



THE RESPONSES OF GEN Z TO THE QUR`AN-BASED JIHAD PROPAGATION ON THE INTERNET SITES

Wardani,¹ Bashori,² Muh. Tasrif³

^{1,2}The Faculty of Uşuluddin and Humanities, State Islamic University of Antasari, Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan, Indonesia; ³The Faculty of Uşuluddin, Adab, and Da'wah, State Institute of Ponorogo, East Java, Indonesia

Email Korespondensi: wardani@uin-antasari.ac.id, bashori@uin-antasari.ac.id,
tasrif@iainponorogo.ac.id

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Abstract

The jihād as a war against non-muslim communities constitutes a global phenomenon. The people of radical thought have used various means to promote their ideas, including the Internet. This article aims to analyze the responses of Gen Z as university students toward interpreting some Qur'anic verses and using images to support the arguments for the necessity of jihād. Employing Wolfgang Iser's theory of reception and Norman Holland's theory of psychological reader-response, it concludes first, that although educated in the Quranic interpretation principles, the vast majority of them have accepted those radical interpretations of jihād-verses and have affirmed that war, based on perceived ideological interpretations, is a permanent duty upon Muslim communities; second, that their psychological expression, either happiness, sadness, being shocked, or angry, in various ways of expressed reasons, represent a single goal, e.g., the willingness of performing jihād; third, viewed from their theological motives, that the different faith, in their minds, could be regarded the sufficient reason for war; fourth, that, due to belonging to poor farmer families, one of the possible factors, among others, behind their minds of others as such is an economic factor because it contributes to inadequate education.

Keywords: Jihād, Gen Z, Interpretation, Reception, Responses

Abstrak

Jihad sebagai perang melawan komunitas non-Muslim merupakan fenomena global. Kelompok pemikir radikal telah menggunakan berbagai cara untuk menyebarkan ide-ide mereka, termasuk melalui internet. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis respons Generasi Z sebagai mahasiswa universitas terhadap penafsiran beberapa ayat Al-Qur'an dan penggunaan gambar untuk mendukung argumen tentang keharusan jihad. Dengan menggunakan teori penerimaan Wolfgang Iser dan teori respons pembaca psikologis Norman Holland, kesimpulan pertama adalah bahwa meskipun telah dididik dalam prinsip-prinsip penafsiran Al-Qur'an, mayoritas besar dari mereka telah menerima penafsiran radikal terhadap ayat-ayat jihād dan menegaskan bahwa perang, berdasarkan penafsiran ideologis yang dipersepsikan, merupakan kewajiban permanen bagi komunitas Muslim; kedua, bahwa ekspresi psikologis mereka, baik itu kebahagiaan, kesedihan, keterkejutan, atau kemarahan, dalam berbagai cara penyampaian alasan, mewakili tujuan tunggal, misalnya, kesediaan untuk melakukan jihad; ketiga, dilihat dari motif teologis mereka, bahwa keyakinan yang berbeda, dalam pikiran mereka, dapat dianggap sebagai alasan yang cukup untuk perang; keempat, bahwa, karena berasal dari keluarga petani miskin, salah satu faktor kemungkinan di balik pikiran mereka seperti itu adalah faktor ekonomi karena berkontribusi pada pendidikan yang tidak memadai.

Kata kunci: Jihad, Generasi Z, Tafsir, Penerimaan, Respons

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A. INTRODUCTION

Jihād as war is now a global phenomenon. This is marked by numerous transnational organizations affiliated with radical ideologies and movements. Ingrid Borárosová, Aaron T. Walter, and Ondřej Filipec identified several global *jihād* organizations, such as the *Islamic State of Iraq and Syria* (ISIS) or *al-Dawlah al-Islāmiyyah fī al-‘Irāq wa al-Shām (Dā`ish)*, al-Qaeda, al-Nusrat Front (*Jabhat al-Nuṣrah*), *al-Shabāb (Ḥarakat al-Shabāb al-Mujāhidīn)*, Boko Haram, the Islamic Movement of East Turkmenistan, *Arab Mujahideen* in Chechnya, and *Lashkar e Tajibadan*. These transnational organizations propagate *jihād* through various online media, such as television and magazines¹.

These organizations generally also promote their radical ideologies through online and print media. In 2006, sourced from postings by the Global Islamic Media Front (GIMF), in his article entitled “Virtual *Jihād*: the Internet as the Ideal Terrorism Recruiting Tool”, Luis Miguel Ariza wrote that a website (www.alfarouq.com/vb/) affiliated with radical organizations offered degrees of the university for its members who committed *jihād*. According to Aḥmad al-Wāthiq Billāh, the deputy emir of GIMF, students could enroll in various faculties, where they would learn to achieve the goal of establishing the *khilāfah* through moral purification and bombings. The website offered a specialization on electronics, media, moral education, and financial *jihād* (Ariza, 2006). Similarly, in their article “Visual *Jihād*: Constructing the ‘Good Muslim’ in Online *Jihād*ist Magazines,” Stuart Macdonald & Nuria Lorenzo-Dus (2019) prove the existence of *jihād* propaganda through print media magazines through the concept of the “good Muslim”.

As a country with most of its population being Muslims, Indonesia is a “fertile breeding ground” for these global organizations. Some radical organizations in Indonesia are affiliated with international networks, such as Hizbut Tahrir. Transnational organizations in Indonesia also spread their propaganda through various media. Recent developments show that the media used for this propaganda are diverse in print and online forms. Despite the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (*Kementerian Komunikasi dan Informasi*) releasing the blocking of 11,803 radical content pieces on several Indonesian websites for ten years, some websites containing invitations for *jihād* have been still found, for instance, arrahmah.com, al-waie.id, anaksoleh.net, annajahsolo.wordpress.com, buletinkaffah.id, eramuslim.com, nahimunkar.org, panjimas.com, suaraislam.id, and voa-islam.com.

Some websites belonging to Indonesian Muslims which are affiliated with transnational organizations also contain propaganda for *jihād*. They target both adult and young generations. Researches conducted by several research institutions in Indonesia reveal this phenomenon. For instance, the Centre for the Study of Islam and Society (*Pusat Pengkajian Islam dan Masyarakat*, PPIM) of Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University at Tangerang, in collaboration with Convey,

¹ Ingrid Borárosová et al., *Global Jihad: Case Studies in Terrorist Organizations* (Research Institute for European Policy Instytut Badań nad Polityką Europejską, 2017).

found several facts. First, the millennial generation is increasingly engaged with the movement of *hijrah* (literally means migration physically, then spiritually) that has emerged recently, such as *Shift Pemuda Hijrah* (*Hijrah Youth*), *Yuk Ngaji* (Come on, Learn Religion), *Terang Jakarta* (Illuminating Jakarta), *Musawarah* (Meeting), dan *The Strangers Al-Ghuroba*. Second, the *hijrah* has been interpreted by transnational radical groups as a concept closely related to the obligation of war (*jihād*). Third, the emergence of conservative Islamic narratives². Indeed, the *hijrah* movement has become a widespread phenomenon among the younger generation³.

According to Berkup, individuals born between 1946-1964 are called baby boomers, those born between 1965-1979 are referred to as Generation X, those born between 1980-1994 are known as Generation Y or millennials, and those born after 1994 are termed Generation Z. Levickaite explained, Gen Z is also known as the Children of the Internet, Digital Generation, Digital Natives, Media Generation, .com Generation, iGen, or Instant Online. (2014). That means that Gen Z tends to get more information from the internet, rather than other sources, such as formal religious education and family.

Gen Z circle includes teenagers in junior high school and college/university students. This latter segment of the millennial population is equally important to be studied in terms of their potential exposure to radicalism because universities are environments where they interact with various external ideas, both within the classroom and through broader connections on social networking sites and engagement with online social groups.

One part of Gen Z includes university students pursuing higher education at Islamic institutes or universities, such as State Islamic Institute (*Institut Agama Islam Negeri*, IAIN) and State Islamic University (*Universitas Islam Negeri*, UIN). They are not just Gen Z in terms of age but also students who, on the one hand, are familiar with information technology advancements while, on the other, are educated in the academic, systematic, and authentic traditions of Qur`ān interpretation. Therefore, in the context of the media-reader issue, they are most worthy of study, compared to other millennial generations from different backgrounds, intellectually engaged in the field of interpretation.

Therefore, they face intense online propaganda of *jihād* on the internet. Based on the findings of research conducted so far⁴, in addition to propaganda in the form of memes, news, and lectures in the form of audio and video, there are also articles on internet sites. The presented arguments generally include, firstly, arguments derived from verses of the Qur'an and ḥadīths; secondly, arguments citing the opinions of Muslim jurists; thirdly, rationalization of verses and

² Febiyana, "Tren Hijrah Di Kalangan Anak Muda, Ini Temuan Riset PPIM," *Peluncuran Hasil Penelitian: Trend Keberagaman Gerakan Hijrah Kontemporer*, February 1, 2021, <https://ppim.uinjkt.ac.id/2021/02/01/tren-hijrah-di-kalangan-anak-muda-ini-temuan-riset-ppim>.

³ Paelani Setia and Rika Dilawati, "Tren Baru Islam Melalui Gerakan Hijrah: Studi Kasus Shift Pemuda Hijrah," *Khazanah Theologia* 3, no. 3 (2021): 131–46, <https://doi.org/10.15575/kt.v3i3.12708>; Zahara et al., "Gerakan Hijrah: Pencarian Identitas Untuk Muslim Milenial Di Era Digital," *Indonesian Journal of Sociology, Education, and Development* 2, no. 1 (2020): 58–70, <https://doi.org/10.52483/ijsed.v2i1.21>.

⁴ Saifuddin, *Popular Jihad* (Pusat Penelitian dan Publikasi Ilmiah, Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian Masyarakat)(Centre of Research and Scholarly Publications, The Institute of Research and Society Service), Universitas Islam Negeri Antasari (State Islamic University of Antasari), 2021), 1–320.

ḥadīth, accompanied by flashbacks of the life (*sīrah*) of the Prophet Muḥammad, reporting a series of warfare (*ghazwa* and *sariya*) which are also compulsory to be done by later generations, and news broadcasts about violence against Muslims in various countries.

The radical interpretation can be regarded as an abuse of interpretation for justifying ideologies. No interpretation purely detaches from “ideology” in the general sense of adopted understanding. However, in interpretation, preconceptions should not precede the interpretation itself, which could result in Qur`ānic verses being used solely to justify existing understandings. The Qur`ān interpreter must “enter the ‘world’ of the Qur`ān without pre-conception”⁵. Therefore, an objective interpretation mechanism considers the meaning of the text (*dalīl*) and its alignment with the derived meaning (*madlūl*) and context (*siyāq*), including the intended audience (*mukhāṭab*), which may have influenced the revelation of a particular verse⁶.

This article examines Gen Z's response to interpretations or explanations of Qur`ānic verses used as justification for the call to engage in *jihād* in the sense of warfare. It aims to analyse the university students' responses to the issue at the Department of the Science of the Qur`ān and Its Interpretation, at two State Islamic Universities in Indonesia, UIN Antasari and IAIN Ponorogo. It will be focused on first, describing their response in the sense of agree-disagree with degrees, to online propaganda *jihād* using the Qur`ānic verse, particularly Q. 2: 216, and its interpretations; second, their arguments underlying the two opposite responses; third, their psychological or emotional responses (happy/angry, joy/sad, love/hate) indicating degrees of the willingness of conducting *jihād*; third, analysing their motives, in the sense of their needs to be implemented concerning the perceived ideal relations between Islam and the other religions, behind their above responses to online propaganda of *jihād*; fourth, analysing their economic background that might influence immediately poor education and in turn the poor understanding of the true Qur`ānic concept of *jihād*.

This research is important as it can explain, analyze, and even predict the potential for radicalism, both in terms of thought and action, resulting from exposure to websites containing radical content. Therefore, empirical studies of responses to *jihād* propaganda become crucial, particularly in observing the evolving patterns of exclusivity and inclusivity in various regions, including Kalimantan and other islands such as Java, Indonesia, and even the world due to affiliating with global networks.

A. LITERATURE RIVIEW

Research on *jihād* propaganda on the internet has been frequently conducted. Firstly, on radicalism in general. Rohyn Torok (2013), Von Behr Ines et. al. (2013), Raffaello Pantucci (2011), Stevens Tim dan Peter Neumann (2009), Marc Sageman (2008), Boaz Ganor et. al. (2007), Jonathan Figchel (2007), Hanna Rogan (2006), have focused their researches on global issues concerning the process of radicalization in the world. Ghaffar Hussain and Erin Marie Saltman mapped their

⁵ Ṣalāḥ ‘Abd al-Fattāḥ Khālidi, *Mafātīḥ Li Al-Ta’āmūl Ma’ al-Qur`ān* (Maktabat al-Manār, 1985).

⁶ Jalāl al-Dīn Suyūṭī, *Al-Itqān Fi ‘Ulūm al-Qur`ān*, vol. 2 (Dār al-Fikr, n.d.).

research. The radical groups examined here are undoubtedly global network groups, such as al-Qaidah⁷.

Second, on websites with radical content, particularly those encouraging *jihād*. Aaron Y. Zelin and Richard Borow Fellow (2013) through their research, focusing on English-language websites examine the prevalence of social media platforms such as Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, and the Archive.org site being accessed. Erez, Weimann, and Weisburd (2011) researched websites affiliated with organizations in Indonesia and Malaysia that contain calls for *jihād*. This research found that the majority of the content originates from Arabic-language sources. The contents cover citations of statements from leaders of al-Qaeda and Jemaah Islamiyah, opinions calling for *jihād*, instructions for carrying out bombings, and guidance on suicide bombings. These websites also present narratives about the life of Prophet Muḥammad (*sīrah nabawīyah*), emphasizing Islam's development through warfare.

Third, on websites affiliating with Indonesia Muslims that content during the early digital era, such as some of the research during 2002-2008 conducted by Martin van Bruinessen (2002), Khamami Zada (2002), Greg Fealy (2004), John T. Sidel (2006), and Noorhaidi Hasan (2008)⁸.

In the recent development of information technology, one of the important research to be mentioned here is Taufiqur Rahman's which examined several websites on the internet identified as radical sites. The studied websites include Republika Online, Arrahmah, and Voice of Al-Islam (Voa-Islam). This study revealed that Republika Online exhibits an ambiguous identity, appearing to be influenced by the New Order regime and the distinctive Islamic identity they wish to project. On the other hand, the websites Arrahmah and Voa-Islam are unconnected to secular political influences and openly emphasize their Islamic identity⁹.

The research on the relationship between media propaganda and its reception by the Muslim community has been conducted by M. Nanda Fanindy and Siti Mupida (2021), addressing the issue of the potential spread of radical ideologies shown on social media to the millennial generation and prevention efforts. Unfortunately, the focus of the study was limited solely to analyzing social media, YouTube, and television. What the two researchers refer to as the "representation of Gen Z"¹⁰ should ideally be substantiated through empirical research.

All these researches only examine the use of social media by radical groups for *jihād* campaigns and how specific methods are employed for those purposes, such as framing methods to highlight certain aspects of news to create specific impressions in the readers' minds regarding radicalism and the strengthening of Muslim identity, as well as approaches to counter radicalism. Regrettably, there is no study on how Gen Z receives radical content from media.

⁷ Ghaffar Hussain and Erin Marie Saltman, *Jihad Trending: A Comprehensive Analysis of Online Extremism and How to Counter It* (Quilliam, 2014).

⁸ Ismail Hasani and Bonar Tigor Naipospos, *Dari Radikalisme Menuju Terorisme: Studi Relasi Dan Transformasi Organisasi Islam Radikal Di Jawa Tengah Dan D.I. Yogyakarta* (Pustaka Masyarakat Setara, 2012).

⁹ Taufiqur Rahman, "Islamic Identity Online: The Discourse of Umat and Jihad in Online News Services in Indonesia" (The University of Western Australia, 2016).

¹⁰ M. Nanda Fanindy and Siti Mupida, 20, no. 2 (2021): 195–222, <https://doi.org/10.20885/millah.vol20.iss2.art1>.

Empirical studies on the religiosity of Gen Z were conducted through the Convey program initiated by the Centre for the Study of Islam and Society (*Pusat Pengkajian Islam dan Masyarakat*, PPIM) of Syarif Hidayatullah State Islamic University (*Universitas Islam Negeri*, UIN Syarif Hidayatullah) of Tangerang, Indonesia, in collaboration with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). This research concludes that based on quantitative research targeting Gen Z students in high schools and universities, presented in the report “Fire in the Chaff: Religiosity of Generation Z,” it was found that Gen Z who actively use social media tend to exhibit more intolerant attitudes compared to those who do not access it. This study includes surveys with several questions related to levels of tolerance and religiosity ¹¹.

Previous research has delved into online propaganda. However, these studies are limited to studying *jihād* arguments in cyberspace so, unfortunately, they have not empirically investigated how millennial generations respond to these arguments.

B. METHODS

This research was conducted in 2022 at two different places; the Department of Quranic Studies of two universities; State Islamic University of Antasari (*Universitas Islam Negeri Antasari*, UIN Antasari, Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan) and State Islamic Institute of Ponorogo (*Institut Agama Islam Negeri*, IAIN Ponorogo, East Java), located in Indonesia. The primary data was collected from students' responses using a questionnaire. Multiple-choice answers were arranged using a Likert scale with 5 answer options (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree) for responses in the form of attitudes toward *jihād* propaganda using Qur`ānic verses and arguments of the students for agreement or disagreement. This research also would describe emotional responses, using Paul Ekman's scale. At the level of analysis, it traces the motives behind these responses and the possible economic factor (parents' monthly income) contributing to their stands of *jihād* propaganda.

The relevant theories applied in this research integrate Wolfgang Iser's reception theory and Norman Holland's psychological reception theory. The reception theory originated in the literary world and was employed to understand readers' responses to media. Although this theory is related to reader-response criticism in the United States, it develops its theoretical assumptions ¹². The reader-response theory was developed in the 1960s by Anglophone theorists such as I. A. Richards, Louise Rosenblatt, and Stanley Fish, who believed that the reader's role could not be separated from our broader understanding of the literary world ¹³.

¹¹ Rangga Eka Saputra, *Api Dalam Sekam: Keberagaman Generasi Z*, 1, Convey Report (Convey, 2018).

¹² Robert C. Holub, “Constance School of Reception Aesthetics (Reception Theory),” in *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Literary Theory* (Toronto University Press, 2018), <https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.3138/9781442674417-006/html>.

¹³ Matthew Coneys, “Travel Writing, Reception Theory and the History of Reading: Reconsidering the Late Middle Ages,” *Studies in Travel Writing* 22, no. 4 (2019), <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645145.2019.1612148>.

Reception theory, among others, was formulated by Wolfgang Iser and Hans Robert Jauss, as well as several of Jauss's students, including Rainer Warning, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, and Karlheinz Stierle, from the Constance School in West Germany. Known as reception aesthetics (*Rezeptionsästhetik*), this theory developed there in the 1960s and 1970s, and it gained prominence in English-speaking countries in the 1980s ¹⁴.

This theory focuses on the relationship between the quality of the text (including media) and the reading process (comprehending, reception). Unlike Iser, Jauss emphasizes social and historical issues related to the reader. He developed the concept of the “horizon of expectations”, which states that readers responding to a text (media) must be understood from their cultural background.

Although both text and reader are significant, reception theory sees the reader as playing a crucial role as an active reader. The reader is seen as a manifestation with several layers shaped by their social, cultural, economic, and political backgrounds. In his work, *The Act of Reading*, Wolfgang Iser argues that the critic's role is not important in this context. However, to ensure the absence of subjectivity in various interpretations, the intersubjectivity of multiple reader's readings must be considered ¹⁵.

Readers' psychological responses are not extensively covered in Jauss and Iser's reception theory. However, one of the five approaches in reader-response criticism, proposed by Norman Holland with his psychological reader-response theory, includes explanations about psychological responses. This branch of the theory states that readers' motives greatly influence how a text in the media is read; thus, analyzing readers' responses to a text should involve examining the psychological dimension of readers ¹⁶. Therefore, Iser's reception theory is supported by this psychological theory.

With the same direction as that of Holland's theory, the theory of Eric Hoffer (1898-1983) in his *The True Believer: Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movements* also restate that responses to the media do not always depart from rational considerations because, according to, the attraction to mass movements is often driven by irrational factors such as imitation, persuasion, coercion, and suspicion ¹⁷. However, while acknowledging these psychologically irrational aspects of responses, they can also be seen integratively as rational choices, given that they belong to a millennial generation systematically educated in Qur`an interpretation.

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

¹⁴ Holub, “Constance School of Reception Aesthetics (Reception Theory).”

¹⁵ Haneen Omari, “Reception Theory: Resurrecting the Reader,” in *Echoes: Further Reflections on Language and Literature* (Catalogação na fonte pela Biblioteca Universitária da Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, 2016).

¹⁶ Anonym, “Reader-Response Theory,” *Wikipedia*, 2024, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reader-response_criticism.

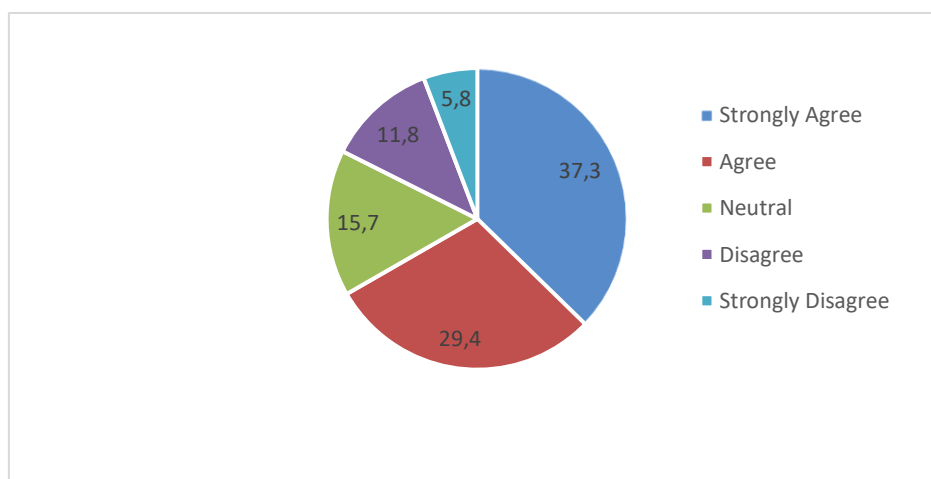
¹⁷ Eric Hoffer, *The True Believer: Thoughts on the Nature of Mass Movement* (Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 1966).

Responses to *Jihād* Propagation by Qur`ānic Verse

Concerning the obligation of *jihād* as a war against disbelievers, the website <https://www.nahimunkar.org> releases a Qur`ānic verse and its perceived interpretation, e.g.: “Fighting has been enjoined upon you while it is hateful to you. But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you, and perhaps you love a thing and it is in principle bad for you. And God knows, while you do not know.” (Q. 2: 216). This verse has been regarded to contain a command to engage in *jihād* (war against unbelievers) as an ongoing obligation¹⁸.

Regarding the use of this verse for *jihād* propaganda, the responses of students of UIN Antasari are as follows:

Chart 1: Students of UIN Antasari’s Responses to the Propaganda by Qur`ānic Verse



The arguments put forward by respondents who affirm the use of this verse and its interpretation to propagate *jihād* are as follows: (1) “Because Allah's command is above all else”; (2) “Because it is a command that we must obey and adhere to. Every Muslim must have the spirit of wanting to engage in *jihād*”; (3) “I agree with the above verse, which orders *jihād* against unbelievers, with the condition that unbelievers are the ones who initiate problems related to the Islamic religion. So, it does not apply if Muslims are the ones initiating warfare against unbelievers without a religious reason”; (4) “In addition to being tested with poverty and adversity, believers will also be tested by being asked to sacrifice their lives through the duty of war”; (5) “Kerana (because) nowadays, many unbelievers are dividing and sowing discord among religions”; (6) “For now, the order to fight against those who fight against Muslims is crucial. This case was done to protect and assist the Islamic community, as in Palestine. Many Muslim brothers and sisters are striving to defend the Aqṣā Mosque. Many of them are suffering while defending their country. Therefore, the duty to fight to defend the

¹⁸ Nahimunkar.com (anonym), *Mengapa Anda Anti-Jihad? Indonesia Merdeka Karena Resolusi Jihad*, October 28, 2016, <https://www.nahimunkar.org/mengapa-anda-anti-jihad-indonesia-merdeka-karena-resolusi-jihad/>.

nation's position is obligatory, and we should also strive to show our dissatisfaction with the colonization of the people in Palestine. Of course, the obligation to fight against unbelievers does not apply to all unbelievers but only to specific ones, such as those who first initiate warfare against us and disrupt the lives of Muslims in their own country. It is forbidden for us to fight against those who do not fight against us.”

Although viewed from quantitative research they agree with the application of the above verse and its perceived interpretation to justify the obligation of *jihād* on the one hand, qualitatively speaking, their arguments are diverse on the other one. Some of these arguments contain absolute statements of agreement with the obligation to engage in *jihād* against non-Muslim communities. These arguments tend to justify absolute warfare, without conditions, whether defensive or offensive. However, in the views of some of them, war is only permissible in the context of Muslims being attacked.

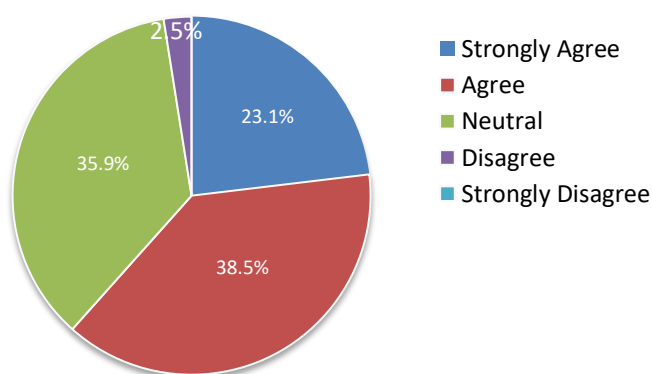
Furthermore, the arguments of rejection are as follows: (1) “In the translation of the verse, it only mentions fighting against unbelievers. When this verse was revealed, unbelievers were fighting against Muslims. In other words, if they fight against us, we must fight back. Is not this explained in other verses? Fighting when we are attacked, if not, there is no obligation to fight, which applies until now”; (2) “First, not all verses with imperative language demand to be carried out absolutely. On one hand, the Qur'an mentions the command to fight against unbelievers. On the other one, it also commands us to make peace. Two kinds of command are applicable based on the purpose for which the verses were revealed. Thus, a reinterpretation is needed to understand verses encouraging the command to wage war, including Q. 2: 216. This verse could not be fully understood as an absolute call to fight unbelievers, during the time of the Prophet, unbelievers were not fought against if they did not initiate warfare against Muslims. Therefore, the understanding of fighting unbelievers cannot be deemed relevant. Moreover, in the principles of interpretation, when there is a *fi'l* (verb) that, in reality, requires an object but is mentioned without an object in the Qur'an, it signifies a general meaning, similar to *al-qitāl* (fighting), which requires an object. Still, when commanded, it is obligatory to kill without specifying 'unbelievers.' It could be understood as fighting against one's desires. Killing unbelievers without a valid reason contradicts the principle of Islam as a *rahmatan lil 'ālamīn* (a grace for all over the world)”; (3) “This verse obligates Muslims to respond to the call for war against unbelievers if the leader declares war against them with a valid reason, but it is not a call to fight unbelievers without cause”; (4) “Understanding the Qur'an is not limited to the text alone. There are many other supporting elements in understanding the Qur'an. Regarding *jihād*, it is not solely about war and even killing. It would be beneficial to gain more insight into the Qur'an. Do not be swayed by a glance exclamation”; (5) “This verse has its context. It is necessary to look at the historical context of verse revelation to get a comprehensive understanding and not fragmentary”; (6) “We are still fighting against unbelievers, fighting against their culture that poisons all Muslim groups, especially, in Indonesia”; (7) “I disagree, as when looking at the context of the verse, it pertains to the time of the Prophet Muhammad and the time when unbelievers were attempting to destroy Islam, leading to the revelation of this verse. However,

the present situation is quite different, so the obligation to fight physically no longer applies universally”.

From the above arguments, it is evident that, in their views, the *jihād* as an obligation only applies when Muslims are under attack. Some students emphasize the need to understand the contextual background behind the revelation of this verse, which pertains to the unequal relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims, where Muslims face oppression. However, some respondents answered outside the context of the question (misunderstood), attempting to interpret the verse differently, such as fighting against one's desires.

Regarding the above-cited verse and its interpretation, respondents from IAIN Ponorogo responded as follows:

Chart 2: Students of IAIN Ponorogo's Responses to the Propaganda by the Qur`anic Verse



The developed arguments for affirmation answer are: (1) “Because for every Muslim, fighting is a duty, especially if their faith is insulted. Even though everyone has different attitudes, some may dislike, and others may like war, the Qur`an has already explained that we should not excessively hate or like something; what we hate might be good for us and on the contrary”; (2) “I agree, one of the forms of our *jihād* is to fight against unbelievers for a faith reason”; (3) “I agree, because especially in today's age there are many things that are not under the name of unbelievers, but provide or reflect actions similar to those of unbelievers, and in today's age, physical warfare is not feasible, so we need to be careful in all actions”; (4) “Fighting in the sense of warfare indeed becomes a duty when unbelievers attempt to destroy Islam, so this war becomes obligatory”; (5) “In my opinion, the *jihād* is one of God's commands”.

The above responses reveal that some students argue that the obligation of *jihād* is just God's command without providing a more detailed explanation. However, others emphasize that this obligation depends on the attitude of non-Muslims who oppose Muslims. Additionally, some of them emphasize the importance of Islamic teachings of tolerance and the significance of interpreting the Qur`an under its context of revelation, suggesting that the duty should be

reinterpreted. Besides that, classical arguments arise, as spread among scholars, that it's obligatory to fight non-Muslim communities due to differences in faith. Therefore, respondents who agree with the duty of *jihād* adopt various perspectives: some embrace *jihād* as absolute warfare (offensive *jihād*) without conditions (such as solely based on the difference in beliefs, not their mistreatment), while others adhere to the idea of defensive *jihād*, namely when Muslims are attacked or threatened.

Meanwhile, contrary to that stand, some of them advanced arguments of negation as follows: (1) "In my opinion, *jihād* does not have to suppress evil through cruel and violent means immediately. The Prophet taught and set an example for his people to treat others gently and lovingly. We can detest bad actions, but we should not detest the wrongdoer. Perhaps the wrongdoer has reasons of their own or even does not know whether their actions are good or bad. Therefore, our task as the next generation is the true *jihād* against our egos and desires that always feel right, causing many to judge others based on shallow judgments alone easily"; (2) "Because there must be reasons for war, and we must understand the fiqh of war. In essence, war is a last resort when there are disputes"; (3) "Because this war is about fighting against their attitude and attributes that refuse to follow the righteous teachings. However, there is a growing tolerance towards people of other faiths"; (4) "In my opinion, fighting against unbelievers is when unbelievers commit evil actions or engage in activities that harm the Muslim community. It can be said that fighting against unbelievers causes turmoil in the Muslim community. So, as long as unbelievers do not cause disturbances, we do not fight against them"; (5) "Ethical ways of war are permissible, besides that, *jihād* is not limited to the physical realm"; (6) "The verse is not universal. Even if it carries a universal meaning, it can still be interpreted from various perspectives."

From the quoted opinions of the respondents, there is a common thread in the rejection of the absolute duty of *jihād*. According to them, *jihād* is permissible for specific reasons, for instance, when they are being attacked. In other words, the type of warfare they endorse is "ethical warfare," known as just war. They believe that this verse on warfare is not universal or applicable without limits, but rather it is particular, and its application depends on the situation.

Among the neutral responses, some reasoned as follows: "There are several aspects or reasons that need to be considered in understanding this verse because if it were obligatory in today's era, I think the question should be about what kind of unbelievers should be fought against, and then what kind of warfare would be carried out. I choose neutral; I believe the real enemy in this era is oneself." The rationale underlying this neutral stance is the need for clear boundaries on which unbelievers should be fought against, which, according to them, is not clear; perhaps in terms of *kāfir ḥarbī* or *dhimmi*, and shifting the focus from physical warfare to battling inner desires, even though the intent of the verse is physical warfare.

Responses to Propagation with Images

The following images depict individuals who are anti-*jihād* being referred to as hypocrites.

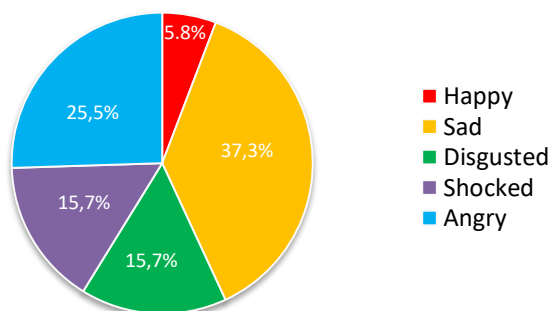
Picture 1: An Illustration of Anti-*Jihād* as Hypocrisy



(Source: <https://arrahmah.com>)

In response to this image illustration, the reactions of students from UIN Antasari are as follows:

Chart 3: The Students of UIN Antasari's Responses to the Propaganda by Picture

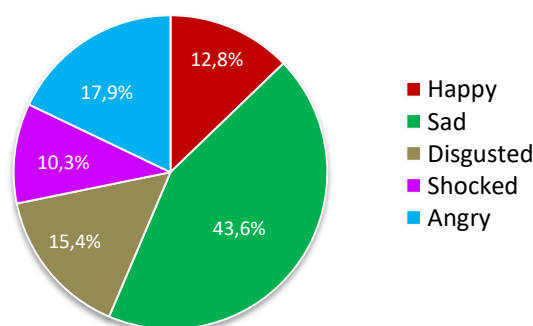


As seen from the chart above, most of them (37.3%) feel sad about the accusation that those who do not want to participate in *jihad* are labeled hypocrites. This sadness signifies that

they are unable to realise *jihād* due to the dire conditions of the Muslim community. According to some of them, “Perhaps I am included among the hypocrites, but I continue to strive to get out of that category. At the very least, I do not present myself or behave like a hypocrite. However, when I see those around me who behave that way, I feel anger on one side and also sadness at the current state of our community, which has deteriorated so much, it is baffling, yet it is the end times”. Furthermore, the sadness is also, according to them, “because fellow Muslims should protect each other.”

Among students, 15.7% feel disgusted, 15.7% feel shocked, and 25.5% admit to be angry at this image. Various reasons are given regarding the illustration of hypocrites as those who reject *jihād*. One of their reasons is, “Do not label those who are anti-*jihād* as hypocrites. Because it is possible that their understanding of *jihād* is broader.” However, 5.8% of them feel pleased with the illustration of the hypocrites. This group is likely those who support *jihād* and agree with the harsher labeling of those deemed ‘anti-*jihād*’.

Chart 4: The Students of IAIN Ponorogo’s Responses to the Propaganda by Picture



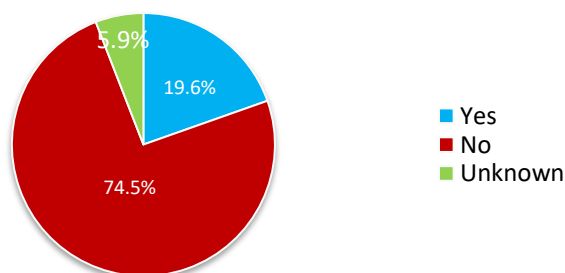
From the chart above, it is evident that 43.6% of them feel sad about the accusation that those who do not want to participate in *jihād* are labeled as hypocrites. According to some of them: “Hypocrites are people who appear different in front and behind the Muslim community. They are indeed anti-*jihād* and even pretend to fight, but they do nothing and are “two-faced”. Truly, this is a despicable act.” In their opinion, the sadness is also caused by, “sad to see fellow Muslim brothers behaving as such, and sometimes even refusing the call for *jihād*.”

About 15.4% feel disgusted, 10.3% feel surprised, and 17.9% admit to being angry at this image. Various reasons are given regarding the illustration of hypocrites as those who reject *jihād*. One reason for their anger is “furious because their hypocrisy is something God Himself despises.” Some are surprised because “they did not expect to come across such words”.

The Theological Motive Behind the Responses

One of the motives that want to be explored in their above responses is the theological one: whether difference of beliefs is a valid reason to wage war against non-Muslim communities.

Chart 5: The Students of UIN Antasari’s Motives

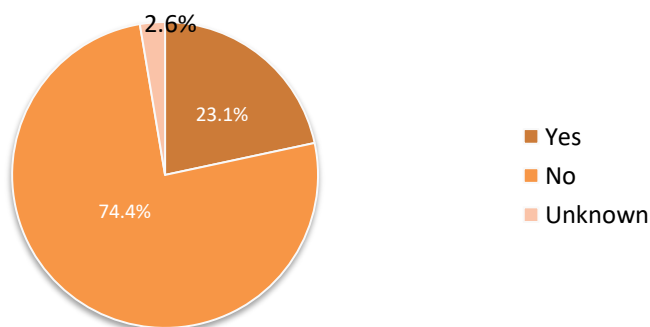


Most of them (74.5%) believe that differences in beliefs cannot be used as a reason to wage war against non-Muslim communities. That means they acknowledge religious freedom as something that should be recognized and respected, making differences in beliefs the right of every individual and community.

In principle, the main arguments put forward are as follows. Firstly, the understanding that beliefs are a reason for war is considered shallow by them because even Muslims are commanded to do good to non-Muslim communities. Secondly, Islam should not be spread by force. Thirdly, the teachings of the Qur`ān provide reasons that justify war, not based on beliefs. It is also argued, “Fight those who fight against you, not those who are different.” It is also said, “Differences in beliefs do not necessarily make us fight them. If people with different beliefs still respect our religion and behave politely towards us, then I think their differences are not a strong reason to fight them.”

This viewpoint is quite progressive compared to some of them, 19.6% of whom still adhere to the old doctrine in classical fiqh books, which states that non-Muslim communities can be fought because they are non-Muslims (different beliefs). Some respondents say, “Indeed, Islam is the true belief, and we should not be afraid to fight them.” However, there are still 5.9% of respondents who are undecided.

Chart 6: The Students of IAIN Ponorogo’s Motives



As the case in UIN Antasari, most of the students of IAIN Ponorogo (74.5%) believe that differences in beliefs cannot be used as a reason to wage war against non-Muslim communities. That means they acknowledge religious freedom as something that should be recognized and respected, making differences in beliefs the right of every individual and community. However,

there are still respondents, 23.1% of them, who believe that differences in assumptions can be a reason for war. Meanwhile, only 2.6% of them have no opinion.

The main arguments for the affirmation answer in principle are as follows: “Yes, because these beliefs will become the major catalyst. Because these beliefs are sacred and cannot be changed just because of something”; “Sometimes, this can happen depending on the context of the problem”; “Because beliefs are equivalent to religion, defending religion is obligatory even if it leads to some form of war”; “It (war) is allowed when our opinion (reason) is strong, but we should not impose our opinion on others. As Muslims, we should respect the opinions of others”.

There is no adequate explanation of the valid reasons according to them. However, from these answers, it can be concluded that firstly, belief is the essence of religion, with the result that differences in beliefs mean going against the true religion (Islam), thus being different in beliefs can be considered a sufficient reason to fight those who have different beliefs; The same argument has been developed among Shāfiite School of jurisprudence ¹⁹; secondly, belief is considered sacred, so different beliefs mean different levels of respect for the sacred. That means that sanctity is interpreted as something that those outside the respective religious followers should respect; thirdly, belief is seen as something containing a final truth.

On the other hand, the negation answer has been justified by students by the following arguments: “No, because Pancasila teaches tolerance”; “As long as they do not disturb and insult (us), it is okay!”; “In my opinion, differences in beliefs are not a basis for waging war against them; “We can exchange opinions about our religion and (issues of) non-Muslims”; “Belief is self-confidence”; “Belief cannot be forced as it would violate human rights”; “If they are not waging war, there is no obligation to wage war against them”; “Differences in beliefs may not necessarily be a strong reason because, from a perspective of (the history of) thought, many non-Islamic scholars have helped Islam. Historically, regarding history, religion, and other issues (could be seen as such)”; “They have the right to embrace other religions, not necessarily the religion they follow. They have different opinions and answers. Respect them and do not oppose them as long as they have a good attitude toward Muslims”; “Islam is not coercion”; “If they are not causing the disturbance and are willing to respect each other, there is no reason to wage war. We are taught not to impose our will, especially in belief issues”; “A strong reason to fight non-Muslims is when they insult Islam by persecuting Muslims”; “Differences are no longer a new thing in this era, so we should learn to appreciate the many differences in beliefs and opinions in this diverse society”; “Because belief is a personal right”; “No, because in Indonesia, we live side by side”; “Differences in beliefs are not sufficient rationale for war; what needs to be fought against is if they disturb or influence thoughts or other aspects within Islam”; “Because there are many religions and cultures in Indonesia, and it is a country in which any opinion is delivered freely, so why should we wage war against them just because of differing beliefs?”; “Belief is determined and changed only by God, human beings should only remind each other”; “*Ikhtilāf ummatī rahmatun* (Differences among my community is a grace). Indeed, differences are a strengthening factor for maintaining good cooperation because, through differences, we can collaborate to align diverse thoughts,

¹⁹ Muhammad Idris Shāfi’i, *Al-Umm*, vol. 7 (Dār al-Ma’rifah, 1393); Muhammad Idris Shāfi’i, *Aḥkām Al-Qur`ān*, ‘Abd al-Ghanī ‘Abd al-Khāliq, vol. 2 (Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyah, 1400).

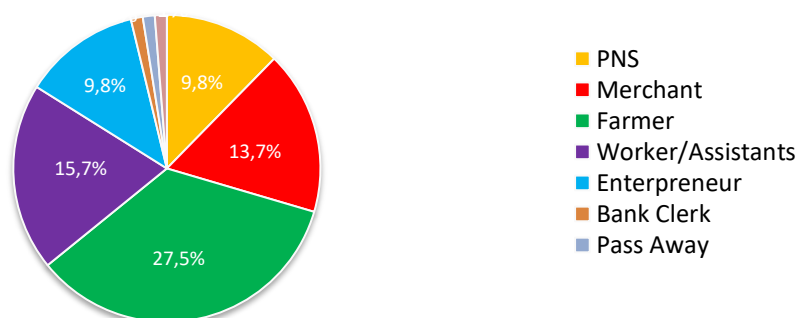
leading to the birth of brilliant ideas (innovations) that can be developed to build positive endeavors or steps.”

These responses, in essence, emphasize belief as an individual matter that cannot be enforced, not in line with the spirit of Pancasila, diversity, and the principle of not disturbing one another. Furthermore, belief is considered a matter of God, and differences are seen as a blessing. Similarly, differences in opinions are regarded as a means for collaboration and complementing each other.

Economic Background

Most respondents from UIN Antasari originate from farming families with monthly incomes of 1-2 million rupiahs.

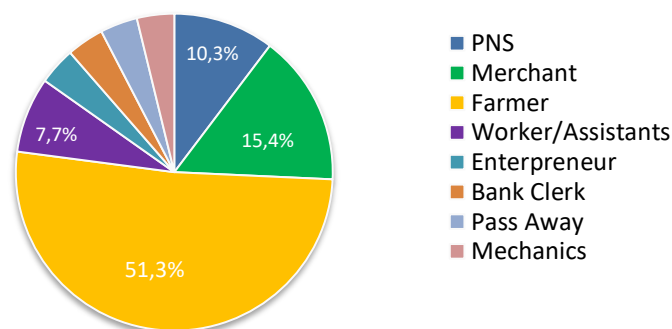
Chart 7: Economic Background of UIN Antasari Students



Most of them (27.5%) come from farming families. Meanwhile, workers/assistants reach 15.7%. These two groups can be considered part of the lower economic class with their parents' occupations. The group of respondents consisting of government employees (*Pegawai Negeri Sipil*, PNS) families can be regarded as having a middle economic status at 9.8%, followed by respondents from entrepreneurial backgrounds. Only a few respondents come from trading, banking, or even deceased parents' backgrounds (and are not included in the groups mentioned above as recipients of pension benefits).

Similarly, just like the respondents from UIN Antasari, respondents from IAIN Ponorogo also come from farming families with an average monthly income of 1-2 million rupiahs:

Chart 8: Economic Background of IAIN Ponorogo Students



Most of them (51.3%) come from farming families, followed by traders at 15.4%. The group of respondents from government employee (PNS) families has a middle economic status at 10.3%, followed by the laborer/worker group at 7.7%. Additionally, some students belong to the family of entrepreneurs, honorary teachers, and livestock breeders.

CONCLUSION

First, quantitatively, most of the students of the Department of Quranic Studies affiliating with both campuses, agree and even strongly agree with interpreting and using specific verses in the context of *jihād* propaganda. *Jihād* is recognized as an obligation that remains applicable as a collective obligation (*farḍu kifāyah*). They also agree that financial *jihād* can be carried out when obstacles to physical *jihād* exist. Physical *jihād* also includes combating secular ideologies like Hitlerism and non-Islamic economic systems such as capitalism.

Second, qualitatively, respondents who affirmed the interpretation developed arguments; from understanding the verse literally to relating the relevance of the *jihād* verses to the context in which Muslims are oppressed; Some arguments are textual, to ideologically relate them to certain conditions. There are also arguments based on the reason for the creed. On the other hand, some respondents, who are a small population, understand verses from various aspects, reason/background, the spirit of humanitarian ethics, etc.

Third, in terms of motive, especially theological motive, most respondents consider that differences in belief can be a sufficient reason for Muslims to wage war against non-Muslim communities. Despite being educated in Qur`an interpretation, they cannot criticize the interpretations and use of *jihād* verses that *jihād*ist authors use as the basis for calling for permanent *jihād* against non-Muslims. The fact that a significant number (19-23%) still agree that differences in faith could be a reason to proclaim *jihād* against non-Muslims strengthens this affirmation.

Fourth, concerning economic background, they generally come from farming, trading, or laboring and entrepreneurial backgrounds with monthly incomes of 1-2 million rupiahs. However, there is no direct evidence that economic background directly influences the attitudes of some of these respondents.

There is a need for religious moderation education, especially based on interpretations of peaceful verses and reinterpreting *jihād* verses, systematically and well-programmed in the curriculum. Second, more is needed to interpret these two verses in the IAT program. Students also need to be equipped with a “filter” against radical interpretation through intensified studies of methodological explanation on the one hand, which is mostly already taught, and on the other hand, a course on “critique of Qur`ān exegesis” (*naqd al-tafsīr*) that has not been included in the curriculum so far. Third, even though many radical content websites on the internet are said to have been blocked, in reality, many similar sites with radical interpretations of Qur`anic verses are still found. The government needs to monitor and block these sites again. Fourth, there is a need to “reclaim interpretation” from the hands of *jihād*ist writers who have twisted the interpretations of verses and to restore accurate interpretations, not only based on the textual content of the verses but comprehensively understanding them using relevant media, such as understanding their context and ethical values.

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