Accessing Global Information: The Use of the Internet for Current Islamic and Non-Islamic Issues by Students in Solo, Indonesia

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Abstract

Internet use, an important portal for globalization, has grown dramatically in both Muslim and non-Muslim countries. Little is known about students' use of the Internet to obtain information about current Islamic and non-Islamic issues. Sixty-one students – ages fifteen to nineteen from three *pesantrens*, three madrasahs, and one secular high school in Solo, Indonesia – were surveyed and classified as expressing conservative (twenty-seven), modernist (twenty-four), and moderate (ten) views. They were asked to recommend three Internet sites and the reasons for their choice. We found that regardless of student outlook the Internet was not a major source of Islamic or non-Islamic news. Fifty-five sites were recommended, indicating there were no universally popular sites. Students tended to favor sites that were in keeping with their views. However, all three types of schools had students with modernist, conservative, and moderate views.

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> These findings support Indonesia's uniqueness as a pluralistic society in the Muslim world. Although we found limited use of the Internet and a lack of uniformly popular sites in 2009, the Internet has the potential to influence young people in the future. It will be important to follow the patterns of use by Indonesian youth in *pesantrens* and other schools to assess if this pluralism persists or extremists' sites grow in popularity.

Introduction

The globalization of the Internet has provided ready access to information and mutual communication across vast distances. This omnipresent technology provides a powerful portal for accessing new skills, new values, and new knowledge of the diverse peoples of the world.[1]

It is important to consider that as well as providing new global perspectives, the Internet can also serve as a portal to obtain widespread support for one's existing views, even if these views are contrary to the views held by one's local community. What is the case with Indonesian youth? Is the Internet a major source for Islamic and non Islamic news? Is the Internet used to connect with and understand the broad global community, or do students use it to find support for positions that are contrary to those of the broad global community? An important goal of this study is to examine these questions by analyzing the extent and relative importance of Internet use as well as the character of the sites recommended by a sample of students in Solo, Indonesia. Solo is also widely known as Surakarta, a city in Central Java, Indonesia of more than 520,061 people. While our study is primarily descriptive, our research derives in part from the theoretic perspective that information-seeking behavior is strongly influenced by a person's cultural identity and that the information sought can serve as a mirror of a person's worldviews and interests.[2]

We ask, what are the worldviews of these students as reflected by the top sites they access on the Internet? Is there validity to the widespread stereotyping[3] of Muslims as terrorists and the resulting Islamophobia? Since the events of September 11, 2001, Islamic educational institutions in particular have been stigmatized as fundamentalist schools – characterized as having a medieval mind-set, advocating violent jihādist militancy, and serving as "breeding grounds for fundamentalism and terrorism."[4] To investigate the validity of these stereotypes, we have examined the Internet use of a sample of Indonesian students. Indonesia is of special interest as it is the largest Muslim country in the world today, and has a long

tradition of being democratic and pluralistic. Furthermore, there has been concern within Indonesia that there may be "creeping fundamentalism," which threatens the pluralism espoused by the government and educational institutions. Although much has been written about the use of the Internet in the Muslim world,[5] there is little if any research that has interviewed students directly about their use of the Internet for Islamic or secular news. Our study of the Internet sites chosen by a sample of students in Solo, Indonesia to recommend to their friends as a source for Islamic news and the reasons for this choice is a first step toward providing insight about these students' world views and their association with religious fundamentalist or non-fundamentalist groups and principles.

Method

Background

The stereotyping in the United States and Europe of madrasahs in Muslim countries after September 11 as "breeding grounds of fundamentalism" prompted The Muslim Youth Internet Survey, developed in 2006 and administered to Muslim students in Oakland, California. The original pilot survey asked students to list the top three Internet sites that they would recommend to a friend, and to state the reasons for this recommendation. This research design was based on the theoretic perspective that information-seeking behavior is strongly influenced by a person's cultural identity and that the information sought can serve as a mirror of a person's world views and interests. That is, students who held extremist positions would tend to recommend extremists sites, while students who held non-extremist positions would tend not to recommend extremist sites. Their stated reasons for recommending specific sites would also give insight into their worldview – that is, extremist students would both recommend extremist websites and express extremist views in justifying their recommendations. The results of the survey were reported at the International Society of Political Psychology in Barcelona, Spain in July 2006.

In designing the survey conducted in Indonesia, local input felt that it would be important to include questions that could provide insight into the dimension of pluralism among the students. Indonesian Muslim society is fragmented into subgroups. The literature suggests there are at least three distinct categorizations. The first is usually described by scholars as "Radical" or "Extremist" Muslims,[6] who adhere to scriptural-orthodox theology closely, and do not feel the need to contextualize Islamic teachings with the

contemporary development of the world. Radical Muslims are often perceived as less tolerant toward others who differ in faiths and life styles. The second is described as "Progressive Muslims"[7] who adhere to scriptural theology and yet, challenge literal interpretations of Islamic tenets that are thought to be incompatible with the current dynamics of human civilizations. Progressive Muslims are context-oriented, appreciate diversity, and promote liberal ideas of Islam. In between these two streams lie moderate Muslims, who adhere closely to scriptural theology – while embracing the middle-way of Islam, practicing tolerance, and viewing Islam and modernity as compatible.[8]

Criteria for each outlook were developed in concert with our research team. The answers students gave to the additional questions were categorized into three outlooks which were felt to reflect the views described above but were considered to be both culturally and politically more acceptable in Indonesia: modernist (to replace "progressive"), conservative (to replace "Radical/Extremist")[9] and moderate. "Modernists" refer to students who closely adhere to scriptural theology while embracing modern learning and modern concept. "Conservatists" refer to those who do not express need to revitalize the Qur'ān for contemporary learning and modern concepts, and "moderates" refer to those who maintain religious piety, while being modern and tolerant. Operationally, moderates could not be classified as either modernist or conservative as they express elements of both positions. Using these criteria, each student's outlook was scored by two U.S. investigators. In cases of disagreement, the responses were discussed and a single outlook agreed upon.

Survey

In the first two questions, the student was asked to "list the names and web addresses if you have it of the top three Internet sites blogs," and /or "weblogs that you would recommend to a friend to find out about recent Islamic news," and to explain the reason for recommending the three sites. The students were then asked to comment on any of the statements below that matched the reasons they gave for recommending the top three sites:

1. The need for Muslims to widen external relationships in multicultural society.

2. The need for Muslims to renew interpretations of Islamic teachings and knowledge in order for these ideas to be relevant to the developments of the current age.

3. The need for Muslims to be aware of both the internal and external enemies that would destroy or jeopardize Islam.

4. The need of Muslims to oppose abuse against Islam – such as the insult to the Prophet (ṢAAS) in the Danish cartoon, criticisms of the U.S. war on Iraq, and the accusations that Muslims are terrorists.

5. Internet use for other information.

Examples of typical responses to these five questions by modernist, conservative, and moderate students are available on request.[10]

In order to assess the extent of Internet use, regarding the first two statements above, students were asked to list how much they used the Internet for current Islamic and /or non- Islamic issues (none, one or two days a week, three to six days a week, everyday, one time a week, or more than one time a day everyday).

To assess the relative importance of the Internet, regarding the last two statements above, students were asked to list the top sources for Islamic and non-Islamic issues (family, friends, TV, radio, newspaper, Internet, the Qurʾān, and /or the Sunnah.

The survey was conducted in Indonesian, and the responses translated into English for analysis. The English translated version of the survey is available at this note.[11]

Sample

This survey was administered as a pilot to twenty-nine students, and the results were presented in Solo, Indonesia at the 10th International Symposium on the Contributions of Psychology to Peace (Theme: "Social Justice, Cultural Diversity, and Peacebuilding") in 2007 and at the 9th International Conference on Social Representations in Bali, Indonesia, in 2008. The survey was then expanded by interviewing thirty-two students in the same and or similar schools over the next six months until early 2009. As both the amount of time spent on the Internet and the relative importance of the Internet as a source of Islamic news was similar in both groups of students the two surveys were combined for this research study. The students attended three private *pesantrens*, three Islamic madrasahs and one secular school.

> The Indonesian pesantren is a religious boarding school . . . similar to that of other regions where the Shafi'i school is followed . . . where the tradition is the emphasis on the oral transmission of knowledge, even of written texts. . . . In Indonesia, the term madrasa (spelled as madrasah in Indonesia is reserved for religious schools with classes and a standardized curriculum including mostly general subjects.[12]

These schools were chosen to reflect Indonesian Muslim diversity. Three schools, namely Pesantren As-Salaam, Madrasah Aliyah Negeri

(MAN) 1, and Madrasah Aliyah Negeri (MAN) 2, are regarded by the public as modernist schools; Sekolah Menengah Atas Negeri (SMAN) 2 and Sekolah Menengah Atas (SMA) Batik 1 are regarded as moderate; while Pesantren Ta'mirul Islam and Pesantren Al-Mukmin are regarded as conservative. It is important to note that even in a secular public school such as SMAN 2, the majority of students are Muslims, and attend compulsory Islamic education for at least two hours a week.

After obtaining permission from school principals, students were approached in the schools by two Indonesian college student research assistants, one male and one female, outside the classrooms during breaks, and shortly after school when the students still lingered in the schoolyards.

The students wrote the answers themselves on the school grounds. There were no refusals by either the students in the schools considered as moderate or conservative (even at Pesantren Al-Mukmin where Bashir, the accused spiritual figure for Muslim hard-liners[13] was the headmaster). Similar to our experience in California, Indonesian students were not only eager to fill out the survey, but clearly had memorized the sites they most frequented and knew the reasons they visited them. The students readily identified the sites they used on the Internet and were quite specific in their responses. Although permission was given to conduct "some" interviews, under the terms of our permission, it was not possible to obtain a larger sample of students. Because of this limitation, the interviewers attempted to choose students who, based on their judgment, appeared to be "typical" students of each school. The number of students that could be interviewed, without exceeding the permission to conduct some interviews, was also left to the on-site judgment of the interviewers.

The Websites

The students recommended fifty-five different sites that were classified into four general viewpoints:

1. Inclusive-modernist: Closely adhering to scriptural theology, while acknowledging contemporary contexts, and expressing respect for diversity and differences.

2. Exclusive-conservative: Closely adhering to scriptural theology, expressing intolerance toward diversity and differences, and not expressing a need to revitalize the interpretation of the Qur'ān for modern situations.

3. Moderate: Middle ground, in between or expressing elements of both of the two categories above; these sites display particular

4. Islamic teachings that maintain a balance between religious commitment and tolerance.

5. Search Engines: This category represents a functionality rather than a viewpoint.[14]

The reasons that the students gave for recommending their top three Internet sites fell into the following distinct categories: religious guidance; Islamic/ religious news; Political Islam; Muslim Youth Life Style, and search engine functionality. Examples of student responses are available at this note.[15]

Analytic Design

Our analysis assesses the extent to which pluralism exists among Indonesian students by classifying their general outlooks as modernist, conservative, and moderate. We then compare students' survey responses with respect to the relative importance of the Internet as a source of Islamic and non-Islamic news, the frequency of their Internet use, and the general viewpoint of Internet sites that they access. While descriptive in nature, we attempted to perform statistical tests when sample sizes permitted the use of the Freeman-Halton extension of the Fisher Exact Chi Square test.

Results

Sixty-one students ages sixteen to nineteen from three *pesantrens*, three madrasahs, and one secular school were surveyed in Solo, Central Java. The three *pesantrens* were boarding, and the remaining four schools were non-boarding. Although similar in age, conservatives were predominantly male, while the majority of modernists and moderates were female.

It is important to note that although the schools surveyed were chosen to be representative of either a conservative or a modernist outlook, each school regardless of its "public outlook" had students who expressed a variety of points of view from modernist to conservative. For example, in *pesantrens* 33 percent of students surveyed expressed a modernist outlook, 41 percent a conservative outlook, and 26 percent a moderate outlook. A pluralistic outlook was also seen in the students surveyed in madrasahs (52 percent modernist, 39 percent conservative, and 9 percent moderate) – and in the secular school (27 percent modernist, 64 percent conservative, and 9 percent moderate).

Table 1. Demographics

	Total Students	Modernist	Conservative	Moderate
	61	24	27	10
Sex				
Male	30	33 percent	70 percent	30 percent
Female	31	67 percent	30 percent	70 percent
Age				
16–17	44	71 percent	77 percent	60 percent
18–19	17	29 percent	33 percent	40 percent
School				
Pesantrens (3)	27	38 percent	41 percent	70 percent
Madrasahs (3)	21	50 percent	33 percent	20 percent
Secular (1)	13	13 percent	26 percent	10 percent

The Internet was cited as one of the top two sources for non-Islamic news by only 8 percent of modernists, 13 percent of conservative, and 20 percent of moderates. Regardless of outlooks, the top sources for non-Islamic issues included the TV, (35 percent of modernist, 28 percent of conservative, and 20 percent of moderate students listed TV as a top source); newspapers (modernist 23 percent, conservative 20 percent, and moderate 25 percent), and friends (modernist 21 percent, conservative 13 percent, and moderate 20 percent). Only 15 percent of modernists, 6 percent of conservatives, and 10 percent of moderates listed the Internet as a primary source for information about Islamic issues. The top two sources for Islamic issues differed by student outlooks. Modernists listed the TV (21 percent) and the Qur'ān (19 percent); conservatives listed the Qur'ān (22 percent) and the Sunnah

(15 percent) and the family (15 percent); and moderates listed family (20 percent) and friends (15 percent) as their top two sources for Islamic issues.

Table 2. Percent of Sources Listed as the Top Two Sources of Information about Non-Islamic and Islamic Issues

Modernist (24 students)	Conservative (27 students)	Moderate (10 students)
Non-Islamic Issues		
TV 35 percent	TV..........................28 percent	TV..........................20 percent
Newspapers.............23 percent	Newspapers.............20 percent	Newspapers.............25 percent
Friends.. 21 percent	Friends...................13 percent	Friends...................20 percent
Internet.....................8 percent	*Internet*...................13 percent	*Internet*...................20 percent
Islamic Issues		
Qur'ān.....................19 percent	Qur'ān....................22 percent	Family....................20 percent
TV...........................21 percent	Sunnah...................15 percent	Friends...................15 percent
Internet..................15 percent	Family....................15 percent	Newspaper..............15 percent
	Internet.....................6 percent	*Internet*...................10 percent

Frequency of Internet use was similar for Islamic and non-Islamic issues. Approximately a third of the students used the Internet one or two days a week for information (33 percent for Islamic and 34 percent for non-Islamic). Fewer students used the Internet three to six days a week (18 percent and 16 percent), and only 4 percent used the Internet at least once a day for information about Islamic subjects and 7 percent at least once a day for non-Islamic news.

There were no significant differences in the extent of Internet use by students for non-Islamic news or for Islamic news: 67 percent of conservatives vs 50 percent of modernists, and 30 percent of the moderates used the Internet. However, 37 percent of conservatives vs 8 percent of modernists and 0 percent of moderates used the Internet more than three days a week.

When asked to list three Internet sites that they would recommend to a friend, the sixty-one students gave 128 recommendations that included fifty-five different sites. The most popular sites were Google and Yahoo search engines (26 percent), the exclusively conservative sites www.sabili. co.id/, www.eramuslim.com, http://myquran.org/forum,(19 percent), and the moderate-conservative site /www.acronymgeek.com/MQ/Manajemen_Qolbu (5 percent). Although there were a great variety of sites, the reasons given for choosing these particular sites could be broken down into five general categories:

- search engines (31 percent)
- religious guidance (30 percent)
- local or international Islamic political news (26 percent)
- Muslim youth lifestyle /community Information (7 percent), and
- news and discussion regarding Islamic conflict (6 percent).

As shown in Table 3, the priority given to the top five reasons differed across the modernist, conservative, and moderate students.

There were some striking differences in the viewpoints of the sites recommended by the three student groupings (Table 4). Search engines were recommended by 100 percent of the modernists vs 48 percent of conservatives, and 40 percent of moderates. Exclusive conservative sites were recommended by 74 percent of the conservatives, 30 percent of the moderates, but only 7 percent of the modernists. However, there were no significant differences in the recommendations of moderate conservative or inclusive modernist sites.

Table 3. Comparison of the Top Five Reasons for Students Choosing Their Websites*

Student Reasons**	Modernist	Conservative	Moderate
Easy to Access	35 percent	13 percent	27 percent
Religious Guidance	23 percent	30 percent	27 percent
Islamic Political News	19 percent	11 percent	20 percent
Universal Information	9 percent	2 percent	0 percent
Islamic Conflict	5 percent	9 percent	0 percent
Blog with Friends	2 percent	0 percent	7 percent
Islamic News	0 percent	11 percent	0 percent
Community Information	0 percent	8 percent	7 percent
Sharing Opinions on Islamic Issues	0 percent	2 percent	13 percent
Other	7 percent	0 percent	0 percent

* The above reasons were listed in the top five by one or more of the three student groupings.

** The percentages are the percent of all reasons given by each student grouping.

Table 4. Percent of Students Who Recommend Sites of Differing Viewpoints

Type of Site	Modernist	Conservative	Moderate
	51 sites 2.2 / student	60 sites 2.1 / student	17 sites 1.7 / student
Moderate Conservative Site	46 percent	70 percent	70 percent
Inclusive Modernist Site	21 percent	30 percent	30 percent
Exclusive Conservative Site	71 percent	74 percent	30 percent
Search Engine Site	100 percent	48 percent	40 percent

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine and compare the use of the global Internet by modernist, conservative and moderate Muslim students in Solo, Indonesia. Indonesia was chosen as the site of the study because it is the largest Islamic country that is a pluralistic country, but not an Islamic state.

To this day, Indonesia remains a secular state and the vast majority of its citizens wish it to stay that way – in spite of the fact that more than 80 percent of the population describe themselves as Muslim. Presently, traditional pluralism in Indonesia is threatened by the globalization of conservative, extremist Islamic views.

Indonesia increasingly presents tantalizing possibilities: a democracy in the world's most populous Muslim nation, where more people are continuing to turn to Islam in their private lives – even as they reject political Islam in favor of secular democracy.[16] The *pesantren* system of education also promotes Islam:

> More than three million students are registered in Indonesia's pesantrens free board, and education sometimes lures poverty stricken families

to send their children to Islamic schools. . . . In a typical Islamic
boarding school, students follow a regimented program from dawn to
dusk with tough rules. But in Indonesia, pesantren students often defy
stereotypes.[17]

The Internet was chosen for analysis because it represents a power-
ful portal for global news that is not always pluralistic. It also provides a
"microcosm of the alternative world of information" that is available and
popular among young people. The decision to survey students in Solo was
based on two reasons: the results of previous research that indicates that
Solo is one of major cities identified as a hotspot for Islamic extremism, and
that in Solo. there is the availability of schools of differing viewpoints that
represent a pluralistic Indonesia. All of the schools selected for this study
provide Internet access for their students. New opportunities to access mass
media have significantly transformed the public spheres for researchers.

Our first question was which sites do the students access on the global
Internet and what do these sites reflect about their religious and pluralistic
views. We found that for students in this study, the Internet was consid-
ered one of the two essential sources by only 10 percent of all students
for Islamic news and 13 percent for non-Islamic news. Furthermore, the
sixty-one students surveyed listed fifty-five sites, indicating a great deal
of exploration and/ or perhaps reflecting pluralism. We conclude that the
Internet at the time of the study was not a major source of information, and
the multiple sites listed suggest an early period of exploration rather than an
established popularity of specific sites with extremist views.

Our second question was what we could learn about student's attitudes
by their use of the Internet. The reasons for the students choosing the sites
they went for information on current Islamic news and non-Islamic news
was analyzed along with the our understanding from other sources of their
outlook in order to try and understand how Muslim youth were thinking
and feeling about current global events and their social representation on
the Internet. The Internet provides microcosms from which young people
explore their own identity as well as others.

With respect to terrorism, Marc Sageman believes that the Internet is
also a place where people could develop a sense of collective social iden-
tity. So although the Internet may socialize a potential mujāhid to the ideol-
ogy of global Salafi Jihādis, it is still uncertain whether he or she is willing
to make the sacrifices for the jihād and can be securely counted on. He or
she still needs to undergo an intense period of face-to-face interaction to
check one's commitment and devotion to the cause and generate bonds that
will prevent him from betraying the cause.[18]

From this perspective, the patterns of Internet use give us a possibility of understanding the character of the information that is informing and reinforcing the student's belief systems and global understanding. We found that in general the three types of students tended to favor similar sites. Modernists indicated their top sources for Islamic issues were the Qur'ān and TV, whereas conservatives were most influenced by the Qur'ān, Sunnah, and family. Modernists and conservatives gave their top reasons for choosing Internet sites for religious guidance and for Islamic political/religious news and the use of search engines for instant up to date news. Modernists used the Internet mainly for search engines and religious guidance, Conservatives for religious guidance and Islamic political/ religious news, while moderate for Islamic political/r eligious news and search engines.

Our limited findings give us some insight into the student's social representation of their views as they see them reflected on the sites they choose on the Internet. However, the design of the study did not provide information on the extent to which the Internet reinforced or shaped these views.

Perhaps the most important goal of the study was to test the assertion that *pesantrens* and madrasahs are the "breeding ground of fundamentalism." We attended a major meeting on international political psychology where presenters frequently spoke of the 4,300 websites "serving terrorists and their supporters."[19] However there were no comments on either young people's use of the Internet or the use of sites on the Internet that were expressions of peaceful Islamic beliefs. This deepened our interest in finding out more about the young people in Muslim countries, "who said no to fundamentalism" and who espoused a peaceful interpretation of jihād.

Stereotypical beliefs about Muslims were being supported all over the world, and in the West in particular, where September eleven has become a symbol of the attitude of all Muslims worldwide.

While few people have questioned the students about their beliefs, a further stereotype prevalent in America since September eleven that *pesantrens* and madrasahs are the "breeding grounds for fundamentalism". There has been much speculation about the role of Indonesian *pesantren*, but not from questioning the students in the schools. Central Java, the site of our survey, was particularly vulnerable to verbal attacks because Abu Bakar Bashir, alleged to be Jemadh Islaiah's spiritual leader, was a director of one of the local *pesantrens*, Al Mukmin Ngruki:

> The October 2002 bombings in Bali, Indonesia, in which more thatn two hundred people died , raised concerns in Indonesia and Western policy circles about the possible involvement of some of Indonesia's modern Islamic schools (madrasas) and traditionalist boarding schools

(*pesantrens*) in promoting religious radicalism. Police investigations traced Bali bombers back to a small pesantren in Lamongan, East Java. Some of the staff and and students at this school , had studied with Abu Bakar Baasyir, the spiritual head of the al-Mukmin pesantren in Ngruki, Central Java, and a man identified by intelligence analysts as the *amir* of the Jemaah Islamiyah (JI), an extremist group alleged to have carried out bombing campaigns in Indonesia and the Philippines.[20]

Our study provides no support for these stereotypes in the students surveyed in *pesantrens*, madrasahs, or secular schools. We found that the sites the students chose and the reasons they gave for going to these sites matched their outlooks. Whether from boarding *pesantren* or non-boarding schools, the students had a variety of outlooks: modernist, conservative, and moderate. The students choose inclusive-modernist, exclusive-conservative, and moderate websites, as well as search engines. Even students from a school whose headmaster was at one time considered mind-master of the Bali bombers showed a variety of outlooks: in Pesantren Al-Mukmin, 30 percent students were modernists, 30 percent conservatives, and 40 percent moderate.

Also, unlike responses to our survey questions in Pakistan, we can report that in Solo, Indonesia there were only rare references to jihād or anti-American sentiment.

Limitations

The small number of students who were surveyed is a potential limitation of this study. Although we had permission to survey "some" students, within the boundaries of this permission it was not possible to expand our sample. We were also able to demonstrate that regardless of the nature of their school, students represented modernist, conservative, and moderate points of view. Furthermore, even though the use of the Internet for global information was not extensive, the character of the sites they choose were consistent with their outlook. All of the schools gave students access to the Internet. However, in some of the *pesantrens* and madrasahs, there is a "control room" where a teacher was assigned to make sure that students were not using the Internet for pornography or other forbidden subjects defined by the school and the Qur'ān. For this reason, in future studies it will be important to ask where each student used the Internet – school, Internet cafe, or home computer. This would help define more accurately the range of sites available to students. Despite this limitation, students visited numerous sites on the Internet, showing a wide range interest in diverse information.

Because our study was limited to one city, it is not possible to generalize our findings to all of Indonesia. As a first step toward a larger scale

Indonesian study, Solo was chosen because the city was felt to embody the diversity and dynamics of Indonesia's Muslim communities in a miniature scale. The seven schools chosen as study sites represent the levels of those dynamics. For example, of the *pesantrens* chosen, Al-Mukmin at the time of study represented a conservative Islamic *pesantren*, because its popular leader subscribed to a hardline interpretation of jihād and was associated with the Bali bombings. The second *pesantren*, As-Salaam, was classified as modern, and it was considered as one of the best *pesantrens* in Indonesia because of its strength in information technology – and in conveying tolerance messages, and being open to contemporary issues. The other schools chosen for this study also represented a wide spectrum of views. Although the schools were carefully selected to reflect diversity, in selecting students, the researchers in Solo selected students who appeared to be typical students.

A further limitation of this study is that we did not ask the students to directly state if their "outlook" was modernist, conservative, or moderate. We choose to categorize students on the basis of their responses because we felt that a direct question could be received in a negative way. We believe that the reasons they gave for the sites they choose for Islamic news and current news gave enough information for us to determine their outlook. The validity of this outlook was in part confirmed in that it was congruent with the position of the Internet sites – sites whose mission was articulated by three Indonesian investigators.

The strategy of this research shows promise, as an effective way to track changes in student's outlook over time, however the study would have to be repeated in order to test this.

Conclusion

There have been little explorations about where Muslim students go for information on the Internet that informs their thinking and knowledge of current world events. Where students go for information on the Internet and why they choose the particular sites that they would recommend to their friends may give us some insight into why and the extent to which they make decisions about their association with religious fundamentalist or non-fundamentalist groups.

This research gave us an opportunity to widen the lens of our globalized world – to understand the individuality of the different Muslim countries, and to move away from a diminished view we might have of one of the richest and most important group of people on a earth. Our study

represents an opportunity to get to know a very small part of the worldview of Muslim youth, who will be the next generation of people representing their culture and religion. We have recorded the sites on Internet the students have chosen as the sources of this knowledge, because it is the most widely used form of communication in the world today, surpassing face-to-face communication among youth using the telephone or cell phone. Social networking through the Internet has changed our world and changed Indonesia. Improved cross-cultural communication will come about not only with more sensitive contacts with people from diverse countries, but also with an understanding of how the media create and distribute stereotypical images of foreigners.[21]

In conclusion, in the small sample of Solo students that we surveyed, their choice of Internet sites and the reasons that they gave demonstrates that pluralistic thinking exists in the *pesantrens*, madrasahs and secular high schools.

Notes

1. Kakepoto Hamadullah, "Globalization and Implications for the Social System,"   http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/english/previous_pdf/ Hamadullah%20Kakepoto.pdf.

2. Charles Horton Cooley, "Looking Glass Self—the Meaning of 'I,'" in *Charles Horton Cooley On Self and Social Organization*, ed. Hans-Joachim Schubert (Chicago: University of Chicago. 1902), 164

3. Our discussion of stereotypes is based on Patricia G. Devine , "Stereotypes and Prejudice: Their Automatic and Controlled Components" *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 56, no. 1 (1989): 5–18

4. Peter Bergen and Swati Pandey, "The Madrassa Myth," *The New York Times*, May 14, 2005, www.archives2005.ghazali.net/html/ the_madrassa_myth.html.

5. We were very influenced by the work of Gary Bundt's book on the Internet, especially the chapters "Decoding the Sacred: Islamic Source Code in Ibid.," in *iMuslims Rewiring the House of Islam* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina, 2009), 77–129 and "The Cutting Edge. The Militaristic Jihād in Cyberspace" in *iMuslims Rewiring the House of Islam*, 177–241.

6. Azra Azyumadi "The Roots of Conflict and Hostility," in *Religion and Culture in Asia-Pacific: Violence or Healing?*, ed. Joseph A. Camilleri (Melbourne, Australia: Vista Publication, 2001), 85–90 and Robert W .Hefner, "Muslim Democrats and Islamist Violence, in *Post-Soeharto Indonesia, Remaking Muslim Politics: Pluralism,*

Contestation, Democratization, ed. R. W. Hefner, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press).

7. Omid Safi, *Progressive Muslims: On Justice, Gender, and Pluralism* (Oxford, Oneworld Publications, 2003).

8. Greg Fealy and Sally White, ed., "Expressing Islam: Religious Life and Politics in Indonesia," (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2008), 15–39.

9. Joel C. Kuipers (November, 1992)."The Society and Its Environment, Islam, *Indonesia*," November 1992. *Library of Congress Country Studies*, http://lcweb2.loc.gov/frd/cs/idtoc.html#id0052 ORT.htm.

10. Contact Benina Gould at: bgould@berkeley.edu.

11. Muslim Youth Internet Survey Questions

1. Please list the names (and web address if you have it) of the top three Internet sites, blogs, and/or weblogs that you would recommend to a friend to find out about recent Islamic news. (Viewpoints)

2. Explain in one or two sentences, the reason you would recommend those 3 sites above. (Reasons)

Survey Question: Outlook

3. What kind of information that you will get from those sites? Listed below are a few types of news and information. Please comment on the ones you think match your answers.

a. The need for Muslims to interact peacefully with others in plural and diverse societies…..

b. The need for Muslims to renew interpretations of Islamic teachings and knowledge in order to be relevant with the current age developments…...

c. The need for Muslims to be careful to enemies who want   to ruin or weaken Islam, both from inside or outside of Muslim communities……

d. The need for Muslims to stand up to opposing abuse against Islam, such as insult of Danish cartoon to the Prophet, U.S. war on Iraq, accusation of Islam as terrorists, etc.…….

e. Internet use for other information:

4. Internet Use for Islamic Issues: days/ wk.

a. none

b. one or two days

c. three to six days

d. every day one time a day

e. everyday more than one time a day

   5. Internet Use for Non-Islamic Issues: days/ wk.

     a. none

     b. one or two days

     c. three to six days

     d. every day one time a day

     e. every day more than one time a day

   6. Top Sources for Islamic Issues:

     a. family

     b. friends

     c. TV

     d. radio

     e. newspaper

     f. Internet

     g. Qur'ān

     h. Sunnah

   7. Top Sources for Non-Islamic Issues:

     a. family

     b. friends

     c. TV

     d. radio

     e. newspaper

     f. Internet

     g. Qur'ān

     h. Sunnah

12. Martin van Bruinessen, "Traditionalist and Islamist Pesantrens in Contemporary Indonesia," in *The Madrasa in Asia Political Activism and Transnational Linkages*, eds., Farish A. Noor, Yoginder Sikand, and Martin van Bruinessen (Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Amsterdam University Press, 2008), 220–22

13. International Crisis Group, Indonesian Briefing Jakarta/Brussels, August 8, 2002, "AL-QAEDA in Southeast Asia: The case of the 'Ngruki Network' in Indonesia" (Jakarta/Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2002).

14. Categories of Internet Sites by Viewpoints

   1.   Inclusive-Modernists: Loosely adhere to scriptural theology, and acknowledging contemporary contexts, modern learning, and modern concepts; see Islam and modernity as compatible;

2.   and posses' tolerant and inclusive attitudes toward diversity and differences.

3.   Exclusive-Conservative: Closely adhere to scriptural orthodox theology and do not express need to revitalize the Qur'ān for modern day learning and modern concepts: see Islam and modernity, including democracy, as incompatible; possesses intolerant and exclusive attitudes toward diversity and differences; strong opinions on political Islam.

4.   Moderate-Conservative: Middle ground, in between the two categories above; display particular Islamic teachings that maintain a balance between religious commitment and tolerance.

5.   Search Engines: Instant up to date news, blogs, and online discussion

15. Reasons for Choosing Web Sites

   A. Religious Guidance: Islam, Qur'ān

   1. manajemenqolbu.com: "Increase our religious knowledge" or "We can get a lot of religious understandings from it."

   2. As-sunnah.com: "It has a detail information regarding Islam."

   3. Padmapress.com: I place "to find out about new Islamic books . . . including the ones written by Agus Mustofa that *insya Allah* will increase our Islamic faith."

   4. Mta-online.com "This site contains Islamic knowledge/wisdom that would intensify our *aqidah*."

   B. Islamic Political/Religious News, Views Local/ International

   1. islamuda.com: "The news and information contained are regularly updated."

   2. sabili.com: "The news is up to date and accurate."

   3. islib.com: "It has a critical view of understanding Islamic matters."

   4. kotasantri.com: "Not only for browsing, this site can also be used for discussions about Islamic problems."

   C. Islamic Conflict

   1. sabili.com: "To find out about the development of Christianization in Indonesia."

   2. khilafah.com: "It contains information regarding the assault of the West toward Islam and nationalist understanding."

   3. infopalestina.com: "This site contains news that follows the progress of Palestine."

      4. islamonoine.com: "It's an Islamic site that contains information about various events happening around our brothers in Iraq, Afghanistan, etc."

      5. arrahman.com: "information regarding Islamic conflict in Middle East, especially Palestine."

    D. Muslim Youth Life Style/Community Information

    assalam.com: "information about Islamic boarding schools" and "it contains information regarding my own *pesantren*."

    E. Search Engines/Blog/Online Discussions

      1. yahoo.com: "Iit is easy to remember." "It's easy and quick to search for news from this site."

      2. msn.com: "It provides complete information about anything."

      3. google.com: "It is easy to access," and "it contains everything you'd want to look for."

16. "Indonesian President is Projected to Win Election," *New York Times*, July 8, 2009, www.nytimes.com/2009/07/09/world/asia/09indo.html.

17. Sugita Katyal and Adhityani Arga : "Muslim Schools in Spotlight," August 8, 2008, www.nzherald.co.nz/war/news/article.cfm?c_id=359&objectid=10456385.

18. Marc Sageman. *Leaderless Jihād: Terror Networks in the Twenty-first Century*. (Phila, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 163.

19. Gabriel Weimann, *Terror on the Internet: The New Arena, The New Challenges* (Washington, DC; United States Institute of Peace, 2006), 15.

20. Azra Azyumardi, Dina Afrianty, and Robert W. Hefner, "Pesantren and Madrasa: Muslim Schools and National Ideals in Indonesia," in *Schooling Islam: The Culture and Politics of Modern Muslim Education*, eds. Robert Hefner and Muhammad Qasim Zaman (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 172

21. Hassan Agha Olfat, "Islamic Fundamentalism and Its Image in the Western Media," in *Islam and the West in the Mass Media*, ed. Kai Hafez (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press. Inc, 2000), 219–20.