

The Religious Moderation and Decreasing Muslim Students' Identity

Mardiah Astuti

Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah

Fajri Ismail

Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah

This research aimed to describe the effect of religious moderation on decreasing Muslim students' identity in Palembang. The research used a mixed method. The respondents of the research were 177 Muslim students in four state and private universities. The data were collected through observation, interviews, questionnaires, and relevant documents. The research results indicated that students' understanding of religious moderation generally was in a very high category. Also, students' perception on religious moderation was positively and mutually supportive for friendship, leadership, and solidarity. The diversity of regional cultures is a strong identity that is carried in interacting within the campus environment. The forms of moderation diversity are supported by the religious moderation programs in the study program, faculty, and university. The smallest symptom showed an attitude of religious moderation which was built in Islamic studies courses, especially in public universities. This research concludes that religious moderation can affect the decreasing Muslim student's identity, but it depends on students' perception and understanding of religious moderation itself.

Keywords: Muslim students, religious moderation, self identity

INTRODUCTION

This research discussed the religious moderation in state and private universities. This topic is interesting to be analyzed because the religious practices of Indonesian society are heterogeneous from the aspects of religion, education, language, ethnicity, and culture (Habibi et al., 2018; Muazza et al., 2018; Muazza et al., 2019; Mukminin et al., 2019). Individual religious practices (worship) are potential to cause disputes if they interfere with other people's practices. The research results showed that the Malay community cannot keep up with the development of great civilizations due to strong leadership and unity (Zed, 2017). Critical and dynamic thinking is needed in religion so it can adapt to the times. In fact, Sanchez et al. (2017) state that being too critical of religion affects the decrease of individual religious beliefs.

Additionally, the effect of rigid religious beliefs may create a lack of initiative by religious adherents to deal with disasters because they only depend on belief in God's help (Sajadi et al., 2018). True religious belief and understanding make a person strong, dynamic, and able to adapt to changes in destiny which is good or bad. On the other hand, a weak personality and poor understanding of religion may lead to narrow thinking, which results in violence and terrorism and may damage the image of Muslims. In fact, it has

nothing to do with Islam. Terrorism arises because of Islamic mythology, and the motive of revenge is due to customs in Bedouin Arab culture (Meftah, 2018).

The results of a study done in 2018 showed there was an influence of Islamic values on the religious behavior of Muslims in Minangkabau, Indonesia. Customs that are not under Islamic teachings must yield because they are human-made, while religion comes from Allah (Muslim, 2018). It shows that religious moderation is not rigid in Islamic society because adherents will leave culture strictly and choose to uphold religious teachings. Ghaderi et al. (2020) try to find the best middle way by raising culture to overcome the problem of interacting with rigidly religious traditions. Religious moderation is a way to solve the national problem according to flexible, novelty, convenient, and tolerant religious teaching that was previously discussed in various religious texts about Islamic civilization. The scarcity of texts that provides insight into truly religious moderation may be unable to stem the increasing flow of global information, the high demands of life in modern society, and the high levels of violence. The practice of shifting religious classifications increases due to the influence of individual culture, violence, and masculinity. Afterwards, religion is unable to decrease this behavior because it is not supported by a strong law enforcement (Baohen & Mamatzakis, 2021).

The implementation of religious moderation has been implemented in several universities in Indonesia. In universities in Palembang, religious moderation is implemented as an institutional program, such as UIN Raden Fatah Palembang. The implementation of religious moderation is in a particular container called the UIN Raden Fatah Palembang Moderation House. It is managed programmatically as a student religious center related to religious moderation. In private universities, the socialization of religious moderation programs has been carried out such as in Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang and Universitas PGRI Palembang. However, the detailed management is not yet known. Through this research, it examined the implementation of the moderation program in universities.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researchers used a qualitative-quantitative method. Both points of view are needed to obtain results that are under the research objectives. Data sources were students, lecturers, and heads of the religious division at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang, Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang, Unsri Poltekkes, and Universitas PGRI Palembang. The population were Muslim students at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang, Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang, and Universitas PGRI Palembang. The samples were students who were participating in religious activities on campus through a purposive sampling technique, in which the researchers determined the number of samples based on research needs. The respondents were 50 students from UIN Raden Fatah Palembang, 50 students from Unsri Poltekkes, 37 students from Universitas PGRI Palembang, and 40 students from Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang students so that the total respondents were 177 students. Data were collected using observation, questionnaires, interviews, and documentation. The data that had been collected were then analyzed by using qualitative and quantitative techniques.

Research Preparation

This research intended to describe the effect of religious moderation to decrease Muslim students' identity in Palembang. Preparations were to realize this purpose so the implementation could run smoothly and does not deviate from the research theme being studied. The first preparatory activity was to identify issues related to religious moderation in Indonesia, especially among students. Issues around religious moderation in Indonesia are currently an actual topic for discussion because they have only been promoted simultaneously in government programs through the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia.

Activities carried out in preparation for this research were to determine the characteristics of students as samples, to formulate the problems studied, to determine data collection method, to formulate instrument grids, to develop research instruments including observation, interviews, questionnaires, and documents, and to conduct instrument trials. Instrument testing consisted of two stages, initially tested through examination by researchers to obtain valid and reliable sentences and questionnaire contents. After being

declared theoretically valid by experts, trials of the instrument were carried out in the field, in this case at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang, Poltekes Sriwijaya, Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang, and Universitas PGRI Palembang.

Based on the results of the questionnaire instrument trials, the validity of the questionnaire was compiled in a total of 35 items which were valid and could be tested in research. Meanwhile, the validity of test contained 17 statement items which were valid and three were invalid. All valid statements were used, while the invalid instruments were discarded.

Research Implementation

This research took place on the 14th to 24th of November 2022 at four public and private universities in Palembang. Data collection was obtained from 177 male and female students of the third, fifth, and seventh semesters. The data collection mechanism was arranged in such a way as to complement each other in obtaining accurate and complete data relating to the effect of religious moderation on decreasing Muslim students' identity in Palembang, Indonesia.

The first data collection was carried out through observation to observe student activities when interacting in their campus environment. The guidelines used in making observation sheets that have been provided in advance by the researchers. Observed religious moderation activities include visible symptoms of tolerance, anti-violence, balance in national commitment, and respect for local wisdom. Observations on the Muslim students' identity included identity in the social structure, cultural structure, self-ability, and identity in their environment.

After doing observations, it continued collecting data through questionnaires. There were two stages used in distributing the questionnaire, first through the Google form. The students filled out the form provided via the link distributed in their respective WhatsApp groups. They filled out the form after completing their identity in the fields provided. The Google form contained the alternative questionnaire answers, including strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. The implementation of data collection through a questionnaire with a Google form was to collect student understanding of religious moderation. Second, the dissemination of data (offline) to 177 students was to collect data on the Muslim students' identity in Palembang. In this questionnaire, students were only asked to include the requested code names without having to provide their real name information to obtain the accurate data.

Furthermore, the data collection through interviews was carried out by the head of the religious moderation program at each higher institution, especially at the faculty and study program levels. The interview questions were related to religious moderation, namely perceptions about student religious moderation, implementation of moderation, and concrete efforts to support religious moderation programs. In the Muslim students' identity variable, the variables studied were related to perceptions of Muslim students' identity, decreasing of identity, efforts to build identity, and the obstacles they face. Every observation activity, questionnaire distribution, and documents were taken for documentation in this research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the objectives of this research, the expected results included understanding student religious moderation, forms of religious moderation in student perceptions, and the effect of religious moderation on Muslim students' religious identity. Based on the results of the interviews, the student's understanding of religious moderation at public and private universities in Palembang showed mixed results. In public universities, students generally understood that religious moderation is the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia program that must be supported to create a prosperous society without hostility.

The religious moderation program in higher institutions varies depending on the educational institution's policy. At UIN Raden Fatah Palembang, religious moderation has been going well. The implementation of the religious moderation form at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang is integrated, where the program at the Study Program and Faculty levels and majors is centered in one direction, namely the House of Religious Moderation which is coordinated by central employees. The religious moderation program at

UIN Raden Fatah Palembang is directed to be implemented not only among lecturers but also students and parents of students. So far, the religious moderation program at UIN has been able to create a new atmosphere and understanding for students at the Study Program and Faculty levels. In general, students' knowledge of religious moderation here is good. Real activities that support the religious moderation program at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang include the implementation of religious moderation socialization, moderation training within the lecturer environment, and lecture activities that are integrated with the religious moderation program. So far, the religious moderation program in study programs/ faculties and universities at UIN has been independent but has been still confirmed by the UIN Raden Fatah Palembang moderation house program.

In contrast to the Religious Moderation Program at UIN Raden Fatah Palembang in the House of Religious Moderation, the Poltekes Sriwijaya Palembang has been running but is still at the stage of socialization and training activities. Each department at the Poltekes is given the autonomy to prepare its moderation program. Nevertheless, students have had known religious moderation even though it is not optimal. So far, the actual activities that support the religious moderation program at Poltekes Sriwijaya as long as they are in the activities of the respective departments at the Poltekes, and socialization of the development of material on religious subjects, such as Islamic Studies, so that in the development of the religious moderation program at Poltekes Sriwijaya are different, depending on the autonomous policy of the department.

As the oldest private Islamic university in Palembang, Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang has implemented a moderation program for a long time, long before the Indonesian Ministry of Religion's Religious Moderation Program. This program has been running well, even though a religious moderation manual has not been specially prepared. The form of implementing religious moderation at Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang includes accepting the type of religion of students who wish to continue their studies at Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang, not limited to being Muslim. However, in carrying out Muslim worship, it remains oriented towards the principles of the Muhammadiyah organization and Islamic teachings. The religious moderation program on campus has been able to increase students' knowledge of religious moderation so they can practice it. The activities that support the religious moderation program at the Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang today are socialization and religious moderation training for lecturers and students. Every religious moderation program in the study program/faculty and university on campus is one unit, namely the religious moderation program at Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang.

The religious moderation program at Universitas PGRI Palembang has been going well. The form of implementing religious moderation at Universitas PGRI Palembang is the same as at universities in general. It is still in the socialization stage and provides training for lecturers and students. So far, the religious moderation program has added insight and knowledge of religious moderation to Universitas PGRI Palembang students, enriched by journals and reading books. The activities that support the religious moderation program on campus are accepting all student religions in lectures and treating them the same as Muslims. There has been no religious moderation program specifically at the study program/faculty level, only limited to the University program, and it has been running well. The analysis results of religious moderation questionnaire data and the Muslim students' identity in Palembang are in Table 1.

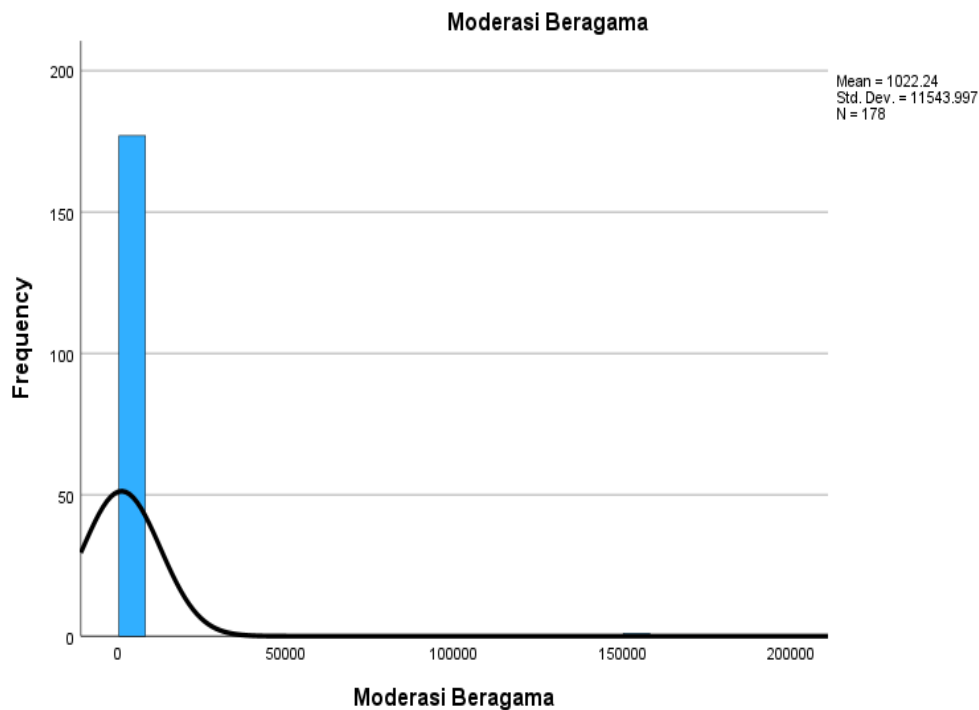
Based on Table 1 below, the average value of students' understanding of religious moderation is 1022.24. The median value obtained was 158.50, and the mode was 175 from 35 questionnaire statements given to 177 students. The minimum score was 110, and the maximum score was 154173. Students' understanding of religious moderation in Palembang is in the histogram below.

TABLE 1
THE DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS RESULTS OF STUDENTS' UNDERSTANDING OF
RELIGIOUS MODERATION IN PALEMBANG

Description	Religious Moderation
Mean	1022.24
Median	158.50
Mode	175
Minimum	110
Maximum	154173
Sum	181959

Source: Data Processing Using SPSS Version 22, November 2022

FIGURE 1
QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS DATA ON RELIGIOUS MODERATION



Source: Results of Data Processing Using SPSS Version 22, November 2022

Figure 1 above shows the understanding of religious moderation in Palembang. Furthermore, the Muslim students' identity questionnaire results are in Table 2 below.

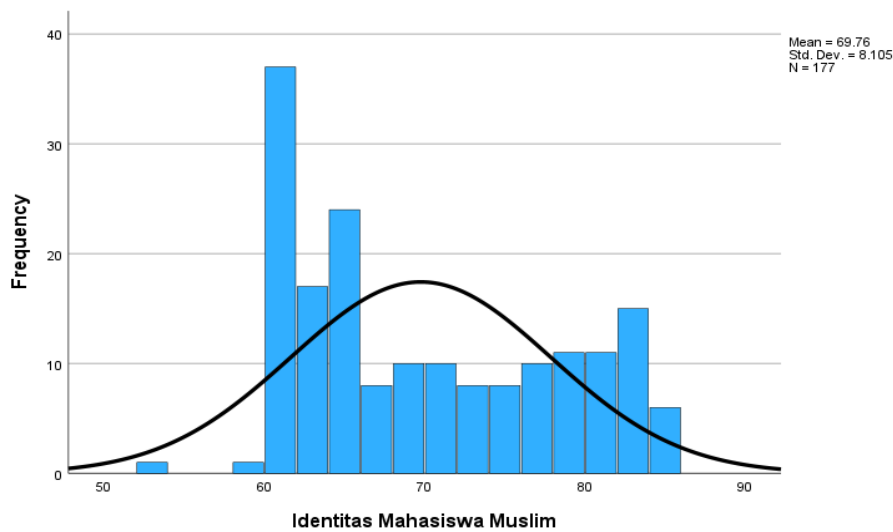
Based on Table 2 below, the average value of Muslim students' identity is 69.76. The median value obtained is 68, and the mode is 61 from 20 questionnaire statements given to 177 students. The minimum score is 53, and the maximum score is 85. The Muslim students' identity in Palembang can be seen through the histogram below.

TABLE 2
DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS RESULTS OF MUSLIM STUDENTS' IDENTITY IN PALEMBANG

Description	Muslim Students Identity
Mean	69.76
Median	68.00
Mode	61
Minimum	53
Maximum	85
Sum	12347

Source: Results of Data Processing Using SPSS Version 22, November 2022

FIGURE 2
QUESTIONNAIRE RESULT DATA ON MUSLIM STUDENTS' IDENTITY



Source: Results of Data Processing Using SPSS Version 22, November 2022

To find out the effect of understanding religious moderation on decreasing Muslim students' identity in Palembang, a hypothesis test was carried out using the Simple Linear Regression formula. From the linear regression analysis, data were as in Table 4.3 below.

TABLE 3
RESULTS OF SIMPLE LINEAR REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Model		Coefficients ^a				t	Sig.
		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			
		B	Std. Error	Beta			
1	(Constant)	27.825	5.961			4.668	<,001
	Moderasi Beragama	.267	.038	.471		7.063	<,001

a. Dependent Variable: Muslim Students' Identity

From the output of SPSS Table 3 above, the constants and coefficients of the simple linear regression equation were shown in column B. The linear regression equation was $\hat{Y} = 27.825 + 0.267X$. From the data

analysis, it was obtained that $t \text{ count} = 7.063$ and $p\text{-value} = 0.001/2 = 0.0005 < 0.05$, so H_0 was rejected, which means that students' understanding of religious moderation had a positive effect on decreasing the Muslim students' identity in Palembang.

TABLE 4
ANOVA

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Muslim Students' Identity * Religious Moderation	Between Groups	(Combined)	5259.943	47	111.914	2.291	<,001
		Linearity	2564.600	1	2564.600	52.508	<,001
		Deviation from Linearity	2695.343	46	58.594	1.200	.213
	Within Groups		6300.611	129	48.842		
	Total		11560.554	176			

The hypothesis in this research is described in two statements, which are:

$H_0: Y = \alpha + BX$ (Linear regression)

$H_0: Y \neq \alpha + BX$ (Non- linear regression).

From the table above, the linearity test of the regression equation is obtained through the deviation from the linearity line, namely F count (TC) = 1.200, with $p\text{-value} = 0.213 > 0.05$. It shows that H_0 is accepted, which means the regression equation Y over X is linear or in the form of a linear line. Furthermore, the ANOVA table obtained:

TABLE 5
ANOVA

		ANOVA ^a				
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	2564.600	1	2564.600	49.890	<,001 ^b
	Residual	8995.954	175	51.405		
	Total	11560.554	176			

a. Dependent Variable: Muslim Students' Identity

b. Predictors: (Constant), Religious Moderation

The criteria for the hypothesis in this research are:

$H_0: \beta = 0$ (meaningless regression)

$H_0: \beta \neq 0$ (mean regression).

In the ANOVA table above, the significant test of the regression equation is shown by Fcount value (b/a) = 49.890 and $p\text{-value} = 0.001 < 0.05$, so H_0 is rejected. It means that the regression from Y to X is significant. In other words, the understanding of religious moderation affects decreasing the Muslim students' identity in Palembang. In the Summary model table, data is obtained:

TABLE 6
MODEL SUMMARY

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.471 ^a	.222	.217	7.170	.222	49.890	1	175	<.001

a. Predictors: (Constant), Religious Moderation

The statistical hypothesis formulated is:

Ho: $p = 0$

Ho: $p \neq 0$.

Furthermore, in the model summary table above, a significant test of the correlation coefficient obtained $R = 0.471$ and F count (F change) = 49.890, with a value = 0.001, which means that Ho is rejected. It means that the correlation coefficient X and Y are significant. The coefficient of determination is R square 0.222, which means that 22.2% of the variable moderation in religion affects decreasing the Muslim students' identity.

Based on data analysis, the student's understanding of religious moderation varies, generally agreeing with the religious moderation of the Indonesian Ministry of Religion. Students can accept the concept of moderation as a middle way in interacting between religious communities in South Sumatra, especially for those who have friends from the same class or majors who have different beliefs. From observations, many students at private universities have a high tolerance attitude so they can interact well with fellow friends. Religious moderation among students appears in the form of interaction, believing in regional culture as a culture that must be maintained and preserved by the community. In general, the character of students in interacting brings regional cultural characteristics as the culture where they come from.

Religious moderation forms in student perceptions, besides high tolerance and understanding of one's culture and others. In general, Muslim students have a high respect for other cultures, especially in Islamic universities. They live regardless of ethnicity and can understand differences, especially in different socio-economic conditions. In the case of relating to local wisdom, students in Islamic Higher Education have high character. Religious moderation has a positive effect on the religious identity of Muslim students. Muslim students who have a broad understanding of religious moderation and deep religious understanding tend to have a high attitude of tolerance, a high spirit of patriotism, and respect for differences. They can live in peace with difficult situations and survive mild conflicts amidst friendships across cultures. Among the factors that support the moderation program in shaping Muslim students' identity are friendship support, experience interacting with a variety of people, and regular socialization with lecturers. Factors that hinder student religious moderation in forming Muslim students' identity is rigid religious spirit and knowledge that tends to be partial.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results and discussion, the conclusions are as follows:

1. Students' understanding of religious moderation generally shows a high category from the interviews, observations, and questionnaire results.
2. Religious moderation in student perceptions is described in the form of positive interactions, mutually supportive friendships, leadership, and solidarity. The diversity of regional cultures is a strong identity that is carried in interacting within the campus environment. The forms of moderation diversity are supported by the religious moderation program at the Study Program, Faculty, and University levels. The smallest symptom shows an attitude of religious moderation built in Islamic Studies courses, especially at public universities.

3. The effect of religious moderation on the religious identity of Muslim students is reflected in the form of tolerance in friendship, daily interactions, and decision-making, as well as the ritual worship of its adherents.
4. Factors that support and inhibit religious moderation in students are friendship support, experience interacting with a variety of people, and regular outreach from lecturers.

Factors that hinder student religious moderation in forming Muslim students' identities are a rigid religious spirit and knowledge that tends to be partial. From testing the hypothesis, religious moderation has a positive effect on the identity of Muslim students. Students' low and partial understanding of religious moderation tends to make religious behavior rigid and apathetic, whereas a high understanding can build a better Muslim students' identity.

REFERENCES

- Boahen, E.O., & Mamatzakis, E.C. (2021). What are the effects of culture and institutions on classification shifting in India? *Journal of International Accounting, Auditing and Taxation*, 44, 100–402.
- Ghaderi, Z., Hall, C.M., Scott, N., & Béal, L. (2020). Islamic beliefs and host-guest relationships in Iran. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 90, 102–603.
- Habibi, A., Mukminin, A., Najwan, J., Sofwan, M., Haswindy, S., Marzulina, L., . . . Harto, K. (2018). Investigating EFL classroom management in pesantren: A case study. *Qualitative Report*, 23(9), 2105–2123.
- Meftah, J.B.T. (2018). Roots of sadistic terrorism crimes: Is it Islam or Arab culture? *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 42, 52–60.
- Muazza, M., Mukminin, A., Habibi, A., Hidayat, M., & Abidin, A. (2018). Education in Indonesian islamic boarding schools: Voices on curriculum and radicalism, teacher, and facilities. *Islamic Quarterly*, 62(4), 507–536.
- Muazza, Mukminin, A., Rozanna, E.S., Harja, H., Habibi, A., Izroni, D., . . . Nurulanningsih. (2019). Caring the silenced voices from an islamic boarding school-pesantren: Stories of volunteer teachers and policy implications. *Dirasat: Human and Social Sciences*, 46(3), 270–279.
- Mukminin, A., & Habibi, A. (2019). Promoting Access and Success for Disadvantaged Students in Indonesian Basic Education: Social Justice in Education. *Handbook of Research on Social Inequality and Education*, pp. 403–413.
- Mukminin, A., Habibi, A., Prasojo, L.D., Idi, A., & Hamidah, A. (2019). Curriculum reform in Indonesia: Moving from an exclusive to inclusive curriculum [Kurikulumna prenova v Indoneziji: Prehod od izključujočega k vključujočemu kurikulum]. *Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal*, 9(2), 53–72. doi: 10.26529/cepsj.543
- Muslim, K.L. (2018). Nilai-Nilai Islam dalam budaya dan kearifan lokal (Konteks budaya Minangkabau) (Islamic values in local culture and wisdom (Minangkabau cultural context)). *Jurnal Fuaduna: Jurnal Kajian Keagamaan dan Kemasyarakatan*, 1(1), 48–57.
- Sajadi, M., Niazi, N., Khosravi, S., Yaghobi, A., Rezaei, M., & Koenig, H.G. (2018). Effect of spiritual counseling on spiritual well-being in Iranian women with cancer: A randomized clinical trial. *Complementary Therapies in Clinical Practice*, 30, 79–84.
- Sanchez, C., Sundermeier, B., Gray, K., & Calin-Jageman, R.J. (2017). Direct replication of Gervais & Norenzayan (2012): No evidence that analytic thinking decreases religious belief. *PloS One*, 12(2).
- Zed, M. (2017). Local culture of Malay and universal civilization changes. *Journal of Malay Islamic Studies*, 1(1), 13–24.