

## SUPPORTING AND OPPOSING ISLAMISM: THE VIEWS OF MILLENNIAL MEMBERS OF INDONESIAN ISLAMIC ORGANIZATIONS (IIOs) AND RELIGIOUS GATHERINGS (PENGAJIAN) IN SYDNEY AND CANBERRA AUSTRALIA

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### ABSTRACT

This article examines to what extent do Indonesian Muslim millennial members of Indonesian Islamic organizations (such as Nahdlatul Ulama & Muhammadiyah) and *pengajian* in Australia support Islamism. It is based on two research methods, online questionnaire with 106 respondents and in-depth interview with 27 key informants consisting of 17 *ustadz* (religious teacher), some *ketua pengajian* (heads of religious gathering), and 10 millennial Muslims members of IIO and *pengajian* living in Sydney and Canberra. Islamism is measured by using more detailed questions relating to the support of three core elements of Islamism: (1) the implementation of Islamic (Sharia) law in Muslim majority countries and in non-Muslim majority countries; (2) support the acquisition of power for the Muslim community; (3) the restoration of the Caliphate for the sake of uniting Muslims the world over. This study found that, in line with the trend taking place in other Islamic countries, Islamism has been understood in various ways, such as radical and moderate interpretations wherein the number of those supporting both radical and moderate Islamism is greater than those criticizing and opposing it. However, this does not mean that they support jihadist violence and extremism.

**Keywords:** Islamism, Indonesian millennial Muslim, Nahdlatul ulama, Muhammadiyah, Pengajian

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### 1. Introduction

Indonesia is often heralded as a Muslim-majority country that breaks negative Western stereotypes about Islam. Islam in Indonesia is considered compatible with democracy, because the more devoutly Muslims practice Islam the more likely they are to accept democracy (Mujani, 2003). Various scholars from both the West and Indonesia have

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investigated ideas regarding Islam, democracy, human rights, civil society and gender equality in Indonesia (Azhar, 2015, Lussier, 2011; Mujani, 2003; Ramage, 2002; Robinson, 2009) and most of them show optimistic findings. World leaders have pointed to Indonesians as practicing a more moderate and tolerant form of Islam. During her 2009 visit to Indonesia, Hillary Clinton proclaimed: “If you want to know whether Islam, democracy, modernity, and women’s rights can coexist, go to Indonesia.” (Hoesterey, 2019; Saahar, Sualman, Hashim & Mohamed, 2017). Both Clinton and Madeline Albright have called Indonesia’s democratization process the ideal model for the countries of the so-called Arab Spring.

Certainly, Indonesia has been found to be more democratic and open than other Muslim countries. In the 2016 Democracy Ranking by Global Democracy Ranking, Indonesia was ranked 65 of 118 countries and was placed in the Middle Democratic Country band. This was ahead of every other Muslim-majority country in the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia and Southeast Asia (Campbell et al., 2015; Nair, 2017). Similarly, in terms of women’s rights Indonesian Muslim women are well ahead of their sisters in other parts of the Muslim world. Indonesia only ranked 88 out of 144 on the World Economic Forum’s Gender Gap Index for 2016, however this is ahead of every other Muslim-majority country in the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia and Southeast Asia except Bangladesh (72) and Azerbaijan (86). The bottom quintile of the Gender Gap Index is dominated by Muslim-majority countries (Schwab et al., 2016). Additionally, Indonesia has already had a female head of state.

This data makes it clear that Indonesian Islam in practice is more democratic, supports human rights and opposes Islamism.<sup>6</sup> One of the key factors supporting this trend is Islamic associational life (Hefner, 2000) (Lussier et al., 2012). Indonesian Islamic organizations (IIOs) such as Nahdlatul Ulama & Muhammadiyah are among the most prominent civil society organizations strengthening democracy in Indonesia. The role of these organizations promoting Indonesian Islam at home has been studied in depth.<sup>7</sup> The ideas of democracy, pluralism, and humanism have been discussed on many occasions and obtained positive and warm responses. Scholars from Islamic-based organizations, both traditionalists and modernists, have developed new ideas in Islam and found ways to compromise between Islam and these new social movements (Antlöv & Wetterberg, 2011; Webber, 2006).

A quiet recent survey (Sakai & Fauzia, 2014b) confirm previous argument that the influence of radical groups such as FPI (Front Pembela Islam), HTI (Hizbut Tahrir Indonesia) in Indonesia is still very limited although studies focused on these groups are very numerous.

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<sup>6</sup>Regarding Islamism (Webber, 2006) notes that, the NU’s opposition to Islamism and support for democratic politics has both a theological and practical justification. The NU believes, as did the founding fathers of Indonesia after the Second World War, that an attempt to create an Islamic state would lead to civil war and/or the break-up of the country. Similarly, mainstream organized Islam in Indonesia according to him has played a helpful role in Indonesia’s democratization as well as in bolstering the dominance of a secular over religious political orientations to oppose Islamism.

Nevertheless, some new trends have been more common among Indonesian Muslims indicated that the support for Islamism has increased significantly. This can be seen from some evidence such as the acceptance of political Islam, the approval of to use violence to promote belief on Islam, actively showing the intentions and acts to adopt Islamic values and morals in daily life, aggressively promoting Islamic symbol in the public sphere (Sakai & Fauzia, 2014a). In other words, Indonesia in the one hand has been claimed to be a democratic country with support from some Islamic organizations (IIOs) such as Nahdlatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah. While on the other hand, some Islamic groups popularize Islamism and radical Islam which are opposing democracy such as FPI & HTI are flourishing.

It is important to note that very little attention has been afforded to understand how Indonesian Muslims live abroad and how IIOs function beyond the country's borders. This article aims to describe the attitude of Indonesian millennial members of IIOs (such as Nahdlatul Ulama & Muhammadiyah) and *pengajian* in Australia towards Islamism.

This topic is important for at least two reasons. *The first reason*, Indonesian Islam after Soeharto has been considered to turn to conservative ideas (Bruinessen, 2011). Examples of some important changes are the bombing attack in 2000 which happened on Christmas eve and later the Bali Bombing in October 2002. Another surprising phenomenon are under democratic system many districts issuing syaria local regulation despite the fact of the failure to bring back Jakarta Charter to be adopted by the constitution, and the emergence of some new Islamic movement in various forms such as political party (Prosperous Welfare Party/PKS), Hizbu at Tahrir Indonesia (HTI), Tablighi Jama'at and Salafi movement, and the conservative group within the existing Islamic organization such as NU and Muhammadiyah has strengthened. Additionally, the Council of Indonesian Ulama (MUI) 2005 issued a *fatwa* that secularism, liberalism, and pluralism are forbidden (*haram*). Those marked the important changes of Indonesian Islam from moderate and tolerance to the conservative turn. The emergence of this new face of Indonesian Islam post-Soeharto does not mean that the progressive Islam has disappeared. Wahid and Ma'arif, two prominent figure of progressive Islam still keep promoting their ideas. However, their power has lowered and the conservative ideas have challenged the progressive Islam significantly (Bruinessen, 2011).

*Second reason*, based on previous studies, there is a tendency that youths in diaspora are vulnerable to radicalization and are in support of political Islam in many countries (Keddie, 2018; Nilan, 2017). Those studies rely on data from Muslims from Middle Eastern countries. Muslim youths in the diaspora of liberal countries have to negotiate two sets of norms: Western norms to reward economic and educational achievement, and Islamic norms to be a good Muslim (Nilan 2017, 4).

From the perspective of Western society, Muslim youths are considered as "outsiders" and "dangerous foreigners", and in this regards, Muslim youths have defined themselves as an

object of prejudice in their professional life, while concurrently, their lifestyle has been beyond their family tradition. Following Giddens (1991 in [Ritzer 2011](#)) and Beck (1992 in *ibid*), young people have grown up in uncertain and precarious society, especially young Muslims, they experience more risks and uncertainties than others. Consequently, young Muslims in the diaspora may be influenced by two different discourses: radical Islam or popular culture ([Nilan, 2017](#)).

Indonesian millennial Muslims, members of Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah and *pengajian* (religious gatherings), living in Australia could be influenced by Indonesian Islam that is understood to be compatible with democracy and opposing Islamism. Similarly, they could be influenced by radical Islam, which is indicated by supporting Islamism that has recently been flourishing among both Indonesian Muslims in Indonesia and youth Muslims in the diaspora.

## 2. Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

The term Islamism, according to [Mozaffari \(2007\)](#), has just emerged following the Islamist revolution in Iran (1978-1979). Previously, other terms were more frequently used, such as „Islamic fundamentalism“, „radical Islam“, „Islamic revival“, and „political Islam“. The term Islamism indicates a type of political Islam where violence is accepted with strong criticisms of the West. Further, he argues that Islamism is constructed based on the term Islamic totalism which construes Islam not merely as a religion in one’s private life, but as a total system to guide politics, the economy, and social life as well. Islamism considers the “Islamic state” as a must to ensure the implementation of sharia law. In this regard, [Mozaffari \(2007\)](#) defines Islamism as: “... a religious ideology with holistic interpretation of Islam whose final aim is the conquest of the world by all means.”

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Two elements: „Islam“ and „ism“ indicates a bi-polar composition of Islamism. „Islam“ refers to a religion with its particular history and civilization, and „ism“, according to [Pipes \(2005\)](#), is equivalent to other ideologies such as Marxism-Leninism and fascism. Islamism is an ideology to restore the glory of the Medina Islamic civilization created by the Prophet Muhammad and his followers, the first four caliphs. Accordingly, there is a need to interpret

Islam holistically, embracing all aspects of *Din* (Religion), *Dunya* (way of life), and *Dawla* (Government). Islamism aims to reestablish the Medina model and the Caliphate for the Islamization of the world because Islamists believe Islam is a universal religion and its goal is to rule the whole world. This goal can be achieved through various means in which violence and terrorism remain debatable. Some groups ban violence while others adopt violence and terrorism as viable means of action.

Islamism and post-Islamism has been used interchangeably on account of their having very similar messages. Post-Islamism still maintains the core message of Islamism to maintain Islam's political identity, but it articulates how Islam, democracy, and modernity can be connected. In Bayat's words (2013, in [Tajuddin \(2016\)](#), "... it wants to marry Islam, democracy, and modernity". It is believed that both Islam and democracy promote freedom, equality, and social justice. However, some Muslims continue to maintain radical Islamism to oppose and fight against democracy and modernity. This follows [Achilov and Sen \(2017\)](#) classification on political Islam into radical and moderate groups, which are comparable to Islamism and post-Islamism (see Table 1).

**Table 1: Classification of Islamism**

Types of Islamism	Characteristics	Accepted Political System
	Support for political pluralism	Parliamentary System in which all political parties can compete Men of religion should not have influence on how people vote over government decisions
	Support for individual civil and political rights	Government and parliament should make laws according to the wishes of the people
	Accommodative support for both Sharia and secular law	Government and parliament should make laws according to the wishes of people in some areas and implement Shari'a law in others
Radical Islamism	Intolerance toward political pluralism	A system governed by Islamic law in which there are no political parties or elections
	Support for exclusive rule of	Government should implement only the laws of

the Sharia

the Sharia law

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Another classification of Islamism may be based on its commitment to democratic principles (accommodationist vs non-accommodationist), and the implementation of Islamic teaching (contextualist vs legalist). Accommodationists and contextualists consider the importance of social and political realities, accordingly, they may be in support of implementing democratic process. By contrast, non-accommodationists and legalists or hardliners believe that they should interpret the *Qur'an* and *Sunnah* by using the legalist perspective and they tend to oppose democratic norms (Achilov & Sen, 2017). An element of radical Islamism accepting violence can be classified into violent radicalism. This group is a minority of Islamism, but it is destructive and dangerous for mankind.

The principal indicator of Islamism in Berman and Stepanyan, (2003: 30) is whether children were sent to madrassas, or Islamic religious schools. A survey by the WVS asked respondents in Islamic countries to measure the degree of Islamism by asking whether they agreed that the state 'should implement Sharia only' as the law of the land (Kaufmann, 2005). The most recent study by Sakai and Fauzia (2014) measured Islamism by asking the following three topics: (1) Should *Khilafah Islamiyah* or an Islamic state be established in Indonesia; (2) Is the use of violence permissible to fight for Islam; (3) Muslim women should wear a *cadar* (a veil that covers the entire face).

Islamism (Tausch & Heshmati, 2016) is measured by using indicators such as: politicians must believe in God; male and female university students should not attend classes together; sharia law is a must; women shouldn't become political leaders; parliaments have no right to pass laws in Islamic countries; boys are considered more important in obtaining a university degree than girls; Jews can not be accepted as neighbors; the influence of religious leaders on how people vote is important; it is important to limit the influence of cultures from the US and other Western countries; Muslim majority countries must be led by men with good understanding of Islam; wife's obedience is a must; the political rights of non-Muslims must be inferior to that of Muslims.

### 3. Material & Methods

This article combined two research methods: *first*, online questionnaires were distributed among 18 to 40 years old members of Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah and *Pengajian* in Australia, and this resulted in 106 replies. First of all, we contacted *the PCI (Pengurus Cabang Istimewa)* of NU, Muhammadiyah, and some *pengajian* established in Australia<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah and group of *pengajians* are classified differently because it is assumed that they are different based on their affiliation to IIOs in Indonesia. Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah are formally declared their affiliation to IIOs in Indonesia while CIDE and groups of *pengajian* consider their group

We distributed online questionnaire among those three groups (NU, Muhammadiyah, and *Pengajian*) by asking their assistance in distributing our online questionnaire via their social media platforms especially WhatsApp). According to (Muttaqin et al., 2016), there were at least 34 Indonesia Muslim groups that established a *pengajian*. We focused our online questionnaire distributed among *pengajians* connected to CIDE (Centre of Islamic Da'wa and Education) located in Sydney. CIDE was selected because it used to be the Indonesian Islamic centre originally established in Australia and it does not have direct connection to Indonesian Islamic organizations. The head of CIDE introduced some religious gatherings (groups of *pengajian*) such as IQRA academy, Ashabul Kahfi, Al Amin, IMFACT, One Sister.

Secondly, in-depth interviews were conducted in Sydney and Canberra on account of the following reasons: (1) Both cities represent different characteristics as the former represents a large city with substantial Muslim population in Australia; by contrast, the later represents a small city with a small number of Indonesian Muslim population. (2) Muslims in both cities are quite actively engaged in religious gathering activities. The in-depth interviews are carried out with 27 key informants living in Sydney and Canberra (17 *ustadz*/religious teachers, heads of religious gathering (*Pengajian*) including from Nahdlatul Ulama, Muhammadiyah; and 10 participants of the millennial generation involved actively in the religious gathering).

In this study, Islamism was quantitatively measured in more detail by asking questions on the following topics. *The first* element relates to the respondent's agreement on the implementation of Islamic (Sharia) law in Muslim majority countries such as Indonesia (P27) and in non-Muslim majority countries like Australia (P28). The question included their agreement about the implementation of *Hudud* Islamic criminal laws in Muslim majority (P36) and Non-Muslim majority countries such as Australia (P37); the importance of halal product for food products (P33) and Islamic banking product (P34); the rights of women in Islam to be a female president (P32) and the obligation to wear hijab for a Muslim woman (P35).

*The second* topic delved into the respondent's support in the acquisition of power for Muslim community: to elect leaders or parliamentary members who can fight for the Islamic Sharia (P29), to vote for an Islamic party (P30), to nominate a Muslim candidate (P31). *Finally*, the last topic refers to the respondent's agreement with the restoration of the Islamic Caliphate for the sake of uniting Muslims around the world (P38).

Islamism in the in-depth interviews was observed by focusing on the informant's opinions about basic principles of Islamism, which according to (Mozaffari, 2007) and (Pipes, 2005) covers the following topics: (1) restoration of the Medina and Caliphate Model; (2) an "Islamic state" is a must to ensure the implementation of sharia law; (3) Islam embraces all

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with no or limited formal affiliation to IIOs. However, they cooperate in some of their activities. Similarly, NU and Muhammadiyah established *pengajian* as well.

aspects of *Din* (religion), *Dunya* (way of life), and *Dawla* (government); (3) the final goal of Islamists is world conquest by all means.

#### 4. Results

##### *Supports for Islamism*

According to the descriptive analysis in Table 2, all indicators of Islamism obtained a rather strong agreement.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Islamism**

Statements	Agreed	Disagreed
P27 Islamic law (Sharia) must be implemented in Muslim majority countries such as Indonesia.	63.21%	36.79%
P28 Islamic law (Sharia) must be implemented for the Muslim population in non-Muslim majority countries such as Australia	37.73%	62.27%
P36 I agree on the implementation of <i>Hudud</i> Islamic criminal laws in Muslim majority countries such as Indonesia.	48.11%	51.88%
P37 I agree on the implementation of <i>Hudud</i> Islamic criminal laws for Muslim populations in Non-Muslim majority countries such as Australia.	16.98%	83.02%
P32 Muslim-majority countries such as Indonesia cannot be led by a female president.	39.62%	60.38%
P35 A Muslim woman is obliged to use the hijab.	83.97%	16.04%
P33 I only consume food products that have halal labels.	75.48%	24.30%
P34 I only use Sharia bank products	31.13%	68.87%
P29 The aim of the General Election (elections) in both Muslim and non-Muslim majority countries is to elect leaders or parliamentary members who can fight for Islamic Sharia	52.83%	47.17%
P30 In Elections, Muslims must vote for an Islamic party.	55.66%	44.34%
P31 In Elections, Muslims must vote for a Muslim candidate.	72.65%	27.35%
P38 I agree on the establishment of <i>Khalifah/Khilafah</i> Islamiyah for the unity of Muslims around the world.	55.66%	44.34%

The most important indicator, according to the *Partial Least Square* estimation method, is the statement that Islamic law (Sharia) must be implemented in Muslim majority countries such

as Indonesia (P27), wherein the agreement to this statement reached 63.21%. The respondents were realistic for not expecting sharia law to be implemented in non-Muslim majority countries such as Australia, resulting in a disagreement value of 62.27% and agreement at 37.73. In relation to this topic, an Australia born *ustadz* who has been a part of the Indonesian Muslim community since he studied Islam in Indonesia and gotten married to an Indonesian woman, responded that the possibility of Sharia law implementation in Australia as follows:

Well, I suppose it depends what part of Sharia law, because it's we can't say I don't think I'd ever see anything like Saudi Arabia here in Australia, then the people would never want that. But could there be something I don't know to what extent maybe another example like Aceh or I don't know about Brunei, or..But perhaps I suppose it depends on what matters if we had the opportunity there are certain things as a Muslim I think I'd like to see of course we want to implement the Quran as much as we can.

Most of the respondents (83.97%) agreed that a Muslim woman is obliged to wear the hijab (P35). This is echoing the WVS survey in Algeria, Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Nigeria, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia stating that more than 70% of Muslims think that the veil is important or very important (Tausch & Heshmati, 2016). Islamism significantly correlates with the acceptance of the veil. However, in terms of the rights of women to become a president, respondents were more likely to hold a progressive view. Most of the respondents consider that Muslim-majority countries, such as Indonesia, can be led by a female president (60.38%)/(P32). In this regard, the opinions from the in-depth interviews varied between supporting and opposing women leadership. One informant considered women leadership as a very important aspect and it is most appropriate in Islam by mentioning the role of Khadijah (the Prophet Muhammad's wife), yet she remained unsure about women holding a role as president.

Similarly, another informant believes that women should not take on a decision-making role such as a governor. Women are more suitable to assume safe roles such as a lecturer, teacher, and others, but not a decisive role. In my opinion, said one interviewee, "women should not become a governor or president. It is more appropriate for women to become teachers or lecturers."

Another aspect of Islamism is to seize power and strive to elect Muslims as leaders or representatives of the Muslim community in order to advocate for the implementation of Sharia law. Bayat (2013) has emphasized the importance of grasping the power of the state for Islamism. This relies on one of the principles of Islamic teaching, namely "command right, forbid wrong", which historically is closely associated to the prohibition of sinful acts such as drinking wine and prostitution. They believe that the state is the most effective institution to enforce "the good" and hinder "the bad".

Three indicators were formulated to question the respondents about their agreement on the importance of seizing power for the Muslim community. Among those three questions, the

support to elect a Muslim candidate as a must obtained the highest response by 72.65%, followed by the agreement to vote for Islamic political parties and electing leaders or parliamentary members who can fight for the Islamic Sharia in Elections by 55.66% and 52.83% respectively.

The restoration of the Medina and the Caliphate Model is shown by posing questions relating to the establishment of the Islamic caliphate for the sake of uniting Muslims the world over. The respondents who agreed reached 55.66%. The strongest intention to implement Islamism can be seen from their agreement on the implementation of sharia law and *Hudud* Islamic criminal law for Muslim populations in Muslim majority countries and non-Muslim majority countries, such as Australia (37.73% and 16.98% respectively), and the use of Sharia banking products (at 31.13%). Although these sharia elements require extra efforts in their implementation, some respondents still choose to agree.

A high preference for Islamism is not surprising because their religious teachers commonly discuss these topics and they tend to support Islamism. This is mentioned in the in-depth interviews. The following explanations below are provided to describe in more detail how the selected participants and religious teachers interpret and understand each aspect of Islamism.

### ***Understanding and interpreting basic principles of Islamism***

#### ***Restoration of the medina and the caliphate model***

One important aspect of Islamism is the restoration of the Medina model and the Caliphate for the Islamisation of the world. This was mentioned by informants from IQRA and CIDE. An informant from IQRA believes that no one can oppose the caliphate. Similarly, a respondent believes that the caliphate system is mentioned in the hadith, therefore it will subsequently happen in the future.

A female informant believes in the possibility of the Islamic state as it has been implemented by the Prophet Muhammad, and it will become a reality in the future on account of God's power. She is aware about her lack of understanding regarding this issue because she had not learned about the issue intensively, but she believes in her teacher's explanation. Further, she argues:

If one day the political system under the Prophet Muhammad were to exist, we could not say that the caliphate was appropriate for the Prophet's period only. So, I don't know my personal opinion about this topic. I just listened to all their sayings and "oh, so that's how you think about it, alright, alright" ( a female member of Pengajian in Sydney).

A participant from Muhammadiyyah mentioned a similar opinion that the caliphate system is possible, no one can deny it as it is God's will. God has determined the caliphate and as his creation, men can only follow his destiny. We may return to the time of the prophet, in which a leader is elected but God's will intervenes in the election. The steps of establishing a caliphate has been mentioned in *hadith*.

However, some realize that the opinions of Muslims regarding this issue vary according to their interpretation. An informant from IQRA academy Australia, disagreed with the understanding of the caliphate that is proposed by Hizbut Tahrir, an organization which introduced and popularized the caliphate as a political system to replace the democratic system. By contrast, he understood *khilafah* as a leadership style for individuals in the family as a family leader and *khilafah* as *rahmatan lil ‘alamin* (a blessing/mercy to all creation), not using the caliphate to force their will and pretend their interpretation as the truth and deny different interpretations. Accordingly, he was not surprised with the results indicating that the support for *khilafah* and Islamic state in the quantitative method is very significant. He mentions:

No one can deny the caliphate, but does it represent the system that existed in the past, and should it be implemented as it is or could we reinterpret it? I emphasize that the caliphate applies to ourselves, in that everyone is a *khalifah*, as a head of the family, a *khalifah* in my organization (IQRA) and I am the president of *majlis syura*. As a caliph I have to move and make Islam work not to impose my mind and my interpretation to become the only source of what is considered as truth (a male member of IQRA academy Sydney).

Another informant explained that *ustadz* and *Imams* in Australia are generally in support of the caliphate system, but they respectively have numerous different meanings of the term caliphate. According to the informant, during a general Islamic gathering (*pengajian*) attended by almost the majority of Muslims in Australia, a speaker mentioned his opinion in support of the caliphate. An audience then asked him about which one is important, symbol or value, with an example of the importance of the caliphate. The speaker did not oppose the argument, he asked the audience instead about how should the caliphate take its form. Should it be an “Islamic state”, an international organization, as it has been established recently in the form of OKI, or an international parliament. According to him:

I strongly agree with the argument that the caliphate in Islamic teaching is flexible. Let’s think realistically, Muslims need to support each other, especially Muslim minority challenged by violence in some countries like China. They need help from a high-level Muslim coordination, which cannot be conducted at a state level. This makes the caliphate relevant. But, I really disagree about “an Islamic State” experiment by ISIS (a male member of *pengajian* in Sydney).

*“Islamic state” is a must to ensure the implementation of sharia law*

The strongest argument stating that “an Islamic state” is obligatory was mentioned by a member of Australian National Imam Council (ANIC). According to him, the declaration that a country is an Islamic one and that the values of Islam serve as the foundation of the country is important. Islam and the state are integrated as a single unit, wherein both are inseparable not only in Indonesia but in the universe. Islam embraces all aspects of *Din* (Religion), *Dunya* (way of life), and *Dawla* (Government), with its goal being world conquest. He mentions as the following:

Both the Islamic state and the values of Islam are important. Countries that reject the establishment of an Islamic state, reject Islam for the benefit of the universe. This does not only apply in Indonesia but in all other countries as well. They don't need only to adapt the values but also need to integrate Islam and the state...

The organizers of sisters in Islam believe that the Islamic state is a solution for social problems in Indonesia. She expressed her disappointment with Indonesia being a Muslim majority country with high levels of criminal rate for murder, deceit, and theft. Muslims who live in non-Muslim countries such as Australia do not have the privilege of implementing Islamic law. Indonesia should try implementing Islamic law to suppress the high rate of criminal activities such as murder, because in Islam killing a Muslim means killing the whole community of Muslims. She expects that the implementation of Islamic teachings will compel people to think deeply before committing a serious crime like murder.

According to her, an Islamic state was operational during the period of the Prophet Muhammad, and now some of the Middle Eastern countries have claimed to reproduce the Islamic state. However, she realizes that criminal and social problems in those countries remain. In this regard, she doesn't know how to start formulating an Islamic state, but she trusts Muslim experts to initiate how Islamic state can be executed as it has been taught in Islamic teachings.

However, a participant member of *pengajian* who used to be a member of Hizbut Tahrir believes that the Islamic state is not an ideal choice for both Indonesia and other countries because the current situation is different from the conditions the Prophet was in. He argues as the following:....that's the thing, when they talk about the Islamic state, they talk about the Islamic State in the old days, for me it's not suitable for Indonesia now because sometimes there's a lot of questions that I would sometimes ask the teachers and the preachers in Hizbut Tahrir, the answers were not clear. We live in different situation, different condition from the Prophet period, and I don't think Islam is static but dynamic. Islam is supposed to go forward not backwards. With all the innovation and technology, Islam needs to catch up with that, we should not be going backwards *Embracing all aspects of Din (Religion), Dunya (way of life), and Dawla (Government)* (a male member of *pengajian* in Sydney).

An *ustadz* from CIDE (Centre for Islamic Dakwah and Education) who teaches Muslim youth intensively considers the topic of political Islam as an advanced topic and it should not be taught as a priority topic. He focuses on how young Muslims grow in Australia, and how they can be good Muslims, such as by conducting prayers properly. He realized that topic of *khilafah* has multi interpretable understandings.

Personally, I try to focus on the many Muslim youths that have grown up in Australia in particular, many have not learned the basics about Islam, and yes, there are many who are promoting the concept of *Khilafah* and political matters, and myself, I've seen that and I've experienced some of that myself and I realized that, in my opinion there's a lot more that we need to learn and focus on before getting involved in political matters (an *ustadz* in Sydney).

However, as a Muslim he expects to implement all Islamic teachings from the ritual, economic, social, and political aspects. He realized that some aspects of Islam is incompatible with Australian norms, culture, and law. Muslims can choose Islamic teachings to live their life, yet in some aspects there are particular problems that relate to other Australians, even for Australian Muslims, Australian law is more imposing and is the highest reference for all cases. While Muslims can refer to Islamic teachings for issues pertaining to inheritance, if any other members of a family prefers in using the Australian law, the issue would be resolved based on the Australian law.

In terms of the implementation of sharia economy, the respondents generally appreciated sharia banking as a noble effort to start operating under the Islamic system. They are aware of the fact that there are inconsistencies and weaknesses of Islamic banking being implemented under the capitalist system. Islamic banking operated by conventional banks is certainly not perfect. They support them nonetheless, and expect the system to improve. Indonesia as a Muslim majority country must establish and develop sharia banking and other Islamic financial products to protect Muslims from *riba* practices

Well, it's a good development and it's not perfect yet, even here it's not perfect, but it's a good effort to begin with, and I think of course it still needs improvement, to make it 100% perfect is impossible, but I guess it's a good start, and it still needs time to work. In Indonesia, I believe it's something new, because unlike Malaysia or other parts of the Middle East, it's still new in Indonesia. But it's just my opinion according to my research (a male member of *pengajian* in Sydney).

The most important aspect of Islamic finance is to prevent Muslims from committing practices of *riba*. At times, Islamic teachings may function in non-Islamic institutions. An informant, who is a religious teacher actively involved in WAMU (a *pengajian* in Wollongong) but lives in Sydney, believes that substance is more important than using Islamic labels for a product (form) that does not emanate Islamic values. This does not only relate to Islamic banking, but other aspects of Islam as well. Islamic states, like Saudi Arabia, that are unable to implement Islamic values such as justice, are less valued than secular countries that are capable of implementing Islamic values.

I don't believe in a substantial Islamic State, the substance from my foundation does not necessarily mention the name of Islam because I would rather believe the substance than the form. It's unrealistic, it will be, I don't deny *khilafah*, but, I still don't see this stage yet, because we don't. We live in Australia and we don't talk about it... (a male member of *pengajian* in Sydney).

#### *World conquest by all means*

The strategy used to achieve the goal of Islamism includes various models from a peaceful approach to a violent model (Mozaffari, 2007). Most Muslims believe in the obligation to spread Islam throughout the world, and they keep spreading Islam although they live in non-Muslim countries. They know it is difficult, but they believe that all are possible with God's

permission. They still expect Islam to be influential in the country they are living in now in the future.

When they consider the Islamism principles as unrealistic to implement under recent conditions, they would be pragmatic enough not to enforce them, but some still keep the implementation of those principles as their agenda. Accordingly, some aspects of Islamism obtained low agreement percentages such as the implementation of *Hudud* Islamic criminal law for Muslim populations in Non-Muslim majority countries such as Australia and the agreement to use Sharia banking products that only reached 16.98% and 31.13% respectively.

While the majority believed in the importance of running an Islamic state and the caliphate, the informants generally rejected violence and extremism. Some believed that the caliphate would bring about love into the universe (*rahmatan lil alamin*), but it is not the caliphate imposed by the HT or ISIS. Muslims cannot force other groups to follow the idea of an Islamic state.

We accommodate, Indonesia is like, hmm it's...how do we say, like- there are many people in Indonesia that, even though we are the majority, but we can't really force it into whatever the majority wants to shape Indonesia into.

As Muslims, we can't deny that an Islamic state will never happen. Because it did happen, historically. Can we apply the system here in Australia? I don't know how. How can someone explain properly to me. Explain how they're going to apply that back here. But, to me, I can't deny it. It occurred in the past, it should be applicable now or in the future. But how is it possible? I don't know (a male member of *pengajian* in Sydney).

Similarly, many informants rejected the caliphate by Hizbut Tahrir (HT). Based on his experience when he was a member of HT, a participant thought that an exclusive means proposed by Hizbut Tahrir to impose sharia law is unrealistic.

I used to be a member of Hizbut Tahrir for maybe 5 or 6 years. When you are in Hizbut Tahrir, it was like exclusive, because when you live in western countries there are some things that Hizbut Tahrir want to impose, like they want to impose sharia Islam here in Australia, it doesn't make sense because the Muslim population here is less than 3% (a male member of *pengajian* in Sydney).

The agreement to support sharia and Islamic state among respondents according to him is the result of brainwashing and their lack of knowledge. They repeatedly listen to explanations about the caliphate, the Islamic state, and sharia, as a result, they become more easily influenced there are no other experts on Islam to clarify the explanations. A millennial informant explains:

A lot of sheikh remind you to be good, to be kind to other people, that kind of topic is okay, but when they talk about politics, they try to force an idea. So, people, when they hear that kind of topics (to accept the caliphate Islamiyah and Islamic state) and they don't have enough knowledge, that's what creates that idea ...and when I hear that kind of topics, this is

not what I had in mind when I first joined Hizbut Tahrir (a male member of *pengajian* in Sydney).

This especially applies to those who are vulnerable to radicalism on account of not having good family support. The loneliness of living in Australia as a stranger and not having many friends are conditions he had previously experienced. This has been experienced by an informant:

Being a member of Hizbut Tahrir at the time, I could be easily manipulated at the time because people do brainwashing and stuff. They tell you one thing every day for the next 5 years, even if it's wrong, it becomes true, so yeah, the young people are vulnerable and they lack proper knowledge, and some of them don't have a family so they don't worry about anything else (a male member of *pengajian* in Sydney).

Similarly, most informants are not interested to impose the idea of Islamic finance and sharia banking. Although personally some informants prefer to use sharia banking and want to promote it, they do not want to force it upon others. They merely want to make sure that Islamic banking can be introduced and be an alternative system and alternative choice for Muslims. The conventional system must be available because she knows that not all economic activities can be covered by Islamic banking.

We accommodate, Indonesia is, like, hmm it's...how do we say it, like- has many people in that even though we are the majority, but we can't really force it into whatever the majority wants to shape Indonesia into. So, I think we should, Indonesia should be able to accommodate those groups. So, they can still choose what Muslims- let's say that they want to conduct business through the conventional bank, it is up to them, but we promote and encourage them to, hmm... support Islamic banking (a male member of *pengajian* in Sydney).

Islam as a *rahmatan lil a'alaimien* is frequently mentioned as Islamic values have been implemented universally in many countries. Both inclusive and exclusive interpretation about the nature of Islamic da'wah were discussed by the informants. This mostly relates to the character of universal Islam wherein Islam should be beneficial for the entire universe. An imam explained that countries rejecting the implementation of Islamic state have rejected the principle of Islam as a *rahmatan lil a'alaimien*. Both Islamic countries and Islamic values are important, and both must be combined. Islam must be introduced via a more practical strategy, not merely through speech but also from the conducts of Muslims. According to him, more and more non-Muslims are converting to Islam not because of speeches but because they are inspired by the acts of Muslims. Some examples of good conducts carried out by Muslims supporting non-Muslims to convert to Islam are the way Muslims treat the homeless, distribute food for them, and Muslims' participation to clean Australia.

We expect to persuade non-Muslims, to treat others with kind acts and they will be curious to know about Islam. I have been here for 25 years and I witnessed the increase of the Muslim

population by almost 31%. I believe the Muallaf are inspired by good examples of Muslims that they decided to convert to Islam (a member of Australian National Imam Council/ANIC from Indonesia).

He considered the strategy to call to Islam by telling people the truth as extreme sometimes. He criticized some behaviors that are forbidden in Islam, and he really believes that his decision to criticize is compulsory in Islam and should not be considered as extreme. In other words, Muslims must ignore the label of extremist because speaking the truth is a Muslim's obligation. He believes Muslims must tell people about the truth to touch people's heart, tell the truth or otherwise as it is regardless of our reluctance to do so. However, most Muslims have an imperfect understanding of Islam, even Muslim Professors, some don't want to practice Islam and they tend to show a negative image about Islam in the public domain.

## 5. Discussion

Based on the descriptive statistics in Table 1 which is further strengthened in Table 2, it can be concluded that the support given to Islamism principles outweighs its opposition.

**Table 3: The Classification of Islamism Variables of 106 Respondents**

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Highly non-Islamist	14	13.2
Non-Islamist	26	24.5
Islamist	44	41.5
Highly Islamist	22	20.8
Total	106	100.0
Highly non-Islamist	14	13.2
Non-Islamist	26	24.5
Islamist	44	41.5
Highly Islamist	22	20.8
Total	106	100.0
Highly non-Islamist	14	13.2
Non-Islamist	26	24.5

Statistically, this can be proven by applying the CFA model and rescaling of latent variables of Islamism from the 12 indicators to obtain the score between 0-100. The categorization is as follows:

0 – 25 : Highly Non-Islamist

- 25 – 50 : Non-Islamist  
50 – 75 : Islamist  
75 – 100 : Highly Islamist

Table 2 shows that the percentage of highly Non-Islamist and Non-Islamist reaches 37.7%, while the Islamist and highly Islamist reaches 62.3%. Grinin (2018) defines Islamism as a political trend and ideology, widespread among Muslims, especially, of Arab countries. The influence has been expanded to Indonesian Millennial Muslims members of Indonesian Islamic organisations in Sidney and Canberra, but this idea remains conceptual in terms of being implemented in their country of origin not in country where they are currently living in. The participants believe with varying degrees to Islamism principles and to keep the Islamic traditions (Islamic law, political Islam, Shari‘ah economy) to be practiced in Indonesia as their country of origin because Indonesia is a Muslim majority country. It seems that they do not support the implementation of an Australian political system (the system of the country they are living in now). More than 50% support sharia law, Islamic party, Muslim candidates, consume only halal food, and consider restoration of the caliphate as a universal principle of Islamism. They support putting Islamic ideas and principles at the center of life in Indonesia as a country with a Muslim majority.

The positive response about Islamism among respondents can be influenced by various aspects such as their religious teachers (*ustadz*), although the topics (of Islamism) are not exclusively touched on in *pengajian*, their parents, and social media. The respondents in this study are actively engaged in religious gatherings, some independently established in Sydney and Canberra and do not have particular affiliation to mainstream IIOs, some are indirectly affiliated to IIOs such as Muhammadiyah, Nahdlatul Ulama, and Tarbiyah Movement. However, the religious teachers are commonly invited from IIO and there are some religious teachers from the Middle East, and Australian Muslims.

Explanations pertaining to Islamism principles in religious gatherings are considered clear and easily understood by those who are just starting to learn Islam. This is stated by an informan, a quite famous *ustadz* in Sydney.

Religious teachers hold strong Islamism principles, and they convey these messages to beginners learning Islam. Those who just learned Islam are likely to become very excited in understanding Islam. They want a simple explanation of Islam and they avoid complicated terminologies, therefore simple explanations about the caliphate and other Islamic principles are very interesting to them (an *ustadz* of CIDE).

He believes Indonesian Muslim millennials are very enthusiastic to learn Islam, but they do not like complicated explanations about Islam. However, the support for Islamism is likely only at conceptual and discursive levels, instead of a technical one involving the implementation of the ideas of Islamism.

However, some respondents chose not to support Islamism. They don't want to implement Islamic law (Sharia) in Indonesia (at 36.79%); do not consider wearing the hijab as a compulsory for Muslim women (at 16.04%); do not have to consume food with halal label (24.30%); do not consider voting for Islamic political parties and electing Muslim candidates as compulsory (at 44.34% and 27.35% respectively), and they do not want to establish the caliphate Islamiyah (at 44.34%). Unlike religious gatherings with strong intention to promote Islamism, some groups intend to introduce Islam in a more inclusive way. The *pengajian* does not have any intention to convert non-Muslim. Their agenda seems to oppose Islamism. An informant provided the following explanation..

My *pengajian* just tries to introduce that there is an Islamic community here in Canberra. There are Islamic values and norms here. But it is not to influence people to become a Muslim. We invite people to know more about Islam. But we do not have any intention to ask them to convert. For example during Ifthar, we invite non-Muslim people to have ifthor together. We do ifthor with other non-Muslim society in my house. So they experience diversity. That might not happen in another circle (a coordinator of *pengajian* in Canberra).

According to one of our respondents, the stance of not supporting Islamism is considered as a kind of liberal attitude. It is important to note that those who are highly non-Islamist in table 2 (13.2%) chose to have been a board member at Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) or Muhammadiyah. This means that some IIOs still maintain non-Islamist teachings abroad, yet these are not very popular among millennial members of *pengajian*.

Achilov and Sen's idea (2018) to classify radical and moderate Islamists (Table 1) is useful but not very similar to this study. This classification is too simple to understand the situation of millennial members of IIOs and *pengajian* because it covers those who support Islamism, but could not explain those who oppose it. Moderate Islamists are accommodative, supportive of pluralism, accepting of both sharia and secular laws, and they believe in individual civil liberty. Radical Islamists, on the other hand, seek to form and strengthen exclusive sharia law, reject democratic pluralism, and support the superiority of religious individuals (Muslims).

By contrast, Arifianto (2018) categorizes the responses of Indonesian Islamic movement toward Islamism principles into four types: integration, moderation, non-violent radicalism, and violent radicalism. *First*, the integration model declares a rejection of the Islamic state and their acceptance of Pancasila and democratic principles. *Second*, moderation declares a support to Pancasila as well as Islamist policies and acceptance of democratic principles. *Third*, non-violent radicalism declares acceptance of the Islamic caliphate and refusal of Pancasila yet it denies revolution, and *finally*, the violent radicalism model declares acceptance of the Islamic caliphate and refusal of Pancasila and support for revolution.

Although dissimilar to Achilov and Sen's classification (Achilov & Sen, 2017) it may still be comparable, wherein the highly Islamist classification in this study is probably close to radical Islamist. They may be intolerant against political pluralism, support Sharia law

exclusively, and believe in the superiority of leaders with strong religiosity. They prefer the implementation of sharia law, criminal *hudud* law in Muslim countries, prefer to vote for Islamic political parties and Muslim candidates, consider hijab as a female Muslim obligation, and consume food with halal label. Only a limited percentage are still eager to adapt such principles in non-Muslim countries, but this indicates the strong degree of Islamism.

Radical Islamists cannot accept secular law voluntarily, although they are living in a secular country. An informant believes that Australia is a country of immigrants. All groups and religions have rights to influence and to shape the character of Australia. According to him, prior to the Europeans, Malay Muslims had discovered Australia and they can cooperate with native Australians. He believes that Australia is under the colonization of European and Non-Muslims, and in the future he expects Islam to have greater influence than it currently has. He appreciates the political culture of Australia that respects his rights but he cannot be proud of the fact of Australia as a modern and advanced country. Yet, Australia is not an Islamic country although some believe that Australia has adapted Islamic values. He still has a dream of Australia will be developed into an advanced modern democratic country, declare Islam explicitly.

## 6. Conclusion

Support for Islamism has been a trend in many countries. This study strengthens previous researches that have found youth to play a significant role in supporting Islamism. [Grinin, Korotayev, & Tausch, \(2019\)](#) Shows the social base of Islamism originates from various representations, such as intelligentsia and those with university level education and good practical skills to organize. They come from a middle class background, and are urban youths aged between 20 and 30 years who are disappointed with nepotism, corruption, and social injustice. They usually hold a dream of building an Islamic state and have a superficial image of Islam. Further, it is believed that youth domination in Islamist groups is not only important but also a distinctive characteristic of the movement. Both leaders and followers of these groups are very young ([Robert, 2010](#)).

Following [Sakai and Fauzia \(2014\)](#), support for Islamism to establish an Islamic caliphate and Islamic state as well as to implement sharia law does not mean support for radical Islamists to call on other Muslims to wage jihad. Supporters of Islamism believe in the importance of Islam in their everyday life both socially and politically, therefore, Islamism has become an influential and stable factor in domestic and foreign policies throughout all countries with Muslim majority population. Furthermore, most Muslims are now very excited to become better Muslims by following pure/genuine Islam, which they believe to have been taught by the Prophet Muhammad. Islamists impose to seize power while reformists of Islam strive to reach their goal gradually. The questionnaire distributed in this study is somehow formulated based on the reformist's strategy to establish Islamist agenda. Reformists reject the use of violence and follow democratic procedures to seize power. Furthermore, they

apply a Gramscian strategy to establish moral and political hegemony with hope in future Islamization of the state when the society has come to accept Islam (Bayat 2013).

In Bayat (2013), most of Islamists support post-Islamism to activate the role of religion in the public sphere where its influence has begun since Post-Islamism Iran. It was initiated by religious scholars, youths, women activists, and students who believe in the values of democracy, the separation of religion and state, the rights of individuals, equal rights based on gender, and tolerance. Especially, the view of Islamism among respondents has been shaped by Indonesian Islamism as their country of origin. The reformation era has facilitated the flourishing of democratization, and has concurrently been taken advantage of by groups of Islamists to advocate the goals of Islamism. They strive to follow democratic procedures to implement sharia peacefully from personal level to state level.

In general, the classification of Islamism in Indonesia can be divided into moderate and radical groups. Muslim Brotherhood, Hizbut Tahrir, and the Salafis choose to realize sharia gradually; other radical militant groups choose to realize Islamism in aggressive ways such as calling for jihad in some conflict regions, or sweeping and attacking cafes. People who are labeled as liberal Muslims oppose both types of Islamism as they believe that both types of Islamism have distorted Islam by bringing it into politics. Both types of Islamism as well as liberal Islam have obtained support from Indonesian Millennial Muslims members of IIO and groups of *pengajian* in Australia, and the moderate Islamist type is likely to have greater support than the other.

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