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Promoting Models of Moderate Islam-based Education: Insights from Indonesia and Australia

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Abstrac

In response to the need for enacting Islamic education to tackle radicalism and violent extremism (RVE), the present study aims to explore the models of moderate Islam-based education in Indonesia and Australia and to explain the challenges in promoting moderate Islam in both countries. Grounded in an exploratory case study, data were garnered through in-depth interviews and observation. Findings of this study expose that firstly, the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) chairmen in both Central Java, Indonesia and Melbourne, Australia portrayed the same views on moderate Islam; it was religiously and ideologically situated between two radical and extremist groups, i.e., the fundamentalist group and the liberal one. Secondly, the model of moderate Islam-based education depicted by the NU chairpersons in Central Java, Indonesia employed two approaches, namely: formal madrasahs/schools and non-formal education, and the strategies performed in the formal education proposed a design of moderate Islam value-based learning. Meanwhile, the model of moderate Islam-based education in Melbourne, Australia applied non-formal education. Lastly, this study also reveals several challenges encountered in fostering moderate Islam to confront the problem of RVE emerged in the sector of Islamic education in Indonesia and Australia.

Keywords: Moderate Islam, Islamic Education, Nahdlatul Ulama, Indonesia, Australia

Abstrak

Menanggapi kebutuhan untuk mempertinggi pendidikan Islam dalam mengatasi radikalisme dan ekstremisme, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi model pendidikan berbasis Islam moderat di Indonesia dan Australia sekaligus untuk menjelaskan tantangan dalam mempromosikan Islam moderat di kedua negara tersebut. Didesain dengan studi kasus eksplorasi, data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara

mendalam dan observasi. Temuan-temuan penelitian ini mengungkapkan bahwa pertama, pimpinan Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) di Jawa Tengah, Indonesia dan Melbourne, Australia menggambarkan pandangan yang sama tentang Islam moderat; NU secara religius dan ideologis memosisikan diri di antara dua kelompok radikal dan ekstremis, yaitu: kelompok fundamentalis dan kelompok liberal. Kedua, model pendidikan berbasis Islam moderat yang digambarkan oleh pimpinan NU di Jawa Tengah, Indonesia menggunakan dua pendekatan, yaitu: madrasah/sekolah formal dan pendidikan non-formal, dan strategi yang dilakukan dalam pendidikan formal ini mengusulkan desain pembelajaran berbasis nilai-nilai Islam moderat. Sementara itu, model pendidikan berbasis Islam moderat di Melbourne, Australia menerapkan pendidikan non-formal. Terakhir, penelitian ini juga memaparkan beberapa tantangan dalam mengembangkan Islam moderat untuk menghadapi isu-isu radikalisme dan ekstremisme pada sektor pendidikan Islam di Indonesia dan Australia.

Kata Kunci: *Islam Moderat, Pendidikan Islam, Nahdlatul Ulama, Indonesia, Australia*

A. INTRODUCTION

Radicalism and violent extremism (hereafter, RVE) have received a thorough attention from recent studies around the globe, involving in Indonesian and Australian settings (Arifin, 2016; Dean, Bell, & Vakhitova, 2016; Forrest & Dunn, 2006; Haris, 2006; Harris-hogan, Barrelle, & Smith, 2019; Muzakki, 2014; Sjøen & Jore, 2019). The RVE practices recruit people's resilience toward extremist ways of thinking by providing them with types of content knowledge and doctrines (Davies, 2015, p. 8). In Indonesia, four emerging factors contribute to the potential root of Islamic radicalism cope with political repression, poor governance, global awareness, and Arabia (Muzakki, 2014, p. 8).

In addition to the root, Ni'am (2015, p. 112) argues that one of religious problems highlighted in Indonesia reveals the religious understanding which is not comprehensive and may lead to the practice of religious exclusivism. More surprisingly, a number of youngsters, including students, involved in the radical actions. In 2018, bomb attacks at three churches and Police headquarters in Surabaya, Indonesia involved a woman and two children (Cahya, 2018). This reality portrays that the issues of RVE leading to terrorism are captured to be a serious problem to combat in Indonesia.

In Australia, likewise, a number of anti-racism and non-government agencies over the past decade have exposed that racism is deemed a serious problem in the country (Forrest & Dunn, 2006, p. 167). Anti-Muslim rallies organized by eight right-wing extremism groups have emerged in Australia from their virtual presence committing their determined ideological narratives and propaganda statements (Dean et al., 2016, p. 139). Consequently, Islam is illustrated negatively as an emerging threat to the world peace, obscuring the diversity of opinions within Islam and the reality that most Muslims condemn RVE (Kamali, 2015, p. 37). This, similarly in Indonesia, depicts that the

Australian government is demanded to put a strategic treatment to tackle RVE in the country.

Concerning the world-noticed phenomena, constructive potentials of religious education in Indonesia and Australia are crucial to hone in educational settings to confront the problem of RVE. One of the endeavors is the incorporation of moderate Islam in Islamic education serving to tackle RVE in the two countries. Within the landscape of Islamic thoughts and practices, moderate Islam, the term for Indonesian Islam, refers to Arabic words, namely: “*al-wasath* or *tawassuth* (moderation), *al-qist* (justice), *al-tawazun* (fairness), *al-i’tidal* (harmony), and *tasamuh* (tolerance)” denoting the non-violent actions and thoughts of religiosity in Islamic traditions (Hilmy, 2013, p. 26). Similarly, the Australian government has suggested Radicalisation Awareness Kit (RAK) to combat RVE in this nation since 2015. RAK denotes one of the fundamental documents portraying Australia’s conceptual framework for countering RVE (Abdel-Fattah, 2019, p. 30)

It is worth explaining that moderate Islam showcases the opposition of radical and extremist Islam as well as Islamic fundamentalist (Kamal, 2017, p. 78). Similarly, Mutawali (2016, p. 312) also depicts that moderate Islam refers to a beautiful means of practicing Islamic values in daily life demonstrating between the right-wing and left-wing groups. It possesses the style to internalize the concept of *wasatiyyah* (moderation) that is against extreme actions (Hanafi, 2014, p. 52) and is used as the basis in a friendly Islam spread to the universe in every single aspect of human life (Ni’am, 2015, p. 124), including education. In other words, moderate Islam sets the principle of peaceful Islam *rahmatan lil ‘alamin* (blessing for all universe) in the realm of human lives, involving the Islamic education sectors in Indonesia and Australia.

Some studies also have discussed the incorporation of religious education in Indonesia and Australia through their respective education sector. A study proposed the living values education (LVE), an operational elaboration of the principles of education suggested by UNESCO, as a potential strategy for de-radicalization in Indonesia. This study adopted twelve values enacted in the LVE frame, i.e., peace, respect, love, tolerance, honesty, humility, cooperation, happiness, responsibility, simplicity, freedom, and unity to be promoted in Islamic education (Arifin, 2016). Recently, Kirana (2018) documented her study on a project entitled ‘Enhancing the Role of Religious Education in Countering Violent Extremism in Indonesia’ (CONVEY). This project exposed the websites hosted by unaffiliated Islamic organization used to be accessed, designed a database of Salafism in Indonesia, developed a warning system at the community level to prevent RVE, organizing a series of youth camp to build student awareness on RVE. This study demonstrates the established CONVEY served to combat the problem of RVE in Indonesia through meaningful religious education.

Meanwhile, a recent study conducted by Harris-hogan et al. (2019) reported the role of schools and education in tackling RVE by adapting lessons from Western countries to Australian RVE policy. The role is manifested in organizing teacher training and reporting of students, increasing educational attainment and classroom curriculum, and

fostering the Australian school leadership team resource. Another research revealed that the utmost problem of Indonesian Muslim communities in Sidney, Australia covered an ambiguous identity, laziness for integration, and dream to home country. Most of them shown their positions as 'Indonesian Muslim in Australia', not to be 'Australian Muslim'. They emphasized to develop their own community based on social needs to avoid political idea of Islamism. This study recommends the Indonesian government to put their endeavor to promote moderate and tolerant views on Indonesian Islam to other Muslim communities as well as to the Western media (Muttaqin, Arifin, & Wajdi, 2016).

The previous studies highlighted some endeavors manifested to confront RVE issues in Indonesia and Australia through religious education. To fill the gap, this present study declares that models of moderate Islam-based education are pivotal to foster by applying insights from Indonesia and Australia. The study also looks at the challenges encountered in promoting moderate Islam values in their respective education sectors. Data were garnered from in-depth interviews with Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Indonesia's largest Islamic organization representing Islamic moderation, leaders in Central Java, Indonesia and Melbourne, Australia participated in the exploratory case study. They comprised the Chairman of Educational Institution (LP) Ma'arif NU Demak, Central Java, the Chairman of LP Ma'arif NU Central Java, the Chairman of the Provincial Board of NU (PWNU) Central Java, Indonesia, and the Chairman of Board of Special Branch NU for Australia and New Zealand (PCI NU ANZ). Some thorough observation was also designed to support data from the interview protocols. Concerning data analysis, the study employed a content analysis to transcribe, reduce, display, and interpret the obtained data (Hatch, 2002).

B. DISCUSSION

1. Models of Moderate Islam-based Education in Indonesia and Australia

The present study highlights the models of moderate Islam-based education in Indonesia and Australia managed by the NU leaders in Indonesia and Australia. Regarding the determined model in Indonesia, the Chairman of Educational Institution (LP) Ma'arif NU Demak, the findings reveal that moderate Islam-based education promoted by NU in Central Java, Indonesia covered two approaches, namely: formal and non-formal education. These two approaches were established through various strategies, methods, and techniques in education even though NU in Central Java did not portray all the components situated as a model of moderate Islam-based education (Personal Interview with the Chairman of the LP Ma'arif NU Demak, Central Java, Indonesia, 2016).

It is worth mentioning that the formal education mentioned in this study refers to madrasas/schools that are under the supervision of the LP Ma'arif NU Central Java. There were 3354 madrasas/schools, including 1863 Islamic primary schools (madrasa *ibtidaiyah*), 27 primary schools, 710 Islamic junior high schools (madrasah *tsanawiyah*), 165 junior high schools, 272 Islamic senior high schools (madrasah *aliyah*), 62 senior high schools, and 255 vocational high schools (Personal Interview with the Chairman of LP Ma'arif NU Central Java, Indonesia, 2016).

The findings show that several strategies used attempted to enact the model of moderate Islam-based education by the biggest Islamic mass organization' LP Ma'arif in Central Java Indonesia involved the non-formal education dealing with preserving *turats* works (Islamic Arabic books) in *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools), religious customs and culture of NU followers. The strategies were carried out in various learning methods. These included studying the *turats* works in NU's *pesantren*, which were actually using *mu'tabar* Islamic reference books and *manhaj sunni* (*Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah*) completed with the collection of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) books. These *fiqh* books explain the difference in opinions among Islamic laws. Another method was organizing *pengajian* (a religious gathering where Muslims study the Qur'an and the prophetic sayings) for public that promote the *jama'ah* (participants of the religious gathering) to strengthen the spirit of nationalism instead of radical and extremist. It, for instance, was demonstrated by NU followers for religious gatherings in Demak regency, Central Java. Further, the gatherings were initiated with singing the national anthem of Indonesia, "Indonesia Raya" to foster harmony in nationalism.

The Islamic thoughts, traditions, or practices meet what (Kamali, 2015, p. 14) views that the diversity of thoughts within a majority-Muslim country is deemed a positive contribution leading for Muslims to think and act wisely to enliven the *wasatiyyah* approach. Further, it is relevant to the essence of moderate Islam declaring the attainment of justice, inclusiveness, and moral excellence and the avoidance of injustice, exclusiveness, and extremes (Islam & Khatun, 2015, p. 17).

Meanwhile, the methods in moderate Islam-based education were applied in non-formal education included reciting Surah Yasin and *tahlil* with full of the spirit of togetherness and *ukhuwah Islamiyah*, *ziarah* (visiting the resting place of *ulema* in the past), commemorating the *maulid* (birth) of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), reciting *shalawat* to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) in *simtuddurar*, *al-barzanji*, and *diba'*. It is interesting to notice that all the non-formal education practices illustrate that the images of Islam *rahmatan lil 'alamin* are in accordance with moderate Islam values.

The methods of non-formal education, for example, were enacted in Pekalongan, Central Java. One of them included an International Conference of Nationalism that was organized by Jam'iyah Ahlit Thariqah al-Mu'tabarah an-Nahdliyyah (JATMAN). This conference was successfully attended by *ulema* from national and overseas countries, Islamic Indonesian figures, and *thariqah ulema* from around Indonesia's globe. The keynote speakers of this conference were Syaikh Washif Ahmad Kabili (Saudi Arabia), Syaikh Usamah Al-Azhari (Egypt), Syaikh Muhammad Adnan Al-Afyuni (Syria), Syaikh Mushtafa Abu Shawi (Palestine), Syaikh Muhammad Abdul Qadir Alaydrus (Yemen), Syaikh Utsman As-Syibli (the United States of America), and other Islamic figures. In addition, this conference aimed to escalate the spirit of nationalism in broader and substantial meaning according to Islamic teachings as the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and his *sahabah* (companions, disciples, scribes, and family) modelled in the past (NU Online, 2016).

Meanwhile, the strategies done by NU in Central Java, Indonesia for implementing moderate Islam-based education through formal sector concerned the curriculum design of moderate Islam values. In relation to the curriculum development, the chairman of LP Ma'arif NU Demak explained that course books of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* (the book of "ke-NU-an") constituted one of learning materials developed in each regency or city in Central Java. In fact, the course books contain the materials of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* teachings and the history of Islam in Indonesia and implicitly provide the tenets of Islam *rahmatan lil 'alamin*.

The statement was also supported by the *tanfidziyah* chairman of the Provincial Board of NU (PWNU) Central Java at that time. The chairman clearly stated that one of the contents designed in the course books of *ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* was implicitly encouraging students to have moderate characters. In other words, it suggests that the design of moderate Islam-based curriculum which was developed by NU in Central Java was in the form of hidden curriculum. It indicates that the moderate values were not explicitly taught in the form of learning materials, but they were presented in learning materials containing *mau'idzhah hasanah* (good modeling). For instance, the learning materials emphasized tolerance, respect to diversity, the spirit of nationalism, and the history of Indonesian Islam (Personal Interview with the Chairman of PWNU Central Java, Indonesia, 2016).

The result aligns Suharto (2014, p. 90) asserting that moderate Islam is not viewed as radical Islam and do not commit radicalism in performing Islam as the way of life. This represents that moderate Islam is categorized into the Islam demonstrating *rahmah* (sincere compassion). It mentions four characteristics of Islam moderate, i.e., (1) behaving *al-tawassuth* (Islamic moderation) in implementing Islamic teachings in daily lives, (2) having tolerance toward diversity of opinions, avoiding radical actions, and prioritizing dialogic approach, (3) accommodating modern concepts containing *maslahah* (people's need), (4) thinking rationally based on the Qur'an and Hadith, and (5) interpreting texts contextually as well as using *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) to interpret what is written in the Qur'an and Hadith.

Not to mention, the strategies to promote moderate Islam through the education sector become the continuity of the strategies that have been carried out by the Central Board of LP Ma'arif NU in designing moderate Islam-based curriculum. It, for instance, is stipulated in the core competence of the affective aspect (KI-2) in the book of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* for fourth graders in the first semester. It refers to "having characters of honesty (*as-shidqu*), trust, faith (*al-amanah wal-wafa bil 'ahdi*), fairness (*al-'adalah*), helping each other (*al-ta'awun*), consistency (*al-istiqomah*), moderation (*tasamuh*), self-confidence, balance (*al-tawazun*), tolerance, *amar ma'ruf nahi munkar* when interacting with family, friends, teachers (as well as *kiai*), and neighbors."

The findings affirm that Muslim students should be nurtured to digest learning materials promoting peaceful Islam and not to interpret religious texts rigidly and regard other people showing different opinions as threats that manifest in radical and extremist

actions (Haris, 2006, p. 159). This is also relevant to the concept of moderate Islam that carries the objectivity of Islam, in which the principle of *al-tawazun* (fairness) is promoted to be one of the bases in moderate Islam for shaping the way of life, knowledge paradigm, art of worship, and interaction that transforms the culture and the personal character in moderate Muslim civilization (Yakuub & Othman, 2016, p. 169).

Likewise, it meets Yasid (2014), the whole characteristics of moderate Islam that were enacted by the PWNU Central Java, Indonesia tended to be in accordance with the concept of *wasatiyyah* (Islamic moderation). This result demonstrates that NU in Central Java was in between both fundamentalist and liberal groups. It is in line with Azra (2006, p. 1) asserting that moderate Islam fits the modernity, democracy, and plurality upheld in Indonesian Islam and represents the original character of religious Muslims in Indonesia. It also reveals the country's foreign policy that emphasizes Islam as a "religious identity" and has been articulated since the era of Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur), the fourth president of Indonesia, as well as the former chairman of Nahdlatul Ulama (Umar, 2016, p. 415).

This study also reveals the model of moderate Islam-based education in Melbourne, Australia. Findings of this study reported that the model of moderate Islam-based education in Australia enacted a non-formal education (non-formal schools/madrasas) that was implemented in various strategies and methods. The tendency of moderate Islam-based education in Melbourne, Australia occurred since the existence of Muslims was classified into minorities in this city regarding both the number of Muslims and the number of *nahdhiyin* (NU followers). It suggests that the movements and strategic efforts have not been fostered in a formal education.

The model of moderate Islam-based education that had been developed by the Board of Special Branch Nahdlatul Ulama for Australia and New Zealand (PCI NU ANZ) in Melbourne and had applied a non-formal education was due to the fact that the existence of PCI NU ANZ was deemed a newcomer of an Islamic mass organization in Melbourne, Australia (Personal Interview with the Chairman of PCI NU ANZ, 2016). This meets that the concept of inclusiveness, tolerance, straightforwardness, equality, and prosperity belongs to characteristics articulated in moderate Islam (Kamali, 2015, p. 76). It implies that the different social condition causes the growth of this organization is not as advanced as in Indonesia, especially Central Java equipping with both formal and non-formal institutions.

The interview results, furthermore, uncover that the PCI NU ANZ established the strategies for promoting moderate Islam-based education through developing non-formal institutions and *da'wah* of *bil hal wal hikmah*. The variety of strategies were done through various methods, e.g., delivering *mau'idzhah hasanah* (Islamic speeches), performing *uswatun hasanah* (good modeling), and preserving religious culture and traditions of Nahdlatul Ulama. To succeed the strategies, the PCI NU ANZ also managed Islamic speech rallies during Ramadan *Mubarak* and panel discussion, collected and distributed *qurban*, *zakah*, *infaq*, and *sadaqah*, organizing Islamic events to commemorate Muslim's

holy days, and broadcasting in radio channels (Personal Interview with the Chairman of PCI NU ANZ, 2016).

The findings also align with tolerance and cultural diversity are essential to embrace in every aspects of human lives, including Islamic practices and traditions, for coping with the variety of differences (Kamali, 2015, p. 174). It also agrees with Hilmy (2013, p. 27) pointing out that two wings of Islamic thoughts, i.e., the typically-Western liberal thought and radical Islamism thought, are not adopted in a wide array of a certain religious thought and practice in Indonesia, the country that is considered a majority-Muslim country. Moreover, the two Islamic thoughts need to be countered since they tend to cause people lack of tolerance, accommodation, and cooperation (Wani, Abdullah, & Chang, 2015, p. 646).

2. Challenges to Moderate Islam-based Education in Indonesia and Australia

This section elaborates challenges to moderate Islam-based education encountered by the Board of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) both in Central Java, Indonesia and in Melbourne, Australia. The result of interview with the *tanfidziyah* chairman of the Provincial Board of NU (PWNU) Central Java, Indonesia mentioned the main challenge that was experienced by the Boards of NU in Central Java, Indonesia concerned the existence of some Salafi/Wahabi groups and transnational Islamic movements in lots of regions in Indonesia, including Central Java. It was evidenced that there were some *pengajian* (religious gatherings studying al-Qur'an and the prophetic sayings) persuading their *jama'ah* (followers) to judge others based their exclusive understanding. This demonstrates the particular groups of people tended to commit radical acts to others. To fill in this challenge, the Boards of NU in Central Java, Indonesia promoted a sustainable consolidation through religious traditions in this Islamic mass organization, such as reciting Surah Yasin and *tahlil* together, *barzanji*, and so forth (Personal Interview with the Chairman of PWNU Central Java, Indonesia, 2016).

Similarly, the *Rais Syuriah* of PCI NU ANZ highlighted the challenge that was experienced by the NU Board in Melbourne, Australia in expanding the understanding of moderate Islam was not different from what the Boards of NU in Central Java, Indonesia. It proposes that there had been friction and the difference of ideology between the PCI NU ANZ in Melbourne, Australia and radical Muslim groups. The radical groups in this city, for example, tried to restrict the use of mosques and other Muslim facilities. In response to this challenge, the PCI NU ANZ held a dialogic approach and negotiation with the so called radical and extremist groups. To anticipate the failure in the dialogic consolidation, the PCI NU ANZ might expand new areas of *da'wah* or other sectors, including art performances (Personal Interview with the Chairman of PCI NU ANZ, 2016). The finding confirms Muttaqin, Arifin, & Wajdi (2016, p. 182) asserting that Islam that is stigmatized on the basis of a radical religion as propagated by Western media and several anti-Muslim groups tend to erode gradually if Indonesian Muslims in Australia promote moderate Islam either to non-Indonesian Muslim communities or non-Muslim communities.

Further, Suharto (2014, p. 88) pinpoints that relating to the background of their emergence, religious moderatism appear because of some affecting factors. First, there are orders explaining that each religion must venerate human beings. Second, there is the awareness of unity in God, the Prophet, and humans. Third, there is the awareness of reality that people around the world construct their lives and nationalism with plural and multicultural facts. Moreover, adherents possessing moderate characters in religion are identified with their attitudes. They, for instance, always prove that their religion brings blessings for all the rest of the universe, finding solution to the plural and multicultural diversity, and persuading others to struggle for independence, justice, prosperity, and better future. In short, moderate Islam reflects the inclusive attitudes in religion which are completely in accordance with the purity of humans around the world.

It is pivotal to elaborate the art performance also demonstrated the dialogic approach with other groups of people that were not intervened by the radical groups so as to minimize the friction occurs. This reaffirms Sjøen & Jore (2019, p. 270) suggesting that prevention through humanistic, democratic, and inclusive pedagogics should be enacted. Nevertheless, counter-radicalization efforts tend to result in the use of serious prevention strategies that may possess harmful impacts on education. In addition, long-term planning that had been prepared was to build Islamic boarding schools, particularly in Melbourne, for the sake of enhancing the *aqeedah* of *nahdhiyin*'s children who studied in Melbourne as well as maintaining *manhaj* of *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* with moderate Islam values (Personal Interview with the Chairman of PCI NU ANZ, 2016). To tackle the radical and extremist thoughts and practice in an educational setting, teachers should be equipped with Islamic moderatism, i.e., non-violent ideology in propagating Islam, adopted modern ways of life with their all elements, involving science and technology, democracy, and human rights, the use of rational way of thinking, contextual approach in understanding Islam, and the use of *ijtihad* (intellectual exercises to make a legal opinion in case of the absence of explicit justification form the Qur'an and Hadith) (Hilmy, 2013, p. 28)

This point may also speak to what Turner proposes that four problems may emerge in incorporating Islam into the modern Western policy, namely: (1) Islam does not recognize the separation of Church and state; (2) Islam has no "Church" as such; (3) Islamic law (Shari'a) is not merely a law of private status; (4) the Islamic community (*ummah*) is a transnational social system. Further, Turner claims that Islam has been labelled as an aspect of modern problem of state security. It is due to the process of separation of the state and church as well as its political and social change in the Western world (Turner, 2013, p. 257). Furthermore, it needs to capture that Muslims in Australia are considered the minority due to both religion and ethnic origins. Khawaja & Khawaja (2016, p. 41) claim that they have been living in Australia for centuries, and the country considers Muslims a rapidly increasing group during the last three decades. Recently released data from Australia's 2016 census reported that there are over 600,000 Muslims in Australia who were derived from various backgrounds, including the Middle East, South Asia, Eastern Europe, and South East Asia. They were equipped with a wealth of different ideas, skills, and talents (Australian Embassy Indonesia, E 2017)

C. CONCLUSION

The current study demonstrates that both Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) chairmen both in Central Java, Indonesia and Melbourne, Australia possessed the same views on moderate Islam. These perspectives suggests that moderate Islam is situated in between two extremist groups, i.e., the fundamental group and the liberal one, promotes peaceful life, keeps unity in diversity as well as the spirit of nationalism, and erodes extreme attitudes in delivering Islamic tenets. Additionally, regarding Islamic texts, the NU chairmen both in Central Java, Indonesia and Melbourne, Australia also demonstrated the same understanding. It illustrates that they do not perform textual understanding, but contextual one and deem the history in comprehending moral values behind the texts. It suggests that the legal products those NU leaders issue are flexible and tolerance-based.

Other results show that the models of moderate Islam-based education depicted by the NU chairpersons in Central Java, Indonesia and Melbourne, Australia with their respective approaches and methods were designed to combat RVE in both countries. This study also illustrates the challenges experienced in upholding moderate Islam to counter the issue of RVE occurred in the Islamic education sector in Indonesia and Australia. The findings of this study are drawn from the experiences of the NU chairmen fostering moderate Islam in the education sectors enacted in Central Java, Indonesia and Melbourne, Australia. Therefore further work is required on larger populations in Indonesia and other areas of Australia, such as Sidney, to gain more comprehensive evidence of moderate Islam-based thoughts and practices.

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