ONLINE MEDIA IMPRESSIONS FOR MANAGING RELIGIOUS REASONING OF MADRASAH ALIYAH STUDENTS

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Abstract

Today's students at Madrasah Aliyah (MA) cannot escape the grip of online media. These Muslim Students are one of the millennial communities that intensively use online media to access religious knowledge. Through online media, these students find it easy to find various religious references and learn quickly. But it seems that studying religion through online media often traps students to be more exclusive and conservative. In the findings of this qualitative research, some MA students in Makassar, after learning from online media, have become conservative, they tend to find it difficult to accept differences and even oppose school rules. For example, they do not want to participate in flag ceremonies, refuse to pray and do not want to participate in mawlid celebrations. Indeed, not all students experience this kind of case. Only those who have a particular religious ideological preference or who are indeed intensively studying religion from online media have the possibility of slipping on Islamic and puritanical religious learning materials. This study concludes that they are trapped in religious conservatism in online media because online media is still dominated by religious information from Islamists. In addition, online media have algorithms that tend to polarize consumers to be more extreme in their respective ideologies. For this reason, Islamic moderates need to contribute a bigger role in intervening and filling religious discourse in online media. In addition, promoting online media literacy to students in MA is a necessity.

Keywords: Religious Radicalism, Online Media, Religious Reasoning, Madrasah Aliyah Students.

INTRODUCTIONS

News of a student who joined the Islamic State of Iraq & Syria (ISIS) was viral in various media. The student named Nur Dhania. The girl with glasses who is still very young. This teenager is just a student at one of the high schools. She is not an Islamic activist who joins the dourah or *liqa* every week. She has never been involved in a school organization called Rohani Islam (ROHIS), which is said to be a hotbed for puritan-minded and exclusive students. However, who could have thought that in the end this young girl fell into joining ISIS in Syria.

In Dhania's confession after being released from ISIS, her mind was shaped by information from online media. She diligently watched ISIS channels and diligently read information from radical Islamic websites. Her imagination is flooded with beautiful experiences of women who are said to have emigrated to Syria. The stories were absorbed from Kanal Diary of Muhajirah. ISIS propaganda through online media entered her mind. In Dhania's case, ISIS ideology is like a hypodermic needle, borrowing the old theory of David K. Berlo (1961), which was injected into a vein and immediately spread throughout the veins of Dhania's religious consciousness.

Such cases occur in many students. Those who initially only looked for religious learning through online media eventually got lost by radical cysts. They finally experienced a process of religious indoctrination and finally their religious understanding changed to become more conservative, intolerant and even radical. Many of the students, without realizing it, learn bullshit religious knowledge (Rahman, et.al, 2020). One thing that Evan Davis (2017) calls lies or deliberately hiding the truth by playing with emotions. These methods are very effective in influencing students through online media (Shearer, & Mitchell, 2020).

Several Madrasah Aliyah (MA) schools in South Sulawesi give freedom to their students to access religious learning through online media. The students are accustomed to learning in the internet network (online learning) (Van Dick, 2020). Apart from being considered easier, more practical, religious learning resources on the internet are also very abundant. The development of information technology has resulted in a flood of knowledge, including religious knowledge. It's just that one thing is forgotten in the online learning process, namely all those involved in the process, do not pay attention to the religious knowledge that develops in online media. Whereas religious knowledge flooding in online media is dominated by Islamic discourse, which seems conservative and even radical. In fact, a lot of religious knowledge circulating in online media is only superficial and contains hoaxes (Syahputra, 2020: 323-354).

As a result, some of the students who got information from the internet changed their religious understanding. Some of them began to challenge religious practices that had long grown in society. The findings of the Makassar Religious Research and Development Center in 2016 showed that some students were willing to carry out jihad in the sense of *qital* (fighting), and were even ready to carry out suicide bombings. The whole attitude is much influenced by religious information from the internet.

Teusner & Cambel (2011) stated that the trend of the internet world, which can have a positive influence and at the same time creates a negative impact, is both a challenge and a hope for religions. It becomes a challenge because Islamic authority, which was previously centered on kyai or ulama, is now expanding everywhere.

People look for religious information by referring to various online media sites or certain social media channels. Many social media connoisseurs are more easily influenced by the popular *ustaz's* in the media, rather than being influenced by scholars of that caliber. Among the popular *ustaz* in their scientific capacity, it is not appropriate to give religious fatwas, but because of his popularity, he is widely referred.

On the other hand, it can be a hope, because with the internet, the da'wa space is easier, cheaper and can reach many people. It is also easy for the congregation to access information relating to certain religious matters (Kirana and Garadian, 2020: 615-622).

In this new era, religious information is growing rapidly. Through gadgets, religious information seems to be in our grasp. It is very difficult to avoid this internet intervention, because every time it comes to flood the homepage of our cellphones or gadgets. Gary Bunt said that the internet is a space for the formation of identity and the development of massive Muslim networks.

Bunt as quoted by Yasir Alimi (2019) stated:

> *"Online and offline activities are increasingly difficult to separate. The separation of religious activity between cyberspace and real world is increasingly difficult to maintain. It is true that many social elements and Muslim communities are not online. But the internet has become an important location for communication, identity development and networking for most Muslims today".*

The situation of students who are unlikely to avoid the internet was clearly illustrated in the poll of the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association (APJII). The poll stated that 71.8% of students were active internet users. Of course, the internet is used for various purposes, but one of them is a source of seeking religious knowledge.

MA students are among those who are diligent in studying Islamic issues from the internet world. In Makassar (the locations studied), educators and students both believe in the importance of the internet in studying religion today. They have one word: "In developing students' religious thoughts and insights, inevitably they must be able to access the internet." All MA's visited gave students the freedom to use the internet to study religion.

The problem then is, as previously stated, students who learn religion from the internet, it turns out that many of them have a more exclusive religious understanding. The internet thus has much more destructive influence than it does constructive. Of course, this needs to be explored and tested more deeply, because according to Gerrad A. Hausher (1999), the internet can be a discursive space, a place to discuss more useful common interests, including matters related to religion.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

The role of online media in today's religious process is very significant. Philip (2008) states that online media has changed the face of religion. Now many people study religion through online media because it is so easy to access. Almost everyone has a smartphone and because of that, (religious) information seems to be in hand.

Due to the significant influence of online media, radical groups have also used online media as a bridge to convey messages. We also know that several radical networks have created their own channels on YouTube, Instagram and telegram. Some people have been influenced through these sites and canals. Klausen's research (2015) proves how these radicals and jihadists make use of online media in such a way as to promote public indoctrination missions.

But apart from being used as a bridge to influence the public, basically religious messages in online media also seem banal. This is what enables one to grasp religious messages in a superficial and highly textual manner. In the end, it makes someone's way of thinking fall into puritan or conservative ways (Mufid, et al, 2023).

Not to mention the logic of the echo chambers algorithm from this online media which ultimately limits and invites someone to only go around in circles of similar (religious) information. A person will not get out of that circle, unless they start looking for a new digital

trail. The role of online media in shaping religious discussion cannot be denied, but how does the online media process shape and influence one's religious thoughts? In this context, there is nothing wrong with restating two old theories, namely the classical communication theory "hypodermic needle" and the theory commonly mentioned in cultural studies, namely encoding-decoding, should be reiterated.

The term hypodermic needle itself is used by David K. Berlo (1960). The assumption is that news or media information is like a needle that is injected into a human and the effect of the message is immediately spread in the blood vessels, which then has a significant effect on the person being injected. Wilbur Schramm (1971) uses another term, namely the bullet theory. Schramm describes the news as if a magic bullet had been fired into someone's head. The bullet is a special message, which then affects a person's mind. Another term used is response stimulus. Of course, there are different emphases from each of these terms, but basically, this theory wants to show media control through news that is so strong over the audience. The public becomes the object determined by these news.

Several cases show that some teenagers experience brainwashing due to frequently consuming certain information from online media. In this case the hypodermic needle theory seems relevant. Some teenagers who suddenly become radicalized just because they learn religion from the internet, is one example of how a piece of information or news works to affect someone significantly.

But of course, not everyone, including teenagers, is simply influenced by online media. Many of them read, watch and listen to certain religious information, but it doesn't have any effect. The message that the news maker wants to convey is read differently. This is because the targeted public may already have religious awareness, ideological colors or also read other information.

In the latter case, the hypodermic needle theory does not apply. What is quite relevant is the encoding and decoding theory. What is encoding-decoding? Stuart Hall (2001) explains the following:

Encoding is the stage one news or information is produced. Raw reality and events in the field are photographed, constructed and framed into certain messages using language in accordance with the ideology of the news maker. This process also considers the characteristics of the message recipient, who they are and how to package the message so that it can be accepted by the audience.

The audience is the source as well as the receiver of the news. These two things are managed in the encoding process, so that news originating from the audience can be repackaged according to the news maker ideology and received back in the packaged and framed form. This raw reality eventually becomes meaningful discourse.

However, said Stuart Hall (2001), don't forget, not only encoding, but also a decoding process carried out by discourse consumers. What has been tried in such a way in the encoding process may not be the same as the original intention, because of the decoding process carried out by

the audience receiving the news. This decoding process occurs because the recipient of the message has different knowledge, historical background and perhaps ideology from the message maker. Not only capturing messages with different meanings, but also reproducing the message in another form. In short, messages conveyed by the media (online media) are not always interpreted similarly by the recipient of the message with the meaning formed by the message maker.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses qualitative methods. In qualitative research the data are described systematically, factually and accurately. Data obtained in the field, especially from Madrasah Aliyah students in fact and accurately then compiled into systematic data. The informants of this research are generally students of Madrasah Aliyah in Makassar, especially those who actively use social media to study religion. To complete it, of course add information from teachers, school principals, parents of students and religious leaders.

In exploring data about the influence of online media in the formation of students' religious understanding, the study tried to observe the students in online media by joining WhatsApp groups. See students' status on social media and their posts. Of course, this is not enough, because according to Burhan Bungin, qualitative research relies on in-depth interviews and observations (Bungin, 2006: 47).

Therefore, researchers also met students and extracted data from them through interview techniques. Visiting the residence of the MA student and observing his daily interactions with fellow students and his association in his neighborhood. In observing and interpreting various data, the writer borrows the Gertz method, namely by using the thin description, which is looking at the surface and also the thick description (digging deep into the meaning) (Geertz, 1973: 140-147).

DISCUSSION

Puritan Religious groups in Makassar and development of Internet Usage

Makassar's population of around 1.5 million comes from various ethnicities and religions. Especially from Islam, since the reformation, religious groups, sects and organizations have developed rapidly. Streams and organizations when the New Order regime lay down, are now reviving. One of them, the Muslim Brotherhood group. This group appears in schools and campuses. In schools holding *tarbiah* while on campus they established the KAMMI (Indonesian Muslim Student Action Committee) organization. Apart from the Muslim Brotherhood, there are also Salafi groups and Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia (HTI). The last group was officially disbanded through Government Regulation in Lieu of Law (PERPU) No.2 / 2017.

In Makassar, puritan religious groups and organizations with Global Islam networks can be grouped according to three main currents. These three main streams, as mentioned by Greg Fealy and Bubalo (2007), are:

First, the *Ikhwanul Muslimin*. This group works more smoothly and metamorphoses into Post-Islamism. They tend to accept modernism and democracy and become part of it without giving up the ideals of an Islamic state. This group is engaged in structural politics, they become political parties and are involved in electoral-political contestation. While on campuses, they appear through KAMMI and in schools influence students through the *tarbiah* movement.

Second, the Salafi group. This group is mostly based on da'wa and educational institutions. This group also enters campuses and schools through LDK and ROHIS. At school, this group fosters recitation and is a resource person and instructor in Basic Leadership Training. Usually these Salafi groups enter schools through alumni from these schools who have become cadres.

Third, the jihadi group. This group is the most extreme group of the global Islamism movement. They legitimize violence and justify suicide bombings. This group also has a lot to influence young people, including students and university students.

Since 2010, when the internet is increasingly being used in Makassar, these Transnational Islamic groups have taken advantage of it in accusing religious teachings that they consider to be true. Moreover, when social media and online media are increasingly being used by the community, religious preaching will be increasingly carried out via the internet.

For information, according to Internet Business Practitioners and Actors, Ferry Prastyo; Makassar is the second largest city after Jakarta in terms of internet penetration. According to him, in South Sulawesi about 44% of the people or 3.7 million use the internet. Of the 44%, the largest users are in the city of Makassar (Tempo, 2015). Meanwhile, data from the Ministry of Information itself as reported on the kominfo.go.id page, from 2011 to 2012 for example, the use of mobile internet in Makassar increased from 34% to 59%. In the following years, it is certain that the use of the internet will increase even more.

One of the biggest number of internet users is young millennials. They are on average still at the junior high school, senior high school and campus student's levels. Therefore, Transnational Islamic groups make maximum use of the world of the internet to accuse Islamic teachings according to their version of students, students and university students. These groups make use of online media sites and social media. With these media, the teachings they spread can reach anyone and anywhere as long as that person uses the internet network.

In MA schools, the use of the internet by students is also very massive. In Makassar, for example, from more than 6,000 MA students, according to information from the Makassar Ministry of Religion, it is estimated that internet users are around 85%. Moreover, the majority of these madrasa schools conduct internet-based learning. MAN I and MAN II, as one of the MA schools with the most students, complete their school area with the internet. Students are allowed to bring cell phones, even though during class hours they are kept in lockers or in certain places. Cellphones or gadgets can be used when needed for the learning process and during rest hours.

Through the internet, especially with the current massive recognition of online media, this Transnational Islamic group peddles its religious understanding (Aly and Thoyibi, 2020). Nationally, for example, we know sites that have been allegedly propagating conservative Islam such as VOA Islam, Era Muslim, Ar-Rahmah Media, Daulah Islamiyah, Mujahid Studies and so on. Meanwhile, online media based in Makassar that often propagate radical Islam have yet to be detected.

In the PPIM research in 2017, as reported by tempo.co, radical Islamic sites or those that always display exclusive Islamic discourse are seen to dominate moderate and tolerant Islamic sites. In terms of visitors, for example, in the months of July-September 2017, Era Muslim.com was visited by more than 9.5 million, while VOA Islam; 8.3 million visitors. Moderate sites, such as NU Online, were visited by more than 6.5 million and Suara Muhammadiyah with around 388 thousand visitors.

The news from online media is spread massively through social media. Some of them were beheaded into short news or memes, then spread on social media such as Instagram, WhatsApp and Facebook. Until 2017, the strong penetration of puritan Islam was felt in the landscape of online and social media. Some Muslims, who previously did not have religious knowledge from schools or *pesantren*, accept this religious information at face value. According to Wilbur Schramm (1971), at that time it could be said that the bullet theory was taking place or in the language of David K. Berlo (1960) the hypodermic needle theory. Where conservative Islamic thoughts are like needles that are injected or bullets shot into the veins of Muslims and are taken for granted, even happily disseminated.

The strong influence of the puritan Islamic media has finally encouraged moderate groups to build more moderate Islamic sites. In addition, pre-existing sites, such as NU.or.id, are improving and getting more and more intense with various information. As a result, since 2018, according to ALEXA, NU Online is the most visited of sites with a specific Islamic topic.

What about millennials, especially students, including MA students? This community also accesses a lot of Islamic information from online media or social media. The strength of penetration of conservative sites to millennials in recent years has been matched by moderate sites. In one Alvara research in 2019, Islam.co, a site that is considered to always display moderate Islamic insights, is said to be the most visited by millennials.

In Makassar several moderate Islamic media sites have also appeared, including *Pecihitam*, *Panrita* and the South Sulawesi PWNU website which is managed by LTN-NU, in addition to the site owned by BLA-Makassar itself. These sites are quite aggressively promoting the idea of moderate Islam in cyberspace. The existence of these sites can at least be a comparison to the existence of conservative sites that tend to be radical.

But, of course, the emergence of these moderate sites does not necessarily change the landscape of Islamic discourse in online media. Nor does it necessarily change the religious preferences of students who have been influenced by Islamic information from conservative websites. The students are already locked up in a religious style and confined in that space. In addition, students also prefer to access Islamic information from social media applications such as

Instagram and YouTube. In these two social media, information is in the form of video lectures from conservative Salafi *ustaz* who usually dominate.

Tendency of MA Students in Makassar to Learn Religion from the Internet

The young man was about 18 years old. He is a student of one of the famous MA in Makassar. Tall and slightly skinny. Less exercise, because they prefer to surf in cyberspace. At home looks quiet. He did not talk much. If a guest comes to his house, the guest is only greeted as necessary, after which he sinks back into wrestling with the android device in his hand. Almost all the time, this teenager cannot be separated from his device or cellphone. Of course he continues to wrestle with the device, because of the internet. Through the internet, he can access various things he wants, from playing games to learning lessons related to his school subjects. But the question then is, for what purpose do MA children, like this 18 year old boy use the internet?

One MA student in Makassar, let's say his name is Ridho (not his real name), said that he himself used the internet to find school materials. Besides that, according to him, some of his teachers have made the internet a medium of learning. The rest, according to this 17 year old teenager, he uses the internet a lot to play games.

Is it never used to seek religious information? Ridho explained that for his case, he only accessed religious questions from the internet if it was related to religious lessons, for example *fiqh*, Islamic History or Al-Quran-Hadith. *"At the very least, I am looking for additional information from the internet for the need to memorize several prayer readings and prayers."* As for the religious issues that are circulating, such as the Hijra, veil or holiday greetings to other religions, according to Ridho it does not attract his interest.

In general, MA students in Makassar use the internet only to access Islamic knowledge related to lessons at their school. This is because the learning system is already internet-based. In some Islamic subjects as explained by the Principal of MAN II Makassar, teachers make the internet a learning medium.

In the current industrial era 4.0, learning using the internet is not only common, but has become a necessity. Now known as the term mobile earning or electronic learning (e-learning). M-learning and e-learning make electronic technology, such as cellphones, devices and of course internet networks as learning instruments. Students learn online and carry out the search process for various learning materials according to their needs.

Even though most of these MA students use the internet as a basis for finding formal learning materials, it does not mean that none of them have access to Islamic knowledge outside of the Islamic subjects they are involved in. Some of the students studied or were diligent in accessing Islamic issues outside the syllabus or learning curriculum. For this we can divide them into categories;

First, students who initially only look for materials according to the subject, but because online learning opens the possibility of accessing anything, they often get things that are outside the syllabus or learning curriculum. One interesting example raised is the issue of the caliphate. At first, students only looked for material related to Islamic history lessons, regarding *Khulafaur*

Rasyidin. However, during this search they encountered the issue of the caliphate being exhaled by certain groups. Starting from there, these students are finally interested in reading the writing or accessing information related to the issue.

Second; MA students who can be called social media activists. They are diligent on social media activities and follow the hot Islamic issues. Access all news or information related to the issue and even share. Students of this kind usually do not yet have a certain Islamic ideological basis, so they do not sort out which ones are absorbed and which are discarded. His enjoyment of Islamic information from a certain *ustaz* is not necessarily because of the substance of his Islamic discourse he agrees with, but perhaps because the *ustaz* in question looks smart, represents millennials and is handsome. This category of students is relevant to read in the encoding and decoding theory of Stuart Hall (2001). The religious messages conveyed by the *ustaz*, were not fully absorbed. They actually read other messages conveyed, for example what they saw was the *ustaz's* cuteness, the rhetoric was good, or even they just enjoyed observing his cool face. What is imprinted on their memory is not their religious teachings either, but it could be their humor or their beauty.

Third; Students who are actively learning about religious issues through the internet (new media). Students of this model enjoy accessing Islamic issues, but do not yet have a particular Islamic ideological preference.

Similar to the third category of students, they access Islamic information randomly. In such a situation, who or which discourse is the most massive on social media, that will be absorbed. In addition, with the habit of accessing certain lectures on YouTube, eventually by programming, these students will usually be directed to the same or at least same-line *ustaz* channel network. In cyberspace terms, this is called an algorithm.

Algorithm system is the intention of the online world to make it easier for someone to get their tendencies or interests in certain things in cyberspace. But according to Cass R. Sunstein (2017), this, consciously or not, has built up polarization. Yasir Alimi (2018) affirms Sustein's opinion by stating; in this case, the online world has created cyber cascades, namely exploiting misinformation and profiting through industrial polarization.

Fourth; Students who already have a preference for Islamic ideology. Usually these students are active in the spiritual field of students. They are fostered by teachers, alumni or outside organizations that are active in certain Islamic groups. In addition, it could also be due to the students' family background and environment who have embraced certain Islamic beliefs. Usually this kind of student is led to study on the internet through certain websites, certain channels on YouTube, telegram, Instagram and so on.

Students Who Become Conservative-Puritans after Exposure to Online Media

In one MA in Makassar there were 11 students who suddenly acted unusual. The eleven students began to form their own groups, did not associate with other friends, did not want to shake hands with their teachers of the opposite sex, were reluctant to join the flag ceremony and if they participated in the ceremony they did not want to salute the flag at all. The eleven

students joined in ROHIS at his school. Their unusual attitude, apart from being formed from recitation in their ROHIS, affects them the most is the online media.

One of the eleven students was named Al-Amin (not his real name). White skin, of medium height. His appearance looks striking in the middle of his friends. Short pants on the feet, walking with a bow. When he came to see us, one of his teachers greeted him and raised his hand to greet him. Al-Amin took a few steps back, he did not receive an applause from the teacher. Her hands were only cupped in front of her chest, blushing. His eyes swept across the floor, he looked reluctant to look at the woman who was not his mahram.

Another student named Aftar (a pseudonym). Sweet black teenager. Claimed to come from Bone. Since the beginning of his arrival, he has been away from his teachers so that he does not have time to shake hands.

Once face to face, I could see the two more clearly. Apart from the distinctive clothes of the two, on the forehead, especially Al-Amin, began to show black dots. Possible black point prostration (former prostration). But there are also those who have said that to make black marks, there are special methods or treatments, not just because of prostration. Al-Amin's son is polite, doesn't talk much. He only answered as necessary. Meanwhile, Aftar, a teenager who looks tougher. His face is actually quite manly, but he is not as calm as Al-Amin. Sometimes he stares fiercely when a slightly sensitive thing is asked.

Al-Amin and Aftar became acquainted with Salafi studies when they were in class II MA. They claimed to have been introduced to them for the first time by their seniors at the Maulana Rauf Mosque Youth Association (IKRAMUNA). IKRAMUNA is similar to Rohis in Public Schools. Al-Amin and Aftar themselves become organizers of the organization that takes care of these spiritual matters. According to one school teacher, his senior brother is a Madrasah alumni. He has been to Batu Malang and Cirebon to study in one of the Salafi groups. Then back to cadre his younger siblings who are in IKRAMUNA.

However, it seems that the time for this direct recitation (*Temu Darat*) is limited. Usually only once a month, twice at most. Especially after the school began to restrict students from staying at school. The students, even though he was an administrator of the organization, could not stay at the school until the night. Meanwhile Al-Amin and Aftar themselves, after being touched by the Salafi recitation, increasingly wanted to deepen their Islamic knowledge. They are like wanderers in the desert who meet a sip of water, they are still thirsty and want to drink more. Therefore, according to them, one of the intensive learning methods is through new media (online media). They can learn from certain websites or through social media whenever they want.

Her classmates then showed her Islamic study sites online. The sites shown are specifically from the Salafi community. For example, in telegram there are atsar.id and Salafi Indonesia which are places to learn *tauhid*. Likewise on Instagram there is a *salafi.indonesia* account and an *Indonesia Bertauhid* account. While on YouTube, although rarely, both of them followed Muhammad Assewed's lecture.

In addition, they also regularly participate in studies through the Radio Islam Indonesia application. If they want to search for information or learn Islam via google, they don't directly search on google, but through the Muslim Referral search engine. This search engine is unique, because if it goes through this search engine, almost all Islamic discourses that emerge are characterized by conservatism, puritanism and even radicalism. For example, I tried to research *Islam Nusantara*. All the writings that appear on this search engine are cornering the discourse.

These two students, not only were guided by an online media algorithm to continuously access the same thing in religious matters, but their mentors themselves had limited where they had to look for religious information.

These were previously known as double echo chambers. The term echo chambers itself was introduced by Cass R. Sunstein (2017) as: *A metaphorical description of a situation in which beliefs are amplified or reinforced by communication and repetition inside a closed system.*

This echo chambers illustrates how a person's situation in online media is always in a closed system and is directed by programmers to always be in that tendency. In the case of the two students, they were not only locked up by the online algorithm, but also imprisoned by the mentor and their community in a closed system. From the beginning, they were only "allowed" to search for religious information from certain sites.

These two students are only in the same religious information circle, namely those from the Salafi group. They just love to hear the lecture of Muhammad Assewed. At the most, they only want to hear lectures from Khalid Basalamah. In addition, they have also been locked up in a WhatsApp group whose religious discussion is only one color, namely the very conservative Salafism.

The echo chambers process slowly shapes the religious understanding of these students. As both of them admit, it is precisely by learning through online that they understand more about various Islamic issues, especially those related to tawhid. Meanwhile, recitation, whether done by mentors, or recitation in other places is called a turning point in his life history.

The attitude of those who restrict association (not only different religions, but also fellow religions but not yet in the same direction), do not want to shake hands with teachers of different genders, do not want flag ceremonies, do not want to participate in *mawlid* events at school, admitted by Al-Amin and Aftar, many formed by online media.

One example, respect for the flag. When I asked them about it, they both asked me to open google, then enter the Muslim Reference search engine. Both then show *Fatwa Lajnah Daimah 1/236*. There it is mentioned that paying homage to the flag is a matter of fabricated heresy. In other sites, even harder. Mentioned; "Respect for the Flag is the wickedness of the various evils that exist." Respect for the flag must be denied, because respect is only for God.

Another case, the two children avoided being photographed. Even when I had time to videotape the incident where they both refused to shake hands with the teacher, Aftar asked to delete. *"Please delete our picture or video! That's not allowed! That is haram!"*.

The two of them then showed their references in online media about the prohibition of being photographed or taking videos. When I asked them about their YouTube viewing habits, they said; "Muhammad Assewed on YouTube only shows his voice, there is no picture or video.

The change in religious understanding and behavior of the two students is similar, though not exactly the same as what happened to Imam Samudra, the Bali bomber who was ultimately sentenced to death. In his biography, book "*Aku Melawan Teroris*", the story of Imam Samudera, as dissected by Hairus Salim (2019) in *"Membaca Otobiografi Imam Samudera, Melalui Berbagai Tahap Menjadi Radikal"*. Hairus Salim quoted this radicalization phase from the way the New York Police Department (NYPD) observed the development of one's radicalization these phases are also seen in the figures of Al-Amin and Aftar.

First, the pre-radical phase or in this case we call it pre-conservative. At this time, the two student figures were ordinary students. They are like MA students who are in their teens. Enjoy watching movies together, joining events with friends and having picnics with other friends.

Aftar, as admitted by his teacher, is a child who interacts with everyone, is cheerful, active in sports, often jokes with his female friends, listens to music and watches movies on YouTube. Likewise with Al-Amin, he admitted that he used to enjoy listening to music, never missed a ceremony, even became an officer at the ceremony. One of the students' friends, Ahyar (not his real name), admitted that both Aftar and Al-Amin had previously been the same as them. The way to dress is the same. *"We're actually cool kids bro, but he realized I haven't .. he he .."* said Ahyar half-jokingly.

Second, the self-identification phase. This phase begins with the meeting of Al-Amin and Aftar with a senior brother who had studied at the Salafi recitation. This senior brother became the mentor and invited both of them to join the recitation. At this stage the two students began to identify themselves differently from themselves in the past. Gradually they felt that there was something wrong with their previous understanding of religion and social relations.

According to the confessions of his friends, the change in attitude towards al-Amin and Aftar was seen during class XI. They started not hanging out with other friends. In class, they like to be alone and slowly start to avoid when invited to shake hands by the teacher. His homeroom teacher said that once he asked one of them to read a prayer during the ceremony, but he refused for various reasons. They also began to refuse to take art classes, especially if there was a practice of playing musical instruments.

Third, the indoctrination phase. In this phase, both Al-Amin and Aftar further intensify their beliefs in religion. It was at this phase that Al-Amin and Aftar began studying religion online. Both admitted, they began to understand the laws of various things. Understanding which is heresy, which is haram, which is permissible and which is obligatory. It is in this phase that they have a stronger belief in not respecting the flag, not wanting to be photographed, not to shake hands.

Learning from the online world made the two of them even more militant. They began to publicly refuse to participate in the flag ceremony. In fact, as told by their teacher, they no

longer wanted to participate in the Prophet's birthday, which was held by the school. "Imagine they are administrators of spiritual matters at school, they should be those who are busy taking care of the *moulid* event, but let alone take care of the event, they are not even present." Obviously one of the homeroom teachers with a little indignation.

Both of them firmly refused to take art courses. For them studying art, especially at school accompanied by various music is an act that is forbidden. Once again, these two students rely on their religious understanding from learning outcomes in online media. He obtained a ban on music and anything related to art, such as painting, by searching the search engine "*Rujukan Muslim*".

What these two children who hate music and art have done, we can also see some examples on YouTube. Even in the extreme, young people who are exposed to Salafi Wahabi religious understanding, destroy their guitars, because they consider the guitar to be an example of a musical instrument that is haram and tends to encourage people to immorality.

Because both of them had reached this phase, when the school asked them to sign a statement to follow the school rules, even IKRAMUNA was temporarily frozen, it still did not shake their belief. They only signed a statement to comply with school rules, but did not change their beliefs about some of these things. Even Al-Amin when asked whether everything he understood was believed to be the truth, he was absolutely sure. He plans to continue his studies at a Salafi *pesantren* in Java.

The next phase that Hairus Salim saw in Imam Samudra was not or had not been seen in the two students' religious attitudes. This phase is called the jihadist phase. Until now, the two students did not want to get involved or be involved in jihadist movements. This could be because the Salafi groups he belongs to are not Salafi jihadists. But there is one note that we should make here, namely: the phases that the two students went through, on average, became phases in the life journey of radicals groups. In other words, if you have gone through the previous three phases, the distance to becoming radicalized and even falling into terrorism is getting closer. Therefore, cases like this that appear in schools cannot be ignored.

From several phases experienced by the two students, it can be seen that religious understanding absorbed from online media has changed their attitude in seeing various social relationships in everyday life. The story of Al-Amin living next door to someone from another religion shows how he built a distance from followers of that different religion. Even Al-Amin did not seem to want to know about his neighbor.

Not only with different religions, with fellow Muslims but who are still considered to be happy to do heretical and *khurafat* deeds, Al-Amin and Arfan tend to stay away. They are afraid that they will fall back into a previous way of life which they think is not yet in the light of Islam.

The story of Al-Amin and Arfan is an example of students who previously had a preference for religious ideology and were increasingly indoctrinated through studying religion from online media. In such cases, Al-Amin and Arfan actually had some friends in common. These students who are similar to Al-Amin and Arfan are the administrators of the IKRAMUNA organization.

Among them were several female students. It's just that after the eleven students issued a statement letter to obey the school rules, the others seemed no longer as hard as before in believing their understanding. At least that, seen when some of them gave explanations during the interview. These other friends may not experience the indoctrination process like Al-Amin and Arfan, or they may just be scheming and hide their true tendencies of understanding.

CLOSING

Online media for students in MA is now an alternative to studying religion. With the emergence of m-learning and e-learning systems, it is possible to learn online religious issues to become the main learning model. But outside of online media being used as a medium for religious learning according to the learning curriculum, it turns out that some students at MA also make religious learning places in general. Things that were not found in religious lessons in schools, religious issues that made them curious to warm Islamic issues, were actually accessed and learned by some students from online media. Even among those who have certain religious preferences, online media has become a kind of yellow book in their recitation. Of course what they are learning is a certain Islamic style.

In the category of students who study Islam in online media outside of school subjects, it seems that in Makassar and the dominant ones are those who are only interested in learning certain issues because they are currently becoming a hot issue and most appear on social media. These students study in a position that does not have any particular religious tendencies.

There are two possibilities for students with the religious learning category without a particular religious understanding preference; *first*, they will not be indoctrinated. This is possible because these students absorb information in a process called Struat Hall as encoding-decoding. There is a social context in which they read the meaning that is not exactly what the informant expected. In the many cases of students in Makassar religious learning in the classroom, information from teachers and routine lecture programs conducted by schools also influenced students in absorbing religious information from online media.

Second, they go through a process of indoctrination. Students with this second model are truly shaped in their religious beliefs and eventually become militants in that understanding. They experienced intensive online media exposure in the echo chambers algorithm. At the same time they do not have a context which allows them to read the information in a different sense. Learning religion in the classroom has no effect, because it rarely talks about sensitive issues that are being of concern to them, while the teacher also does not discuss these hot issues. Such students will not only be influenced by correct religious information, they will even glean religious information even though it is classified as bullshit and hoaxes. In addition, because online media is currently still dominated by conservative or radical websites, it is possible that students of this second model will often encounter conservative-radical religious knowledge. In short, although students are free to choose any religious information, they are actually in the shadow of the grip of conservative or radical websites.

Another category of students studying religion from online media found in this study were those who studied religion with a clear preference for religious understanding. Online media is a means to strengthen their choice of understanding. In the case found in this study, the online media became a determinant for them to be more convinced and militant in their choice of religious ideology. Online media is a way of indoctrination, so that the student becomes convinced of his religious choice. Usually students who then diligently learn from online media are those who previously did not have a religious knowledge base. They do not come from Islamic boarding schools or regular recitations in their neighborhood.

For students with this last category, discipline and punishment no longer have an effect. He can choose to leave school or if he stays at school by following the school rules, it is just a ploy. In this latter case, what can be done is to limit his influence to his other friends, if it is considered that his religious understanding can damage social relations and nationalism. Another thing that can be done is to try to deconstruct the religious understanding he believes in. The latter requires special measures, for example, enrolling him in a deradicalization program or being specially mentored by a teacher who has a deep religious understanding.

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