

## **COUNTERING ULTRA-CONSERVATISM WITH ANIMATION MOVIES: The Responses of Netizens to the Movies of CISForm UIN Sunan Kalijaga**

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### **Abstract**

Despite the declining activism of several terrorist organizations in the last decade, extremist and ultra-conservative ideologies continue to proliferate through digital platforms, particularly social media. In Indonesia, YouTube has emerged as a crucial arena of ideological contestation where radical, conservative, and moderate Islamic narratives compete for public influence. This article examines the role of animated films produced by the Center for the Study of Islam and Social Transformation (CISForm), UIN Sunan Kalijaga, as a form of digital counter-narrative aimed at challenging ultra-conservative and extremist discourses. Focusing on forty animated short films released on YouTube between 2018 and 2025, which address themes of *jihad*, *hijrah*, tolerance, and *Islam rahmah*, this study employs a qualitative netnographic approach to analyze netizens'



responses and patterns of engagement. The findings reveal a complex spectrum of reactions, ranging from strong affirmation among moderate audiences to ideological resistance and contestation by conservative and extremist groups. While moderate viewers largely interpret the animations as effective, creative, and contextually relevant forms of contemporary da'wah, conservative and extremist commentators frequently reject the narratives by invoking selective scriptural interpretations that legitimize exclusivism and, in some cases, violence. The study demonstrates that animated digital media function not only as instruments of counter-extremism but also as spaces that expose the persistence and adaptability of ultra-conservative narratives. This article contributes to the growing literature on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) by highlighting the strategic potential and limitations of animation-based counter-narratives within the broader dynamics of online ideological struggle.

**Keywords:** Counter-Extremism; Digital Counter-Narratives; Youtube and Radicalization; Islamic Moderation; Netnography

## Abstrak

Meskipun sejumlah organisasi teroris telah mengalami penurunan aksi selama dekade terakhir, ideologi ekstremis dan ultra-konservatif tetap berkembang dan menyebar melalui platform digital, khususnya media sosial. Di Indonesia, YouTube telah menjadi arena penting dalam kontestasi ideologis, di mana narasi Islam radikal, konservatif, dan moderat saling bersaing untuk memperoleh pengaruh publik. Artikel ini mengkaji peran film animasi yang diproduksi oleh Center for the Study of Islam and Social Transformation (CISForm), UIN Sunan Kalijaga, sebagai bentuk kontra-narasi digital yang bertujuan menjadi kontra narasi ultra-konservatif dan ekstremis. Dengan menitikberatkan pada empat puluh film animasi pendek yang ditayangkan di YouTube pada periode 2018–2025 bertema jihad, hijrah, toleransi, dan Islam rahmah. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif netnografi untuk menganalisis respons netizen dan pola keterlibatan audiens. Temuan penelitian menunjukkan spektrum respons yang kompleks, mulai dari penerimaan dan dukungan kuat dari kelompok moderat hingga penolakan ideologis dan kontestasi dari kelompok konservatif dan ekstremis. Audiens moderat pada umumnya menafsirkan animasi tersebut sebagai bentuk dakwah kontemporer yang efektif, kreatif, dan relevan secara kontekstual. Sebaliknya, komentator konservatif dan ekstremis kerap menolak pesan yang disampaikan dengan mengandalkan interpretasi skriptural selektif yang melegitimasi eksklusivisme, bahkan kekerasan. Studi ini menegaskan bahwa media digital berbasis animasi tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai instrumen kontra-ekstremisme, tetapi juga sebagai ruang yang mengungkap persistensi serta kemampuan adaptasi narasi ultra-konservatif. Artikel ini berkontribusi pada pengembangan kajian pencegahan dan penanggulangan ekstremisme kekerasan (P/CVE) dengan menyoroti potensi strategis sekaligus keterbatasan kontra-narasi berbasis animasi dalam dinamika pertarungan ideologis di ruang digital.

**Kata Kunci:** Kontra-Ekstremisme, Kontra-Narasi Digital, Youtube dan Radikalisasi, Moderasi Islam, Netnografi

## Introduction

Across the world, extremist ideologies have found fertile ground in digital media, exploiting the unparalleled reach and connectivity of the internet to spread narratives that glorify violence, intolerance, and exclusion. Platforms such as social networking sites, forums, messaging apps, and video-sharing services allow extremist groups to disseminate their content quickly and widely, often bypassing traditional filters and controls. Research on the strategies of extremist movements reveals that groups leverage digital affordances, such as algorithmic recommendation systems and multimedia content, to enhance visibility and engagement. They tailor messages to diverse audiences and even using emerging technologies like AI to augment propaganda efforts.<sup>1</sup> Globally, this digital environment has enabled both violent and non-violent far-right, jihadist, and other extremist factions to sustain transnational networks and recruitment pipelines that extend far beyond their original geographic bases, creating echo chambers that reinforce radical worldviews among susceptible users.<sup>2</sup>

In Indonesia, YouTube has emerged as a particularly significant arena for ideological contestation, given its massive user base and role as a primary source of religious, political, and cultural content. Indonesia is among the countries with the largest number of YouTube users globally, and the platform is widely used for religious preaching, social commentary, and community building.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Ahlulbait Ahlulbait Indonesia, 'Terorisme Siber Meningkat, Densus 88 Perkuat Strategi Penanggulangan Digital', *Ahlulbait Indonesia*, 24 April 2025, <https://www.ahlulbaitindonesia.or.id/berita/internasional-nasional/nasional/terorisme-siber-meningkat-densus-88-perkuat-strategi-penanggulangan-digital/>.

<sup>2</sup> Hestutomo Restu Kuncoro, 'Digital Echoes: Unraveling the Transnational Spread of Far-Right Ideologies through the Identitarian Movement's Social Media Strategies', *Jurnal Studi Diplomasi Dan Keamanan* 16, no. 2 (2024): 1–24, <https://doi.org/10.31315/jsdk.v16i2.12721>.

<sup>3</sup> U. Fikriyati and A. Fawaid, 'Pop-Tafsir on Indonesian YouTube Channel: Emergence, Discourses, and Contestations', paper presented at Proceedings of the 19th Annual International Conference on Islamic Studies,

Academic studies of Indonesian YouTube content demonstrate that both moderate and more conservative Islamic groups actively utilize the platform to shape narratives around faith, social issues, and current events. YouTube's algorithmic mechanics can amplify engagement with content that provokes strong reactions, meaning that fundamentalist and ultra-conservative videos often see high interaction even if they attract criticism or controversy.<sup>4</sup> This has made the platform a contested digital space where competing visions of religion and society are broadcast: on the one hand, voices promoting inclusive and tolerant interpretations of Islam; on the other, channels that lean toward literalist or conservative readings of religious texts and social norms.<sup>5</sup> Despite the decline in overt terror activism in Indonesia, ultra-conservative narratives continue to thrive online, particularly on platforms like YouTube, because they resonate with identity-seeking audiences and are sustained by engagement-driven digital ecosystems, even without explicit calls to violence.

Studies on counter-narratives aimed at conservative groups can be broadly classified into several major strands. The first strand emphasizes interventions within formal and non-formal educational settings; the second focuses on the use of social media platforms in general; the third examines counter-narrative initiatives disseminated through YouTube with highly diverse content formats; and the fourth, more specifically, employs animated films as the primary medium on YouTube. Among these approaches, the use of animated films as a targeted counter-narrative strategy

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AICIS 2019, 1-4 October 2019, Jakarta, Indonesia, 4 February 2020, <https://eudl.eu/doi/10.4108/eai.1-10-2019.2291646>.

<sup>4</sup> Achmad Sulfikar et al., 'YouTube and Religion during COVID-19: Analyzing Indonesian Islamic Groups' Narratives', *Journal of Religion and Health*, ahead of print, 30 September 2025, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-025-02462-9>.

<sup>5</sup> Meisya Nur Dwi, 'Social Media as a New Space for Moderation Politics and Religious Expression', *Social Impact Journal* 4, no. 2 (2025): 307–15.

remains particularly underexplored and comparatively rare in existing scholarship.

First, some studies frequently focus on countering conservative–radical interpretations through the role of educational institutions, including traditional educational settings, as well as through the implementation of soft, education-based approaches.<sup>6</sup> In addition, educational institutions can counter extremism through the development and promotion of models of moderate Islamic education.<sup>7</sup>

Countering extremism has also been pursued through the optimization of the role of digital technologies.<sup>8</sup> This emphasis is reflected in the growing body of recent scholarship on the role of social media. Social media platforms have become highly contested arenas of ideas, serving both proponents of religious extremism and actors engaged in countering it.<sup>9</sup> For example, Instagram has

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<sup>6</sup> Syamsul Ma'arif et al., 'A Soft Approach to Counter Radicalism: The Role of Traditional Islamic Education.', *Walisono: Jurnal Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan* 28, no. 1 (2020); Amin Maghfuri, 'Countering Conservative-Radical Understanding By Mainstreaming Moderat Islam and the Role of Educational Institution in Indonesia', *Sunan Kalijaga International Journal on Islamic Educational Research* 3, no. 1 (2019): 1–14; Mark Woodward et al., 'Muslim Education, Celebrating Islam and Having Fun as Counter-Radicalization Strategies in Indonesia', *Perspectives on Terrorism* 4, no. 4 (2010): 28–50.

<sup>7</sup> Masnur Alam, 'A Collaborative Action in the Implementation of Moderate Islamic Education to Counter Radicalism', *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change* 11, no. 7 (2020): 497–516.

<sup>8</sup> Leonie Schmidt, 'Cyberwarriors and Counterstars: Contesting Religious Radicalism and Violence on Indonesian Social Media', *Asiascape: Digital Asia* 5, nos 1–2 (2018): 32–67; Athik Hidayatul Ummah, 'Digital Media and Counter-Narrative of Radicalism', *Jurnal Theologia* 31, no. 2 (2020): 233–56; Noorma Fitriana M Zain, 'The Role of Social Media in Preventing Radicalism', 1, no. 1 (2021): 736–58.

<sup>9</sup> Sabina Civila et al., 'The Demonization of Islam through Social Media: A Case Study Of# Stopislam in Instagram', *Publications* 8, no. 4 (2020): 52; Bharath Ganesh and Jonathan Bright, 'Countering Extremists on Social Media: Challenges for Strategic Communication and Content Moderation', *Policy & Internet* 12, no. 1 (2020): 6–19; Paelani Setia and Mochamad Ziaul Haq, 'Countering Radicalism in Social Media by Campaigning for Religious Moderation', *Focus* 4, no. 1 (2023):

emerged as an effective platform for public discourse following the rise of Islamophobic demonization expressed through hashtags such as *#StopIslam*.<sup>10</sup>

More specifically, countering extremism through YouTube channels has emerged as a particularly compelling area of scholarly inquiry. Existing studies are notably diverse, yet they tend to converge around two main orientations. On the one hand, YouTube is examined as a tool of radicalization employed by extremist accounts; on the other hand, it is also recognized as an effective medium for disseminating discourses that counter extremist narratives. As a platform, YouTube facilitates the rapid circulation of radical and extremist content, prompting scholars to engage in research focused on identification, detection, auditing, ideological bias mitigation,<sup>11</sup> and, in some cases, algorithmic analysis.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, studies examining the use of YouTube as a tool for countering extremist narratives do exist, although they remain relatively limited in number.<sup>13</sup> Actors involved in countering

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13–24; Jan-Jaap Van Eerten et al., *Developing a Social Media Response to Radicalization: The Role of Counter-Narratives in Prevention of Radicalization and de-Radicalization*, 2017.

<sup>10</sup> Civila et al., ‘The Demonization of Islam through Social Media: A Case Study Of# Stopislam in Instagram’.

<sup>11</sup> Nuha Albadi et al., ‘Deradicalizing YouTube: Characterization, Detection, and Personalization of Religiously Intolerant Arabic Videos’, *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction* 6, no. CSCW2 (2022): 1–25; Muhammad Haroon et al., ‘Youtube, the Great Radicalizer? Auditing and Mitigating Ideological Biases in Youtube Recommendations’, *arXiv Preprint arXiv:2203.10666*, 2022.

<sup>12</sup> Mark Ledwich and Anna Zaitsev, ‘Algorithmic Extremism: Examining YouTube’s Rabbit Hole of Radicalization’, *arXiv Preprint arXiv:1912.11211*, 2019; Josephine B Schmitt et al., ‘Counter-Messages as Prevention or Promotion of Extremism?! The Potential Role of YouTube: Recommendation Algorithms’, *Journal of Communication* 68, no. 4 (2018): 780–808.

<sup>13</sup> Ibrahim Khalaf Suleiman Al-Khalidi, ‘The Effect of YouTube and Facebook Networks in Reducing Religious Extremism among Jordanian Youth from the Viewpoint of the Mosques Imams’, *Multicultural Education* 7, no. 4 (2021): 342–60; Ulvah Nur’aeni and Arfian Hikmat Ramdan, ‘Ideological Contestation on Youtube between Salafi and Nahdhatul ‘ulama in Indonesia’, *Journal of Contemporary Islam and Muslim Societies* 7, no. 1 (2023): 28–64.

extremism on YouTube are not exclusively Muslim; non-Muslim groups, as well as free thinkers, have also utilized the platform for counter-extremism purposes.<sup>14</sup>

When narrowing the focus to the use of animated films on YouTube for the purpose of countering extremism, the existing research remains highly limited. Scholarly attention has largely concentrated on *Nussa the Movie*, which has been suspected of containing elements of intolerance and radicalism.<sup>15</sup> Although several studies have examined CISForm's animated films, these analyses typically focus on only one or a small selection of the total forty-film series produced by CISForm. Moreover, research on CISForm's animations has predominantly employed discourse analysis approaches, most notably drawing on the frameworks of Teun A. van Dijk and Sara Mills.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, a study that examines

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<sup>14</sup> Sebastian Elsässer, 'Arab Non-Believers and Freethinkers on YouTube: Re-Negotiating Intellectual and Social Boundaries', *Religions* 12, no. 2 (2021): 106.

<sup>15</sup> Fika Rizky Auliya, *Analisis Resepsi Terhadap Isu Intoleransi Dan Radikalisme Pada Tayangan Animasi "Nussa Official" Di Media Youtube*, 2021; M Louis, *Analisis Semiotika Charles Sanders Peirce Dalam Film Animasi Nussa the Movie 2021: Pendidikan Agama Islam Dan Tantangan Radikalisme*, 2024.

<sup>16</sup> Muhammad Anshori and Ali Ridho, 'Discourse Analysis Of The Sara Mills Model Of The Religious Animated Film By Cisform Uin Sunan Kalijaga With The Title "Mosque For All"', *Wasilatuna: Jurnal Komunikasi Dan Penyiaran Islam* 6, no. 01 (2023): 1–13; M Sabron Sukmanul Hakim, 'Kita Juga Bisa Menjadi Thaghut (Analisis Wacana Model Teun A. Van Dijk Di Serial Film Kartun CISForm UIN Sunan Kalijaga)', *Jurnal Dakwah Dan Komunikasi* 4, no. 2 (2019): 143–68; Erna Kurniawati, 'Analisis Wacana Sara Mills Dalam Film Animasi Islam "Hijrah Nisa"(Analisis Akun Youtube Cisform UIN Sunan Kalijaga)', *Komodifikasi* 7, no. 1 (2019); Rifatul Khoiriah Malik, 'Analisis Wacana Van Dijk Terhadap Animasi Religi "Negara Islami"(Karya Cisform Uin Sunan Kalijaga & Ppim Uin Jakarta)', *Komodifikasi* 7, no. 1 (2019); Mike Meirianti and Muhammad Ilyas Amirullah, 'Analisis Wacana Sara Mills Dalam Film Animasi "Pemimpin Perempuan" Karya Cisform UIN Suka', *INTERCODE* 4, no. 1 (2024); Ali Ridho, 'Memahami Makna Jihad Dalam Serial Film Kartun Cisform: Jihad Fi Sabilillah (Analisis Wacana Teun A. Van Dijk)', *Jurnal Dakwah Dan Komunikasi* 4, no. 1 (2019): 1–20; Jihad Fi Sabilillah, 'Memahami Makna Jihad Dalam Serial Film Kartun Cisform', *Jurnal Dakwah Dan Komunikasi* 4, no. 1 (2019); Nurul Wahida, *Pesan Toleransi Dalam Film Animasi Religi Produksi Center For The Study Of Islam And Social Transformation (Cisform)*, 2019.

the entire corpus of CISForm's animated films and adopts a different methodological approach can offer a distinct and original contribution to the existing literature.

Furthermore, this study aims to examine the diverse patterns of netizen responses, ranging from moderate to conservative positions. This focus is crucial for understanding how discursive contestation unfolds among online audiences and how such interactions foster critical debate within the public sphere. Open and critical discussions in digital public spaces not only function as arenas of civic deliberation but also serve as informal educational processes that can simultaneously operate as effective counter-narrative mechanisms against radical and extremist discourses.

This study employs a qualitative research design using a netnographic approach. As a method derived from ethnography, netnography similarly examines social and cultural interactions within communities, yet it is more specifically oriented toward online environments. The researcher conducted digital observations, content analysis, and interpretive analysis of online conversations, symbols, and user behaviors. This approach enables an in-depth understanding of the dynamics of online communities while preserving the natural context of digital activities.

Netnography is appropriate to the examination of CISForm's animated films on YouTube, which are produced as counter-narratives to extremism. The method allows for direct analysis of audience responses, comments, and patterns of engagement with video content. Through digital observation, the researcher identifies the extent to which anti-extremism messages are understood, accepted, or contested by users (netizens), as well as assesses the interactions and discourses that emerge around CISForm's animated films within the relevant digital context.

This article examines the initiatives undertaken by the Center for the Study of Islam and Social Transformation (CISForm)

at UIN Sunan Kalijaga in countering extremist and terrorist narratives through its flagship agenda of “mainstreaming moderate Islam,” implemented in the form of forty animated films. These animations address four central themes: *jihad*, *hijrah*, tolerance, and *Islam Rahmah*, and were launched on YouTube in 2018. Employing a netnographic approach, this study analyzes the extent and nature of netizens’ responses to these animated films from 2018 to 2025. The main contribution of this study lies in its ability to demonstrate how deradicalization can be effectively pursued through creative content on YouTube as a *soft* yet impactful strategy. This finding is particularly significant given the prevailing dominance of securitized approaches to deradicalization, which may generate resistance rather than meaningful engagement.

### **Extremist Narratives on Social Media**

Radical and extremist groups have increasingly adopted strategic uses of social media to disseminate ideology, recruit members, and shape public opinion. Studies by Winter and Conway et al. demonstrate that groups such as the Islamic State (ISIS) are highly adaptive to technological environments and capable of maintaining their digital presence despite platform restrictions.<sup>17</sup>

Several narratives are repeatedly and intensively propagated on social media. First is the assumption that the Islamic world is under existential threat, as if it were on the verge of being erased from the face of the earth.<sup>18</sup> The narrative of Muslim victimization, however, is by no means new. The genealogy of terror at the turn of the twenty-first century is likewise rooted in deep-seated grievances stemming from perceived marginalization and sustained

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<sup>17</sup> Maura Conway and Stuart Macdonald, ‘Introduction to the Special Issue: Islamic State’s Online Activity and Responses, 2014–2017’, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 42, nos 1–2 (2019): 1–4; Charlie Winter, *The Virtual Caliphate: Understanding Islamic State’s Propaganda Strategy*, vol. 25 (Quilliam London, 2015).

<sup>18</sup> Among Sukmo, ‘Narasi Muslim Terzalimi’, *detiknews*, 6 March 2020, <https://news.detik.com/kolom/d-4927775/narasi-muslim-terzalimi>.

pressures associated with Western colonialism<sup>19</sup>, liberalism<sup>20</sup>, and global capitalism. The enduring narrative of Muslim vulnerability has been instrumentalized by extremist groups to frame the abolition of the Ottoman caliphate as the principal cause of Islam's multidimensional decline,<sup>21</sup> thereby promoting the restoration of the khilafah, as exemplified by ISIS, as a totalizing solution for reclaiming Islamic political authority, dignity, and global leadership.<sup>22</sup> Democracy, alongside capitalism and liberalism, is framed as the root of corruption, inequality, and social suffering.<sup>23</sup>

The second narrative frequently advanced within radical groups frames the West as a *common enemy*. Policies pursued by Western states are often perceived as imbued with anti-Islamic sentiment (Islamophobia) and as providing support for Israel.<sup>24</sup> The publication of twelve cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad in *Jyllands-Posten*, the movie *Fitna*, and *The Innocence of Muslims*<sup>25</sup> provoked widespread boycotts, flag burnings, and attacks on diplomatic missions,<sup>26</sup> leaving a legacy of resentment toward the

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<sup>19</sup> Joseph McQuade, *A Genealogy of Terrorism: Colonial Law and the Origins of an Idea* (Cambridge University Press, 2020).

<sup>20</sup> Michael Blain, 'On the Genealogy of Terrorism', *Interrogating the War on Terror*, 2007, 49–66.

<sup>21</sup> Indra Utama Tanjung and Muhammad Juang Rambe, 'Khilafah Islamiyah Versus Pancasila Studi Ideologi Dan Penerapannya Di Indonesia', 2023, 391–404.

<sup>22</sup> Tantan Hermansah and Nofia Natasari, *The Khilafah Discourse in Online Magazine of ISIS: DABIQ*, 19, no. 1 (2020): 11.

<sup>23</sup> Endah Sulistiowati, '101 Tahun Ketiadaan Khilafah, Sampai Kapan Dunia Muslim Terjajah?', *muslimahvoice*, 18 February 2002, <https://www.muslimahvoice.com/2022/02/101-tahun-ketiadaan-khilafah-sampai.html>.

<sup>24</sup> Samantha Mahood and Halim Rane, 'Islamist Narratives in ISIS Recruitment Propaganda', *The Journal of International Communication* 23, no. 1 (2017): 19, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13216597.2016.1263231>.

<sup>25</sup> Marion G. Müller et al., 'Dangerous Depictions: A Visual Case Study of Contemporary Cartoon Controversies', *Popular Communication* 7, no. 1 (2009): 28–39, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15405700802598361>.

<sup>26</sup> Erik Bleich, 'Free Speech or Hate Speech? The Danish Cartoon Controversy in the European Legal Context', in *Global Migration: Challenges in the*

West that persisted in subsequent years. Western political policies articulated through the agenda of the War on Terror, the Clash of Civilizations, and, in some instances, are framed as a process of decivilization when military operations are conducted in Muslim societies.<sup>27</sup> Such attitudes are interpreted by radical groups as a form of arrogance that fulfills the criteria of *tāghūt* (override divine law).<sup>28</sup>

Third radical narratives in social media are a call to unite (*berjamaah*). Joining a certain group is presented as a religious obligation, reinforced by the doctrine that Muslims are required to act collectively.<sup>29</sup> The injunction to maintain collective unity (*berjamaah*) is commonly grounded in general scriptural references in which the Prophet instructs Muslims to remain united and avoid fragmentation. However, the concept of *jamaah* is frequently narrowed in an exclusive manner to refer to a single group, while other groups are readily delegitimized or condemned. This exclusivist interpretation is often justified through reference to the notion that the Muslim community will be divided into seventy-three sects, of which only one will attain salvation. Such an understanding, which negates the validity of alternative

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*Twenty-First Century*, ed. Kavita R. Khory (Palgrave Macmillan US, 2012), [https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137007124\\_6](https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137007124_6).

<sup>27</sup> Stephen Vertigans, 'British Muslims and the UK Government's "War on Terror" within: Evidence of a Clash of Civilizations or Emergent de-Civilizing Processes?', *The British Journal of Sociology* 61, no. 1 (2010): 26–44, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-4446.2009.01300.x>. See Also Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Harvard University Press, 2001).

<sup>28</sup> Ammar Zain Marzuqi and Alfiyatul Azizah, 'Konsep Thaghut Dalam Alqur'an: (Analisis Kritis Tafsir Sayyid Qutb, Fii Zhilal Al-Quran)', *Hamalatul Qur'an: Jurnal Ilmu Ilmu Alqur'an* 5, no. 2 (2024): 852–62, <https://doi.org/10.37985/hq.v5i2.374>. Laila Sari Masyhur, 'Thaghut Dalam Al-Qur'an', *Jurnal Ushuluddin* 18, no. 2 (2012): 2, <https://doi.org/10.24014/jush.v18i2.708>. Zifirdaus Adnan, "'Ideological Conflict' Between the Indonesian Government and the Indonesian Muslim Radicals", *Australian Folklore* 30 (2015).

<sup>29</sup> Asman Abdullah, 'Radikalisasi Gerakan Jamaah Ansharut Tauhid Dan Pengaruh Isis Di Indonesia', *Jurnal Sosiologi Reflektif* 12, no. 2 (2018): 213–32.

interpretations and communities, constitutes the foundation of an exclusivist and radical worldview.<sup>30</sup>

Another narrative promoted within conservative or extremist circles is the call to *hijrah*, an invitation to join such groups. *Hijrah* is commonly understood as a transition from an undesirable condition to a better place or state of being. It is also frequently employed as a discursive boundary that establishes a dualism between *jāhiliyyah* (ignorance) and faith or knowledge.<sup>31</sup> *Hijrah* may also be understood as a form of social piety, the markers of which are often highly visible. These include, for instance, changes in styles of dress toward more modest forms, as well as shifts in linguistic choices, reflected in the more frequent use of terms perceived as religiously authoritative. While the phenomenon of *hijrah* cannot be automatically equated with radicalism, it is nonetheless acknowledged that pathways toward radicalization may, in certain cases, originate from such *hijrah*-oriented transformations.<sup>32</sup> *Hijrah*-oriented radicalism emerges when individuals join a *jamaah* that politicizes religious transformation, emphasizes anti-government or anti-foreign narratives, and demands total loyalty through practices such as *bay'ah* (oath of allegiance), thereby fostering militancy and extremist orientations.<sup>33</sup>

From the foregoing discussion, it is possible to delineate the underlying logic and strategic stages employed by radical movements in advancing their agendas. The first stage involves

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<sup>30</sup> Salman Al-Audah, *Thaifah Mansurah Kelompok Yang Akan Menang: Pembahasan Spektakuler Seputar Ghuraba, Firqah Najiyah, Jihad & Uq̄lah* (Ummul Qura, 2014).

<sup>31</sup> Dian Ayuningtyas et al., 'Understanding the Current Trend of Hijrah: Between Self-Existence and Religious Understanding', *Ris̄lah Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Studi Islam* 8, no. 2 (2022): 548–61.

<sup>32</sup> Nurul Annisa Hamudy and Moh Ilham A Hamudy, 'Hijrah Movement in Indonesia: Shifting Concept and Implementation in Religiosity', *JSW (Jurnal Sosiologi Walisongo)* 4, no. 2 (2020): 133–50.

<sup>33</sup> Mush'ab Muqoddas Eka Purnomo, 'Mengoreksi Salah-Paham Makna Hijrah; Kajian Tafsir Dan Sirah Nabawiyah', *MAARIF* 17, no. 2 (2022): 70–86, <https://doi.org/10.47651/mrf.v17i2.195>.

inviting others, particularly millennials and, more specifically, Generation Z, to embrace *hijrah*. The discourse of *hijrah* is framed as a transition toward a more authentic, pious, and morally superior way of life. Numerous empirical cases demonstrate how individual involvement in extremism unfolds through the stages outlined above. In the contemporary context, however, this process can occur at a significantly accelerated pace through digital media, particularly the internet and social networking platforms. One illustrative example is the case of Teuku Akbar Maulana, a 17-year-old Indonesian youth from Aceh who was studying in Turkey and nearly joined ISIS after reconnecting with a former acquaintance via Facebook.<sup>34</sup> Akbar encountered an old friend, Yazid, whose social media profile depicted him posing confidently with an AK-47 against the backdrop of a battlefield. This case, documented by Noor Huda Ismail in the documentary *Jihad Selfie*, illustrates how social media functions as an effective catalyst for radicalization, capable of transforming ordinary adolescents into potential participants in transnational extremist movements. Digital platforms not only compress the stages of recruitment and indoctrination but also blur the boundaries between personal networks, ideological exposure, and operational mobilization.<sup>35</sup>

Radicalization through digital media extends beyond adolescents, as evidenced by several high-profile cases of Indonesian women whose engagement with online platforms facilitated pathways into extremist networks. Dian Yulia Novi, an Indonesian migrant worker in Taiwan, became radicalized through sustained interaction with pro-ISIS content across Facebook, jihadist websites, and Telegram, culminating in her connection with ISIS sympathizers in West Java and her identification as Indonesia's

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<sup>34</sup> Achmad Zainal Huda et al., 'Social Media as an Incubator of Youth Terrorism in Indonesia: Hybrid Threat and Warfare', *Jurnal Indo-Islamika* 11, no. 1 (2021): 21–40.

<sup>35</sup> Huda et al., 'Social Media as an Incubator of Youth Terrorism in Indonesia: Hybrid Threat and Warfare'.

first prospective female suicide bomber.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, Zakiah Aini's lone-actor attack on the Indonesian National Police Headquarters in 2021 was preceded by rapid self-radicalization through pro-ISIS digital content, reflected in her online behavior shortly before the attack.<sup>37</sup> Earlier cases, such as Nurul Azmi Tibyani's long-term involvement in terrorist networks originating from online jihadist forums in the early 2000s, further demonstrate that digital spaces have long functioned as critical infrastructures for female radicalization and sustained participation in extremist movements.

Given the persistence of cases of radicalism, extremism, and terrorism, academic engagement and soft approaches are imperative. This responsibility should not rest solely with the state; scholars must also contribute actively to solution-oriented efforts. In this context, the Center for the Study of Islam and Social Transformation (CISForm) has addressed these issues consistently since 2010. CISForm's *Mainstreaming Moderate Islam* program is designed to reach a broad audience. Thus, the use of new media becomes indispensable. The internet, particularly through social media, has demonstrably emerged as a transformative force reshaping contemporary civilization. "A movement that does not make it into the media is non-existent."<sup>38</sup> This assertion appears to be well understood by extremist movements, which consequently invest heavily in media utilization.

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<sup>36</sup> Dyah Ayu Mahardhika and Sapto Priyanto, 'The Role of Women in Terrorism in Indonesia', *Jurnal Pertabanan: Media Informasi Tentang Kajian Dan Strategi Pertabanan Yang Mengedepankan Identity, Nasionalism Dan Integrity* 9, no. 3 (2023): 512–26; Aldy Marzio et al., 'The Concept of Jihad and Women's Involvement in Terrorism:(A Case Study of Dian Yulia Novi)', paper presented at Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Strategic and Global Studies, ICSGS 0218, October 24-26, 2018, Central Jakarta, Indonesia, 2019.

<sup>37</sup> Ratna Damayanti et al., 'Women's Involvement in Terrorism in Indonesia (A Study of Nirmilitary Defence Strategies to Counter the Threat of Terrorism by Involving Women)', *Technium Soc. Sci. J.* 56 (2024): 270.

<sup>38</sup> W Lance Bennett, 'New Media Power: The Internet and Global Activism', *Contesting Media Power: Alternative Media in a Networked World* 17 (2003): 37.

CISForm's initiatives are situated within an increasingly contested media battleground, where dominance over narrative production has become a decisive source of influence. In early 2022, Indonesia's National Counterterrorism Agency (BNPT) identified a substantial number of websites and social media accounts with potential radical content, totaling 650. Of these, 409 were general informational sites reporting on attacks, 147 contained content opposing the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia (NKRI), 85 were anti-Pancasila, seven promoted intolerance, and two disseminated *takfiri* ideology (excommunicating others). Additionally, 40 sites or accounts were associated with fundraising activities, and 13 were linked to terrorist training content.<sup>39</sup> This demonstrates that ideological contestation in cyberspace persists despite repeated efforts by the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (Kominfo) to shut down websites and accounts suspected of radical content. Between 2017 and June 22, 2021, Kominfo blocked a total of 21,330 radical content items across various digital platforms and websites.<sup>40</sup>

### **CISForm's Counter-Narrative Program**

CISForm (Center for the Study of Islam and Social Transformation) is a research center based at the State Islamic University (UIN) Sunan Kalijaga, Yogyakarta. Since its establishment in 2009, CISForm has focused on empowering Muslim communities, particularly in promoting social transformation toward a progressive and religiously moderate society. Since 2011, through its *Mainstreaming Moderate Islam*

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<sup>39</sup> Fathiyah Wardah, 'BNPT Temukan 650 Situs dan Akun Berpotensi Sebarkan Paham Radikal', VOA Indonesia, 26 January 2022, <https://www.voaindonesia.com/a/bnpt-temukan-650-situs-dan-akun-berpotensi-sebarkan-paham-radikal/6411934.html>.

<sup>40</sup> Fauziyah Mursid, 'Kominfo Telah Blokir 21.330 Konten Radikal Terorisme | Republika Online', 24 June 2021, <https://www.republika.co.id/berita/qv6jhs396/kominfo-telah-blokir-21330-konten-radikal-terorisme>.

program, CISForm has strengthened the capacities of Islamic institutions, embedding principles of religious moderation and building trust, including within previously insular communities. Following an internal evaluative study in 2015, CISForm decided to continue the *Mainstreaming Moderate Islam* project through a new strategic approach, namely media-based engagement.<sup>41</sup>

This shift responded to the growing influence of radical narratives across various media platforms, particularly among younger audiences. CISForm initially focused on conventional print media by producing comic books in 2016. Embedding messages of religious moderation, these comics specifically targeted young readers, ranging from school students to university audiences. Two titles were successfully published: *Si Gun Pengen Jibad* and *Rindu Khilafah*. In 2017, CISForm expanded its engagement into digital media, particularly Facebook and Twitter, which at the time were among the most widely used platforms. Memes were employed as the primary medium to disseminate counter-narrative content. This effort was further strengthened through the production of animated films.<sup>42</sup>

Throughout 2018, CISForm produced 40 animated short films and uploaded them to its official YouTube channel, making them publicly accessible. The films were deliberately designed with short durations (90–180 seconds) to ensure rapid message delivery and ease of sharing, aligning with the media consumption habits of younger audiences who prefer concise and instantly accessible content. Animation was selected due to the persuasive power of moving images in conveying complex messages. These 40 films addressed sensitive themes such as the caliphate, *ṭāghūt*, *hijrah*, *jibad*, and martyrdom. Although the themes are inherently serious, the titles and narratives were presented in an engaging, humorous, and

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<sup>41</sup> cisform.uin-suka.ac.id, *UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta*, n.d., accessed 18 January 2026, <https://cisform.uin-suka.ac.id/>.

<sup>42</sup> 'Former Director of CISForm', 12 June 2025.

accessible manner, thereby offering effective counter-narratives to concepts that are frequently misunderstood or misappropriated.<sup>43</sup>

### Moderate Netizens' Responses

The post titled “*Jihad Tidak Harus Perang (Jihad Does Not Have to Be War)*” illustrates that the concept of *jihad* need not be understood as physical combat, but can instead be enacted through more productive means, such as social empowerment, particularly supporting vulnerable populations, widows, and the poor.<sup>44</sup> Moderate audiences, exemplified by accounts such as @gadgetstore1506 and @marleniadiya3179, responded positively to the animation, describing it as both constructive and *keren* (highly appealing).

The post titled “*Hijrah ke Desa (Hijrah to the Village)*” narrates the concerns of the Arin family, who contemplate selling all their assets, including their house and car, as these were acquired through credit. This decision follows exposure to a religious sermon addressing the prohibition of *riba* (interest) and credit practices<sup>45</sup>. Moderate audiences expressed appreciation for this animated content, as reflected in responses from accounts such as @silviaantatasya4847, @maryaulfa5732, @sygztg, @WowodanTemanTeman, and @dwollopus.

Account @dwollopus expressed a desire for such positive posts to be shared daily, citing two main reasons: first, to foster creative productivity, and second, to support Islamic *dakwah*. These motivations are considered sufficient to encourage the production of value-driven, religiously meaningful content. In contrast, account @maryaulfa5732 emphasized the narrative and storytelling aspects

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<sup>43</sup> Cisform Uinsuka, *Animated Films*, n.d., <https://www.youtube.com/@cisformuinsuka9764/videos>.

<sup>44</sup> Cisform Uinsuka, *Jihad Tidak Harus Perang*, 2018, 02:11, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lpe9dBta1tY>.

<sup>45</sup> Cisform Uinsuka, *Hijrah Ke Desa*, 2018, 02:30, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pB3ZWMVGZ8>.

of the content, appreciating its variety and entertainment value without connecting it to religious sentiment.

Another post, titled “*Toleransi Islam* (Islamic Tolerance),” presented the concept and practices of Islam toward non-Muslims, including the construction of places of worship, mutual respect, and non-interference.<sup>46</sup> This animation received positive responses from accounts such as @marliarahim3813 and @isnawtyismail.h.2704, who described it as appealing and well-produced, without referencing any religious sentiment.

The highest volume of positive responses from moderate audiences was observed in the post titled “*Tolerant Mosque.*” This animation depicted Muslim communities assisting non-Muslims in need, with the mosque functioning as a public space for all faiths.<sup>47</sup> Positive comments were posted by accounts including @rianchannel5106, @muhammadagidsyafei7091, @lukmanfajar297, @henkysyuhada6725, @yuanggakurnia4836, @jingga5739, @ariqnazar, @nenklistriyah8627, @kikyanwar1903, and @haniatussyakilah7102. Notably, no negative responses were recorded for this post.

Account @haniatussyakilah7102 remarked that such media-based *dakwah* demonstrates that Islam is not a religion of terrorism. Account @yuanggakurnia4836 noted that the animation effectively portrays the tolerant social and religious life in Indonesia. Moreover, account @ariqnazar suggested that these animations serve as transformative *dakwah*, particularly relevant to millennial audiences. Account @jingga5739 further described the animation as an authentic representation of societal tolerance. The account @lukmanfajar297 stated with a more complex depictions:

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<sup>46</sup> Cisform Uinsuka, *Toleransi Islam*, 2018, 02:35, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uumj5zaLKYw>.

<sup>47</sup> Cisform Uinsuka, *Masjid Toleran*, 2018, 01:48, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AND13803u1k>.

“The methods of dakwah are diverse, as are the methods of *jihad fi sabilillah*. Propagation of the faith does not necessarily require delivering sermons in mosques, just as *jihad* does not solely entail participation in armed conflict. In an era of advanced technology, these tools greatly facilitate the dissemination of the Prophet’s messages to cultivate Muslims who embody *Insanul Kamil* and *Khairul Ummah*. This is exemplified by @cisform.uinsuka, which utilizes technology as a medium for dakwah. The center employs two main approaches: 1) الدعوة بالأفلام (dakwah through religious films) and 2) الدعوة بالكتابة (dakwah through written media, such as religious comics). Both methods represent innovative and creative approaches to contemporary dakwah (“*dakwah jaman now*”), aligning with the challenges of the modern era. It is hoped that through these media, @cisform.uinsuka can realize the community’s aspiration of nurturing a Muslim generation that is both civically minded (*madani*) and morally grounded in Qur’anic principles.”<sup>48</sup>

This response affirms the diverse forms of *jihad* available to Muslims, highlighting that *jihad fi sabilillah* does not necessarily involve physical combat or the bearing of arms. Moreover, *jihad fi sabilillah* can extend beyond traditional religious preaching, encompassing the strategic use of technological advancements to advance Islamic *dakwah*.

Meanwhile, account @henkysyuhada6725 commented on the content of the animation, stating:

"The mosque is a sacred place of worship for all Muslims, and it is appropriate to propagate Islamic values to both Muslims and non-Muslims, as illustrated in the animation above. For example, Mas Anton was caught in the rain, and his motorcycle broke down. As Muslims, we should not judge others based on their religion, social background, or place of residence. Instead, we uphold humanitarian values of mutual assistance, as Islam encourages helping brothers and sisters in need. Such acts can also be considered forms of worship. It is important to internalize the principle of mutualism in daily life, benefiting one

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<sup>48</sup> Cisform Uinsuka, *Masjid Toleran*.

another, avoiding conflict, and preserving social harmony. Greetings of *hijrah* toward achieving success.”<sup>49</sup>

The response above indicates the successful transmission of the animation’s message to viewers. Moderate audiences understood that mosques should appropriately welcome non-Muslims, in accordance with Islamic teachings that instruct Muslims to assist anyone in distress.

### Conservative Netizens’ Responses

Conservative audiences also responded to the post titled “*Hijrah to the Village*” by supporting Arin, a fictional character who wishes to sell property acquired through *riba* (usury). Account @UserBGE1 commented: “May Arin’s aspiration to *hijrah* come true and successfully liberate herself from the shackles and servitude of *riba*.” In other words, conservative groups continue to view credit as *riba*, prohibited in Islam, and consider selling property such as houses and cars acquired through usury as a tangible expression of the *hijrah* concept.<sup>50</sup>

The post titled “*Masjid Toleran 2 (Tolerant Mosque 2)*” elicited negative responses from conservative groups. The animation depicted the *adzhan* being performed without loudspeakers to respect a deceased non-Muslim neighbor, emphasizing that religious practices should be conducted while honoring individuals of different faiths.<sup>51</sup>

However, @randilembah6365 commented: “What does this mean! *Lakum dinukum wa liya din*. For you, your religion, for me mine. Tolerance should not apply to matters of worship. In other areas, such as business, it may be acceptable.” This comment reflects the view that the *adzhan* is an integral religious practice and must be

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<sup>49</sup> Cisform Uinsuka, *Masjid Toleran*.

<sup>50</sup> Cisform Uinsuka, *Hijrah Ke Desa*.

<sup>51</sup> Cisform Uinsuka, *Masjid Toleran 2*, 2018, 02:02, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xby-ysOy3sw>.

performed regardless of a non-Muslim neighbor's death; tolerance, in this context, should not extend to religious rites.

### Extremist Netizens' Responses

The post titled "*Jihad Tidak Harus Perang (Jihad Does Not Have to Be War)*" also received negative responses<sup>52</sup>. In the comment section, extremist accounts referenced the Qur'an and the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad, particularly the battles of Badr and Khandaq, asserting that the implementation of Islamic law must fully adhere to divine commandments, including warfare, to serve as a deterrent. *Jihad fi Sabilillah* in the form of armed struggle is considered unavoidable, and should not be neglected due to fear of social repercussions. This view was expressed by account @muhamadsyarifsulaemansulae7895, stating:

"*Jihad fi Sabilillah* in warfare is mandated by Allah SWT and exemplified by the Prophets, including the final Prophet, Muhammad (pbuh), as demonstrated in the battles of Badr, Khandaq, and others. This is to implement the comprehensive Shariah of Islam as revealed in the Qur'an, including divine civil laws and *Qisas* (retributive justice), thereby establishing a deterrent effect for all humanity. Only hypocrites obstruct *Jihad fi Sabilillah* due to fear of people. May Allah protect us from such behavior. Repent to Allah SWT and return to Islam in its entirety."<sup>53</sup>

The extremist statements above reflect a rejection of the animation *Jihad Tidak Harus Perang (Jihad Does Not Have to Be War)*, as they contend that the Prophet (pbuh) exemplified *jihad* primarily through armed conflict. The animation's central message, promoting non-combative forms of *jihad*, such as empowering widows and the poor, was disregarded by extremist audiences. Instead, the content was perceived as obstructing the

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<sup>52</sup> Cisform Uinsuka, *Jihad Tidak Harus Perang*, 2018, 02:11, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lpe9dBta1tY>.

<sup>53</sup> Cisform Uinsuka, *Jihad Tidak Harus Perang*, 2018.

implementation of *jihad* as warfare. Those who oppose armed *jihad* are labeled hypocrites and urged to repent and return to Islam in its entirety (*kaffah*).

The post titled *Toleransi Islam* (Islamic Tolerance) received the highest volume of responses. Several accounts responded negatively, including @JustFel-z7g, @qawlansadida1244, and @Kang\_Hee-ri. Account @Kang\_Hee-ri stated: “True tolerance is exemplified by Prophet Ibrahim, who destroyed idols with an axe when he saw them being worshiped instead of Allah.” Here, the use of violence and anarchic actions is justified by narratives of the Prophets in the Qur’an, particularly the story of Prophet Ibrahim.

Meanwhile, account @qawlansadida1244 commented:

“Consider the tolerance of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ when he entered Mecca, which was then dominated by the polytheist Quraysh. The Prophet instructed the young Ali ibn Abi Talib to ascend the Kaaba and demonstrate the declaration *La ilaha illallah* with his hands, subsequently toppling the small idols of the Quraysh for intercession (*tawasul*). Observe the Prophet’s tolerance when collecting the *jizyah* (tribute) from non-Muslims (*Ahlu Dhimmah*), which he administered with his left hand to humiliate those deemed contemptible.”<sup>54</sup>

Similar to @Kang\_Hee-ri, account @qawlansadida1244 also justified anarchic and violent actions by referencing the narratives of the Prophets and their companions. According to this extremist perspective, true tolerance involves violence, the destruction of other religions’ idols, and social humiliation of those with differing beliefs. In other words, extremists rejected the animation “*Islamic Tolerance*” because it does not align with the Prophetic model, whether that of Prophet Ibrahim or Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), which, in their interpretation, involved physical violence. In this context, @JustFel-z7g emotionally expressed

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<sup>54</sup> Cisform Uinsuka, *Toleransi Islam*.

disgust toward the animation, commenting: “giatelllllll,” meaning ridiculous and repulsive.<sup>55</sup>

## Discussion

The findings of this study align with prior research on digital counter-narratives and online radicalization, particularly studies that identify social media as a contested arena where extremist, conservative, and moderate religious discourses intersect. Consistent with earlier scholarship on YouTube’s dual role as both a radicalization tool and a counter-extremism platform, this study confirms that CISForm’s animated films function simultaneously as instruments of moderation and as triggers for ideological resistance. Previous studies on digital counter-narratives emphasize that engagement, controversy, and audience interaction are inherent features of online ideological struggles; similarly, the netnographic evidence here demonstrates that animated counter-narratives do not silence ultra-conservative voices but instead expose and provoke them, thereby making ideological contestation visible in the public digital sphere.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the literature on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism (P/CVE) by extending the understanding of counter-narratives beyond linear persuasion models. Rather than viewing counter-extremism as a process of replacing radical ideas with moderate ones, the findings support a dialogical and contested model of digital da’wah, where meaning is continuously negotiated among audiences. By employing netnography across the entire corpus of forty animated films, this research also advances methodological approaches in the study of online religious discourse, demonstrating how audience responses (moderate, conservative, and extremist) constitute an integral part of the ideological ecosystem, not merely a reaction to content.

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<sup>55</sup> Cisform Uinsuka, *Toleransi Islam*.

From a policy and practice perspective, the findings suggest that animation-based counter-narratives represent a promising soft approach to deradicalization, particularly among younger audiences accustomed to short, visually engaging content. Institutions involved in counter-extremism efforts, including state agencies, universities, and civil society organizations, can draw lessons from CISForm's strategy of combining humor, storytelling, and sensitive theological themes to foster engagement without overt securitization. However, the persistence of extremist resistance also indicates that counter-narratives should be accompanied by active moderation strategies and the empowerment of moderate audiences to participate more assertively in online debates, thereby preventing comment sections from being dominated by radical voices.

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the analysis focuses exclusively on YouTube, leaving out other influential platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and Telegram, where radical and counter-radical narratives also circulate. Second, while netnography provides rich qualitative insights into audience responses, it does not measure long-term attitudinal or behavioral change among viewers exposed to the animations. Finally, the study centers on a single institutional actor, CISForm, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other cultural or national contexts. Future research could address these limitations by adopting comparative, multi-platform, and longitudinal designs.

## **Conclusion**

The CISForm UIN Sunan Kalijaga YouTube channel serves as a platform for promoting a moderate ideological agenda through digital technology. Nonetheless, conservative and extremist netizens have repurposed it as a stage to propagate counter-narratives that contradict CISForm's core messages. Beyond challenging moderation, this dynamic also enables CISForm to map ultra-conservative accounts that are disseminating content more widely.

CISForm's efforts exemplify how promoting moderation and tolerance through animated films inevitably creates a new arena of contestation among moderates, conservatives, and extremists. Conservative groups respond with narrative-based rejection grounded in their interpretation of religious teachings, while extremist groups not only reject but actively propagate ideologies that justify violence, using religious narratives, including the stories of the Prophets, to legitimize acts of terror.

At the same time, CISForm's channel offers an opportunity for the moderate Muslim community to counter radical and extremist comments. However, this potential has not yet been fully leveraged, leaving the ideological debate between moderates and conservative-extremist factions suboptimal.

## **Supplementary Materials**

### **Author Contributions**

The four authors collaborated on this study with the following contributions: development of the research idea and study design; collection and qualitative netnographic analysis of YouTube data; interpretation of the findings regarding ideological contestation in digital spaces; and writing, critical revision, and final approval of the manuscript.

### **Data Availability Statement**

The datasets generated and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

### **Conflicts of Interest**

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest that could influence the outcomes or interpretations of this research.

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## AI Statement

The article is the author's original work. The authors have thoroughly reviewed the accuracy and relevance of the statements in relation to the study's topic and data, and no AI-generated content has been included in the manuscript.

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