Mainstreaming Religious Moderation in the Digital Space: An Examination of Islami.co Web Portal in the Perspective of Jürgen Habermas' Communicative Rationality

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ABSTRACT

The development of popular Islamic media in the digital era, associated with an authority shift from traditional to popular religion, has enhanced peoples' ways of thinking. Ironically, conservative and radical Islamic models have dominated the digital space. Therefore, in response to this phenomenon, this research examines how the mainstreaming strategy of religious moderation is carried out by moderate groups, specifically a non-affiliated Islamic portal called Islami.co, with the tagline "Enlightening and Friendly Islamic Media." This research also analyzed articles, concepts, and perspectives to determine whether they are in the moderate category using the Jürgen Habermas' theory of communicative rationality. Furthermore, the essays in the islami.co were analyzed according to three kinds of validity claims, namely truth, accuracy, and honesty. This study concluded that mainstreaming religious moderation through this islami.co's media significantly impacts the community as a filter from news content or thoughts that do not reflect the Islamic value of mercy to all mankind. Islami.co's writers continuously endeavor to test conservative-radical Islamic narratives that develop in a society with logical (*aqli*) and religious (*naqli*) arguments presented with brief and uncomplicated explanations. The strategy of popular Islamic portals such as islami.co is quite acceptable to middle-class Muslims, as often preached by the fundamentalist groups. Therefore, it is very appropriate to direct islami.co's target audience to readers from the general public.

Keywords: *Religious moderation*, *digital space*, *Islami.co*, *communicative rationality*, *religious authority.*

INTRODUCTION

The evolution of the digital era with the increase in the use of social media has successfully transformed socio-religious discourse in Indonesia, specifically religious understanding. According to Solahudin and Fakhruroji (2020), the growth of this new media has also triggered the shift from traditional to modern or digital religious authority. For instance, the traditional sources in spreading religious thoughts such as *majelis taklim*s, *madrasa*s, and Islamic boarding schools have encountered the dissemination of loose religious concepts due to the digital revolution (Nisa, 2018). This phenomenon has changed the process of producing and consuming information concerning religious thought and its understanding.

Religious information in the digital space has been the cause of conflicts and divisions for the last two decades. Digital media has become a popular space to intentionally create narratives to compare religious teaching or doctrine (Campbell, 2021; Akmaliah, 2020, p.1-24; Peterson & Campbell, 2020, p.141-147; Aydin et al., 2021, pp.231-237). Many emerging religious actors in cyberspace often propagate and support conservatism and radicalism in

Islam. Furthermore, the power of technology has activated the echo chamber effect through social media algorithms (Cinelli et al., 2021; Auxier & Vitak, 2019; Kitchens et al., 2020). Kieron's (2015) article titled "Echo Chamber and Online Radicalism: Assessing the Internet's Complications in Violent Extremism" mentioned scholars' concerns on the effect of social media. Some associated this echo chamber with the context of online media radicalization because it ensures that the feed for a user's home channel is adjusted to their beliefs, interests, and perspectives (Kieron, 2015; Istadiyantha, 2018). Therefore, the effect reduces the possibility of obtaining diverse views on social media (Bozdag, 2020, p.3-4).

The research carried out by *Pusat Pengkajian Islam and Masyarakat* (PPIM/Center for the Study of Islam and Society) through the MERIT Monograph (Media and Religious Trends in Indonesia) categorized religious understanding developed in the digital space into five typologies, namely, liberal, moderate, conservative, Islamist, and extremist or radical. Despite the connection and differences among Islamists and extremists or radicals, they mostly adopted conservatism derived from a conservative understanding. The PPIM's research on Twitter, one of the popular social media platforms, found that conservative religious narratives have dominated the digital space beside other religious views. The conservative has the highest percentage (67.2%), followed by moderate (22.2%), liberal (6.1%), and Islamist (4.5%) (PPIM UIN Jakarta, 2020).

Another study also revealed that cyberspace has contributed to increasing religious intolerance in Indonesia. The collapse of the New Order regime led to the *reformasi* political era, which revived Islamic conservatism by allowing religions to express their ideology freely. However, the freedom of expression led to the emergence of radical Islamic groups (Diprose et al., 2019, p.691-693). Therefore, the State Intelligence Agency was established to monitor the growth of conservative understanding within government institutions. According to the agency, 1300 civil servants, universities, military, and policemen are affiliated with *Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia* (HTI). The development of the new media has strengthened the expression of uncontrolled views that create religious intolerance and conflictual polarization in any public discourse (Hadiz, 2021). Paterson (2019) stated that this phenomenon can lead to possible social and political upheaval, thereby threatening Indonesian democracy.

In early 2015, the government banned several Islamic portals propagating a conservative understanding of Islam, extremist ideology, and radical doctrines. Some of the banned portals include arrahmah.com, voa-islam.com, ghuraba.blogspot.com, thoriquna.com, dakwatuna.com, hidayatullah.com, qiblat.net, an-najah.net, kafilahmujahid.com, panjimas.com, daulahislam.com, muslimdaily.net, salam-online.com, muqawamah.com, aqlislamiccenter.com, indonesiasupportislamicatate.blogspot.com, lasdipo.net, gemaislam.com, eramuslim.com, shoutussalam.com, and azzammedia.com (Kominfo, 2015, March 31).

The ban was due to the counter-productivity found among the media users and readers of Islamic portals. At the same time, there were numerous intolerant religious utterances that adorn the cyberspace associated with religion. The *da'wah* on social media is considered an invitation towards socio-religious improvement based on the practicality and normativity of Islamic text. Therefore, the voices of the moderate majority were ignorant toward the issue that influences the real world (Thoyibi et al., 2018).

Some portals, such as islami.co, alif.id, arrahim.id, ibtimes.id, www.nu.or.id, chatsyariah.com, and Iqra.id have counter religious conservatism by mainstreaming religious moderation. Conversely, others play significant roles in providing moderate Islamic

references for the youths, thereby *weakening the influence of conservative Islamic portals. These include islampos*.com, rumaysho.com, Muslim.or.id, hidayatullah.com, etc (Zamzami, 2020, July 10).

This research analyzed one of the most famous Islamic portals in social media, namely Islami.co. It aims to moderate religious understanding to the readers, specifically middle-class Muslims. This research focuses on islami.co because it is one of the most highly visited Islamic portals. According to alexa.com, a global ranking site, Islami.co is among the 300s most visited websites in Indonesia and ranked tens of thousands globally. Therefore, it is crucial to examine the significant contribution of this Islamic portal in proliferating moderate narratives in Indonesia.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptualization of Religious Moderation
The Indonesian Ministry of Religion supports mainstream religious moderation, such as understanding and practice to promote harmonious life in Indonesia. It is a middle way between the extreme right and the extreme left (Ropi, 2019).

The extreme right adopts a literal approach to religion, thereby leading to conservative and radical religious understanding. This group struggled to establish a National (*Dawlah Islāmiyyah*) and International *Khilāfah Islāmiyyah* Islamic State (Suharto, 2019; Zuhdi, 2018). This exclusive understanding gradually fertilizes into intolerant attitudes toward other Muslims and religious adherents. Meanwhile, the extreme left is more inclined to apply liberalism to Islam and believe that individual freedom of thought is above religious authority (Bourchier, 2019, p.713-733; Udin, 2018, p.168-190).

The moderate understanding is the centre between the two extremes. It refers to the authority of revelation through the rational interpretive methodology while avoiding the extremists' right and their mission to establish an Islamic State. Nevertheless, the moderate understanding avoids secularism through strengthening Islamic values in a modern political system (Fossati, 2019, p.119-148).

Religious Moderation in the Digital Space
Moderation fosters religious narrative in the digital space using information technology tools, such as articles, videos, and photos. This process acts as a counter-narrative against conservative and radical discourse, hence, it is key to increasing religious tolerance. Hefni (2020) stated that moderate groups determine tolerance's future due to their dominance in the digital space.

The narrative influences moderate thinking and behaviour when massively echoed in digital content and messages. Therefore, Islamic portals containing religious moderation introduce a balanced way of religious thought and practice in the public and eventually dominate the religious discourse in Indonesia.

METHODOLOGY

This research employed Jürgen Habermas' theory on communicative rationality to achieve good public communication. Habermas (1989) stated that rationality paradigm is only appropriate for objective processes and not intersubjective social realities in a form of communicative aspect. In Habermas' book, "*The Theory of Communicative Action,*" all elements of society can communicate rational ideas without exception (Habermas, 1989;

Halton, 2019, p.333). Habermas believes that social relations in society are rational and do not occur arbitrarily. The rational nature needs to appear in reality, where the actors are oriented towards understanding each other through an instructive method (Ahlhaus, 2021).
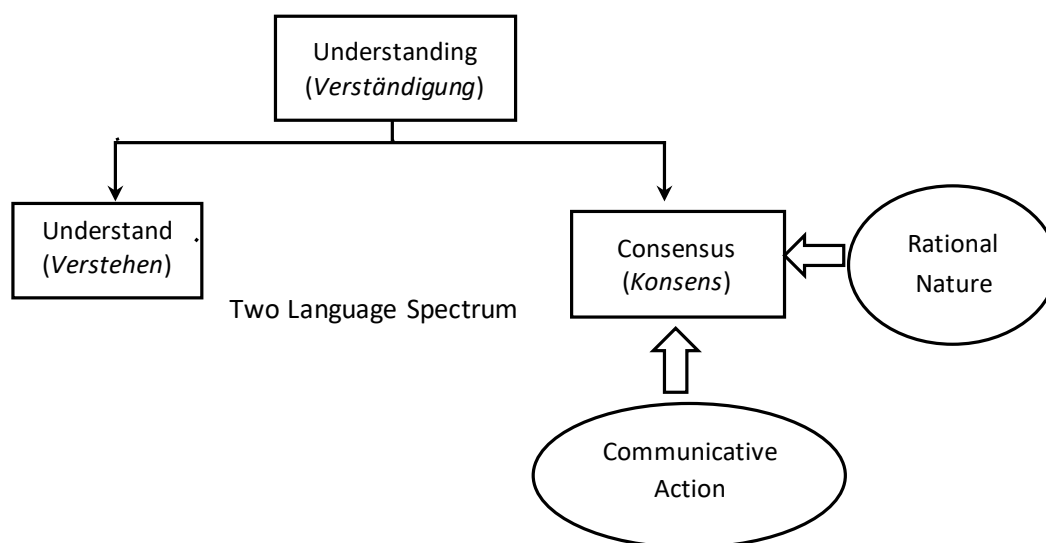

Figure 1: Flow of a rational communication according to Jürgen Habermas

According to Habermas, the term *verständigung* means understanding (*Verstehen*), consensus (*Konsens*), or agreement (*Einverständnis*). The rational nature of action needs to be consensus because human action is rational when oriented towards achieving success. Furthermore, actions leading toward consensus are called communicative, and this concept rests on potential rationality (Jezierska, 2019, p.1-4). Communicative rationality guides actions to achieve consensus goals by applying radical democracy and social relations that occur within the scope. A rational conversation makes arguments an emancipatory element that creates emancipation and enlightenment (Aubert, 2021, p.448-446).

Habermas further stated that the location of communicative rationality is more fundamental than target because it is embedded in the structure of language (Halton, 2019, p.333). In addition, anyone who enters into communication needs to possess three claims in a discourse. The first is accuracy, which is associated with people's ability to express their wants clearly. The second is honesty, while the third is truth, which is the inability to lie while conveying an argument. Despite the reality that communication often fails, those who state have an understanding of successful communication. Therefore, they already have an idea of communicative rationality (Aubert, 2021, p.448-446).

The communicative rationale, an epistemic basis of ethical discourse, does not merely eliminate the differences in citizens' identities, such as cultural and religious wealth, but also supports the survival of shared life without losing their identity in a pluralistic society. In a rational discussion, the participants want to overthrow their opponent and obtain truth through knowledge or practice. However, such rational discussion is based on an interest in achieving autonomy and responsibility (*mündigket*). In other words, it leads to freedom in communication from any restrictions and domination that makes the participants rational and critical (Blau, 2019).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

I.   *Religious Moderation in the Islamic Portal Islami.co*

The islami.co is an Islamic portal established in 2013 to provide Muslims with moderate Islamic (*wasathiyah*) knowledge. The portal promotes the Islamic idea of a good country (*baldah thayyibah*) by publishing religious information. It is also a medium for Islamic boarding school graduates to counter the hegemony of many intolerant websites and blogs. This portal provides references for the public to study Islam inclusively through various interpretations in a non-conservative manner and has extended its movement into popular social media platforms, such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and YouTube.

The Islamic website was established by Mohamad Syafi' Alielha (also called: Savic Ali) to provide religious narratives to urban and middle-class Muslims. Ali is also behind the establishment of the Nahdlatul Ulama Online (nu.or.id) portal and Islami.co, which was developed to reach the *pesantren* graduates and readers, mainly young adults of 20 years and above from various circles (Khairally, 2018).

The portal consists of friendly Islamic attributes, tolerance, and inclusive interpretations. It aimed to eradicate conservative, violent, and radical narratives widely preached by extreme Islamic portals. The conservatism can plunge society's ideology, specifically those who are still unfamiliar with Islam.

The theme raised by islami.co is associated with Islam, worship, and actual news. Members are opportune to discuss current issues using Islamic perspectives as respondents. The theme fills up each of the eight rubrics, namely news, columns, studies, stories, worship, wisdom, and features. Furthermore, approximately seven to eight articles are posted on the portal daily, which consists of red and white color themes accompanied by photos, places, events, and graphic images. The writers range from Muslim scholars, religious leaders, teachers, *Ustaz/ustazah*, and students.

Figure 2: The display of the Islamic portal

The islami.co layout is simple, accessible, and user-friendly for readers to explore the contents easily. The popularity of this site is significant, especially when viewed from the number of visitors. Website rating agencies such as Alexa.com on June 15, 2021 ranked Islami.co at 38,151 globally and 594 nationally. Meanwhile, in May, Similarweb ranked it at 129,494 globally and 2,775 nationally.

Table 1: The editorial structure of islami.co

Founder	Mohamad Syafi' Alielha (Savic Ali)
Editor	Savic Ali
	Hengky Ferdiansyah
	Dedik Priyanto
	M. Alfin Nur Choironi
	Rifqi Fairuz
	Anwar Kurniawan
Video	Elik Ragil
	Saeful Uyun
Information Technology	Ronny Lantip
	Fahmi
Management	Hexa Rahmawati

This research also analyzes an article published on August 2, 2013, entitled "Kenapa Aku Bikin Islami[dot]co?" (Why I Made Islami.co) and provides a context behind the portal's establishment. In the article, Ali, as the author, narrated living in an Islamic boarding school as a child. According to him, Islam is associated with spiritual and social life. The Prophet's teachings of courtesy, mutual help, and sharing made the religion friendly, polite, and tolerant. However, the friendly Islam known by Ali since childhood was different from that in Jakarta. He saw Islam in the capital as a threat to nature, with Muslims adhering to Islamic attributes and organizations that discredit their fellow Muslims. They claim to carry out *jihad* while their souls are filled with hatred. Ali saw that many of them have been contaminated by immoderate and radical reading disseminated on the internet (Ali, 2013). These sites inflame hatred and desire for war and sometimes destroy Muslim brotherhood (*ukhuwwah*). Therefore, as a response to the phenomenon, Saeful Uyun and Savic Ali founded the islami.co antithesis of radical Islamic portals. According to them, someone has to establish the portal to save the society from living in misery, such as planting trees on a barren hill (Ibid).

As a moderate narrative campaign, islami.co targets urban Muslims who have particular religious preferences. However, they tend to avoid using frontal and criticizing manner for target audience affiliated with a conservative or radical group. The urban Muslim communities' inability to know much of *pesantren* education made the Qur'an and Hadith the sole references. According to authoritative scholars, they are the two primary sources of Islam.

II.   The Character of Islamic Communicative Rationality in Islami.co
The Islami.co portal needs to pay attention to interpretation and dissemination strategy to moderate a peaceful and friendly narrative. Amidst the dominance of conservatism in the digital space, moderate description requires a balanced perspective to avoid an extreme reflection on religious life. Therefore, in this situation, it also needs to represent the diverse background of Indonesia.

Islami.co plays a significant role in propagating religious moderation, which is analyzed to determine the concept, and perspective using Borrowing Habermas' communicative rationality criteria. Communicative rationality as the initial foothold for communicative action only succeed assuming the praxis is not understood as mere instincts used to create blind behavior of humans as social beings (Blau, 2019). According to Islamic scholars, printed and

online mass media are the best instruments to educate people and uphold their social, moral, and rational values.

A person needs all access to information and ideas to obtain truth through reasoning in the form of ideas, thereby leading to social change without acts of violence but discussion and persuasion. In this context, discourse is the critical concept. According to Habermas, discourse aims to reach an intersubjective consensus through verbal or literal dialogue (Feteris, 2017). As the consensus on communicative action has been accepted spontaneously and used by the participants of communication without thinking, the participants need to make a consensus effort to be more reflective.

Discourse is the reflection of communicative action, which uses the argumentation process for media continuation. It marks a modern form of communication, where one does not take the understanding developed through tradition to examine rational consideration. This indicates that discourse is open and critical (Kim et al., 2010; Azlan et al., 2017, p.243).

Islami.co which jargon is "*Media Islam Ramah Yang Mencerahkan*" (An Enlightening and Friendly Islamic Media), represents the Islamic portal that fits the discourse and supports the communication that creates human-to-human interaction. Similarly, the published writings indicate the existence of a dialogue space between the administrator and readers. They conveyed messages in Islami.co, as an independent portal, aimed to make tolerant and peaceful Indonesia.

One of the articles analyzed in this research was Supriansyah's essay, a writer and an activist of peace and social issues. The article, published in the review rubric on October 21, 2020, entitled "*Menelusuri Perdebatan Moderatisme Islam dan Ultra-Konservatisme di Internet*" (Exploring the Debate of Islamic Moderatism and Ultra-Conservatism on the Internet), analyzes the proliferation of popular Islamic discussions in Indonesia from various digital platforms.

Figure 3: "Exploring the Debate of Islamic Moderatism and Ultra-Conservatism on the Internet"

Supriansyah reported that the discussion on Islam in the digital space and real life is mainly a confrontation between the moderate versus conservative. He saw this phenomenon as the effect of *reformasi*, when the public space is wide open, thereby allowing Islamic activists with various agendas and backgrounds to grow.

The confrontation between the moderate and conservative perspectives involve Muslim preachers and those who often deliver conservatism and radical ideas (Suraya & Mulyana, 2020). It also threatens major, moderate Muslim groups in Indonesia, namely Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama. The radical ideology on Islam can destroy the moderate Islam ideology of the Indonesian Muslims majority. Therefore, Muslim participation in moderating Islam in the digital space is crucial to guiding dynamic Islamic thought and providing an antithesis of radicalism and conservatism by radical groups.

The articles in islami.co are presented with references from classical to contemporary books. In addition, references from authoritative books were included in the portal's character to fulfill academic and journalistic rules. Technological advances causing moderate groups to be threatened under the presence of the new authority were also discussed in accordance with the research carried out by Wahyudi Akmaliyah at the Indonesian Institute of Sciences (LIPI). Wahyudi Akmaliyah also quoted the opinion of Karen Armstrong, that the spread of conservative narratives among Muslims has occurred since the 16th century with objective facts mentioning authoritative Islamic references.

The arguments presented in islami.co affirmed the concept of Habermas' communicative rationality and included authoritative Islamic sources, such as the Qur'an, Hadith, and the views of the ulama. Besides, the articles published in the portal show contextual arguments to the reality and provide solutions and thoughts following the justice value and benefit for humankind as taught by Islam.

According to communicative rationality, a communicator needs to bridge and mediate communication among many thoughts to reach a consensus that benefits society. The goal of the mediation is to make people understand each other. Therefore, Muslim groups need to become mediators in the communication between conservative and radical narratives to obtain a moderate understanding of Islam following the noble principles and religious values.

A communicator needs to carry out a dialogue to conduct mediation in the digital space. Habermas stated that a communicative society criticizes the use of violence and promotes argumentation. A dialogue needs to be guided by minimum standards such as the breadth of knowledge, good understanding, sharpness of thinking, breadth of insight, and depth of awareness.

Since the early establishment of this portal, the founder has committed to making it a site that offers friendly and enlightening Islamic ideas with a reference source for people to learn Islam and support a peaceful and tolerant society. The articles presented in the portal include analyzed several contemporary Islamic issues with a moderate and non-conservative paradigm. The articles are formatted to dialogue between text and context to understand Islam, bringing substantial values into modern life.

In addition, religious moderation has a broad spectrum whose concern is to eradicate conservatism and extremism while tolerating and bridging religious and social issues in society. The following subsection examines the application of Habermas' communicative rationality to the portal on *jihad* from an Islamic perspective to determine how islami.co-moderates the readers' understanding of the topic.

Islamic and Public Issues Responded by Writers at Islami.co
a)   How Should Jihad Be Understood?
Several preliminary studies were used in this research to provide mainstream moderation on religious topics concerning understanding *jihād* by Muslim communities in Indonesia. The

meaning of *jihād* is not necessarily understood and interpreted as physical warfare due to its broad definition. Therefore, Muslims sometimes misinterpreted the word as the highest form of worship after monotheistic belief and prayer.

Jihad is defined as the process of giving the best energy to achieve set goals. Therefore, a person's efforts to determine a way out is categorized as *jihad* because it means doing something to enforce, build and propagate Allah's law. From the *sharia*'s point of view, *jihad* is a form of resistance to those who do not believe in Islam. It is known as *jihād fī sabīlillāh* by some combatants, which is interpreted as war as a means of revenge for the infidels' hostility toward Islam. The combatants usually refer to Qur'an 9:36, 2:194, 16:126, 2:216, and 8:39 (Bachtiar et al., 2019; Cook, 2015, p.12).

During the attack on the National Police Headquarters (March 31, 2021) and the bombing in Makasar (March 28, 2021), several combatants left messages to their families containing the glorification of the bombing as an act of *jihād*. This process is the highest worship for them after monotheistic belief and prayer. However, this understanding is incorrect because it only portrays *jihad* as physical violence. It also means respecting and caring for parents and fighting the lust of oneself.

The articles on islami.co, which refer to the scholarly views that the ulama is the "ideal communication community," are used to remedy the misconceptions about *jihad*. According to Frias (2021), it functions as a guide or reference that is formally applicable to regulate and criticize the situation of scattered practical thoughts. By using the reference views of this ideal community, individuals are able to accept or reject each claim to truth based on better argument (Spector, 2020, 9-24). This research found that the articles in the portal consistently bring moderate religious views used to define *jihad* as a non-physical violence activity.

In the article "*Jihad Menurut Para Ulama: Tidak Selamanya Bermakna Perang*" (Jihad Understood by the Ulema: Does Not Always Mean War), published April 11, 2021, Yakhsyallah explained the definition of *jihād* according to the famous Muslim scholars Habib Muhammad Quraish Shihab and Bahauddin Nur Salim. According to Yakhsyallah, Habib Quraish understands *jihad* as "a comprehensive effort to achieve something." Furthermore, the Qur'an 25:52, containing a *jihad* reference, was revealed when the Prophet was still in Mecca that does not mean war but the *jihad* with the Qur'an, which is full of sincerity (*Jihād Kabīr*). Therefore, Muslims need to understand the religious teaching following the friendliness and non-violence character of Islam. When someone invites people to the true Islam through violence, the offer fails to succeed, rather it distances them from Islam (Haramain & Aminah, 2022, 208-223; Safrodin, 2022, 144-159). This indicates those who carry out suicide bombings are incorrect. Quraish stated that "Muslims need to carry out *jihad* by displaying the values of religious teachings and showing its greatness to promote non-Muslims to become Muslims. It can also be used to promote those who still lacking good activities to become better" (Yakhsyallah, 2021).

Meanwhile, KH Bahauddin Nur Salim generally known as Gus Baha agrees with Quraish's idea that a Muslim needs to show a good attitude, speech, and behavior. This is because people will only be interested in Islam through noble behavior and not violence. Moreover, Gus Baha narrated a story when the Prophet preached to the Arabs to leave paganism by asking questions that disturbed their logic, as stated in Qur'an 46:46: "Say (Muhammad), "Explain (to me) concerning the God you worship besides Allah and show me what they have created from the earth or any part in the heavens?" (Ibid).

According to the two commentators, *jihad* does not necessarily mean an order for physical war, rather it is interpreted as implementing the values contained in the Qur'an with complete sincerity (*Jihād Kabīr*). Muslims need to understand the teaching following Islam's friendliness and non-violence character to avoid giving a verse a literal meaning with a narrow univocal truth.

The following is the indicator of three validity claims according to the prerequisites for Habermas' communicative rationality:

Figure 4: "Jihad According to the Scholars: It Doesn't Always Mean War"

Table 2: Indicator of validity claims on religious topics

Validity Claims	Indicator
Truth Claim	In Quraish Shihab's statement, *jihad* does not have a single interpretation associated with warfare. The Qur'an 25:52, "Therefore, do not obey the disbelievers, and fight against them with the Quran using great fighting spirit," implies that *jihad* is not only a command of war but living with sincerity (Jihād Kabīr). Muslims need to possess friendly and non-violence Islamic characters.
Accuracy Claim	The article follows the social norms agreement in the form of tradition and culture in the society. The diversity of Indonesian society needs to be preserved based on the following conditions. First, differences are a necessity, therefore, an understanding that denies diversity needs to be avoided. Second, one must have a balance and broad interpretation of religious texts or moderation. Third, Indonesian Islam applies deliberation, which is a common problem that needs to be solved together.
Honesty Claim	The claim of honesty is proven by inferring the meaning of *jihad* as the *birr al-wālidayn* or respect for parents. *Jihad* is also defined as an effort to fight lust and achieve good things. It is associated with happiness between a happy husband and wife, parents and children, and vice versa. Therefore, the depth of knowledge and the breadth of tolerant insight prevent people from easily being trapped into a narrow religious understanding.

b)   Islam and Nationalism

An article on the Islamic view of nationalism titled "Cinta Tanah Air dianggap Thagut, Senior Ulama at Al-Azhar University: Cinta Tanah Air Adalah Hal yang Dibenci Para Terrorism," written by M. Alvin Nur Choironi (one of the editors of islami.co) was published in the review section on August 31, 2020. This article which 22,296 readers have already read outlined the response of a senior cleric at al-Azhar University, Egypt, Sheikh Ali Jum'ah. According to the scholar, terrorists really hate people who love their country. The Grand Mufti of Egypt also stated that the state is the pillar or axis to fight radical groups.

Choironi cited the results of an interview with an Egyptian CBC TV reporter with the former grand mufti, Sheikh Ali Jum'ah, who reported that the state is a buffer or pivot to fight extremist groups. According to Ali, this has been agreed upon by scholars around the world, however, some people define love for the country as an act of immorality and a big sin. Ali further stated that the Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. was a human and a leader that first taught Muslims to love their country when He was about to migrate to Medina from Mecca.

<div dir="rtl">

ألا إنك أحب بلاد الله إلي

</div>

"(O Mecca), know that you are the land that I love the most."

In a complete history, this Prophet's words were conveyed when he came out of the Cave of Tsur to rush to Yathrib (Medina) to save himself from the pursuit and threats of the Quraysh.

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عن عبد الله بن عباس رضي الله عنهما قال: (لما خرج رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم من مكة قال: "أمّا والله لأخرج منك، وأني لأعلم أنك أحب بلاد الله إليَّ، وأكرمه على الله، ولولا أن أهلك أخرجوني منكِ مَا خرجت

</div>

Abdullah bin Abbas RA stated that when the Messenger of Allah came out of Mecca, he said, "Know, by Allah I do not want to leave you (Mecca). Indeed, I know very well that you are the homeland, the land of Allah, which I love the most, and had they not kicked me out, I would not have left for Medina."

Sheikh Ali's view needs to be thoroughly analyzed, specifically when some people are willing to destroy the country in the name of Islam. Therefore, it is important for Muslims to avoid any terrorist group or organization that destroys the order and agreement of the state in the name of Islam. For Sheikh Ali, 'terrorists' tend to forbid and denounce people who love their homeland due to their destructive beliefs.

According to Sheikh Ali: "*Hubb al-awthān fī al-ḥaqīqah hiya al-qadhiyah al-mu'limah li al-irhāb. Li-anna al-irhāb lā yuḥibbu al-awthān, innamā yuḥibbu an yuḥarriba al-awthān*" (Love the homeland is a term that terrorists hate the most because they do not possess such love, rather they prefer destruction)."

The content of the islami.co article is important for people to assert their nationalism in the name of religion, which is also referred through the views of authoritative scholars, such as Sheikh Ali Jum'ah. The views of modern Muslim leaders, such as Rifa'ah Rafi al-Tahtawi and Muhammad Abduh (Egypt), and Ahmad Khan (India), always emphasize the importance of defending the country in the name of religion. The existence of religions also varies with the ideal community or the ulama, which is referred to as the starting point for the article content presented by the writers on islami.co. The importance of properly understanding in accordance with the views of the Qur'an, Hadith and figures/scholars

concerning the problems faced by society. This is associated with reading religious sources textually and analyzing the context and views of the ulama concerning the issue. Therefore, the articles presented by islami.co on this theme have brought to life the character of communicative rationality.

Figure 5: "Thagut considers nationalism, Senior Ulema of Al-Azhar:
Love of the Motherland is What Terrorists Hate"

Table 3: Indicator of validity claims on religion topics

Validity Claims	Indicator
Claim to Truth	The claim to truth in the article is clear because it is objective and contains responses from great scholars concerning love for the country. It does not only refer to the views of authoritative scholars, the article is also associated with the Hadith conveyed by the Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. when He was migrating to Medina from Mecca. In this Hadith, islami.co also confirms that the Hadith narrated by Abū Ya'lā al-Mūṣalī in Musnad, and al-Haythamī *in al-Majma' al-Zawāid wa Manba' al-Fawāid* are all narrators are *thiqqah* (trusted). Therefore, the authenticity of the Hadith is not in doubt. According to the Hadith related by Abdullah bin Abbas RA, the Prophet Muhammad truly loved Mecca as his birthplace and considered Mecca to be his home throughout his life.
Accuracy Claim	The content of this islami.co article can be categorized into the accuracy claim because one of the requirements for legality is to agree on the norms that already apply in society. It means, in this plural Indonesian context, a difference cannot be simply destroyed by certain groups or terrorists that deny the importance of citizenship. In the article, islami.co shows the antithesis of people and groups who act in the name of Islam but want to destroy the state by hiding behind religious masks and campaigning for ideas far from loyal.
Honesty Claim	What is stated in the text is real, not a charade. Shaykh Ali Jum'ah stated that "terrorists are keen to destroy the country, by killing people who love their homeland," and this is true. Radical thinking embedded in some people can destroy the family system, identity, ethnicity, and nationality.

c)   Muslim and non-Muslim Cultural Relations

Previously, a video where one of the leaders in a forum stated that "clapping is forbidden because it is part of Jewish culture and should not be practiced by Muslims" was circulated. In an article published on the islami.co page on June 1, 2021, with a readership of about 2396, entitled "Is imitating non-Muslim culture an automatic act of infidel?" was written by Abdul

Hadi, his expression were based on certain circumstances and perspectives on the prohibition of clapping. He added that adherents of extreme right Islamist agree to the ban on applause from one of the narrations of Tafsir al-Qurtubi, 1964, vol. 7, p. 400, where Abdullah bin Abbas stated that the act of clapping and whistling is an act of worship" (Qurtubi, 1964, Vol. 7, p.400).

In accordance with their belief, a close examination of Hadith means that applause is the worship of the Quraysh infidels. Based on the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad s.a.w. "Anyone that resembles someone, is from their class" (H.R. Abu Daud), Abdullah forbade the act of clapping because it resembles the actions of infidels.

In proposing a counter-narrative to Abdullah Hehamahua's view, Abdul Hadi, in the article "Is imitating non-Muslim culture an automatic act of infidel?" tries to present a moderate point of view in responding to applause capable of making a Muslim an infidel. This process is related to Habermas' discourse ethics, which is the material that aims to get a fulfilling point from a diversity. Furthermore, this article examines the extent to which Muslims tend to imitate non-Muslim culture, which is in accordance with Jürgen Habermas' communicative rationality.

Figure 6: Article: "Is imitating non-Muslim culture an automatic act of infidel?"

Table 4: Cultural topic validity claims indicator

Validity Claims	Indicator
Claim to Truth	The truth claims in this article are considered by analyzing the phenomenon not only from the subjective view of the author. The matter of "applause", which has become a culture in Indonesia must be examined from the context and should not be referred to the practice of clapping at the time of the Prophet which is similar to the worship of non-Muslim communities. Presently, the culture of "applause" has shifted its meaning to become a worldly matter. This is evident by the act of clapping used to appreciate someone during school activities, such as "scout applause," and its use to practice cohesiveness and cooperation.
Accuracy Claim	The claim of accuracy in this article is in accordance with the norms that already exist in Indonesian society. According to scholars, the act of clapping is no longer an exclusive culture of a particular group, such as Muslim, non-Muslim, Eastern, or Western countries. Therefore, conducting an act of applause is not an imitation of pagan culture, as is the claim to wear a suit which is considered haram. It is an outdated thought and does not match the current norms.

Honesty Claim	The legal basis for the claim of honesty is Ahmad Dahlan's gesture which stated that imitating non-Muslims is divided into two conditions. The first is associated with the process of imitating non-Muslims that are not allowed in matters of belief and worship to avoid tarnishing the Muslim faith. For example, a Muslim is not allowed to use symbols of non-Muslim beliefs such as wearing a cross necklace, installing statues from other religions, and attending their worship. The second is in *muamalah* and worldly affairs, whereby Muslims are allowed to imitate non-Muslims, for example, using non-Muslim products such as suits, etc. All of these cases are based on a valid Hadith. Therefore, Abdullah bin Abbas said: "Verily the Messenger of Allah likes to emulate the People of the Book in things outside religious matters" (Narrated by Bukhari). However, the context is different when imitating non-Muslim culture, categorized as haram, such as drinking alcohol at certain events, revealing *aurat*, etc.

Islami.co also presents an article written from the response of a cleric with the title "Applause is prohibited because of Jewish culture, which is not continuously banned in Islam: Ustadz Ahong" read by around 18,894 people.

Ustaz Ahong stated that the ban on applause is haram and similar to the Jewish culture and in accordance with the style of the comb of the Jews and Christians. According to Sheikh Thahir bin Assyria, the Prophet also wore the Syamiyah robe produced by Christians. After witnessing the Medina fasting by the Jews, they thought that Moses was saved from Pharaoh on the day of Ashura. However, to differentiate Islam from the Jewish culture, the Prophet added fasting on the ninth of Muharram, known as the Tasu'a fast.

The following argument that Ustadz Ahong initiated was concerning mistakes in congregational prayers. Women worshipers are allowed to remind the imam by clapping their hands, while men are allowed to recite tasbih. In addition, Dār al-Iftā', Egypt's authoritative fatwa agency, issued a fatwa on applause by stating that it is permissible as long as it promotes and motivates someone.

Therefore, based on the analysis of the articles above, it was concluded that islami.co offers a moderate and friendly understanding of Islam. Furthermore, the articles in this portal are included in the communicative rationality criteria because they contain objective elements responding to existing phenomena. Similarly, the references in the contents adopt several credible references by authoritative scholars that make rational with solid arguments. The knowledge within the articles come from individuals or communities with reasonable and rational insights. Habermas considered knowledge to be possibly incorrect, debated, criticized, or perfected, rationality that can be understood as an argumentative conversation, leading to consensus, overcoming subjective views, and trusting each other rationally.
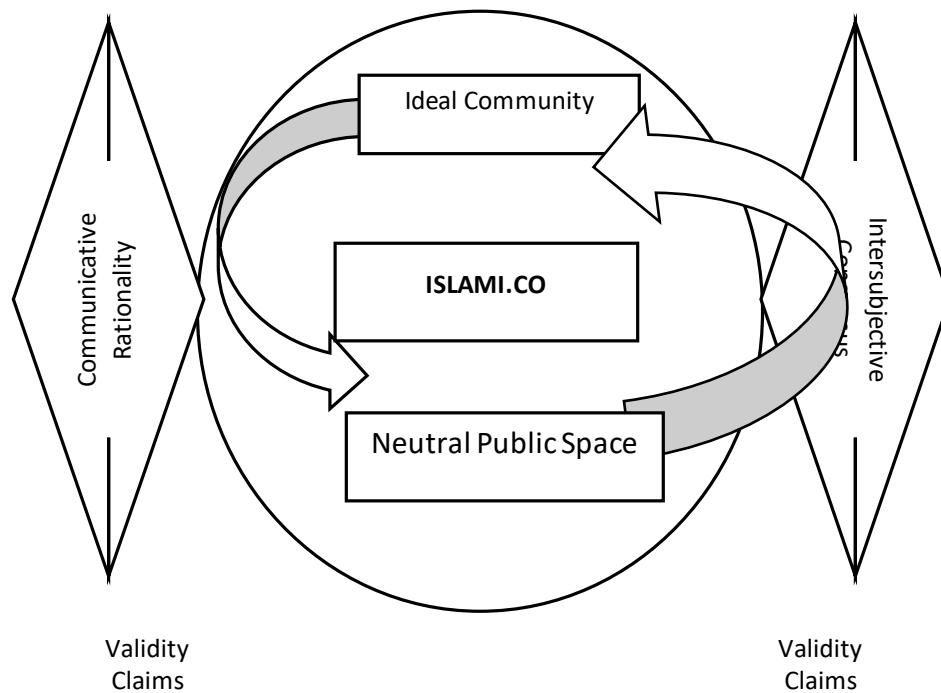
Figure 7: The benchmark of communicative rationality in *Islami.co*

According to Habermas, an ideal public space is a neutral area free from critics. Freedom means each person or group has the right to speak and participate, while critical insight means being responsible and fair in highlighting every public decision-making process. Therefore, Habermas' public space confirms the islami.co's concept in expressing its ideas. The character of being a non-affiliated Islamic portal is associated with objective ideas in the publication. Furthermore, rational writers are expected to create a moderate Islam and ideal communication without pressure and discrimination.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the existence of media is very significant in providing counter-narratives of radicalism through moderate article content. Mainstreaming religious moderation through islami.co's has a significant impact on the community because it acts as a filter for news content or thoughts that do not reflect Islamic values that are merciful to all mankind. The strategy of popular Islamic portals such as islami.co is quite acceptable to middle-class and fundamentalist Muslims groups. Therefore, it is very appropriate for Islami.co's target audience to direct readers who are generally from the public and not pesantren alumni.

Conversely, when analyzed through the perspective of Jurgen Habermas' communicative rationality theory, the contents of the islami.co fulfilled the standard of rational and communicative narrative. An article also seeks arguments from religion and logic while analyzing the aspect of communication with the community as an object that applies to religious teachings. The direction of mainstreaming moderate content offered by islami.co is that the Islamic narrative must first be referred to authentic sources, the Qur'an, Hadith, and authoritative scholars by looking at the surrounding context. The understanding of the textualist group in the understanding of religious teachings rigidly and extremely has

misunderstood the substance and values of Islam, which need to be able to adapt at all times for peace with all humanity.

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