

## The Contestation of Religious Moderation in Digital Da'wah: Study on Buya Syakur and Buya Yahya YouTube Channels

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### Keywords

Religious  
moderation,  
Buya Yahya,  
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Contestation,  
YouTube

### Abstract

*This article examines the contestation of religious moderation discourse in da'wah on the YouTube Channels of Buya Syakur and Buya Yahya. Both are clerics from moderate Islamic mass organizations known to promote religious moderation actively. This qualitative research uses a cyber ethnography approach and text analysis based on Stephen Toulmin's argumentative rhetoric model. Toulmin's argumentative rhetoric combines Claim (C), Data/Ground (D), Warrant (W), Backing (B), Qualifier (Q), and Exception/Rebutta (R). The study results indicate different views on the concept and discourse of religious moderation and its implementation in national and state life. Buya Syakur discusses moderation as necessary to create unity and brotherhood amidst the reality of religious and cultural plurality. He recommends a reinterpretation of religious texts. Unlike Buya Syakur, Buya Yahya states that Muslims do not need a religious moderation movement because Islam is a religion that has had moderate characteristics since its inception. Buya Yahya appealed to Muslims to be aware of the discourse and movement, which he feared could damage the peace of Muslims themselves. The difference in views between Buya Syakur and Buya Yahya occurred due to differences in understanding several concepts in the Quran. The difference in views between the two shows the existence of contestation in preaching religious moderation. Contestation is commonplace in the digital space. However, this contestation enriches the discourse on religious moderation in Indonesia.*

### Kata kunci

Moderasi  
beragama,  
Buya Syakur,  
Buya Yahya,  
Kontestasi,  
YouTube

### Abstrak

*Artikel ini mengkaji kontestasi wacana moderasi beragama dalam dakwah di Kanal YouTube Buya Syakur dan Buya Yahya. Keduanya merupakan ulama dari ormas Islam moderat yang dikenal aktif mengusung moderasi beragama. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian kualitatif dengan pendekatan cyber ethnography dan analisis teks berdasarkan model retorika argumentatif Stephen Toulmin. Retorika argumentatif Toulmin memadukan Claim (C), Data/Ground (D), Warrant (W), Backing (B), Qualifier (Q) dan Exception/Rebutta (R). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa terdapat perbedaan pandangan tentang moderasi konsep dan wacana moderasi beragama serta implementasinya dalam kehidupan berbangsa dan bernegara. Buya Syakur membahas moderasi sebagai keniscayaan untuk menciptakan persatuan dan persaudaraan di tengah realitas pluralitas*

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*agama dan budaya. Ia merekomendasikan adanya reinterpretasi terhadap teks-teks keagamaan. Berbeda dengan Buya Syakur, Buya Yahya menyatakan bahwa umat Islam sebenarnya tidak membutuhkan gerakan moderasi beragama, karena Islam merupakan agama yang memiliki ciri moderat sejak awal kemunculannya. Buya Yahya justru mengimbau agar umat Islam mewaspadaai wacana dan gerakan tersebut yang dikhawatirkannya dapat merusak kedamaian umat Islam sendiri. Perbedaan pandangan antara Buya Syakur dan Buya Yahya terjadi karena adanya perbedaan pemahaman terhadap beberapa konsep dalam Al Quran. Perbedaan pandangan antara keduanya menunjukkan adanya kontestasi dalam dakwah moderasi beragama. Kontestasi merupakan hal yang lumrah di ruang digital. Namun, kontestasi ini justru memperkaya wacana moderasi beragama di Indonesia.*

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## **Introduction**

Religious moderation is essential in realizing social harmony and preventing radicalism (Ridwan et al., 2022; Mutawali, 2023), especially in Indonesia, which has ethnic, cultural, and religious diversity (Hasan & Taufiq, 2023; Hefner, 2019). The Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia launched a religious moderation movement to build a tolerant life (Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama RI, Research, Development, Training, 2021; Muhlisin et al., 2023; Ropi, 2019). The religious moderation movement in Indonesia also aims to counteract radicalism and extremism (Arifinsyah et al., 2020; Subchi et al., 2022). Indonesia suffered from radicalism with bombings in several areas (Akhmadi, 2019; Arifianto, 2017; Arifinsyah et al., 2020).

Nevertheless, the discussion on religious moderation elicited varied reactions from Islamic religious leaders in Indonesia (Akmaliah, 2020b; Ropi, 2019). The concept of religious moderation is embraced, supported, and advocated by various moderate religious groups and organizations, including Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Muhammadiyah, and Al-Washliyah (Akmaliah, 2020b; Subchi et al., 2022; Syahnan & Ja'far, 2021). Preachers and religious communities also advocate the concept of religious moderation, including figures like Ahmad Mustofa Bisri (commonly called Gus Mus). Ahmad Muwafiq (commonly called Gus Muwafiq) is a graduate of Al-Azhar University in Egypt (Rusyana et al., 2023; Salik, 2019).

However, the concept of religious moderation has been opposed by conservative and radical Muslim groups (Hanafi et al., 2022; Jubba et al., 2022). Conservatism is a religious ideology that resists modernity and liberal or progressive interpretations in understanding religious teachings. It consistently uses the early Islamic traditions, including those of the Prophet and his companions, as a literal reference for various aspects of life that must be emulated precisely (Akmaliah, 2020b; Barton et al., 2021; Hefner, 2019; Jubba et al., 2022).

Different views on the discourse of religious moderation give rise to contestation among existing groups (Albana, 2022; Barton et al., 2021; Fanani & Iswanto, 2023; Jubba et al., 2022). The contestation of the religious authority in Islam occurs because Islam has

no tradition of central religious institutions, nor do Muslim scholars have binding authority or exclusive rights to interpret Islamic scriptures (Mandaville, 2007; Musyarrofah & Zulhannan, 2023; Whyte, 2022). On the contrary, many religious actors, institutions, and scholars claim religious authority based on their ability to transmit, interpret, and instill the teachings of Islam (Arifianto, 2020; Eileen Barker, 2005; Muzakki, 2012; Timol, 2023). Such a decentralized structure fosters plurality and competition among those who claim religious authority within a particular Muslim community (Barton et al., 2021; Burhani, 2020; Muzakki, 2012).

The idea and interpretation of religious moderation discourse are available and contested in new media (Barton et al., 2021; Jubba et al., 2022; Rusyana et al., 2023; Safitri, 2017). Religious leaders and preachers rely heavily on the media to win over audiences (Hew, 2018; Sulfikar et al., 2023; Taylor & Einstein, 2022; Wai Weng, 2022). The battle in digital media is inevitable, considering one of the characteristics of new media that is difficult to control (H. A. Campbell, 2013; Roszak & Horvat, 2022). The religious authorities of Islam in Indonesia are attracting more attention because of their rapid and continuous adaptation to the latest technological advances. In this case, YouTube has an excellent opportunity to become a medium of contestation; this platform is very popular and provides comfort for its users (Dwivedi et al., 2022; Solahudin & Fakhruroji, 2020).

So far, studies on the contestation of religious moderation have highlighted many contestations between moderates and conservatives (Akmaliah, 2020b; Hefner, 2019; Jubba et al., 2022). Previous studies have mainly shown that Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah are regarded as two groups that vigorously promote moderation in Islam. These organizations are challenged by conservative Islamic circles that position religion as rigid and exclusive (Akmaliah, 2020b; Jubba et al., 2022; Safitri, 2017). The controversy over religious moderation discourse is not only between moderates and conservatives. Controversy ensued among fellow clerics belonging to moderate Islamic organizations.

Two religious figures who intensively discussed religious moderation were Syakur Yasin, known as Buya Syakur, and Yahya Zainul Ma'arif, known as Buya Yahya. Both are charismatic clerics from NU, known as supporters of religious moderation (Maghfiroh & Masruroh, 2023; Nikmah, 2022). However, both have different views regarding the concept and implementation of religious moderation. Both of them actively carry out da'wah in *Majlis Taklim* and the community face to face, and they also expand the reach of their da'wah through online media.

. Buya Syakur has YouTube channels, such as Buya Syakur Yasin MA and Digital Television Wamimma TV, while Buya Yahya has YouTube channels, such as Buya Yahya and Al Bahjah TV. The contestation between the two can be seen in several videos of religious lectures broadcast by both TV channels. The contestation of religious moderation discourse between Buya Syakur and Buya Yahya is fascinating to examine, considering that both have the same community organization affiliation, namely Nahdlatul Ulama (NU).

The problems in this paper are: How is the discourse of religious moderation in the view of Buya Syakur and Buya Yahya as preachers? What is the model of Buya Syakur and Buya Yahya's rhetorical argument about religious moderation in their da'wah in digital space? This article is significant because it provides a detailed exploration of the reasons for contesting the discourse of religious moderation among the owners of religious authorities in the digital space. The significance of this study also provides information that variations in the methodology used to interpret religious moderation exist within NU.

**Method**

This research focused on contesting religious moderation discourse in Buya Syakur and Buya Yahya's religious lectures uploaded on the YouTube channel. The approaches used are cyber-ethnography and text analysis. Cyber-ethnography is a qualitative research methodology that studies cultures and communities in *computer-mediated communication*(Nasrullah, 2017; Robert V. Kozinets, 2010). This study analyzes discourse texts using Stephen Toulmin's Rhetorical argumentation model. Toulmin was an American-British philosopher known for his argumentation theory in *The Uses of Argument*, first published in 1958(Canavan, 2012; Eemeren et al., 2014; Toulmin, 2003). Toulmin's argumentative rhetoric combines *Claim(C)*, *Data/Ground(D)*, *Warrant(W)*, *Backing(B)*, *Qualifier(Q)*, and *Exception/Rebutta (R)* (Canavan, 2012; Maulyda et al., 2021; Toulmin, 2003). Table 1 shows Toulmin's argument.

Table 1. Elements of Toulmin's Argumentation

| <b>Elements of Argumentation</b> | <b>Explanation</b>   | <b>Identification Questions</b>  |
|----------------------------------|--|--|
| Claim (C)                        | A person's opinion about an issue.   | What exactly is claimed? What is supported?  |
| Ground (G)                       | Information used to support the claim  | What is the basis of the argument?   |
| Warrant (W)                      | Assumptions were used by the speaker so that the claims submitted would be accepted.         | What basis is used for relevant and factual reasoning?                                   |
| Backing (B)                      | Supporting data or statements to strengthen the argument. What is used to support the claim? | What is used to support claims?  |
| Capital Qualifier (M)            | Disclosure of the speaker's attitude that shows the level of certainty of an argument        | What words or phrases are indicated?   |
| Exception /Rebutta (PC)          | Conditions that allow the appearance of rejections or refutations in the given arguments.    | What factors can defeat this argument, and what are the possible arguments against this? |

This research data comes from lecture videos on Wamimma TV, Buya Syakur, and Al-Bahjah TV YouTube channels. This method is used because researchers only listen and are not directly involved in data formation(Creswell & Creswell, 2019). The

object of this research is YouTube videos of YouTube lectures on religious moderation in YouTube Syakur Yasin MA / Wamimma TV and Buya Yahya / Al Bahjah TV which were taken from each of 5 videos selected based on *purposive sampling* that discusses the theme of religious moderation. Table 2 shows the videos of Buya Syakur's preachings on religious moderation studied.

Table 2. Videos of Buya Syakur's Preaching on Religious Moderation

| <b>YouTube URL and Title</b>   | <b>Viewer</b> | <b>Like</b> |
|--|---------------|-------------|
| <a href="https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=smv6pCL20Ew">https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=smv6pCL20Ew</a> “Moderasi Beragama Merajut Nasionalisme & Toleransi Beragama, Mabes Polri Jakarta   Buya Syakur”(Religious Moderation Knitting Nationalism & Religious Tolerance, Jakarta Police Headquarters   Buya Syakur) | 415.000       | 8,7 million |
| <a href="https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=A1LX6XjBnD8&amp;t=1508s">https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=A1LX6XjBnD8&amp;t=1508s</a> “Live Dialog Tokoh Agama Moderasi Beragama Bersama Buya Syakur”(Live Dialogue of Religious Leaders on Religious Moderation with Buya Syakur)   | 17.000        | 580         |
| <a href="https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=El9o_LD0ouY">https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=El9o_LD0ouY</a> “Ini Penjelasan Buya Syakur Soal Makna Kāfir ! Apa dan Siapakah orang Kāfir dari Segi Bahasa?” (This is Buya Syakur's Explanation of the Meaning of <i>Kāfir</i> ! What and Who Are the Kāfirs in Language?) | 1,2 million   | 18.000      |
| <a href="https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=Fog-vXV4f4">https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=Fog-vXV4f4</a> “Sampai manakah batas Toleransi Kepada Orang Non Muslim ?” (What is the limit of tolerance for non-Muslims?)   | 36.000        | 1.200       |
| <a href="https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=nOucNKVTwfY">https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=nOucNKVTwfY</a> “Mungkinkah orang non muslim bisa masuk surga?”(Is it possible for non-Muslims to enter heaven)  | 228.215       | 36.000      |

Table 3. Videos of Buya Yahya's Preaching on Religious Moderation

| <b>YouTube URL and Title</b>  | <b>Viewer</b> | <b>Like</b> |
|---|---------------|-------------|
| <a href="https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=ODIrNpghjpk">https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=ODIrNpghjpk</a> “Toleransi Beragama dalam Islam - Buya Yahya Menjawab”(Religious Tolerance in Islam - Buya Yahya Answers)   | 55.862        | 1.400       |
| <a href="https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=aqIChVvKG9Q">https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=aqIChVvKG9Q</a> “Moderasi Beragama : Sesuikah dengan Pemahaman Islam yang Benar?   Buya Yahya Menjawab” (Religious Moderation: Is It Consistent with the True Understanding of Islam?   Buya Yahya replied" | 24.684        | 759         |
| <a href="https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=-nMNjNMGi74">https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=-nMNjNMGi74</a> “Kafir Atau Non Muslim? - Buya Yahya Menjawab” (Kafir or Non-Muslim? - Buya Yahya Answered)   | 2.615.514     | 33.000      |
| <a href="https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=kjYvVBSFDLk">https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=kjYvVBSFDLk</a> ”Adakah Syurga Bagi Orang Non- muslim Yang Baik? Buya Yahya Menjawab” (Is there a paradise for good non-Muslims? Buya Yahya Answered)   | 3.968.298     | 62.000      |

## Results and Discussion

### *Nahdlatul Ulama and the Discourse of Religious Moderation in Indonesia*

The term "moderation" comes from English, which means *the quality of being moderate, freedom from excess, moderate, and free from excessive* (As. Hornby, 1987). Religious moderation is defined as a religious attitude that is not extreme and prioritizes the values of tolerance and harmony in all societies (Akhmadi, 2019; Akmaliah, 2020a; Sulaiman et al., 2022). The word "moderation" is often equated with the word "*wasathiyyah*" in Arabic. "*Wasathiyyah*" comes from the word "*wasatha*" which means "something that is at both ends and he is a part of it" (Badan Litbang dan Diklat kementerian Agama RI, Research, Development, Training, 2021; Shihab, 2020).

Religious moderation refers to religious paradigms, attitudes, and practices that seek to create shared prosperity (Ridwan et al., 2022; Salik, 2019). Since 2019, religious moderation has become the mainstream of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. This is done to build social harmony amid religious and cultural diversity and fight radicalism. Characteristics that reflect moderation are: 1) having a high national commitment; 2) tolerance and mutual respect; 3) non-violence; and 4) accommodating local culture (Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama RI, Research, Development, Training, 2021).

Indonesians have implemented religious moderation for a long time (Inayatillah et al., 2022; Subchi et al., 2022). Da'wah, which takes place in Indonesia, is full of tolerance, peace, and harmony with all the cultures and traditions faced (Hati et al., 2023; Salik, 2019). Religious moderation then continued to be fought for and became a characteristic of the two most prominent organizations in Indonesia, namely Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) and Muhammadiyah (Almu'tasim, 2019; Pajarianto et al., 2022; Yusuf et al., 2018).

NU is considered one of the Islamic organizations supporting religious moderation because it adheres to *Ahl al-sunnah wa al-Jama'ah*, which is classified as a moderate school (Jubba et al., 2021; Mutawali, 2023). *Ahl al-Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* means adherents or followers of the Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH and his companions. Three characteristics can recognize this school: 1) in the field of faith, following the thoughts of Abul Hasan al-Asy'ari and Abu Mansur al-Maturidi; 2) In the field of jurisprudence or Islamic law, it follows one of the four madhabs, namely Imam Hanafi, Imam Maliki, Imam Shafi'i, and Imam Hanbali; and in the field of Sufism following the teachings conveyed by al-Junaid al-Baghdadi and Imam Al-Ghazali (Zahroh, 2004; Azra, 2014).

This pattern of religious tradition ultimately shapes the character of the NU community and provides normative social guidelines for this organization in the form of attitudes: 1) *tawasuth and i'tidal*, which is a middle and straight attitude, upholding a fair and proportionate attitude, and not extreme, 2) *tasamuh*, which is a tolerant attitude towards differences of view, both regarding religious, social, political, cultural and so on. 3) *tawazun*, which is a balanced attitude in all things, both related to the relationship with God to fellow humans and balanced concerning the environment 4) *Amar ma'ruf nahi munkar*, inviting good and valuable things and preventing reprehensible things, which

can damage and degrade the dignity and values of human life (Zahroh, 2004; Almu'tasim, 2019).

The concept of moderation in the NU perspective emphasizes the following six characteristics: *First*, religion follows the context of the reality encountered, both social, cultural, and geographical, where society is located. *Second*, priority fiqh should be implemented while understanding the central teachings, which are branched, mandatory, *sunnah*, *makruh*, and *haram*. *Third*, it makes it easier and does not complicate the implementation of religious teachings. *Fourth*, understanding religious texts comprehensively, not partially, so that a complete understanding is produced. *Fifth*, be tolerant by always respecting differences of opinion. *Sixth*, understand *sunnatullah* in creation, that Allah created everything through processes and stages, and the process of delivering and receiving Islamic teachings (Almu'tasim, 2019; Pajarianto et al., 2022).

### ***Religious Moderation Da'wah Contest on YouTube***

The advancement of technology has led to the emergence of new technologies and media for communication, commonly referred to as cyberspace (Jeljeli et al., 2022; Uswatusolihah et al., 2023). The cyber world has significantly affected the religious activities of Muslims (H. Campbell, 2007; H. A. Campbell, 2013; Gary R. Bunt, 2018; Rakhmani, 2016; Zamhari et al., 2021). Nowadays, Islam is expressed in countless online platforms in the form of websites, blogs, study forums, library repositories, podcasts, YouTube, digital TV networks, and social media (Halimatusa'diyah, 2020; Savitri Hartono, 2018; Whyte, 2022; Zaid et al., 2022).

Religious leaders and preachers utilize digital media to share their teachings, making religious messages accessible across numerous digital platforms (Halim, 2018; Halimatusa'diyah, 2020; Nisa, 2018; Pimay & Niswah, 2021; Zulfikar et al., 2023). One of the most popular platforms is YouTube, a video-sharing website launched in February 2005 by former PayPal employees Chad Hurley, Steve Chen, and Jawed Karim. This platform enables users to upload, view, and share videos. (Auxer & Monica Anderson, n.d.; Suci, n.d.; Wasis Wibowo, 2022; Widi, 2023). The increasing number of smartphone and internet users has led to a greater variety of YouTube videos. While most content on YouTube is uploaded by individuals known as content creators, over time, content creation has evolved into a collaborative effort involving teams, including those organized as institutions or companies (Mohsin, n.d.; Widi, 2023).

Utilizing digital media for da'wah offers significant benefits but also brings potential negative impacts (H. Campbell, 2010; Gary R. Bunt, 2018; Halim, 2018; Kloos, 2021; Slama, 2018). The use of digital media for da'wah offers several advantages, including the rapid and widespread dissemination of da'wah material, transcending socio-cultural and geographical barriers. Additionally, it reduces expenses related to transportation, meals, and accommodation. Furthermore, digital media provides a platform for interaction between users and content creators. (Makki & Bali, 2021). A significant drawback of digital da'wah is the lack of control over shared content. Anyone can become a source of religious information, even without proper authority or expertise

in the field. Additionally, social media can foster a false identity, enabling individuals to present themselves differently from who they are (Panuju, 2021; Pimay & Niswah, 2021). This phenomenon highlights digital media as a battleground for competition and contention among its users, including those holding religious authority (Barton et al., 2021; Zaid et al., 2022). Religious authorities use media to express their perspectives and interpretations of specific discourses or events (Ratcliff et al., 2017; Sulfikar et al., 2023). No special right exists in the world where everyone can express their beliefs without pressure (Roszak & Horvat, 2022).

In this case, YouTube has a great chance of becoming a contestation medium because this platform allows one to create more permanent impressions and sound effects (Dwivedi et al., 2022). This provides an opportunity for each individual or a specific group to build opinions and social networks, which can eventually form a specific collective identity that typically follows the character of the creator and uploader of the video. YouTube has an institutional identity that refers to a specific community. Viewers can respond with *likes* or dislikes and comments below the video (Denison, n.d.; Panuju, 2021).

### ***Buya Syakur's Da'wah of Religious Moderation on YouTube***

Buya Syakur is a cleric and caretaker of Cadangpinggan Islamic Boarding School, Indramayu, West Java, Indonesia. Initially, Buya Syakur carried out his da'wah activities face-to-face at the taklim and recitation ceremonies when there was an invitation. Since May 7, 2017, Buya Syakur has been using YouTube media under the channel KH. Buya Syakur or Wamimma TV. It has an official website: <https://www.YouTube.com/@KHBuasyakurYasinMA> (Suhendrik, 2021). Until the beginning of 2023, this YouTube channel had 1.17 million *subscribers* and 5.1k videos. Since joining YouTube on May 7, 2017, this channel has been watched 186,766,802 times. A search on Buya Syakur's religious moderation proselytizing found 2,570 posts. Picture 1 is the homepage of Buya Syakur's YouTube channel:



Figure 1. Buya Syakur YouTube Channel



The first video, “*Moderasi Beragama Merajut Nasionalisme dan Toleransi Beragama, Mabes Polri Jakarta*” (Religious Moderation Knitting Nationalism and Religious Tolerance, Jakarta Police Headquarters)” was uploaded on June 1, 2021. This video has been viewed at 415,000, 8.7 million likes, and 7,872 comments. This video drew criticism from the public and went viral. This video received responses and criticisms from many other scholars who uploaded it to YouTube.

The religious discourse delivered by Buya Syakur was criticized by the community and several Islamic religious figures. One of the figures who gave a direct response to the concept of religious moderation of Buya Syakur was Kiyai Muhammad Najih Maemun, uploaded by Ribath Darushohihain's YouTube channel <https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=aMBN8kMhQks>. This video was uploaded on November 3, 2021, and has been watched 49,464 times (Maimoen, 2021). Buya Syakur addressed Kiyai Muhammad Najih Maemun's remarks in a lecture uploaded to YouTube: [https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=f\\_gw7oPUv1E](https://www.YouTube.com/watch?v=f_gw7oPUv1E) on December 30, 2019. Other scholars were Ustadz Adi Hidayat, Habib Abu Bakr Assegaf and Buya Yahya. The sentence that became controversy and criticism was the sentence that stated “...jadi artinya bahwa Islam belum sempurna... dan Nabi mengatakan bahwa tidak akan pernah sempurna akan dilanjutkan oleh generasi kita setelah itu...siapa yang melanjutkan? Itu disembunyikan...yang pasti bukan Yahudi..bukan penyembah berhala.” (so it means that Islam is not perfect... and the Prophet said that it will never be perfect, it will be continued by our generation after that... Who continues? It's hidden..who was definitely not Jewish..not idolaters). This view of Buya Syakur made him considered an agent of liberal Islam.

Buya Syakur constructs four religious moderation discourses that are always promoted in his various da'wah activities:

- a. Religious moderation is crucial in fostering unity, but equality and justice are even more important than religious moderation.
- b. All human beings hold equal standing in the eyes of God. Equality ensures justice and unity.
- c. The term "infidel" has a broad meaning; a person who is not a Muslim is not necessarily an infidel.
- d. Heaven and hell are under God's authority. He has the power to grant entry to heaven or hell.

Buya Syakur uses the element of warrant by building the assumption that any ummah, including Muslims, cannot live exclusively alone; Muslims need cooperation with others. Buya Syakur uses backing or supporting his claim by quoting the Qur'an Surat Al-Hujurat verse 13: “*Dan kemudian kami jadikan kamu berbangsa-bangsa dan bersuku-suku agar kamu saling mengenal* (And then we made you into nations and tribes that you might know one another). According to Buya Syakur, the meaning of tribes and nations includes differences in religion and belief. Buya Syakur put forward an argument by quoting the Qur'anic surah Surah Al-Hajj verse 17:

*"Verily believers, Jews, Shabins, Christians, Magi, and polytheists of Allah will decide among them on the Day of Judgment. Truly God bears witness to all things."*

According to Buya Syakur, this verse is the basis that religious differences are inevitable; Allah will judge and decide in the Hereafter. Buya Syakur said that diversity is God's will. This reality is a deliberate one desired by God. Buya Syakur said: "*Semua agama buatan Tuhan, tidak ada di dunia ini yang bukan buatan Tuhan...Sengaja biar rame.*" (God creates all religions; nothing in this world exists without His creation... It is intentionally made to gain widespread recognition) (Syakur, 2021b). Buya Syakur promotes that equality and equality of human beings in the eyes of the law are higher than tolerance. Equality assumes that people have an equal position in God's eyes. Equality will ensure justice and unity. Tolerance indicates that there are parties who tolerate other parties who are minorities so that minorities will be indebted to the majority. Buya Syakur stated:

*"Moderasi beragama selalu penekanannya pada toleransi. Saya tidak butuh toleransi..yang saya butuhkan adalah kesetaraan...maka yang ditekankan adalah supremasi hukum..Ide besarnya: Supremasi hukum dan keadilan sosial. Moderasi beragama bukan berarti ke gereja bareng-bareng..bukan"* (Religious moderation has always been its emphasis on tolerance. I don't need tolerance... What I need is equality. ...So what is emphasized is the rule of law... The big idea: The rule of law and social justice. Religious moderation does not mean going to church together... not it's. (Syakur, 2019b).

Thus, Buya Syakur supports the discourse of religious moderation in building equality and the rule of law. According to him, social harmony and peace will automatically be realized with equality and the rule of law. Therefore, the thing to do is to coexist and cooperate with followers of other religions without feeling better than others. To support this, Buya Syakur conveyed data about the number of Muslims in the world, which is minimal compared to the earth's population of 8 billion. In addition, it is a fact that humanity cannot live exclusively with its group only. Muslims need cooperation with others.

The claim made by Buya Syakur is about the meaning of "infidel ."One of Buya Syakur's lecture videos about the meaning of kafir is a video entitled "*Ini Penjelasan Buya Syakur Tentang Makna Kafir. Apa dan Siapakah Orang Kafir dari Segi Bahasa?*" (This is Buya Syakur's explanation of the meaning of infidels. What and Who Are the Disbelievers in Language?). This video was posted on August 24, 2019, and has been watched 531,351 times. It has received 1,230 comments. Kafir has various meanings, and there is no meaning that means non-Muslims. Thus, it is incorrect to call non-Muslims infidels. This is also contained in the video titled "*Kafir Atau Non- Muslim? Buya Syakur Menjawab*" (Infidel or non-Muslim? Buya Syakur replied). This video was posted on March 24, 2019, and has been watched 341,956 times and received 2,021 comments. Buya Syakur gave an argument in the form of Ground, stating that the word "*kafir*" comes from Arabic, which means to understand its true meaning, requires linguistic or linguistic

studies. In the Qur'an, there are several expressions of the word "kafir" that have different meanings.

In his da'wah, Buya Syakur started his explanation by stating:

*"Tidak mudah mendefinisikan sesuatu..konsekuensinya ketika definsi tidak benar,..dapat menimbulkan kesalahan persepsi.."* (It's not easy to define something. The consequences when the definition is incorrect. may lead to misperceptions)"

Buya Syakur shows the meaning of the word "infidel" from the Qur'anic verse: Q.S. At-Tahrim verse 8, the meaning of *kafir* is "to erase"; Al-Hadid verse 20, the meaning of infidel is "the peasants"; Al-Kafirun verse 1, the meaning of *kafir* is "non-Muslims"; Al-Baqarah verse 105, the meaning of infidelity is "rebellious people"; An-Nisa verse 38, the meaning of infidelity is "stingy" and "tell people to stingy"; Ibrahim verse 7, the meaning of infidelity is "disbelief";

By elaborating on some of these verses, Buya Syakur wants to explain that linguistically the word "kafir" has a very diverse meaning. The root word *kafir* has the meaning of "closed" or "covering ."In religious studies, *kafir* means closed off from *hidayah* or truth. As for non-Muslims, they are considered to have the truth that they believe in themselves. The word infidel today has a meaning that has negative connotations and contains theologically violent consequences. So, it is not worthy of being a label or call for anyone. When we call or call people who are not Muslims or people who disobey, we call them by their good names.

The interpretation of the term "kafir" is closely tied to the debate about whether non-Muslims will enter heaven. Regarding this issue, Buya Syakur emphasized that the matter of heaven and hell is solely at the discretion of Allah SWT. He stated that if Allah will, both Muslims and non-believers may enter heaven. Buya Syakur also quotes Surah Al-Maidah verse 69:

*"Verily those who believe, Jews, Shobiin and Christians, whosoever believeth in Allah, to the next day, and does good, there is no worry for him, and they do not grieve."*

Buya Syakur also uses the warrant argument by stating that while in the world, all humans are encouraged to compete in doing good. To support this argument, Buya Syakur quoted the Qur'anic verse Surah Al-Hajj verse 17:

*"While in the world... believers, Jews, Pasebans, Christians... please in the world compete to do good, do business.. he will be separated later by God... But later in the doomsday. Do we believe we are going to heaven? In the world make heaven on earth... we exchange interests... Now inter-religious cooperation has been proven)." (Syakur, 2019a)*

The following claim that Buya Syakur wants to convey is that saying and giving prayers of salvation to non-Muslims is a recommended act in Islam. To support this claim, Buya Syakur quotes the Qur'anic verse Surah An-Nisa verse 86:

*"If you are honored with something honor, repay that honor with a better one than him or repay that honor (with something similar). Indeed, God takes all things into account."*

However, as many other religious leaders have, he did not explicitly clarify whether it is permissible to wish Christians a Merry Christmas. Buya Syakur encourages his audience to reflect and think for themselves in his lectures. He refrains from offering clear answers, seemingly wishing for the audience to determine their actions based on their reflections. Buya Syakur said:

*“Kita pikirkan anak yatim..jangan sampai ada orang kerubuhan rumah..jadi ..Jalan menuju surga adalah seremonimah untuk diri kita..kejernihan hati..niat yang baik..ketenangan jiwa..jalan menuju surga adalah membangun keadilan sosial..”*. (We think of orphans... Do not let anyone collapse the house... so. The way to heaven is ceremonial for us.. clarity of heart.. good intentions... peace of mind... The way to heaven is to build social justice)

### ***Buya Yahya's Religious Moderation Da'wah on YouTube***

Buya Yahya is a scholar and preacher who regularly preaches in several *majlis taklim*. His da'wah activities began to be widely known by establishing Islamic boarding schools *Lembaga Pengembangan Dakwah* (LPD/ Da'wah Development Institute) Al Bahjah. LPD Al Bahjah is located on Pangeran Cakrabuana Street No.179, Blok Gudang Air Cirebon Regency, Indonesia. Buya Yahya's recitation also has a regular schedule with various book discussions. Some of the books studied are *Bidayatul Hidayah* by Imam Al Ghazali (every Monday at 20.00 at At-Taqwa mosque) and the book of *Sulukil Murid* by Imam Al Haddad (every Saturday at Al Mustaqim mosque, Cirebon(Maghfiroh & Masruroh, 2023)).

In addition, Buya Yahya regularly fills out her studies at various nurturing ceremonies, currently numbering 29 *majlis taklim*. Ia memiliki channel YouTube resmi <https://www.YouTube.com/@AlBahjahTV>. Al-Bahjah TV joined YouTube on May 27, 2015. He currently has 5.47 million subscribers and 13,000 videos. The channel has been viewed 831,844,242 times. Figure 2 is the homepage of Al Bahjah TV's YouTube channel:

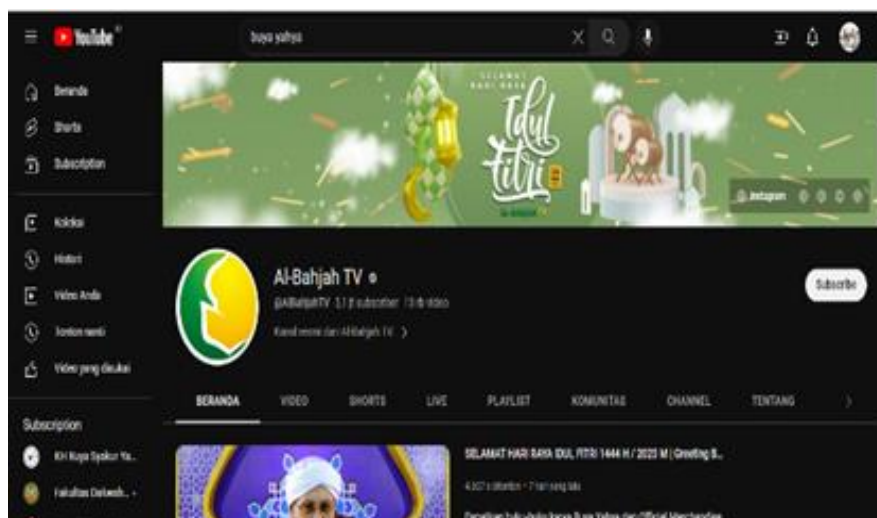


Figure 2. Buya Yahya YouTube Channel

Buya Yahya presents four discourses on religious moderation in his various da'wah forums, which include:

- a. Islam does not need religious moderation because it already contains moderate teachings. Discussions and movements related to religious moderation should be approached with caution and careful consideration.
- b. Islam offers a more beautiful teaching than tolerance, which is respect for others who are different. Islam does not require the concept of "tolerance" towards followers of other religions.
- c. The term "infidel" refers to those who do not accept the truth. Those who reject the prophethood of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) are considered infidels. Therefore, non-Muslims are labeled as "infidels."
- d. Non-Muslims will not enter the paradise promised by Allah to Muslims.

Buya Yahya said that the religious moderation movement must be addressed carefully because it can have detrimental consequences for Islam itself. The religious moderation movement that aims to counteract radicalism and extremism is a genuine religious moderation movement. However, in reality, this movement has been misunderstood and implemented incorrectly by some Muslims.

Buya Yahya put forward the reason or *ground* that Islam is a moderate religion and that the teachings of Islam are full of moderation values. Buya Yahya also said that there is a very extraordinary concept of *wasathiyyah* in Islam. According to Buya Yahya, Islam does not need that movement because Islam already has moderate teachings. Buya Yahya presented his argument by presenting data that, for a long time, Muslims have been able to live peacefully with people of other religions. He stated:

*“Moderasi beragama jika maknanya untuk mengurangi cara beragama yang mengarah pada radikalisme an ekstrimisme..maka itu moderasi beragama yang benar, tapi jika digunakan oleh orang yang tidak benar, maka ia adalah penyusup yang membuat kekacauan dalam Islam.. Oleh karena itu, pemain moderasi beragama harus cerdas, dia adalah orang yang bijak”* (Religious moderation if its meaning is to reduce religious ways that lead to radicalism and extremism. then it is true religious moderation, but if it is used by an unrighteous person, then it is an intruder who is wreaking havoc in Islam. Therefore, the player of religious moderation must be intelligent, he is a wise man).

Regarding tolerance, Buya Yahya argues that Islam knows no tolerance. However, since tolerance has become a global discourse, Muslims have adopted it as a concept that can be practiced in life. According to him, it is an obligation to respect and appreciate people of different faiths in Islam. Respecting and appreciating have a higher status than tolerance. The real meaning of tolerance is not to impose desires on others or others.

As for saying Merry Christmas, Buya Yahya forbade it because saying Merry Christmas means congratulating the birth of Jesus, who is considered God by Christians. So, it is contrary to the beliefs of Muslims.

*"...Apa sih arti mengucapkan selamat natal? selamat natal adalah selamat atas kelahirna Yesus yang dianggap tuhan oleh mereka... Kalau mengganggu mereka merayakan natal itu berdosa..(What does it mean to say Merry Christmas? Merry Christmas is a congratulation on the birth of Jesus who is considered a god by them... If you disturb them celebrating Christmas, it is a sin)*

In several forums, Buya Yahya commented on the discourse of religious moderation, tolerance, and Islam Nusantara, which was considered to have gone out of the right creed path. He warned that it was hazardous. Buya Yahya said:

*"Jangan sok pluralisme, toleransi..merangkul sana merangkul sini..saudaranya sendiri dicekik.."* (Do not suppress pluralism, tolerance. embrace there embrace here. His own brother was strangled)

The videos of Buya Yahya's da'wah discuss religious moderation discourses: 1) The meaning of infidels. According to Buya Yahya, the word *kafir* has various meanings. One of its meanings is non-Muslim. So, non-Muslims are infidels. So that non-Muslims can call non-Muslims or infidels. All those who do not believe in the Prophet Muhammad are infidels in Arabic. *Kafir* is an obvious meaning, that is, one who does not accept the teachings of the (Prophet Muhammad; 2) About paradise, whether only for Muslims or non-Muslims, also has the right to go to paradise. In this matter, Buya Yahya affirmed that Allah's paradise is only for Muslims because non-Muslims also do not want the paradise of Allah SWT; 3) About giving holiday greetings to non-Muslims; 4) About the law of marrying a non-Muslim woman.

About the meaning of infidels, Buya Yahya expressly said:

*"...Apakah betul orang nonmuslim tidak boleh disebut kafir? bahasa Arabnya orang Yahudi dan Nasrani itu adalah kafir. Justru karena mereka Yahudi dan Nasrani mereka itu kafir. Dalam istilah agama Islam, kafir adalah orang yang tidak menerima Islam....jadi orang yang tidak menerima Nabi Muhammad adalah kafir..ini bukan bahasa mencaci..kafir adalah orang yang tidak mengakui Nabi Muhammad, tidak mengakui Islam sebagai agama yang benar.*

*"...kalimat kafir bukan cacian..bukan olokan.., Kalimat kafir yang diucapkan seorang muslim maknanya" 'engkau punya keyakinan yang berbeda dengan kita, engkau punya keyakinan ada Tuhan selain Allah..' ("...Is it true that non-Muslims cannot be called infidels? In Arabic, Jews and Christians are infidels. Precisely because they are Jews and Christians, they are infidels. In Islamic terms, an infidel is someone who does not accept Islam....so someone who does not accept the Prophet Muhammad is an infidel..this is not a language of insults..an infidel is someone who does not recognize the Prophet Muhammad, does not recognize Islam as the true religion. "...the word infidel is not an insult..not a mockery.., The word infidel uttered by a Muslim means, "You have a different belief from us; you have a belief that there is a God other than Allah..")*

Buya Yahya asserted that *kafir* is a concept in Islam to refer to people who do not follow and believe in the Prophet Muhammad. *Kafir* is not a language that contains

negative values and insults. Kafir is a neutral term. About whether non-Muslims go to heaven or not and how good non-Muslims get paradise or not, Buya Yahya explained:

*Dia mengajarin iman yang salah, jangan hadir di majlis lagi jangan mendengar ceramahnya. Ini bahaya sekali.. Orang di luar Islam tidak mendapatkan surga Allah. ini jelas..dan enggak usah maksain. Deh.wong mereka sendiri tidak pernah minta surganya Allah, aneh banget kita....dia punya tuhannya sendiri...mereka punya surganya sendiri ngapain ngurusin surganya orang lain...Orang Hindu Budha tidak pernah minta dan berhayal bercita-cita masuk surganya kita..*

(He taught the wrong faith, so do not attend the council anymore and do not listen to his lectures. This is very dangerous. People outside of Islam do not get Allah's paradise... this is obvious... and do not force; they never ask for God's paradise... how strange we are... He has his own God... They have their paradise to take care of other people's paradise... Hindu Buddhists never ask and fantasize about aspiring to our paradise) (Yahya, n.d.)

Buya Yahya has the opinion that the paradise of Allah SWT is only for Muslims, that is, people who recognize the apostleship of the Prophet Muhammad and follow his teachings. People who do not acknowledge the apostleship of the Prophet Muhammad and do not practice its teachings are called infidels, and unbelievers have no right to enter the paradise of Allah.

The findings revealed a distinction in the religious moderation preachings of Buya Syakur and Buya Yahya, driven by their differing perspectives and arguments. According to Toulmin's rhetorical theory of argumentation, there are variations in the Ground, Warrant, and Claim between their teachings on religious moderation. The difference in views between Buya Syakur and Buya Yahya arises from their contrasting interpretations of the concepts of "infidel," "tolerance," "heaven," and "hell." Table 4 shows the arguments of Buya Syakur and Buya Yahya's religious moderation discourse:

Table 4. Arguments for Religious Moderation Discourse In Buya Syakur and Buya Yahya YouTube channels

| <b>Concepts of Religious Moderation</b> | <b>Elements</b> | <b>Buya Syakur's Argument</b>  | <b>Buya Yahya's Argument</b>  |
|---|-----------------|--|---|
| The Meaning of Religious Moderation     | Claim           | Religious moderation is a necessity to achieve unity and unity   | Islam does not need religious moderation. Moderation is different from <i>wasathiyah</i> . Islam is <i>wasathiyah</i> . |
|   | Ground          | The realities of life in this world are very diverse, including diversity in religions and streams of belief held by humans. | Since ancient times, Muslims have been able to live peacefully with people of other religions.                          |
|   | Warrant         | Diversity is the will of Allah. Quran Surah <i>Al-Hujurat</i> verse 13   | Muslim communities can already coexist with non-Muslims   |

|                                |         |  |  |
|--------------------------------|---------|--|--|
| The concept of Tolerance       | Claim   | Human life requires equality, not tolerance.   | Teaching tolerance to Muslims is considered inappropriate.   |
|                                | Ground  | Tolerance is a process of dialogue that requires one party to relent   | Islam has had a better concept of tolerance, the obligation to respect followers of other religions  |
|                                | Warrant | All humans have an equal position in God's eyes. Equality will guarantee justice and unity.  | The history of Indonesian people living in peace and harmony   |
| The meaning of "infidel"       | Claim   | It is not appropriate to call non-Muslims "infidels."  | It is okay to call non-Muslims " <i>kafir</i> "(infidel)   |
|                                | Ground  | The word "infidel" in Arabic has a comprehensive and religious meaning, and none of it refers to the meaning of a person of any religion other than Islam. | "Infidel" has an obvious meaning, that is, one who does not accept the Prophet Muhammad. "Infidel" means neutral and does not contain harmful elements or insults. |
|                                | Warrant | In the Qur'an, many verses contain the word <i>kafir</i> , which has various meanings.   | One of the meanings of infidel in the Qur'an does not believe in the Prophet Muhammad. Those who are not Muslims are called infidels.                              |
| Happy holidays for non-Muslims | Claim   | Muslims can wish happy Eid for adherents of other religions  | Muslims cannot say Eid for adherents of other religions.   |
|                                | Ground  | Saying happy holidays is a social issue, not theology and belief.  | Wishing a happy holiday is part of worship. Social life remains harmonious without congratulations.  |
|                                | Warrant | Islam teaches that if we are given respect, we should reciprocate it equally or better.  | Muslims never ask for congratulations, nor do Muslims need to wish them a happy holiday.   |
| Paradise for Non-Muslims       | Claim   | All human beings, regardless of religion, have a chance of going to heaven   | Non-Muslims will not enter the paradise of Allah promised to Muslims   |
|                                | Ground  | Heaven and hell are the prerogatives of God; Allah has the authority to place any servant in either heaven or hell.  | Allah's paradise is only for Muslims because non-Muslims also do not want Allah's paradise.  |
|                                | Warrant | Non-Muslims can obtain paradise.   | Non-Muslims have their imagination about heaven.   |

## Conclusion

The study's results indicate that there are differences in the discourse on religious moderation in the preachings of Buya Syakur and Buya Yahya, stemming from differing perspectives and arguments on various concepts in the Qur'an, such as the meaning of



'infidel,' 'heaven-hell,' and the boundaries of 'tolerance.' These differences lead to contestation, with each side believing their view to be the most accurate. While contestation exposes society to diverse ideas, society must possess critical thinking skills.

According to Toulmin's rhetorical argument theory, there are differences in the Ground, Warrant, and Claim between the religious moderation preachings of Buya Syakur and Buya Yahya. Buya Syakur highlights that social reality is diverse, including cultural differences. Therefore, religious moderation is essential to achieving social unity and harmony amidst these differences. The concepts of 'infidel' and 'heaven-hell,' as well as the practice of greeting with 'festivals,' should be re-examined within the framework of human equality as creations of Allah SWT. On the other hand, Buya Yahya argues that Muslims can already coexist peacefully with followers of other religions without the need for a religious moderation movement because Islam provides foundational teachings that promote respect and honor for all people. Buya Yahya maintains that the concepts of 'heaven and hell' for non-Muslims and the teaching of 'Merry Christmas' are clearly explained in the Qur'an and hadith. Muslims are instructed to understand these concepts within the context of Islam, believing that Muslims are the best people with perfect teachings. When Muslims practice Islam well and perfectly, social harmony will naturally follow.

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