recruitment of extremists, providing a platform for the dissemination of extremist ideologies. Daniel Koehler<sup>7</sup> highlights the rise of right-wing extremism in Europe as an example of how radicalism can evolve into a broader threat if not effectively addressed. This understanding underscores that radicalism is not just a local threat but a global one, necessitating comprehensive attention and action to prevent its transformation into extremism and terrorism.

On 'Twitterland', borrowing the diction from Nikiphorou et al. as a virtual world where Twitter users interact, various Twitter accounts appear to be actively working to counter radical messages. Despite their efforts, these movements often come across as rigid and normative, thus lacking impact. Amidst the stagnant strategies of cyber warfare over radical discourse on social media, punchline Twitter accounts have emerged as an interesting phenomenon. Their humorous tweets seem to capture the attention of netizens. Holton and Lewis<sup>8</sup> suggest that the use of humor in presenting arguments should be considered.

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<sup>3</sup> Amal Rekik, Salma Jamoussi, and Abdelmajid Ben Hamadou, "Violent Vocabulary Extraction Methodology: Application to the Radicalism Detection on Social Media," in *Computational Collective Intelligence*, ed. ICCCI (Hendaye, France, 2019), 97.

<sup>4</sup> "Digital 2020: Indonesia. ," last modified 2020, accessed July 30, 2020, <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2020-indonesia>.

<sup>5</sup> Andean Bonar Sitinjak, "Terrorism-Radicalism Doctrine on Social Media In Indonesia," in *Proceedings from the 1st International Conference on Law and Human Rights* (European Alliance for Innovation n.o., 2021), accessed July 30, 2020, <https://eudl.eu/pdf/10.4108/eai.14-4-2021.2312450>.

<sup>6</sup> Charlie Winter et al., "Online Extremism: Research Trends in Internet Activism, Radicalization, and Counter-Strategies," *International Journal of Conflict and Violence* 14, no. 2 (2020): 1-20, accessed May 30, 2021, <https://www.ijcv.org/index.php/ijcv/article/view/3809>.

<sup>7</sup> Daniel Koehler, *Right-Wing Terrorism in the 21st Century*. (Routledge, 2020).

<sup>8</sup> Avery E. Holton and Seth C. Lewis, "Social Media in News Discourse / Les Médias Sociaux Dans Les Discours Des Nouvelles Journalists , Social Media , and the Use of Humor on Twitter," *The electronic Journal of Communication* 21, no. 1 & 2 (2009): 1-20.

The educational values of religious moderation, particularly in the context of the social media conflict between moderation and radicalism,<sup>9</sup> form the cornerstone of this study's literature. Previous research, such as Thohir's work,<sup>10</sup> has highlighted the subtle presence of radicalism in school textbooks. This was also found in research by Syaui et al.<sup>11</sup>, that high school students are targeted by radical ideologies. Mahmut's research<sup>12</sup> underscores the necessity of regulating religious knowledge and education to combat extremism. Additionally, Husna and Thohir<sup>13</sup> emphasize the importance of educational management and strategies in fostering a spirit of religious moderation.

Sunarto's research<sup>14</sup> on the portrayal of radicalism on social media shows it has a significant impact on users and faces resistance from accounts promoting religious moderation. Studies on punchline Twitter accounts, conducted by Fubara<sup>15</sup>, Altahmazi<sup>16</sup>, and Okhuosi<sup>17</sup>, reveal the practical aspects of these accounts. From the various research discussions above, there is one aspect that has not been extensively studied and is therefore crucial for this research: how punchline social media accounts negotiate educational values of religious moderation through the humor genre in combating the infiltration of radical discourse.

## Method

This study employs a method to illustrate how Twitter accounts openly negotiate the educational values of religious moderation on social media. The

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<sup>9</sup> Elena Nikiphorou et al., "Twitterland': A Brave New World?," *Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases (BMJ Publishing Group Ltd)* 77, no. 8 (2017): 1245-1246.

<sup>10</sup> Muhammad Thohir, "Radikalisme Versus Pendidikan Agama," *Nadwa: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam*, Vol. 9, No. 2 (October 2015), <http://journal.walisongo.ac.id/index.php/Nadwa/article/view/521>.

<sup>11</sup> Syaui Syaui, Badrian Badrian, and Faisal Mubarak, "Peran Kearifan Lokal Dalam Upaya Deradikalisasi Paham Radikal Di Kalimantan Selatan," *Kbazanah: Jurnal Studi Islam dan Humaniora* 18, no. 2 (December 30, 2020): 155.

<sup>12</sup> Dilmurat Mahmut, "Controlling Religious Knowledge And Education For Countering Religious Extremism: Case Study of The Uyghur Muslims in China," in *FIRE: Forum for International Research in Education*, vol. 5, 2019, 22-43, <http://www.china.org.cn/english/education/184669.htm>.

<sup>13</sup> Ulfatul Husna and Muhammad Thohir, "Religious Moderation as a New Approach to Learning Islamic Religious Education in Schools," *Nadwa: Jurnal Pendidikan Islam* 14, no. 1 (July 13, 2020): 199-222.

<sup>14</sup> Andang Sunarto, "Dampak Media Sosial Terhadap Paham Radikalisme," *Nuansa: Jurnal Studi Islam dan Masyarakat* 10, no. 2 (2017): 126-132.

<sup>15</sup> Samuel Joshua Fubara, "A Pragmatic Analysis of the Discourse of Humour and Irony in Selected Memes on Social Media," *International Journal of Language and Literary Studies* 2, no. 2 (June 8, 2020): 76-95, accessed July 30, 2020, <https://mail.ijlls.org/index.php/ijlls/article/view/281>.

<sup>16</sup> Thulfiqar Hussein Altahmazi, "Collective Pragmatic Acting in Networked Spaces: The Case of #activism in Arabic and English Twitter Discourse," *Lingua* 239 (2020): 102837, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0024384120300449>.

<sup>17</sup> Ronke Eunice Okhuosi, "A Pragmatic Act Analysis of English Postproverbials on Twitter," *Matatu* 51, no. 2 (2020): 379-392, [https://brill.com/view/journals/mata/51/2/article-p379\\_11.xml](https://brill.com/view/journals/mata/51/2/article-p379_11.xml).

approach used is web-based environment as social phenomenology<sup>18</sup>, with a qualitative descriptive method to deeply understand this phenomenon. Through the qualitative descriptive paradigm, this study selects the Twitter account @NUgarislucu as the primary data source, chosen for its large following and its representation of similar accounts that meet the established criteria.

Data collection is conducted through online documentation, allowing the researcher to access and analyze tweets directly within their original context, as demonstrated by Sit et al.<sup>19</sup> by identifying tweets within their semantic, spatial, and temporal contexts using deep learning, natural language processing, and spatial analysis. Data analysis employs critical discourse analysis developed by Teun A. van Dijk, which helps reveal how messages related to religious moderation are conveyed and received by the audience as a sociocognitive approach.<sup>20</sup>

## Result and Discussion

Religious moderation is a balance between exclusive religious practice and inclusive respect for others' beliefs.<sup>21</sup> This concept is debated among scholars. Louise Campbell criticizes the religious moderation promoted by Matthew Parker in 1559 London for its subjectivity and superficiality.<sup>22</sup> Indonesia's Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag RI) clarifies that religious moderation is not a new ideology but an approach to balancing principles like scriptural (*naqli*) and rational arguments (*aqli*), spiritual and physical aspects, rights and obligations, and personal needs and communal welfare.<sup>23</sup>

Religious moderation has several key indicators: (1) *tawasuth* (taking the middle path), (2) *tawazun* (maintaining balance), (3) *i'tidal* (fulfilling obligations proportionally), (4) *tasamub* (tolerance), (5) *musawab* (egalitarianism), (6) *syura*

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<sup>18</sup> Marigold G Lao et al., "Undergraduate Students' Experiences of Scientific Inquiry in a Web-Based Environment: A Descriptive Phenomenological Study," *Asia Pacific Journal of Education, Arts and Sciences* 7, no. 1 (2020): 15–23, accessed July 30, 2020, [www.apjeas.apjmr.com](http://www.apjeas.apjmr.com).

<sup>19</sup> Muhammed Ali Sit, Caglar Koylu, and Ibrahim Demir, "Identifying Disaster-Related Tweets and Their Semantic, Spatial and Temporal Context Using Deep Learning, Natural Language Processing and Spatial Analysis: A Case Study of Hurricane Irma," *International Journal of Digital Earth* 12, no. 11 (November 2, 2019): 1205–1229, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17538947.2018.1563219>.

<sup>20</sup> Teun A. van Dijk, *Discourse and Knowledge: A Sociocognitive Approach* (Cambridge University Press, 2014).

<sup>21</sup> Tim Penyusun Kementerian Agama RI, *Moderasi Beragama* (Jakarta: Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama RI, 2019), 17–18. [https://adminku.kemenag.go.id/public/data/files/users/5/MODERASI\\_BERAGAMA.pdf](https://adminku.kemenag.go.id/public/data/files/users/5/MODERASI_BERAGAMA.pdf).

<sup>22</sup> Louise Campbell, "A Diagnosis of Religious Moderation: Matthew Parker and the 1559 Settlement," in *Moderate Voices in the European Reformation* (Taylor & Francis Group, 2005), 19.

<sup>23</sup> Tim Penyusun Kementerian Agama RI, *Moderasi Beragama*.

(emphasizing deliberation), (7) *isblāh* (reform), (8) *amlawīyyah* (considering priorities), and (9) *ibtikariyah* (innovation).<sup>24</sup>

Whereas punchline, as a model for negotiating religious moderation on Indonesian social media, is based on humor theory, serving as a means of communication with both positive and negative effects. This study refers to the term used by Casteen<sup>25</sup> and Xie et al.<sup>26</sup>, where punchline delivers a humorous surprise in statements. In stand-up comedy, punchline involves a twist on expectations from the preceding statement, key to humor theory and known as incongruity (see Figure 1).

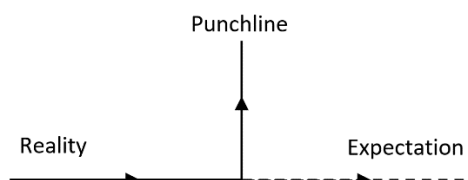


Figure 1. The Formation of Punchline<sup>27</sup>

In contrast to moderation, the process of radicalization can be viewed through the ACPO (Association of Chief Police Officers) pyramid model. It consists of four stages of approach, (1) a universal approach: all members of the community, (2) a targeted approach: the vulnerable, (3) an interventionist approach: moving towards extremism, and (4) an enforcement approach: actively breaking the law. While Christmann<sup>28</sup> in the NYPD model, namely (1) pre-radicalization, (2) self identification, (3) indoctrination, and (4) jihadization.

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<sup>24</sup> Muhammad Fahri and Ahmad Zainuri, “Moderasi Beragama Di Indonesia,” *Intizar* 25, no. 2 (2019): 95-100.

<sup>25</sup> John Casteen, “The Punchline,” *Virginia Quarterly Review* 93, no. 1 (2017), <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/645888/pdf>.

<sup>26</sup> Yubo Xie, Junze Li, and Pearl Pu, “Uncertainty and Surprisal Jointly Deliver the Punchline: Exploiting Incongruity-Based Features for Humor Recognition,” in *ArXiv*, 2020, 33-39.

<sup>27</sup> Aditya Aries Darmawan, “Membangun Punchline Dalam Film Fiksi Imalam Minggu Kliwonī Menggunakan Ritme Editing” (Institut Seni Indonesia Yogyakarta, 2019), [http://digilib.isi.ac.id/6001/5/JURNAL\\_Aditya\\_Aries\\_Darmawan.pdf](http://digilib.isi.ac.id/6001/5/JURNAL_Aditya_Aries_Darmawan.pdf).

<sup>28</sup> Kris Christmann, Preventing Religious Radicalisation and Violent Extremism: A Systematic Review of the Research Evidence, Youth Justice Board (UK, 2012), 11-12. [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/396030/preventing-violent-extremism-systematic-review.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/396030/preventing-violent-extremism-systematic-review.pdf).

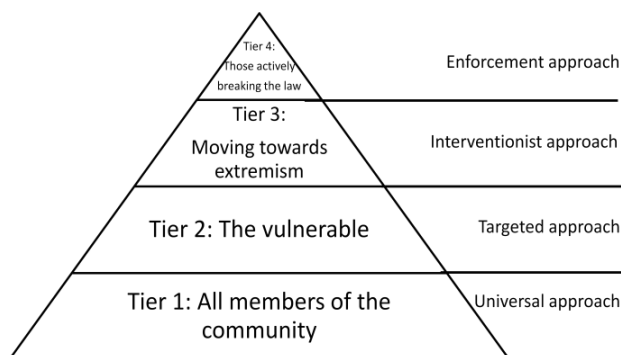


Figure 2. ACPO Tiered Intervention Model<sup>29</sup>

Both models describe radicalization as a multi-stage process but differ in their focus and structure. The ACPO model emphasizes a broad spectrum of preventive and intervention measures, starting from community-wide efforts to specific law enforcement actions. In contrast, the NYPD model provides a more individual-centric view, detailing the psychological and social transformation of a person from a pre-radicalized state to committing extremist acts.

Figure 2 shows that the top of the pyramid is occupied by active terrorists (Tier 4) who plan and execute violent acts, though they are few in number. Below them is a larger group (Tier 3) moving toward extremism, providing support and influence without using violence. Tier 2 includes individuals easily recruited into terrorist networks, often young people vulnerable to radical messages. At the bottom (Tier 1) is the broader community, which, although not clearly defined by group, often forms social groupings based on faith or religion.

The average act of terrorism originating from social media is carried out in less than a year, after messages of radicalism are received in high frequency. Usually, messages are packaged through framing that many people have been wronged, accusations of the government being *tāghbūt*, *kāfir*, and then calling for *jihad*<sup>30</sup>. This framing becomes a marketing communication strategy for radicalism in the context of ‘cyber warfare’,<sup>31,32</sup> or what Alimi<sup>33</sup> calls the internet as ‘dar al-harb’ (house of war),

<sup>29</sup> Christmann, *Preventing Religious Radicalisation and Violent Extremism: A Systematic Review of the Research Evidence*.

<sup>30</sup> Irawan Irawan and Nasrun Nasrun, “Bahaya Perekrutan Terorisme Melalui Media Sosial Di Indonesia,” *SUSTAINABLE: Jurnal Kajian Mutu Pendidikan* 3, no. 1 (2020): 50.

<sup>31</sup> David McElreath et al., “The Communicating and Marketing of Radicalism: A Case Study of ISIS and Cyber Recruitment,” *International Journal of Cyber Warfare and Terrorism* 8, no. 3 (2018): 26-45.

<sup>32</sup> Imam Malik, Khoirul Anam, and Sukron Ma’mun, “Online Radicalism, When Online Surfing Leads to Suffering,” *ESENSIA: Jurnal Ilmu-Ilmu Ushuluddin* 21, no. 1 (2020): 109.

<sup>33</sup> Moh Yasir Alimi, “Theorizing Internet, Religion and Post Truth: An Article Review,” *Komunitas: International Journal of Indonesian Society and Culture* 11, no. 2 (2019): 207-222.

which is a stage for ideological contestation. and political. Social media algorithms seem to be really studied by them, so their ideas flow aggressively and easily go viral as trending topics. Said Aqil Siradj responded to this phenomenon. He suggested that to counter radicalism in social media that was already massive, a social media da'wah movement was needed which was not enough to be carried out sporadically and non-organically.<sup>34</sup>

Subsequently, several accounts with funny line name dictums appeared. Most of the topics and themes of their tweets contain messages of religious moderation and tolerance. Interestingly, according to the dictum embedded as the account name, they convey a pattern of tweets in the humor genre. One of them on Twitter is the @NUgarislucu account. The admin of the account created in May 2015 said that he was inspired by the humor of the Nahdlatul Ulama figure and was also the 4th President of the Republic of Indonesia, who is often called Gus Dur, known for his sense of humor, but smart and pious.

The @NUgarislucu account then became an inspiration, so that other identical accounts appeared. Until 01/06/2021, at 15.50 Western Indonesia Time, it was monitored according to the order of the number of followers as follows. @NUgarislucu 761.1K, @CatholicG 135.5K, @MuhammadiyahGL 105.7K, @GIHindu 77.3K; @BuddhistGL 71.8K, @KonghucuGL 58K, and @ProtestanGL 34K. The seven twitter accounts are currently quite representative, because other identical accounts with fewer followers are still popping up. Overall, the number of followers of these accounts can be seen in the percentage ratio as shown in Figure 3 below.

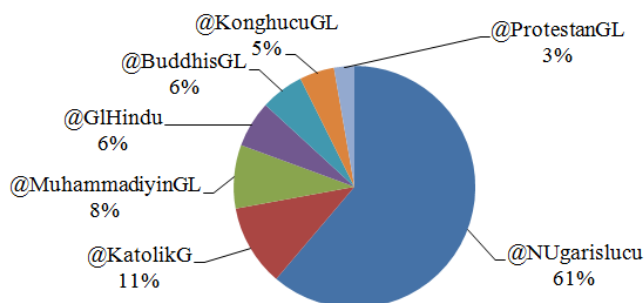


Figure 3. The Followers of Punchline Twitter Accounts in Percentage.

The two accounts with the highest percentage of followers are @NUgarislucu and @KatolikG. Turns out, both use a unique status tagline. @NUgarislucu uses the status tagline, "Tell the Truth Even if it's Funny." Meanwhile, @KatolikG uses the status tagline, "Don't forget Gus Dur!" Of the many punchline accounts, this study

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<sup>34</sup> Suara.com, 22/09/2019

focuses on the @NUgarislucu account on the Twitter application as the main character.

Punchline was cited Xie et.al.<sup>35</sup> as a humorous part of a series of statements. Usually given as a violation of the general expectation that the listener or reader understands from the previous statement (the set-up part). Violation is the key in humor theory and is also often referred to as incongruity. The theory of humor itself is so broad and has many perspectives, both in terms of definition, type, scope and function. In its development, the witty punchline has become part of the trend takes over Twitter.<sup>36</sup>

From the results of mapping tweets on the Twitter account @NUgarislucu into 11 humor categories, they can be ordered from the most to the least frequent as follows: joke, irony, wordplay, insult, anecdote, fantasy, observational, humorous quotes, vulgarity, self-deprecation, and role play. This analysis provides a clear overview of the variety of humor used by the account.

The five tweet themes below represent examples of various entry points for the bursts of radicalism propaganda on social media, especially on Twitter. The social media users who are in a state of disorientation in life, feel disappointment and injustice, both in social, economic and political aspects, become easy objects from the targeted approach: the vulnerable in the ACPO model or pre-radicalization and self identification in the NYPD model.<sup>37</sup> In Dijk's perspective<sup>38</sup> on critical discourse analysis theory, there is a macro structure of tweets in these themes, namely the answer to transnational ideological pressures that want to undermine local wisdom values. The analysis in the superstructure related to the text and its context is as follows.

#### 1. Religious Conversion (21/06/2019)

a. @KatolikG: Hari ini kami serahkan @corbuzier ke @NUgarislucu untuk selanjutnya silahkan disunat dan diarahkan....

*[@KatolikG: Today we hand @corbuzier over to @NUgarislucu for further circumcision and guidance....]*

b. @NUgarislucu: Siap, ndan. Ajaran-ajaran baik dari sampean tetap kami pertahankan.

*[@NUgarislucu: Ready, commander. We will continue to uphold the good teachings from you.]*

c. @Indrawati23: Hahahhah. Semoga jd muslim yang ramah dan taat.

*[@Indrawati23: Hahabbab. Hopefully, you become a friendly and devout Muslim]*

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<sup>35</sup> Xie, Li, and Pu, "Uncertainty and Surprisal Jointly Deliver the Punchline: Exploiting Incongruity-Based Features for Humor Recognition."

<sup>36</sup> Hindustantimes.Com, 25/07/2020.

<sup>37</sup> Christmann, *Preventing Religious Radicalisation and Violent Extremism: A Systematic Review of the Research Evidence*.

<sup>38</sup> Teun A. van Dijk, "Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis," *Discourse & Society* 4, no. 2 (1993): 249-83.



- d. @tias\_wilis: Omaigaaat I love you guys so much! Kalian terlalu lucu.. aku ga kuaaat! Suka lihat yg begini. Rukun, selow, adem, gak ngotooooo aja bawaannya. Makasih ya sdh memberi contoh bagaimana hidup beragama yg baik. Kl lihat begini, saya batalkan niat jadi atheis

*[@tias\_wilis: Oh my God, I love you guys so much! You are too funny... I can't handle it! I love seeing this. Peaceful, relaxed, calm, and not overly aggressive. Thank you for setting an example of good religious living. Seeing this makes me cancel my plans to become an atheist.]*

First, religious conversion. The context at that time was when the celebrity figure, Deddy Corbuzier, declared himself to be converted to Islam. Many oblique and even harsh accusations were made against him, including accusations of converting to Islam for wanting to marry his fiancé, Sabrina Chairunnisa,<sup>39</sup> to political motives.<sup>40</sup> "There were really bad comments... I converted to Islam because of groin," Corbuzier said via his Youtube channel.

Then, suddenly the @KatolikG account with @NUgarislucu tweeted the handover of Corbuzier (1.a, 1.b) which provoked laughter (1.c). Sympathy is also flowing fast, as in the expression (1.d) because the dialogue between the two punchline accounts presents a pleasant atmosphere, in the midst of a similar phenomenon, where after the conversion of religion they vilify the previous religion. Here, the educational value of religious moderation that is embedded is the principle of *tasâmuh* (tolerance), which is to respect the choices and beliefs of others without casting insults and slander.

## 2. Religion and Suicide Bombing (14/11/2019)

- a. @NUgarislucu: Jika benar pelaku Bom bunuh diri itu gak beragama, berarti dia salah pilih guru ngaji. Ini pesan buat @pardedereza agar membimbing kaumnya, untuk menjadi Ateis yang Rahmatan Lil Alamin.

*[@NUgarislucu: If the suicide bomber truly had no religion, it means they chose the wrong religious teacher. This is a message for @pardedereza to guide his followers to become atheists who bring mercy to all.]*

- b. @hkushardanto: Setujuuuu ... Jadilah atheis yg ikhlas, jd gak ngarep dpt bidadari ketika meledakkan diri

*[@hkushardanto: Agreed... Be a sincere atheist, so you won't expect to get virgins when you blow yourself up.]*

- c. @dimaskerik1: gak beragama khog salah pilih guru ngaji Gus ?? pastinya dia muridnya @setangarislucu

*[@dimaskerik1: How can someone with no religion choose the wrong religious teacher, Gus?? They must be a student of @setangarislucu.]*

- d. @aryprsty: Agnostic dia min 😊

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<sup>39</sup> Lifestyle.Bisnis.Com, 20/06/2019

<sup>40</sup> Liputan6.Com, 24/06/2019

[@aryprsty: He's agnostic, admin 😊]

Second, religion and suicide bombing. The explosion of the Medan City Police Station with a suicide bombing became part of radicalism propaganda.<sup>41</sup> The perpetrator turned radical to carry out a suicide bombing in just 6 months. So, that's what his father-in-law said.<sup>42</sup> Uniquely, this news was followed by torrents on social media about the issue of non-religious perpetrators, intelligence conspiracies, and hatred against the government, thus framing the justification for acts of terror.

Responding to one of the netizens' tweets, the @NUgarislucu account replied that they just chose the wrong teacher and asked to become an atheist who was rahmatan lil alamin (2.a). Then his followers responded with the suggestion of being a sincere atheist and not expecting an angel (2.b). While others, there are those who chimed in with smiley emojis that supporters of suicide bombings are agnostic (2.d). Here, the account appears to promote the educational value of religious moderation through the principle of *tawassuth* (moderate), which is to avoid extreme attitudes and behaviors.

### 3. Religion and Political Identity (08/04/2020)

- a. @NUgarislucu: "Apa gua bilang" Salafi: Dulu ngehina cadar skrg pakai masker, kan? Muhammadiyah: Habis sholat gak usah salaman baru tahu, kan? LDII: Habis dari masjid harus dipel, terbukti kan skrg? NU: Aku ra iso ngomong, sak ulan gak ono berkatan.

[@NUgarislucu: "What did I say?" Salafi: Used to mock the niqab, now you wear masks, right? Muhammadiyah: Now you understand why we don't shake hands after prayer, right? LDII: We always clean the mosque after use, proven now, right? NU: I can't say anything, it's been a month without 'berkatan' (communal meals).]

- b. @elokkristiya: Ahahaa adekku biasa berkatan saiki di rumah blas gaonok tonggo seng berkatan gus..

[@elokkristiya: Ahaha, my little brother usually gets 'berkatan', but now there are no neighbors sharing 'berkatan' at home, Gus.]

- c. @NUgarislucu: mung mbok kon cuci tangan wae..

[@NUgarislucu: Just being told to wash our hands all the time.]

- d. @Iwa\_Kusuma: ini puwwool bikin ngakak 😊

[@Iwa\_Kusuma: This is totally making me laugh 😊]

Third, religion and political identity. One of the seeds of radicalism is identity politics.<sup>43</sup> The tweet (3.a) from @NUgarislucu reveals the side of identity that is often used as a trigger for disharmony between adherents of Islam itself. The problem of

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<sup>41</sup> Voi.Id, 13/11/2019

<sup>42</sup> Detik.Com, 14/11/2019

<sup>43</sup> Firdaus Syam et al., "Narrative and the Politics of Identity: Patterns of the Spread and Acceptance of Radicalism and Terrorism in Indonesia," *Religions* 11, no. 6 (2020): 1-27.

wearing the veil, impurity outside the group, is juxtaposed with the *berkatan* which is a nahdiyyin tradition. The *berkatan* is food that is brought home after the feast ceremony.<sup>44</sup>

The violation here is the tradition of saying that it cannot be done due to the pandemic period, but the appeal for hand washing continues to be campaigned (3.c). Although the followers' responses were less favorable because the punchline was considered self-deprecating, many of the followers laughed in response, as in (3.d). Here, the educational value offered is the principle of *tawâzun* (balance) in the context of religious moderation. We are taught to maintain balance in all aspects of life, not leaning towards one matter exclusively.

#### 4. Religion and Political Order of *Khilāfah* (19/07/2020)

- a. @felixsiauw: Adam pernah salah, iblis pernah bener. Adam mengaku salah, iblis nyalahin orang. Adam itu khalifah di muka bumi, iblis gasuka adam jadi khalifah di muka bumi Iblis benci khalifah, benci sama manusia, makanya dia bersumpah bakal gagalkan tugas manusia

[@felixsiauw: Adam once made a mistake, and the devil was once right. Adam admitted his mistake, while the devil blamed others. Adam is the caliph on earth, and the devil dislikes Adam being the caliph. The devil hates the caliph, hates humans, and that's why he swore to thwart humanity's mission.]

- b. @NUgarislucu: Adam tahu beda Khalifah dan Khilafah. Iblis tidak. 😊

[@NUgarislucu: Adam knows the difference between a Caliph and a Caliphate. The devil does not. 😊]

- c. @agungniar: Makjleebb, cerdaassa 👍 👍

[@agungniar: Spot on, clever 👍 👍]

- d. @elmarshush: Sgitu panjang analogcuk @felixsiauw cm dibls cuitan ini lgsg dhuaar.. Los ora rewel.

[@elmarshush: Such a long analogy, dude @felixsiauw. Just respond with this tweet and boom... No complaints.]

- e. @zhevs: wkwkwk

Fourth, religion and political order of *khilafah*. Felix Siauw is known as one of the proponents of this campaign. He is very active in preaching. Because a convert to an atheist,<sup>45</sup> he gained a lot of sympathy with his da'wah activities. However, it turned out that his lectures carried a veiled propaganda of the caliphate system, the transnational ideology of Hisbut Tahrir.<sup>46</sup> Data number 4.a shows how Siauw framed

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<sup>44</sup> Riadus Solihah, "Agama Dan Budaya; Pengaruh Keagamaan Masyarakat Gebang Madura," *Al-Mada; Jurnal Agama, Sosial dan Budaya* 2, no. 1 (2019): 77-94.

<sup>45</sup> Republika.Co.Id, 20/12/2020

<sup>46</sup> Abd Hannan, "Cyberspace Dan Populisme Islam Di Kalangan Netizen: Studi Kasus Pada Akun Media Sosial Felix Siauw," *Jurnal Sosiologi Reflektif* 15, no. 2 (2021): 224.

the political ideology of the *khilāfab* by telling stories about Prophet Adam, then equating those who rejected Adam as *khālifab* with the devil.

The long tweet was answered briefly by @NUgarislucu that Adam understood the difference between the *khālifab* and the *khilāfab*, on the other hand the devil did not understand (4.b), which provoked laughter (4.e). Here, the principle of *tawāzūn* (balance) is also more prominently negotiated. The generalization of the term ‘the *khilāfab*’ as a transnational political ideology is countered by the account through diction differentiation, which semantically in the Quran is actually referred to as ‘the *khālifab*’.

#### 5. Religion and Nationalism (12/12/2020)

- a. @NUgarislucu: Palestina sedang mati-matian mempertahankan negaranya, sementara fans Khilafah berkampanye bahwa nasionalisme tak ada dalil. Lucu ora?

[@NUgarislucu: *Palestine is fighting hard to defend their country, while Caliphate supporters campaign that there is no basis for nationalism. Isn't it funny?*]

- b. @m\_t\_hidayat: Haha senjata makan tuan.

[@m\_t\_hidayat: *Haha, hoist with their own petard.*]

- c. @AdinaTeguh: lucu itu saat bertahan dalam kesalahan Yg di kritik HT itu nasionalISME bukan cinta tanah air, seperti HT mengkritik pluralISME bukan pluralitas #gagalfaham

[@AdinaTeguh: *It's funny when one persists in their mistake. HT criticizes nationalism, not love for the country, just as HT criticizes pluralism, not plurality. #misunderstanding*]

- d. @batugunting12: Lah nasionalisme itu pengertiannya cinta thdp tanah air yang gabolet itu chavunisme bambank ah gemes aku.

[@batugunting12: *Well, nationalism means love for the country. What shouldn't be allowed is chauvinism, bro. Ah, it frustrates me.*]

Fifth, religion and nationalism. Radicalism is described by Bithymitris and Spyridakis<sup>47</sup> as a counter-nationalism group. So it's only right for a long time, Siauw through his account @felixsiauw at 30/11/2012, stated “Defending nationalism, there is no argument, there is no guide. Defending Islam, the reward is clear, the example is clear.” On the other hand, groups carrying the *khilāfab* often sneak behind the Palestinian solidarity movement, as is the case with the Indonesian Red Hilal.<sup>48</sup> In

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<sup>47</sup> Giorgos Bithymitris and Manos Spyridakis, “Union Radicalism versus the Nationalist Upsurge: The Case of Greek Shipbuilding Workers,” *Dialectical Anthropology* 44, no. 2 (2020): 121–135.

<sup>48</sup> Fahlesa Munabari, “Ideologi Dan Strategi Gerakan Filantropi Islam : Studi Kasus Hilal Merah Indonesia Fahlesa Munabari Pendahuluan Keterbatasan Kapasitas Negara Dalam Menghadirkan Jaminan Sosial , Kesejahteraan , Dan Perlindungan Penanggulangan Pasca Bencana Alam Bagi Warga,” *Jurnal Sosial Politik* 7, no. 1 (2021): 47–62. Fahlesa Munabari, “Ideologi Dan

this context, @NUgarislucu questions why supporters of the *kebilāfab* who think that defending nationalism is no argument actually support the Palestinian people who are desperately for nationalism to defend their country (5.a). This statement was immediately replied with laughter by his followers (5.b).

Here, the principles of *tawassuth* (moderate) and *tawāẓun* (balance) are embedded in the form of a question by the account. We are taught to maintain a balanced and proportional stance regarding the relationship between religion and state, allowing us to see that the exclusivist views of radicals who reject nationalism are actually contradictory when they advocate for the defense of Palestine, which is also fighting to defend its country.

The punchline Tweets above become @NUgarislucu's communication strategy in negotiating the educational values of religious moderation, through the integrated principles of *tawassuth* (moderate), *tasāmuh* (tolerance), and *tawāẓun* (balance). The three principles will grow well if social media communication can refer to the orientation of religious moderation as mentioned by Hanafi<sup>49</sup> including understanding (1) reality-'*al-wāqi'*, (2) priority-'*al-awlawiyyāt'*, (3) creation-'*sunnatullāh'*, (4) convenience in religion, (5) comprehensive interpretation of religious texts, and (6) openness. Especially in the sixth orientation, Kamali (2014: 64) adds that religious texts also need to be seen, which ones can be changed (*mutaghayyirāt*) and which ones cannot be changed (*thawābit*).

From the humor classification in Yishay Raz's Twitter perspective,<sup>50</sup> @NUgarislucu's humor is quite varied, including role play (1.b), word play (2.a), self-deprecation (3.a), observational (4.b), and irony (5.a). The educational values of religious moderation and orientation above are often considered heavy and boring. However, its delivery through humor with its various classifications becomes lighter and easier to accept. Although at first glance a tweet is difficult to define, humor through Twitter which is limited to only 140 characters is easier to understand and accept from the point of view of its users in the same environment.

Perhaps, the Huffington Post data source which mentions humorously delivering critical religious discourse has more power to break through the barriers of suspicion and prejudice<sup>51</sup> Here, various propaganda of radicalism through social

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<sup>49</sup> Muchlis Hanafi, “Moderasi Islam; Menangkal Radikalisasi Berbasis Agama,” *Ciputat: IAAI-PSQ* (2013): 21-28. Muchlis Hanafi, “Moderasi Islam; Menangkal Radikalisasi Berbasis Agama,” *Ciputat: IAAI-PSQ* (2013): 21-28.

<sup>50</sup> Yishay Raz, “Automatic Humor Classification on Twitter,” in *Proceedings of the NAACL HLT 2012 Student Research Workshop, 2012*, 66-70, <https://aclanthology.org/N12-2012.pdf>. Yishay Raz, “Automatic Humor Classification on Twitter,” in *Proceedings of the NAACL HLT 2012 Student Research Workshop, 2012*, 66-70, <https://aclanthology.org/N12-2012.pdf>.

<sup>51</sup> [Huffingtonpost.Co.Uk, 27/07/2017](https://www.huffpost.com)[Huffingtonpost.Co.Uk, 27/07/2017](https://www.huffpost.com)

media, both in the pre-radicalization, self-identification, indoctrination, and jihadization phases,<sup>52</sup> can be broken by punchline tweets with minimal resistance. This is proven by the acceptance of the @NUGarislucu account on social media. The empirical fact is marked by the increasing number of followers every day. The presence of the @NUGaris Lucu account with its punchline strategy tweets was then followed by the presence of other punchline accounts.

Is this a similar response to the phenomenon of moderate resistance to the *Hiszb al-Wasat* movement in London in the 1990s? The resistance occurred due to a hot atmosphere (a boiling point) in the community designed by the *Ikhwan*, according to Robert S. Leiken and Steven Brooke<sup>53</sup> This is because McElreath<sup>54</sup> and Malik et.al<sup>55</sup> argue that social media has now been used as cyber warfare, or *dar al-harb* according to Alimi<sup>56</sup>, by radical groups. Of course, this question can be answered in future research according to developments. However, at this time it can be said that what @NUGarislucu has done in offering the educational value of religious moderation in Indonesian social media deserves appreciation.

## Conclusion

Punchline tweets here are the humorous part of a series of social media posts on Twitter, deviating from the general expectations held by readers regarding the previous statement (the set-up). Using various forms of humor, the @NUGarislucu account has tried to negotiate religious moderation by countering issues that often become boiling points in cyber warfare by radicals. These issues include (1) religious conversion, (2) religion and suicide bombing, (3) religion and political identity, (4) religion and the political order of the caliphate, and (5) religion and nationalism. Punchline tweets have become an effective communication strategy in negotiating the educational values of religious moderation, through the values of *tawassuth* (moderation), *tasâmuh* (tolerance), and *tawâzûn* (balance). Radicalism propaganda on social media during the phases of pre-radicalization, self-identification, indoctrination, and jihadization can be countered by punchline tweets with minimal resistance.

To further this research in strengthening religious moderation on social media, studies on the use of humor as a strategy can be further developed. This can be done by expanding the use of humor in campaigns, enhancing algorithm systems,

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<sup>52</sup> Christmann, Preventing Religious Radicalisation and Violent Extremism: A Systematic Review of the Research Evidence. 11-12.

<sup>53</sup> Robert S. Leiken and Steven Brooke, "The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood," *Foreign Affairs* 86, no. 2 (2007): 113. Robert S. Leiken and Steven Brooke, "The Moderate Muslim Brotherhood," *Foreign Affairs* 86, no. 2 (2007): 113.

<sup>54</sup> McElreath et al., "The Communicating and Marketing of Radicalism: A Case Study of ISIS and Cyber Recruitment."

<sup>55</sup> Malik, Anam, and Ma'mun, "Online Radicalism, When Online Surfing Leads to Suffering."

<sup>56</sup> Alimi, "Theorizing Internet, Religion and Post Truth: An Article Review."

developing creative content, and involving influencers. This research requires follow-up with a multidisciplinary approach as a mitigation effort against the strong currents of radicalism campaigns on social media, targeting social media users, especially Gen Z.

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