THE VIRTUAL DA'WA LABORATORY FOR ISLAMIC MODERATISM:
Multi-Case of *Walisongo TV* and *MBS FM*

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Abstract: This paper aims to analyze the virtual da'wa laboratory of Walisongo TV (WTV) and MBS FM owned by the Faculty of Da'wa and Communication, UIN Walisongo Semarang in nurturing Islamic moderatism during Ramadan 2020 amid the Covid-19 Pandemic. This research is a qualitative study using the New Media and Religion approach from Cambpbell (2010) who stated that there are two important objects regarding online religion, namely the technical aspects of new media, and the non-technical aspects related to three things, namely the community, authority, and textual media. The study concludes that first, technically WTV and MBS uses new media such as WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, Jitsi.meet, and Zoom meeting for all activities, starting from the internal crew's coordination; communication between crews and da'i in discussing da'wa contents; videos taking process; production activities, to promotions and publications. Second, non-technically WTV and MBS FM provide the products in the form of recordings and LIVE (live broadcast). The products represent the Islamic moderate community behind the media authorized by Nadlatul Ulama (NU) da'wa ideology. Hence, media text broadcasted is framed by the jargon "Islam Rahmatan li al-'Alamin" based on the classical Islamic texts (Kitab Kuning). This suggests that community, authority, and textual media have to be taken into account in forming a virtual moderate da'wa laboratory.

Keywords: Islamic moderation; virtual da'wa laboratory; WTV; MBS FM.

Abstrak: Makalah ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis laboratorium dakwah virtual *Walisongo TV (WTV)* dan *MBS FM* milik Fakultas Dakwah dan Komunikasi UIN Walisongo Semarang dalam menumbuhkan moderatisme Islam selama Ramadhan 2020 di tengah Pandemi Covid-19. Penelitian ini merupakan studi kualitatif dengan pendekatan *New Media and Religion* dari Cambpbell (2010) yang menyatakan bahwa terdapat dua obyek penting mengenai agama online, yaitu aspek teknis *new media,* dan aspek non teknis yang berkaitan dengan tiga hal yaitu komunitas, otoritas, dan media tekstual. Hasil penelitian menyimpulkan, bahwa *pertama,* secara teknis *WTV* dan *MBS* menggunakan media baru seperti *WhatsApp, Instagram, YouTube, Jitsi.meet,* dan *Zoom meeting* untuk semua kegiatan, mulai dari koordinasi internal kru; komunikasi antara kru dan *da'i* dalam membahas konten dakwah; proses pengambilan video; kegiatan produksi, hingga promosi dan publikasi. *Kedua,* secara non-teknis *WTV* dan *MBS FM* menyediakan produk berupa rekaman dan *LIVE* (siaran langsung). Produk tersebut mewakili komunitas Islam moderat yang berada di belakang media yang diotorisasi oleh ideologi da'wa Nadlatul Ulama (NU). Karenanya, teks media yang disiarkan dibingkai dengan jargon *"Islam Rahmatan lil' Alamin"* berdasarkan teks-teks Islam klasik (Kitab Kuning). Hal ini menunjukkan bahwa komunitas, otoritas, dan media tekstual harus diperhitungkan dalam membentuk laboratorium virtual dakwah moderat.

Kata kunci: Moderasi Islam; laboratorium dakwah virtual; *WTV; MBS FM.*

A. Introduction

The existence of a laboratory is an important part of the process of developing science,[1] especially da'wa science which is still considered a new branch of science.[2] Da'wa laboratory is required to produce a contributive product to the scientific development and Islamic da'wa practices, especially in the current world context where Islamic da'wa is faced with Islamic practices that often display an unfriendly face of Islam. The da'wa laboratory is expected to play a role in this context.

The Faculty of Da'wa and Communication of UIN Walisongo Semarang has a da'wa laboratory which is abbreviated as "LABDA." The LABDA is a laboratory institution within the Dawah Faculty structure, as an embodiment of the existing departments in the context of implementing the *Tri Darma (three functions)* of higher education. This institution which is an integral part of the Da'wa Faculty is located at Campus III UIN Walisongo Jl. Boja Ngaliyan Km. 2 Semarang. This laboratory has carried out its activities through some division; among the most important divisions are the broadcasting and publishing division in which *Walisongo TV and MBS FM* Radio are part of it.[3]

Since the presence of the Covid-19, where all activities are required to be carried out from home, *Walisongo TV and MBS* have explored new avenue for laboratory development, which is called "virtual laboratory." Even though it is limited by the makeshift equipment, this effort has produced its own characteristics for laboratory performance. During the month of Ramadan 2020, *Walisongo TV and MBS* activities are carried out from home. Several TV and Radio products are produced through virtual-online work. Furthermore, online Islamic content during the month of Ramadan is oriented as a form of strengthening moderate Islam.

This research attempts to look at how the application of a virtual laboratory to nurture Islamic moderation is carried out by *Walisongo TV and MBS FM Radio*. For this reason, several previous studies on da'wa laboratories can be raised to see comparisons.

Masy Ari Ulin Nuha, et al researched the Da'wa Laboratory entitled, "Designing Online Television Stations to Extend the Broadcast Range of Walisongo TV."[4] They designed a web-based television station to broadcast *WalisongoTV.* There are three stages to be taken, namely: designing the *WalisongoTV* website; designing the live streaming video; and testing the live streaming video. In its design, the television station created utilizes the web blog facility provided by Blogspot; uses Ustream as a streaming server and VLC Player as a video player as well as adjusting *the WalisongoTV* screen display. This research has succeeded in creating a *WalisongoTV* web page, and broadcasting *WalisongoTV* through live streaming video facilities.

Besides, Agus Riyadi researched the Da'wa Laboratory as well with the title "Design of Da'wa Laboratory Development: A Case Study of UIN Walisongo Semarang."[5] This study concluded that the Da'wa laboratory at the Faculty of Da'wa and Communication of UIN Walisongo Semarang was developed based on departments included the Islamic Community Development (PMI)), Islamic Communication and Broadcasting Laboratory (KPI), Da'wa Management Laboratory (MD), Islamic Guidance and Counseling Laboratory (BPI). In addition, all of these are developed in the framework of implementing the *tridharma* of higher education

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[1]Huda Mohammad Babateen, "The Role of Virtual Laboratories in Science Education," *5th International Conference on Distance Learning and Education*, IPCSIT, Vol. 12 (2011), IACSIT Press, Singapore.

[2]Andi Faisal Bakti, "Membangun Keilmuan Komunikasi Berbasis Dakwah: Sumbangsih untuk Islamic Communication Journal." Paper presented at the Online Journal Seminar and Call for Papers of the Faculty of Da'wa and Communication UIN Walisongo Semarang, 2020.

[3]http://fakdakom.walisongo.ac.id/?page_id=112.

[4]Masy Ari Ulinuha, Akmal Irfan Maulana, Sarah Wijayanti, Amelia Rahmi, and Kholifatul Ardliyan, "Perancangan Stasiun Televisi Daring untuk Memperluas Jangkauan Siar Walisongo TV," *Walisongo Journal of Information Technology,* Vol. 1 No. 1 (2019): 35-50 DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.21580/wjit.2019.1.1.3991.

[5]Agus Riyadi, "Desain Pengembangan Laboratorium Dakwah: Studi Kasus UIN Walisongo Semarang," *Jurnal Komunikasi Islam,* Volume 09, Nomor 01, (Juni 2019). http://jki.uinsby.ac.id/index.php/jki/article/view/171/122.

and improving skills. Meanwhile, the development phase is carried out in four stages, namely the initiation and development of the quality management system; the optimization of academic support capabilities, the intensification and extension of research services, and the external capacity building.

In relation to that, Nurhidayat Muhammad Said wrote the article "The existence of the Da'wa Laboratory at PTKI."[6] He concluded, the Da'wa Laboratory should conduct da'wa research activities, so the information owned and developed in the training and practicum of da'wa is based on accurate and realistic information. Meanwhile, M. Jamil Yusuf in his research, "Laboratory of the BKI Study Program: A Study of the Foundation and Direction of Development,"[7] emphasized that the revitalization of the BKI-FDK laboratory serves to enable: (a) the development of laboratories based on the principles of the Islamic teaching from al-Qur'an and hadith; (b) development of research and community service functions; (c) the development of psychological assessment practicum activities to reveal problems and developmental tasks; and (d) able to perform psychological testing services within the limits of authority available to counseling lecturers/counselors such as intelligence tests, personality tests, aptitude tests, interest tests, and creativity tests. For this purpose, the existence of a laboratory needs to be supported by some inventories, including instruments for solving problems, and instruments for development tasks. In addition, the laboratory also needs to be equipped with audio-visual media, such as television, camcorder, video player, VCD/DVD player, and standard sound system.

Still, in the context of the Islamic religious laboratory, there is Achmad Dudin's research entitled "A Case Study of the Islamic Religious Education Laboratory at SMAN 3 Bandung."[8] He concluded that the PAI laboratory of SMAN 3 Bandung had reached a standard level, and had adequate utilization in the management of the PAI laboratory. This can be understood by the existence of a positive assessment from students and support for the management factors of the laboratory. Furthermore, this study recommends the need to maintain and improve the level of standards, utilization, and supporting factors for the management of PAI laboratory, so that its function is effective and maximized.

In his research with the title "Designing Virtual Science Labs for the Islamic Academy of Delaware (IAD),"[9] Nada Saeed AlZahrani said that the IAD teacher interviews indicating that the teachers are well-prepared for and supportive of, the implementation of virtual labs to improve the science education curriculum. The investigator believes that with the support of the literature and the readiness of the IAD administration and teachers, a recommendation to implement virtual labs into the curriculum can be made. Samir A. Elsagheer Mohamed, Allam Shehata Hassanin, Mohamed Taher Ben Othman wrote "Virtual Learning System (Miqra'ah) for Quran Recitations for Sighted and Blind Students."[10] Through this application, they concluded that scientists can supervise the registered students. Students (from different ages) can register from anywhere in the world given that they have an Internet connection. Students can interact with the scientist in real-time so that they can help them memorize *(Tahfeez),* guide them for

[6]Nurhidayat Muhammad Said. "Eksistensi Laboratorium Dakwah di PTKI," *Jurnal Tabligh* (Desember 2016), 47-62.

[7]M. Jamil Yusuf. "Laboratorium Program Studi BKI: Suatu Kajian Tentang Landasan dan Arah Pengembangan," *Al-Taujih: Bimbingan dan Konseling Islam* 2, no. 1 (2019), https://jurnal.ar-raniry.ac.id/index.php/Taujih/article/view/7207.

[8]Achmad Dudin, "Studi Kasus Laboratorium Pendidikan Agama Islam di SMAN 3 Bandung," *EDUKASI: Jurnal Penelitian Pendidikan Agama dan Keagamaan* 16, no. 1 (2018): 63-79.

[9]Nada Saeed AlZahrani, "Designing Virtual Science Labs for the Islamic Academy of Delaware (IAD)." University of Delaware, (2015). http://udspace.udel.edu/handle/19716/17477.

[10]Mohamed, S.A. E., et al. "Virtual Learning System (Miqra'ah) for Quran Recitations for Sighted and Blind Students," *Journal of Software Engineering and Applications* 7 (2014): 195-205. http://dx.doi.org/10.4236/jsea.2014.74021.https://www.researchgate.net/publication/266082899_Virtual_Learning_System_Miqra'ah_for_Quran_Recitations_for_Sighted_and_Blind_Students [accessed Oct 31 2020].

error correction, and give them lectures or lessons through virtual learning rooms. Administrators prepare a daily schedule for each room. Students can register to any of these rooms by pronouncing its name. Each student is allocated a portion of the time where he/she can interact directly by voice with the scientist. Other students can listen to the current student's recitation and the error corrections, guidance, or lessons from the scientists.

Finally, Mukhibat and Muhammad Ghafar wrote the article "Virtual Pesantren: New Trend of Islamic Education Model in Indonesia." The findings showed that visual *pesantren* has appeared due to the availability of information technology through the internet that encourages *kyai* (priests) and santri (students) to conduct face to face interaction indirectly. Furthermore, the method applied by *kyai* in the teaching process is by reviewing the classical manuscripts of earlier ulama' (Islamic scholars) and santri comprehended the materials through *bandongan,* lecturing and question and answer through cybernetic applications such as Website, Youtube, Whatshapp and Telegram.[11]

From several studies on da'wa laboratories above, there has not been found a study that specifically discusses virtual da'wa laboratories for the development of Islamic moderation. Therefore, this research is expected to find a new model for laboratory development in the Faculty of Da'wa and Communication.

B. Theoretical Review: Online Communication Based on the Internet: A Basis of Virtual Laboratory

New media refers to what is known as the Internet. The Internet has interesting characteristics that are not shared by other mass media. Grossman et al, as quoted by Hopkins,[12] write about the Internet and formulate the building structure of the Internet, (1) the structure of the Internet building is decentralized (does not have a central authority); it is a network of several existing networks that are designed without a gatekeeper; (2) the Internet is global; provides direct access to information from around the world; (3) the Internet is "abundant" in nature; it can accommodate an unlimited number of virtual communicators; (4) Internet is very economical; because individuals can send messages to hundreds or even thousands of people via e-mail at low cost, can communicate via Web pages for free; (5) The Internet is "user-controlled"; controlled according to user wishes. This characteristic applies not only technically but also in the context of the meaning of the message received. This means that users have full authority on how to interpret messages on the Internet.

Meanwhile, Mahmoud and Auter[13] designed an online communication model called the Interactivity Model of CMC (Computer-Mediated Communication). There are four important elements in computer-based communication interactions, namely (1) users act as senders and receivers, or in other words, netizens act as communicants as well as communicators; (2) medium, namely the need for the existence of media or channels to facilitate the interaction process between users; (3) messages in the form of exchange of messages between users through the media used; (4) communication arrangements, namely a flexible communication environment and time according to the wishes of the participants, considering that online communication is real-time.

CMC (Computer-Mediated Communication) has several forms, namely: *first,* electronic mail or e-mail using the Internet or a computer network to send messages to someone who is

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[11]Mukhibat and Muhammad Ghafar, "Virtual Pesantren: New Trend of Islamic Education Model in Indonesia," *International Journal of Innovation* 5, no. 2: Special Edition (2019).

[12]Bruce R. Hopkins. *The Nonprofits' Guide to Internet Communication Law* (United States of America: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2012).

[13]A. E. Mahmoud and P. J. Auter. "The Interactive Nature of Computer-Mediated Communication". *American Communication Journal* 11, no. 4 (Winter 2009). http://acjournal.org/journal/2009/Winter/Articles/110401%2   0Interactive_Nature.pdf tanggal 23 November 2017.

part of a network or the Internet. An email is a form of asynchronous communication. *Second,* the Bulletin board system (BBS) is a text-based asynchronous communication facility that allows you to spread information to many people. BBS discussions on the websites usually raise certain topics of concern to the members. Not only on the website, but this BBS-like form of discussion can also use a listserv (email-based discussion group). Discussions, whether web-based or email-based only allow one person to asynchronously post messages to some people who are also accessing the discussion forum. *Third,* instant messaging (IM) or commonly known as chatting is a form of text-based synchronous communication that allows users to connect two computers to the Internet and entrust them through their computers. *Fourth*, audio-video conferencing using the Internet network to connect two or more computers that have multimedia capabilities in live, interactive conversations using audio-visual communication channels. By using a microphone and camera, you can have audio-visual conversations over the Internet at a low cost. *Fifth,* Multiuser environments (MUDs) are virtual worlds based on websites where participants can interact with each other and engage in a role-playing fantasy.[14]

Concerning religion, according to Lorne L. Dawson, there are many things can be done by the Internet for religious purposes,[15] including:

1. Spread the message around the world. With the homepage facility provided by the Internet, we can share information about our beliefs and in an instant, the greatest information will be spread across the globe. Everyone in any part of the world will easily be able to access it.

2. Building a new community. The Internet provides us with the facility to be able to keep in touch even though we are separated from the distance and time. This is very beneficial for religious observers to join together and form a new virtual world community that is not even possible in the real world.

3. Breaking the boundaries of space and time. The greatness of the Internet that is able to destroy the boundaries of time and space is very beneficial for religious practitioners in opening up religious discourse as widely as possible through inter-faith dialogue. Anyone from anywhere in the world, regardless of time and space constraints, can participate in the dialogue that is held in this virtual world.

4. Carrying out rituals in the virtual world of the Internet turns out to be not just a vehicle studded with numbers, letters and pictures that can be read and seen. With technological advances such as 3-D animation, the Internet can become a medium for procuring religious rituals in cyberspace.

5. Developing a more open understanding of religion. With the abundance of religious information coming from various understandings, seekers of the nature of religion can certainly compare the various information to provide and develop a more open religious awareness.

The era of internet openness above requires a precise concept of how to integrate the internet with religion because as Branston and Stafford stated that new media messages tend not to be articulated. The new media is not like the old media which because in one direction is easier to control.[16] Therefore, the concept of Campbell can explain how da'wa in new media can be done. He assessed that religion (da'wa) in the new media is related to two important objects, namely, *first*, the technical aspects of new media, and *second*, the non-technical aspects containing three things, namely the community, religious authority, and media texts. Users in new media will do something related to religion both as senders and receivers based on the community and religious authority they refer to. When referring to the character of new media, those involved in the da'wa process are users who are free and open to express their religious opinions and thoughts.[17] Campbell explains that online religion occurs because of the

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[14]Branston, Gill dan Roy Stafford, *The Media Student's Book* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

[15]AggerGupta, Dorothy E., "Asynchronous Formats," *Encyclopedia of Distributed Learning* (SAGE Publications, 2010).

[16]Lorne L. Dawson, "Doing Religion in Cyberspace: The Promise and the Perils," *The Council of Societies for the Study of Religion Bulletin* 30, No. 1 (2001), 3-9.

[17]Heidi A. Campbell. *When Religion Meets New Media* (London: Routledge, 2010).

expressions of users who have different community backgrounds.[18] Likewise, Christopher Helland confirms that online religious activities have an impact on communities, religious authority and identity.[19] This also means that online activity cannot be separated from the community, authority, and religious identity. I see that religious identity in Helland is the same as the media text in Campbell.

C. Methods

This paper uses a qualitative method based on field studies with a new media approach. This approach is part of the communication scientific approach used to read the virtual laboratory phenomenon which is the object of study of this paper. This approach refers to Campbell's theory[20] of three things related to religion and new media, namely community, authority, and media texts.

The data in this study are obtained from interviews, observation, and documentation. Interviews were conducted with the leaders of the FDK, the board of *Walisongo TV and MBS FM.* Meanwhile, the observation in question is an online observation which can be called a *nethnographic* action[21] in which we are directly involved in online laboratory activities. Meanwhile, the documentation data is obtained from reading the *Walisongo TV and MBS* documents, both in the form of text and non-text documentation in the form of audio and video products.[22]

After the data is obtained, we will perform an analysis with several steps, namely, first, we map the original data from *Walisongo TV and MBS.* Second, sorting and separating secondary data that are not directly related to *Walisongo TV and MBS.* Third and finally, the data is arranged in the form of narratives that reflect the arguments built in this paper.

D. Results and Discussion

1. Da'wa Laboratory (LABDA) of the Faculty of Da'wa and Communication, UIN Walisongo Semarang

The Da'wa Laboratory (Classical) of the Da'wa and Communication Faculty of IAIN Walisongo Semarang was established in the early 1990s, through various seminars, discussions, and workshops on da'wa laboratories. Then just starting in 1996 a magnificent 2 (two) floor building was built for the Da'wa Laboratory, and was the first Da'wa Laboratory between IAIN and STAIN in Indonesia, as well as the first faculty laboratory in IAIN-UIN Walisongo.[23]

Since its establishment in 1996 until now, the Da'wa Laboratory of the Faculty of Da'wa and Communication of IAIN Walisongo Semarang has continued to develop, starting from making special rooms and also completing the equipment inside, such as the Hall (The Hall is a multipurpose room with a capacity of 250 people, which equipped with folding chairs, a set of Art Pow sound system which is very adequate, and air-conditioned), Administration Room (including Administration Room equipped with Desk and Chair for Management, Cupboard, filing cabinet, Computer Unit, portable LCD and several other administrative types of equipment), Room Radio Broadcast, Radio Broadcast Production Room, Counseling Guidance

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[18]Heidi A. Campbell. *Digital Religion. Understanding Religious Practice in New Media Worlds* (London and New York: Routledge, 2013).

[19]Christopher Helland. *Virtual Religion: A Case Study of Virtual Tibet* (Oxford University Press, 2018).

[20]Heidi A. Campbell. *When Religion Meets New Media* (London: Routledge, 2010).

[21]Robert V. Kozinets. *Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online* (London: Sage Publications Inc., 2010).

[22]The documented Audios dand Videos of WTV dan MBS Podcast can be accessed online through https://www.youtube.com/channel /UCpsYTXMcFNRYJhNjzfw_aBw dan https://www.youtube.com/channe l/UCPWsNVWtaCOLi47iFvW5ezQ

[23]http://fakdakom.walisongo.ac.id/?page_id=112.

Room (LBKI),[24] TV and Film Broadcast Production Room, Printing Room (Publishing), Research and Development Room, and Traditional Media Room, and Islamic Institutional Room. Recently a tourism laboratory and LBQT have been developed. All of these functions to facilitate students of the Faculty of Da'wa and Communication to have better academic quality and be professional in their fields.

The vision of the Da'wa Laboratory is to become a partner of Study Programs/Departments within the Faculty of Da'wa and communication to realize the formation of Muslim scholars who fear Allah and have intellectualism and professionalism in the field of Islamic da'wa and communication both theoretically and practically who are ready to compete in society by promoting the understanding of unity of Sciences.[25]

The mission of the Da'wa Laboratory is to provide services for testing the theory and practice of da'wa in the context of carrying out the *Tri Darma* of Higher Education so that it can produce graduates who are experts in the field of da'wa and communication who have community concern. While the strategy of the Laboratory of the Faculty of Da'wa and Communication is Education and Training, Research and Collaboration with related parties.[26]

2. *Walisongo TV and MBS FM*

The Walisongo TV and MBS FM da'wa laboratory is part of the Da'wa Laboratory (LABDA) of the Faculty of Da'wa and Communication of UIN Walisongo Semarang, which is under the coordination of the Broadcasting and Publishing division inherent with the Islamic Communication and Broadcasting Department (KPI). Although under the same broadcasting and publishing coordinator, *Walisongo TV and MBS* FM are both separate in terms of management. *Walisongo TV and MBS FM* become scientific laboratories for communication, media, and journalism in relation to Islamic da'wa. Through these two media, it was carried out to test the theories of communication and da'wa that had developed, and also to develop new theories and models in the field of Islamic communication and broadcasting.

Currently, the world of Islamic broadcasting is eagerly awaited by the public in producing healthy and peaceful products. In the midst of rampant violence and acts of extremism in the name of religion, the position of Islamic broadcasting has become very crucial and important. Herein lies the relevance of religion and advances in communication technology.[27] Before the Covid-19 Pandemic, *Walisongo TV and MBS FM* were active as the media in general. These two media are open during campus working hours. The broadcast schedule adjusts to the lecture time of students who are members of the two media. MBS FM is located on the 1st floor of the da'wa building with an editorial meeting room as well as a production room, and a broadcast studio room. *Walisongo TV* has a studio on the 2nd floor of the LABDA building with one production room and one broadcast studio.[28]

3. The Pandemic, Ramadan 2020, and Virtual Laboratory for Moderate Islam

Since the presence of the Covid-19 Pandemic, Walisongo TV and MBS FM have transformed from offline studio activities to online studies. All willingness activities are carried out online. Technical works, such as crew meetings, crew communication with resource persons, audio-video recording, editing and production, promotion and publication, are all done online. Likewise, coordination for non-technical matters is also carried out online.[29]

The Covid-19 pandemic period encouraged WTV and MBS to continue working even from home, but their work during Ramadhan 2020 which coincided with the Pandemic was oriented towards strengthening moderate Islam for students and the general public. The leaders of the

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[24]http://fakdakom.walisongo.ac.id/?page_id=112.
[25]http://fakdakom.walisongo.ac.id/?page_id=112.
[26]http://fakdakom.walisongo.ac.id/?page_id=112.
[27]K. Parna. *Believing in the Net* (Leiden University Press, 2010).
[28]Online Interview with heads of WTV and MBS, 2020; Observation, 2020.
[29]Online Interview with heads of WTV and MBS, 2020.

Faculty of Da'wa and Communication (FDK) together with the WTV and MBS teams formed a program that would later become the forerunner of the LABDA virtual laboratory, namely the Gema Ramadhan 2020 program. This program contains several important Islamic da'wa events oriented to several things, namely 1) enliven Ramadan with useful Islamic studies; 2) coloring Ramadan with religious spirit content amid the dangers of Covid-19; 3) developing new media in the context of the Da'wa and Communication Faculty Laboratory work; 4) producing moderate Islamic content based on *Islam Rahmatan lil Alamin* in the midst of rampant extremism in the name of religion. In connection with this, Dean Ilyas Supena in his several remarks said:

> The *Gema Ramadhan* activity is oriented to ground and strengthen the moderation of Islam based on the *Rahmatan lil alamin* principle, which has been one of the struggles of UIN Walisongo so far. In addition, this activity is also intended for students to develop creativity and innovation through new media in the context of new conditions, namely the Covid-19 era.[30]

What Supena conveyed can be seen from the content of the *Gema Ramadhan 2020* program, which includes:

a. *Great Spirit,* a program that contains general religious advice on the spirit of life, the spirit of worship, and the spirit of creativity during the Pandemic. This program airs every morning and evening. Morning is broadcast by WTV and in the evening by MBS FM.

b. *Kajian Kitab Kuning,* which is broadcast every day at 8.30-10.00 WIB. This program studies Arabic-language Islamic boarding schools containing studies of Islamic Law (fiqh), Tafsir al-Quran, Hadith, Moral Guide to Life, and so on.

c. *Ramadhan Kita.* This program is broadcast every day at a flexible time. The program is devoted to accommodating student creativity in any field, which is then framed with Ramadan nuances.

d. *Khatmil Quran and Tahlilan.* This program is broadcast once a week attended by all leaders and lecturers of FDK.

e. *Nuzul Quran.* This activity is only carried out once during Ramadan accompanied by prayer together.

f. *Halal bi Halal.* This activity is carried out at the end of Ramadan to be precise as the closing of all Ramadan agendas at FDK.[31]

All of the above programs, both technical and non-technical aspects, are conducted online without having to come to an offline studio. The above program then became the basis for the virtual laboratory at LABDA UIN Walisongo to continue to be formulated after Ramadan had passed. The virtual activity above made the leaders of FDK and Labda in early October hold an International Webinar with the theme: "Virtual Da'wa Laboratory: Opportunities, Challenges, and Advantages."[32] Also, holding a Laboratory Development Workshop at the end of October where one of the focuses is the development of a Virtual Laboratory.[33]

4. Technical Work of the Virtual Da'wa Laboratory of Walisongo TV and MBS

This section will describe the form of a virtual laboratory from a technical aspect. The technical side referred to is all forms of laboratory activities supporting the implementation and involving all internal crews of WTV and MBS until a product is aired. In another section of this article, the non-technical aspects will also be discussed. As stated above, that a technical and non-technical aspect of new media is referred to Campbell's concept.

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[30]Interview via WhatsApp with Dean of FDK. See http://fakdakom.walisongo.ac.id/?p=2373.

[31]Term of Reference of *Gema Ramadhan* program of WTV dan MBS 2020.

[32]https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dcEDk9My1Ss.

[33]Interview with Head of Da'wa Laboratory of FDK UIN Walisongo, Yuli Nurhasanah, 2020.

a. Editorial Meeting, Crews Internal Communication, and Coordination with Resource Persons *(Da'is)*

This activity is carried out from home. The media used to coordinate are mobile phones and WhatsApp groups. Coordination meetings are usually initiated by the WTV and MBS coordinator and sometimes by the WTV and MBS heads themselves. Meetings are usually held before processing. The coordinator asks each of the heads of WTV and MBS about the readiness of the editors and crews. Then, each of the two coordinates with the team and crew. At certain times for the sake of bigger events, management meetings are held via the Jitsi.meet and Zoom applications.

Coordination and communication with resource persons for determining the topic of da'wa are also carried out online. The *source (da'i)* is contacted via WA to ask for his willingness to fill out the *kajian* and record audio and video. The audio-video requirements, duration, and size required are notified to the speakers prior to the recording process. In production science, this part is included in pre-production.[34]

b. Audio and Image-Video Taking through Mobile

Due to conditions that did not allow face to face between the crew and the performers/speakers during the Pandemic, *Walisongo TV and MBS* FM asked them to record audio and video through their respective cellphones. The results are sent to the WTV and MBS crews to be discussed, processed, and produced and then broadcast on the official YouTube and Instagram (IG) channels belonging to WTV and MBS, and then the YouTube and IG links are shared across the Whatsapp group.[35] This condition is indeed sad on the one hand, because the speakers' own cellphones do not always produce the best results according to the provisions of WTV and MBS. Sometimes the audio and video recorded to WTV and MBS are not captured at the specified size. Sometimes the noise accompanying audio and video is also a problem in itself. Therefore, for long-term needs, virtual activities can be carried out more professionally with adequate equipment with support for communication and broadcasting activities.[36]

Technical equipment support for the development of virtual laboratories should be a concern for faculty leaders in the future. WTV and MBS have started this virtual step with all their limitations but full of innovation and creativity. The products produced by WTV and MBS can still be enjoyed by both viewers and listeners. Both recorded products and live broadcast (LIVE) can be presented by following the standard media product in general.

c. Product Processing (Production)

Production activities or product processing both recorded and LIVE, are carried out online. Recordings from the resource persons are sent to the WTV and MBS crews to be compiled into a good product and worthy of being shown and heard. Production activities are carried out by the WTV and MBS crews who are in charge of the production department. They split the production time into two parts. For products that will be broadcast in the morning, the production process is carried out at night, while for products that will be broadcast in the afternoon, the production process is carried out at noon, and of course, this time division is not binding at all, because production work can be done at any time by the crew.[37] The editing and rendering process is carried out by still referring to production principles in general. WTV products appear in the video-visual form, while MBS products appear in the audio-auditive form.

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[34]Online interview, 2020.

[35]Online interview with WTV and MBS crews, 2020.

[36]M. Jamil Yusuf, "Laboratorium Program Studi BKI: Suatu Kajian tentang Landasan dan Arah Pengembangan," *Al-Taujih: Bimbingan dan Konseling Islam* 2, no. 1 (2019), https://jurnal.ar-raniry.ac.id/index.php/Taujih/article/view/7207.

[37]Online Interview, 2020.

d. Product Publication and Promotion

The finished products are published and promoted through WTV and MBS 'social media, WhatsApp, YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook. In addition, publications and promotions are also assisted by personal social media accounts of each student and lecturer in the Faculty of Da'wa and Communication.[38] Publications and promotions are related to the target of the audience. WTV and MBS online products target lecturers, students, and the general public. Therefore, the content of the preaching is relaxed, packaged in language that is easy to understand, and avoids *khilafiyah* problems that can lead to conflict. Publication and promotion are carried out online from time to time every day. It's just that the biggest obstacle is that not all students have sufficient internet quota, so accessing video or audio online is a problem in itself. This is certainly homework for the laboratory to develop its marketing strategy in the future.

5. WTV and MBS FM Non-Technical Work: The Framing of Moderate Islam

The non-technical part of the virtual laboratory work is very important part especially with regard to orientation and the content displayed. There are three important things related to this aspect, namely community, authority, and media texts (Campbell, 2010). These three things will color any media broadcast. Internet users always focus on these three things in every online activity they do. What people call "online religion" or "religion online" is a form of implementation of the three things stated above.[39] The virtual da'wa laboratory is aimed at building an online space for religion and further shaping online religious culture. Of course, what is very inherent with all of this is that various da'wa services, training, testing, development, or studies, etc., are carried out online.

a. Community

The community becomes the basis for a new media activity. *WTV and MBS* online da'wa activities are largely determined by the communities dominating them. Content providers in online media rarely stand-alone in relation to the content they create. Usually, they are people who belong to or admirers of certain communities. So the content produced usually represents a community.[40] From here actually, the sociology of community is being virtualized. As known, the Faculty of Da'wa and Communication of UIN Semarang is controlled by the moderate Islamic community. The moderate Islamic groups in this faculty are represented by the NU and Muhammadiyah organizations, but the NU community appears as a community that is more dominant than its rivals. This was indicated by the leaders of the FDK who indeed grew up culturally from and within the NU tradition. This community became the basis for da'wa activities carried out by the WTV and MBS da'wa laboratories during Ramadan 2020 which coincided with Covid-19.[41]

So, the community that is behind the virtual activities of WTV and MBS is not only the da'wa community in a small scope, but on the other hand, it carries the mission of the mainstream moderate Islamic community organizations in Indonesia, namely NU and Muhammadiyah. If traced further, the study of the *Great Spirit* of *Gema Ramadhan 2020* is full of lecturers with NU and Muhammadiyah backgrounds even though the portion of NU is much larger.

b. Authority

There is a religious authority in a community. This authority is related to certain ideologies and currents on which the movement is based, including the central figures it relies on. The moderate Islamic authority behind WTV and MBS is NU itself. The da'wa authority is held by the

[38]Gary Bunt, "Status Update: Islamic Dimensions of Faith in CyberspaceIslamic Dimensions of Faith in Cyberspace," in *Hashtag Islam* (October 2018). 10.5149/northcarolina/9781469643168.003.0004.

[39]Brenda E Brasher. *Give Me That Online Religion* (San Francisco: Jassey Bass Inc, 2001).

[40]Gary Bunt, "Virtually Islamic: Computer-Mediated Communication and Cyber-Islamic Environments, University of Wales Press," (2000). ISBN: 9780708316115.

[41]Online Observation, 2020.

leaders of the FDK and certain lecturers who are selected and determined by the leaders of the FDK themselves. They are those who are considered competent in the fields of da'wa and religion, especially capable of disseminating moderate Islamic content. The ideology of da'wa carried out is based on the authorization of *Kyai* pinned to selected lecturers in FDK. This can be seen from the title of *Kiyai Haji (KH)* in front of each of their names to indicate a certain religious authority.[42] Therefore, it is natural that young lecturers have not been given a place concerning this authority. Besides, *Kiyai* is a title that is synonymous with the world of *Pesantren*. The authorization of the media with the direction of *the Pesantren* has certainly led to the moderation of the Islamic version of the Islamic boarding school itself.

However, the tendency of religious authorities in WTV and MBS dominated by those who are referred to as representatives of *Kiyai NU* in the university does not always have a good effect on the development of Islamic da'wa in media. The problem that then arises is the occurrence of social fragmentation in the society in interacting with the content displayed. But as an effort to build religious moderation through the media, WTV and MBS have succeeded in displaying the power of the message authority of every product produced. This is because moderate Islamic authority (Islamic moderation) in the context of WTV and MBS is held by experts in their respective fields. The products produced come from the very careful consideration of the religious authorities. This can be an important contribution to the formation of a moderate Islamic media. This moderate content based on the authority of *Ulama* can counter the extreme Islamic message spread by irresponsible people who causes a boomerang for Islam itself.

c. Media Text: Textual and Visual Media

Media texts are an integral part of the existence of preaching through new media. The authority behind the media becomes the background for a media text to be built. Media text, on the other hand, can be referred to as auditive-visual media as another version of the text. Media texts are a means of framing and constructing an Islamic ideology. Nurdin Rusli saw the need to use the media to strengthen Islamic narratives.[43] Media texts at least describe two things, namely 1) regarding orientation, tendencies, and of course, the ideology behind them, 2) framing a particular phenomenon or event occurring in society.

In the context of WTV dan MBS, the media text is built based on certain considerations by the religious authorities in the Faculty of Da'wa and Communication, UIN Semarang. The media texts of Walisongo TV appear in audio-visual form. Likewise, with MBS FM which broadcast audio-voice version of the da'wa content. WTV and MBS FM form an integrated text work, in which visual text and auditive text are displayed alternately in the morning and evening. The text of the da'wa media broadcast on WTV and MBS includes all Islamic texts that appeared in these media during Ramadan 2020. This can be seen from several shows on WTV and MBS. As previously mentioned, during Ramadhan 2020, WTV and MBS broadcast several activities, namely *Great Spirit*, *Kajian Kitab Kuning, Ramadan Kita, Khataman al-Qur'an, Nuzul al-Qur'an,* and *Halal bi Halal* at the end of Ramadan. All texts constructed through these programs depict Islamic moderation. This is in line with Wahyu Akmaliyah who views that reactive action against the reality of extremist Islam needs to be done through the media.[44]

First, the Great Spirit program. Great Spirit is an Islamic program showing a short video about 5-7 minutes containing encouragement for the spirit of life and religious spirit for the audience. That's why the *Great Spirit* is shown every morning and evening. From the content side, it can be seen that the *Great Spirit* contains light solitude material and is oriented to the peace and tranquility of life. It encourages a religious spirit in general and does not touch on

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[42]Online Observation, 2020.

[43]Nurdin Rusli, "Spiritualising New Media: The Use of Social Media for Da'wa Purposes within Indonesian Muslim Scholars," *Jurnal Komunikasi Islam* 3, no. 1 (Juni 2013).

[44]Wahyudi Akmaliah, "The Demise of Moderate Islam: New Media, Contestation, and Reclaiming Religious Authorities," *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies* 10, no. 1 (2020). https://ijims.iainsalatiga.ac.id/index.php/ijims/article/view/3227.

issues of *Halal* and *Haram* which are sometimes misused by some people to judge a particular group.

Second, Kajian Kitab Kuning. The program is a media text broadcasted LIVE every day throughout the month of Ramadan 2020 through the *Jitsi.meet and Zoom* applications connected to Walisongo TV's YouTube and Instagram Channels and MBS's Podcast Channel (YouTube and Instragam).[45] The speakers for the *Kajian Kitab Kuning* were leaders in the FDK and several Ustadh/Kiyai who were given the mandate to complete this program.[46] This *Kajian* is framed in such a way as to all sources (speakers) coming from the Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) circles. The Ustadhs are Dr. Ilyas Supena (Dean of the Faculty of Da'wa and Communication); Drs. Mudhofi M.Ag (Deputy Dean I of FDK); Dr. Safrodin, M.Ag (Deputy Dean II of FDK); Dr. Yuyun Affandi, Lc., M.A (Head of the KPI Masters Masters Program); Drs. Kasmuri, M.Ag (Lecturer in Da'wa Management FDK); and Kholisin, M.Sos (FDK Contract Lecturer). It seems that not all the leaders of the FDK from the head of the study program became the sources for the *Kitab Kuning*, because not all of them were allowed to become sources or because they could not become resource persons. On the other hand, it also needs to be highlighted that those who fill in this material are those who are considered to have affiliations with the *Pesantren* world or *Pesantren* alumni. *Pesantren* is a large community with the authority of the *Kyai.*

The books read in the *Kajian Kitab Kuning* program describe the moderation of Islam. The books read were *Riyadh al-Shalihin, I'anat al-Thalibin*, *Safwat al-Tafasir*, *Ihya 'Ulum al-Dina*, *Tafsir of Shaykh Wahbah al-Zuhaili.*[47] These books are the books of *Ahl Sunnah wa al-Jama'ah* which is often read by the *Pondok Pesantren* community.[48] The things discussed in this book include discussion of fiqh/law, Qur'anic interpretation, life guidance, and guidelines for adolescents. It seems that the *Kajian Kitab Kuning* through the media can be said to be an effort to strengthen religious moderation in universities and society in general. Azra assessed that NU as a moderate Islamic group is influenced by the Kitab Kuning taught at the Islamic Boarding School (Pondok Pesantren) guiding students to get used to differences or *khilafiyah* so that it was not easy to blame other groups who were different.[49]

Third, Ramadhan Kita. This program is intended to accommodate student creativity from both HMJ (Department Students Association) and UKM (Student Activity Unit). Students can create any content according to their talents such as cultural dance, art, music, traditional celebrations, and daily habits during Covid-19, student studies, and so on as long as they have a positive spirit. The logic of this program is to show that Islamic media does not have to be always oriented in the form of rigid and study-oriented Islamic preaching, but can be paused with other positive impressions. Therefore, this program is generally broadcast during the hours of the day and/or night and is not bound by time. It is displayed flexibly. In this context, *Walisongo TV and MBS* virtually raised and built a narrative regarding student creativity and innovation during the Pandemic and the month of Ramadan. The message to be conveyed is that the Covid-19 pandemic does not stop people from being creative; especially this creativity is associated with messages of Ramadan amid the outbreak. Its contribution to religious

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[45]Online interview with Bayu and Rino, 2020.

[46]Mukhibat and Muhammad Ghafar menulis artikel "Virtual Pesantren: New Trend of Islamic Education Model in Indonesia," *International Journal of Innovation,* Volume 5, Issue 2, Special Edition (2019) kesimpulannya adalah the method applied by kyai in the teaching process is by reviewing the classical manuscripts of earlier ulama' (Islamic scholars).

[47]Online Observation, 2020.

[48]Syamsun Ni'am. "Pesantren: the miniature of moderate Islam in Indonesia." *Indonesian Journal of Islam and Muslim Societies,* Vol 5, No 1 (2015). https://ijims.iainsalatiga.ac.id/index.php/ijims/article/view/259.

[49]Azyumardi Azra, Dina Afrianty, and Robert W. Hefner, "Pesantren and Madrasa: Muslim Schools And National Ideals in Indonesia," (2010), https://www .researchgate. net /publication /291849002_Pesantren_and_madrasa_Muslim _schools_and_national_ideals_in_Indonesia# full TextFi leContent. Compare with Mohammad Hasan, "Wasatiyyah Islam in The Pesantren Islamic Education Tradition Framework," *Karsa: Journal of Social and Islamic Culture* 26, no. 2 (December 2018): 177-194.

moderation is that religion can be combined with art and creativity keeping religion from appearing as something scary.

Fourth, Khatmil Qur'an and Tahlilan. This program is broadcast once a week, to be precise every Friday night Saturday. The resource persons who filled this program were selected from certain *Kyais* appointed by the FDK leadership. Among those who had filled this program was K.H. Drs. Ahmad Anas, M.Ag and KH. Drs. Mudhofi M.Ag. KH. Ahmad Anas is a lecturer in the Department of Da'wa Management (MD), and KH. Mudofi is the Vice Dean of the FDK. Both were given the title of *Kyai* to show their scientific authority. *Khatmil Quran* is done by reading the entire juz al-Qur'an individually by all the lecturers of the FDK from their respective homes and then reported by checking the names in the WA Group. *Khatmil Quran* accompanied by recitation of *Tahlilan* and prayer together online. This weekly celebration depicts the NU tradition broadcasted on Walisongo TV and MBS where one of the endings is the awakening of Islamic moderation as often echoed by NU.

Fifth, Nuzul Quran. This program is implemented once during Ramadan. Just like the Khatmil Quran, this program is filled with religious lectures, recitation of tahlilan, and prayer together. This online religious appearance with the NU tradition portrays a moderate Islamic orientation. This is in line with Campbell's opinion on "religion online." "Religion online" refers to religious experiences conducted online. FDK, through WTV and MBS, tries to fill the virtual space with spiritual values amidst the challenges of globalization and the proliferation of destructive religious content. In other terms, virtual space spiritualization[50] is a way of countering the extremization of cyberspace in the name of religion.

Sixth, Halal bi Halal. This program is, of course, carried out at the end of Ramadan. In effect, this program combines the online and offline studios of WTV and MBS. This activity captures the online relationship between the FDK academic community of UIN Walisongo. This program is also filled with religious lectures and closed with prayer together. Through this program, WTV and MBS online construct a new reality about human life, that friendship is never interrupted even though through cyberspace. Cyberspace can be oriented as a space for togetherness in building peace, not conflict and hostility. This is in line with the findings of Baraybar-Fernández, Antonio, Sandro Arrufat-Martín, and Rainer Rubira-García[51] where togetherness in religion can be done through new media.

E. Conclusion

The virtual da'wa laboratory can be a means of strengthening Islamic moderation amid rampant extremism in the name of religion. The virtual laboratory in the context of the Faculty of Da'wa and Communication of UIN Walisongo Semarang forms a religious online space oriented towards strengthening and developing da'wa science and providing useful da'wa content. A virtual laboratory is a necessity because the freedom of new media provides an opportunity for everyone to express themselves. On the one hand, this freedom sometimes creates counterproductive Islamic da'wa with a friendly and merciful Islamic character. So the virtual laboratory can balance the openness inherent in this new world by presenting preaching based on religious moderation. Of course, in this effort, the existence of community, authority, and media texts greatly determines the orientation of Islamic content. Apart from that, these three non-technical matters must also be supported by an adequate set of tools and technical work.

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[50]Nurdin Rusli, "Spiritualising New Media: The Use of Social Media for Da'wa Purposes within Indonesian Muslim Scholars," *Jurnal Komunikasi Islam* 3, no. 1 (Juni 2013). See also Heidi Campbell, "Spiritualizing the Internet: Uncovering Discourse and Narratives of Religious Internet Use," *Online-Heidelberg Journal of Religions on the Internet* 1, no. 1 (2005). Compare with Asep Muhammad Iqbal, "Spiritualizing the internet, Internet dan Gerakan Salafi di Indonesia," Global House Publications, 2010.

[51]Baraybar-Fernández, Antonio, Sandro Arrufat-Martín, and Rainer Rubira-García, "Religion and Social Media: Communication Strategies by the Spanish Episcopal Conference," *Religions* 11, no. 5 (2020), 239; https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11050239.

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