

Globalization, Islam Nusantara, and contemporary character empowerment

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this research is to analyze how Islam Nusantara may contribute to contemporary character empowerment in today's globalization era.

Research methodology: This research uses textual studies in order to assert the interaction between Islam Nusantara and contemporary character empowerment.

Results: The results of this study assess local values as reflected in Islam Nusantara could enrich human and cultural tolerance as the main ideas of character empowerment.

Limitations: This study explains how globalization, Islam Nusantara, and contemporary character empowerment may work together today in Indonesia. Any other aspect such as different times, places, and themes should not be concerned.

Contribution: Analyses in this study may enrich social and humanitarian understanding about local Islamic culture in Indonesia, horizons of globalization, and perspectives of contemporary character empowerment.

Keywords: *Character empowerment, Globalization, Industrial revolution 4.0, Islam Nusantara, Technological advancement*

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1. Introduction

The current globalization is marked by two important phenomena, namely the rapid progress of technology, especially information technology, and the spread of capitalism ideology that has spread to almost all over the world. Information technology makes it easy for people to get information not only in the country but also to get information from all corners of the world. This convenience is not only in terms of the variety of information but also in terms of the speed at which information is delivered to every human being. Meanwhile, capitalism makes humans inclined more and more into material measures in seeing things. Even Zygmunt Bauman stated that currently, the object that is attractive to humans is wealth, so that wealth is considered a guarantee of today's lifestyle (Bauman, 1998: 204). Therefore, the ease of obtaining information can affect the lifestyle of humans wherever they are, including in Indonesia.

The measurement of the material used in the era of globalization makes people more inclined to look for something that is material. Traders are more concerned with profit, officials are more concerned with the advantages of strategic positions, and even students are more concerned with the scores written in the assessment report book. Thus, it is appropriate for the Governor of the Special Region of Yogyakarta (DIY), namely Sultan Hamengkubuwono X, to state that the main problems faced by Indonesian people are not only problems of ignorance and poverty, but also a moral crisis which is so concerning (tekno.kompas.com). It is also supported by the Indonesian Ulama Council (MUI) who declared a "National Movement for the Improvement of National Morals" in Jakarta in 2014 (republika.co.id). Moreover, some of these things indicate that globalization provides

opportunities in the form of extensive information and technological advances that facilitate human life, but it displaces or even erodes values that are considered non-material, namely morals.

In the current era of the 4.0 industrial revolution, progress is the main principle in everything. *Internet of things* which is characterized by the interconnectedness of devices is one of the characteristics of industry 4.0 (Marr, 2018). The massive advancement of technology and information is driven by more equal distribution of internet access to become a kind of new knowledge. Knowledge can be accessed from various places and times with minimal differences in distance and time. Interestingly, this kind of technological openness does not always have positive impacts. Access to everything is expanding while understanding of many things has not increased. As a result, many people simply consume information and share it without the need to think whether it is true and in accordance with related facts and conditions (Hidayah, 2015:106). This condition certainly also influences the development of Islam. Islam often must also be progress-based by highlighting its scientific abilities. Islamic orthodoxy has actually strengthened by relying on the material packaging rather than the substance of thought. Anything related to Islam is in demand without rethinking the truth. The period of globalization shapes Islam to be seen as a certainty rather than a value to measure and to assess the importance of information (Bilfagih, 2016:54).

Amid this phenomenon, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) in its 33rd Congress of 2015 in Jombang declared Islam Nusantara. Previously, KH. Abdurrahman Wahid had explained a combination of Islam and culture which was stated as *pribumisasi Islam* or Indigenous Islam. Normative Islam tends to be more permanent, while culture that is man-made can easily develop and change according to progress of times (Wahid, 2015). So that the fusion of Islam with Nusantara culture gave birth to a permanent but timeless Islam.

The values of Islam Nusantara are considered to transcend the boundaries of time and space. In other words, Nusantara Islam is in accordance with the principles of *al-Islām shālih li kulli zamān wa makān*. Therefore, Islam Nusantara can be considered in accordance with the current developments, namely globalization. So simply put, Islam Nusantara should be able to solve the problems caused by globalization that Indonesian people are worrying about.

Islam Nusantara is basically how Islam relates to local culture in Indonesia. This religion is understood universally and locally at the same time, which is suitable for all communities and can still coexist with local culture (Luthfi, 2016: 2). In general, Islam itself is understood in two aspects; a literal form which is fundamentalism and a substantive form in mysticism. Islam Nusantara exists between the literal and the substantive. Rather than being too ontological, Nusantara Islam emerged axiologically in the nature of an ethical religion by interacting with society. The discourse of Islam Nusantara itself focuses on the public space by understanding how religious orthodoxy can be accepted and adapted to the flexibility of local culture (Fauzi, 2019:76; Akhiyat, 2017:250). With a cultural approach, Islam Nusantara is not on the vertical side but the horizontal aspect of society. Thus, Islam Nusantara can be understood in the context of the development of progress today.

It is important to study the application of Islam Nusantara as a character empowering strategy in facing the threats and challenges of globalization in society. So that material values do not erode immaterial values seen in the moral crisis that was feared. In simple terms, applying Islam Nusantara values in the current era means emphasizing the nobility of morals in Islam. Of course, it is not the only religion that is taught but also how religion can coexist in harmony with science in the frame of religious reasoning (Hamsyah, 2015:306). This is because globalization has impacted the negative aspects of technological progress which has led to the current character crisis. Information technology becomes value-free without the need to be linked to any cultural context (Hidayah, 2015:108). Empowering the Islam Nusantara-based character means how to respond to the progress of globalization without being completely dragged into the uncertainty of information and the certainty of Islamic ideology.

Islam Nusantara can be a study for the development of character empowering today by not forgetting the essence of Islam and the surrounding cultural contexts. The question is, how to explain Islam Nusantara as a character empowering strategy in the current era of globalization? This paper is divided into five sections to answer the question. First, the introduction that explains the background of this paper. In this section, concerns about globalization and its impact on identity and religion are raised. Second, an explanation of globalization and its consequences for human religious life. This

section describes the relationship between globalization, the existence of religion, and how they are closely related to the existence of Islam Nusantara. Third, an explanation of Islam Nusantara as the relationship between character and Islam in Indonesia. Understanding the context of Islam in Indonesia is to explain the reflections of various discourses in Islam Nusantara itself. Fourth, the embodiment of Islam Nusantara values to empower the character both from epistemological and ontological aspects. Islam Nusantara then is not only a practice but also such distinction to empower character in both formal and informal sides. Fifth, the conclusions generated from the analysis of the findings that have been collected.

2. Literature review

Globalization is often echoed by both academics and practitioners. Literally, globalization is a process of globalizing; a process of shrinking the world, which at first is already small then becomes smaller, just like humans all over the world are playing in one field at the same time in globalization ([Friedman, 2007:10](#)). Distance is no longer an obstacle. Globalization brings something far to be closer and closer even more. An example is the Hajj. Mecca as the only city used for Hajj is a distant city for Muslims in Indonesia. When Indonesian Muslims depart for the Hajj pilgrimage, they travel for months to reach the holy land of Mecca. Now, the distance from Indonesia to Mecca remains the same, but the travel time used is much shorter. This is what makes globalization a phenomenon that is considered to be able to narrow the world. In addition, only those who have done the Hajj know what the Ka'bah looks like. Now, the help of information technology that begins with the invention of television makes it easier for Muslims around the world who have never done the Hajj to see how the Ka'bah looks like.

The era of globalization in the advancement of information and technology has an impact not only on empirical things but also on the social and cultural side of human beings. The massive movement of information nowadays forms humans into entities that increasingly consume information with the ease of technology that is spread in various ways. Easy access to information encourages the object to be an important capital today. The exchange of ideas is increasingly occurring because of the ease in terms of economy, movement of people, to freedom in the progress of science.

Globalization also encourages identity to become more fluid in the face of current progress. The identity of humans is no longer monolithic but continues to develop according to the information they understand every time. As a result, humans are inevitably dragged into the flow of globalization without any other way outside of modernity. The more information is spread, it does not increase the ability to understand human beings socially and individually. Confusion then becomes a common aspect today due to the unpredictable flow of information ([Bilfagih, 2016:55](#)). In fact, then humans look for a definite, singularity, and even certainty in the era of globalization to strengthen the roots of their understandings so that they are not too dragged into this big current.

Interestingly, the fluidity offered by globalization encourages humans to become more homogeneous rather than heterogeneous conditions. People are increasingly being pushed to comply with trends in globalization from the latest gadgets, to the latest information, until to better business opportunities. Humans are increasingly reanimated to be modern or being left behind if they do not follow the flow. Even though globalization moves in all directions, it does not bring equality in all directions at once. A culture that reflects localities will then be abandoned if they no longer want to adjust to the bigger picture of modernity.

This also has an impact on religion, which is inevitably dragged into this infinite flow. Religions that do not reflect modernity are considered incompatible with the globalization viewpoint. If religion does not want to change according to modern progress, it will be abandoned as only a normative thought which may not make sense. The barriers of information have faded and it encourages people to be more critical of their religion. This critical attitude is not viewed in terms of philosophy but on the side of information consumption only. Information is not used to broaden views but is intended to justify certain understandings ([Fauzi, 2019:79](#)). The progress of information actually increases consumption which tends to be instant rather than thinking about what individuals experience every day. The result is the increasing prevalence of narrow understanding of religion which actually backfires on religion itself.

As a crucial current, every human being may give different meanings to globalization. On the one hand, humans are increasingly global, but on the other hand, humans are more localized too ([Bauman, 1998: 10](#)). Thus, the two big choices in globalization are to fully accept or reject globalization. Or in other words, a person can think of himself as a citizen of the world. This presumption means that a citizen's identity is no longer necessary for such a person. Or one might say, this kind of person is deprived of his or her national roots. Meanwhile, the second option is in globalization, someone can be more localized. In other words, someone who is skeptical of globalization thinks globalization is a threat. By doing so, this person will stay away from the immense currents of globalization which are so hard to avoid. Exclusivity is the reference. Thus, persons get together to strengthen their cultural roots and do not want to accept global currents that stay outside the group.

The terms used by Bauman to describe these two major groups are tourists and vagabonds ([Bauman, 1998](#)). A tourist is described by Bauman as a person who enters the flow of globalization. Globalization that facilitates mobilization is best utilized by tourists. So that tourists move to one place or another because the place is interesting. In addition, tourists want freedom for themselves when traveling. Meanwhile, the vagabond is more likely to stay. Vagabond is a group of people who are withdrawing from globalization. They do not move much, even if they move, they do that because of being forced. Therefore, vagabonds are more exclusive than tourists. Therefore, every time the vagabond moves, the vagabond always looks foreign and never remains the same ([Burns and Pearson, 2013:108](#)). What can be concluded from these two types of people is that tourists want freedom, meaning that the direction of the tourist's destination is adjusted to their wishes, while vagabonds are a rigid group, the values brought by them are tried to be forced on other people in other areas as well so that vagabonds are always visible as foreign.

If the *tourists* direct his or her goal based on his or her freedom of choice, the *vagabonds* do not know where to go because of compulsion, then *pilgrim* is the only group that knows where they are going. Pilgrim takes a trip with a clear purpose to form an identity ([Dreher, 2016](#)). Pilgrim was not mentioned before because basically, humans in their journey before the era of globalization were pilgrims. For someone religious, of course, a pilgrim trip is appropriate. More specifically, the principle of *tawassuth* or 'being in the middle' can be illustrated in a pilgrim journey. Pilgrims use information technology to find identity. However, instead of being exclusive like Vagabond, Pilgrim's search for identity is tailored to local identities. In other words, pilgrim draws from a global framework to build local sanctity (Vasquez and Marquardt in [Dessi, 2018:478](#)). Besides, pilgrims are not like tourists who are more secular in nature and unlike vagabonds which are more fundamentalist.

Therefore, the pilgrim is a journey that is not swallowed up into globalization but also does not fight against the strong currents of it. This Pilgrim in Indonesia can then be described in Islam Nusantara. Broadly speaking, Nusantara Islam is a blend of universal Islamic ideology with local values within archipelagoes of Indonesia. Islam Nusantara is a form of religious glocalization in Indonesia. Therefore, Islam Nusantara also reflects character for Islam in Indonesia.

3. Research methodology

This research asserts a qualitative method to show how the interaction between globalization, Islam Nusantara, and contemporary character empowerment may happen. Textual texts from primary sources are cited to enrich the understanding and explanation of those interactions. This paper describes Nusantara Islam as a strategy to understand the flexibility of the relationship between technological advances, Islamic culture, and the reality of Indonesian locality. Advances in technology and information are inevitable, but of course, this must be accompanied by further understanding of culture, especially religious culture. Religion can become an intermediary for the development of the cultural character so that understanding progress can also be understood as the implementation of locality in the current era of globalization ([Syauqi, 2015:331](#)).

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Character, Islam Nusantara, and education

The world that becomes more instant today has shaped views of religion, especially Islam, to be two main poles of discourse. First, religion is seen as secular, that is, only in private matters. Even if it

is public, for example in government policy, the existence of religious thought does not answer everything. Religion is actually growing when it is resolved with other aspects according to modern views in the era of globalization. Islam must also accommodate the progress of science. Everything incompatible with progress must be sidelined for the sake of more modern humanity. From an economic standpoint, religion is a promising business base because humans can still become Muslims by adjusting existing products according to their needs. Things that are initially complementary can become a major thing with the support of religious capital. In terms of education, science can be juxtaposed with religion, namely remaining religious but also smart in science. Education costs are legalized to be expensive as long as religion is taught in line with the needs of science as well.

Second, the view that Islam is completely integrated with all aspects of human life. This side is more fundamentalist in saying that religion is the basis of human action and obligatory to be applied to all aspects of life. No creature is not created by God, so every aspect of a creature's life must be juxtaposed with His absolute law. This view seems very radical but it is also born from the impact of globalization ([Akhiyat, 2017:251-252](#)). Humans need certainty in the era of messy information today and this religious viewpoint is here to answer this uncertainty. The certainty that is sought makes religion an ideological value that requires it to become the main standpoint of human life. Some people become radicalized by using violence as a way of enforcing this religious viewpoint. Others remain modern with firm thoughts based on religion. Others use social media to spread certainty about religious views of this kind. Overall, there is no need to think much about other things, it is enough to follow the flow of information offered by this religious view, and the confusion of being uncertain will end. For this view, religion has provided the answers to all things and humans just need to consume them without the need to review them furthermore.

The two main currents mentioned above indicate that globalization has brought people into extreme currents. One leads to religious rationality, namely the conformity of religious values with science that is considered rational. Another one that leads to narrow fundamentalism that overrides and overcomes as well the rationality of every human being in understanding religion. From these two views, there is something that escapes both, namely about human character. Basically, the human character is thinking, that is, asking about what is being faced at any time. Both completely modern and fully fundamental negate the existence of this character. In both cases, humans are assumed to be silent creatures who just go with the flow that is already available and given away. However, the character of a religious human is one who understands God in life by not being trapped in absolute religious certainty. Islam encourages people to think rather than to follow the things that are written ([Akhiyat, 2017: 251](#)). The existence of Islam Nusantara bridges these two extremes. Islam is understood, not in a rigid way, by paying attention to the character of Indonesian culture. Islam does not need to fully refer to Arabic culture because cultural diversity is also a characteristic of religious people. Likewise, Islam is also not fully capitalism because this religion also teaches the idea of sharing and living simply rather than just collecting money ([Syafrizal, 2015: 241](#)). Islam also teaches a good character to understand the surrounding conditions rather than applying certainty to all things. Islam Nusantara is a flexible form of Islam developed in Indonesia. Entering from the cultural side, Islam Nusantara respects diversity by not applying certainty but dialogue with things that are different from Islam ([Asnawi and Prasetiawati, 2018: 220](#)). Liberalism in globalization is not completely rejected but also is not fully complied with. Islam Nusantara moves in heterogeneity rather than adhering to today's modern homogenization. Likewise, character building in Islam is not entirely modern or ancient but combines the two in a more humanist perspective. Education is not just for forming religious people but also for respecting the existence of others as a social manifestation of individual identity ([Syafrizal, 2015:242](#)).

In general, Islam Nusantara is understood as an intersection between Islamic and Indonesian cultures. Islam Nusantara is religious teaching contained in the Qur'an and Hadiths practiced by the Prophet Muhammad SAW who was followed by the natives of the Nusantara (Indonesia), or people who live in it ([Luthfi, 2016: 3](#)). Islam is seen as not monolithic but adapting to the conditions of the local communities. Islam Nusantara is not an ideology, but an argument in thinking about the condition of Islam in Indonesia. Of course, by emphasizing cultural roots, Nusantara Islam moves in its form at a level that respects differences and is tolerant at the same time. More than just being

negatively tolerant, mutual respect and love is a further foundation for Islam Nusantara to move more positively.

Indonesia is a multicultural nation that upholds cultural values. Nothing is fixed in that matter unless it is understood in the form of a process. Culture cannot be separated from religion and vice versa. That is the main essence of how Islam can be accepted in Indonesia, namely not by forcing something but by acculturation ([Zastrouw, 2017:4](#)). The same can be seen how Islam is understood not because this religion teaches rigidity and absolutism, but because its flexibility is universally accepted by wider societies. Islam in Indonesia does not resemble Arabs. Islamic teachings in Arabic culture are not universally final, but Islam is universal and can be understood in various cultural contexts in the world ([Luthfi, 2016:2](#)). Indonesian Islam within the framework of Islam Nusantara finds its uniqueness which processes with the local culture.

The main character of Islam Nusantara is the character of Islam itself. These characters are peace, harmony, and *silaturahmi*. Peace means how to create good things for individuals and society. Of course, by not harming others, especially by not applying violence. Peace can also be understood in the form of dialogue both with fellow Muslims and with followers of other religions. Harmony itself means more on how to embody Islam into the values of everyday life. Not then that Islam is fully implemented rigidly without the need to be reviewed, Islam Nusantara actually considers many things to maintain harmony in society. Islam Nusantara does not move in the forefront by imposing something, but this religious teaching goes hand in hand together with other people ([Zastrouw, 2017:3](#)). Likewise with *silaturahmi* that rests on harmony with compassion. Islam Nusantara is not only willing to dialogue with other communities, it is also able to make peace with differences. It is not a certainty to be applied, Islam Nusantara understands the tension of difference by becoming an intermediary between Islam and many things that surround it. Islam Nusantara is a teaching of Islam that has been able to adapt and make compromises with local needs and culture, which in fact proves that Islam is contextual in accordance with the needs of the local community and actual for its era ([Syauqi, 2015: 332](#)).

The main tension in Islam Nusantara is between religion and culture. Religion itself is based on the revelation which tends to be normative. Dogmas and doctrines understood in religion are entirely good for individual life and society. There is no other value that is better than religion because this teaching directly touches the close relationship between man and God. Likewise, Islam with its laws and *sunnah* are clearly good for daily applications. Islam is considered complete for humans so understanding and applying it later is a virtue that needs to be realized. On the other hand, culture is contingent and rooted in the process of each value. By prioritizing tradition and adaptation, culture simultaneously accommodates the past, analyzes the present, and understands the future. Culture moves according to the times so change is the main thing in the culture. Likewise, culture is not universal but particular according to the experience of individual space and time, the environment, and society ([Fikri, 2018:63](#)). Culture is understood not with rigidity but with the understanding of past, present, and future events.

Religion and culture in fact dominate each other today. There are extreme conditions when religion is more powerful than culture and vice versa. The extreme condition of religion is its universality which is understood absolutely and no longer needs to be reviewed ([Fikri, 2018:63](#)). Religious teachings and laws are seen as complex and good to be instantly applied. There is no need for further negotiations with other aspects. This side actually creates violence that is sort of legalized and normalized in order to implement the absolute values of religion ([Fauzi, 2019:76](#)). Regardless of who and what is the background of individuals and society, religion must absolutely be applied to every aspect of life without any exception. In Islam, fundamentalism and radicalism become this extreme form. What is written literally is indispensable for everything. Things that are taken lightly are even seen as fulfillments, obligations, and compulsory. If individuals do not want to apply it, then violence will come to be a way to enforce religious values.

The extreme aspect of culture is its particularity itself. This view can easily fall into relativism by looking at the absence of universal values ([Fikri, 2018: 63](#)). Culture is appropriate to a certain space and time so that transformation is the main thing. Relativism directs humans to the flow that was happening at that time without seeing any other permanent unity. It is so flexible that cultural value is entirely relative. The absence of a fixed value does highlight the side of individual

experience, but this is also a drawback when it comes to assessing something. This extreme clearly rejects universal religious values. For this extreme, religion too is a culture that will also shift according to the conditions of the times. Unless it is completely changed, religion is just a set of norms that have no meaning unless it is only understood in its limited time (Fikri, 2018: 63).

Different from religious and cultural extremes, Islam Nusantara lies between these two poles. This religious teaching simultaneously accommodates the contextualization of both without being trapped in one of its absolutes (Bilfagih, 2016: 57). On the one hand, it is still Islam with fixed religious values. There is nothing different between Islam and Islam Nusantara unless it is culturally understood in Indonesian culture. On the other hand, culture is still well understood from locality to transnational ideology. Islam Nusantara, for example, continues to highlight Islamic boarding schools without rejecting advances in technology and information. Cultural acculturation is clearly the main point of Islam Nusantara which rationally lies in the tension between religion and culture and between liberalism and fundamentalism (Bilfagih, 2016:63). In fact, the values of those two will be even enriched because humans can still think freely but still pay attention to the good and bad values for themselves and society.

The background of the formulation of Islam Nusantara is the rising of Arabization of Islam. By highlighting the cultural side, this study appears to dampen the process of depriving Muslims of the surrounding environment. Imitating the Middle East is indeed in accordance with religion, but it negates the existence of Islam in Indonesia so far which has been well received because of acculturation (Fauzi, 2019:77). Islam Nusantara moves in accordance with the localization of Islam, not to Islamize local culture, but rather to accommodate localities amid the recent Arabization. Islam Nusantara rejects extremity in religion by proposing moderate cultural arguments in the development of Islam in Indonesia so far. Instead of making Islam a relative religion, by accommodating culture, this religion can be understood more in accordance with past and contemporary adaptations. Polarization between religion and culture is to be bridged with the arguments of Islam Nusantara, which is to remain religious without leaving culture, or it can be said in the frame of cultural Islamization (Syafri, 2015:252). By paying attention to culture, religion becomes more flexible and able to deal with the current context. It can be said that contextualization is another way for Islam Nusantara as an effort to maintain the harmony of today's plurality. The more Islam is linked to the context, not Islam loses its essence, but the more it can be understood in accordance with the current conditions.

Islam Nusantara itself is a strategy of actualizing Islam among Indonesians (Zastrouw, 2017: 3). Its value is still Islamic but has an Indonesian context so that its later understanding is about the culture of this country and nation. In the aspect of the character that has been mentioned above, the Islamic values of Nusantara are also interpreted in the education initiated by Nadhlatul Ulama. Education as seen in the *pesantren maarif* tries to form good character according to better *akhlak* and scientific progress. Character according to morals as seen in *akhlak* is interpreted as the implementation of Islamic values inside *pesantren* (Fikri, 2018:65). Of course, by not leaving local customs and culture, existing relations between *kyai*, *ustadz*, and *santri*, need to be encouraged based on Islamic values that are polite and sincere. In accordance with science means being responsive to today's trends. During the current industrial revolution era 4.0, it is undeniable that *pesantren* also needs to adjust itself toward modernity. *Santri* cannot be separated from the development of modern devices, including the infinite flow of information in it. What needs to be highlighted is how Islam remains a medium for this development.

4.2. Islam Nusantara as effort of character empowerment

The reflection of Islam Nusantara in Islam is the character of Indonesian culture. Islam Nusantara tries to understand and analyze how to remain Indonesia in an Islamic frame. Nadhlatul Ulama then formulated seven strategies in dealing with current globalization (Bilfagih, 2016:65). Of course, this is in line with the discussion related to Islam Nusantara on how to maintain the tradition of accommodation of local cultural values in Islam that has been carried out by many scholars so far. These strategies are; *first*, collect and consolidate understandings based on the customs, traditions and culture of Nusantara (Bilfagih, 2016:65). The habits that are reflected in the culture of Nusantara need to be further explored and maintained so that understanding of Islam can be in line with these various

cultures. Indonesia with its thousands of cultural customs is indeed different from one another and Islam is not there to challenge or even to eliminate these things. The understanding of Islam Nusantara embraces and has a dialogue with these customs in a moderate and tolerant manner ([Asnawi and Prasetiawati, 2018:222](#)). In this aspect, what is universal in Islam and particular to local culture is attempted to be further understood via Islam Nusantara.

Second, developing a model of Sufistic education at both formal and informal levels ([Bilfagih, 2016:65](#)). Empowering the Islam-based character of Nusantara finds its understanding in this aspect, namely by aligning a more Sufistic Islam in the form of teaching and scientific progress. The Sufistic view is based not only on ritual but also on a deep understanding of the agreements and contradictions within them. This is aimed at avoiding literal religion or *dry ritualism*, which is simply applying what is written without considering it further. Of course, by studying many books that are written broadly but deeply, for example in *kitab kuning*, mystical understanding is no longer just discussing packaging but also philosophical analysis of Islamic values in Indonesian culture ([Hamsyah, 2015:306](#)). The main focus of this strategy is to understand the dynamics of a relationship between rational-logical, religious and cultural symbols that are well interpreted in the development and spread of Islam in Nusantara ([Hamsyah, 2015:296](#)).

Third, building an independent discourse in interpreting local wisdom and Islamic culture of Nusantara in ontological and epistemological ways ([Bilfagih, 2016:65](#)). The aspect of the character is very thick in this aspect, shown by the progress of Islamic development which is not completely literal but also contextual. Ontologically, the essence of culture and religion are combined not in finding contradictions but in understanding how both are relations of individual identities and social values. Islamic culture is a religious culture, but it can be understood within the framework of Indonesian culture or local wisdom ([Asnawi and Prasetiawati, 2018: 225](#)). Thus, the bridge between culture and religion can be further analyzed in this context. Epistemologically, science in Islam is not only aimed at Islam itself but also needs to address Indonesian cultural values as the scope of the Indonesian human life. Islamic scholarship is not to shape Indonesia in full accordance with Islam but how to create a constructive dialogue between Indonesian and Islamic cultural habits ([Zastrouw, 2017:6](#)). The advancement of the knowledge of Islam is not meant to be arrogant and to consider itself absolutely capable of being applied in Indonesia without the need to listen to other perspectives from other people.

Fourth, rallying strength together as a nation characterized by *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* to reconnect the civilization of Nusantara ([Bilfagih, 2016:65](#)). This aspect shows how nationalism is actually parallel to the understanding of Islam Nusantara. Loving the culture of Nusantara and Islamic teachings at the same time reflecting the love for the Indonesian homeland. It is impossible to love Islam by destroying Indonesia's pluralistic history. Likewise, it is impossible to completely deny the existence of Islam in the roots of Indonesian culture, both locally, nationally and globally ([Fikri, 2018:68](#)). This aspect also rejects the existence of violence in replacing the ideological system of Pancasila with a caliphate perspective that emphasizes the absoluteness of Islamic law. Islam Nusantara in its cultural approach actually respects diversity within the unity of Indonesia which embraces various views and religions. Between local culture, Islamic teachings, and Pancasila actually do not negate each other but instead construct and are being constructed by each other ([Fikri, 2018: 72](#)).

Fifth, reviving diverse cultural arts in the realm of *Bhinneka Tunggal Ika* based on the values of harmony, peace, tolerance, empathy, mutual cooperation or *gotong-royong*, and excellence in art, culture and science ([Bilfagih, 2016: 65](#)). This is raised because of many rejections from Islamic fundamentalism on Indonesian local cultural arts which are deemed not suitable with Islamic culture. Islam Nusantara in fact respects diversity with all tangible and intangible arts and cultures. What fundamentalists reject is the absence of Arabic culture in Indonesian culture. In fact, Islam has existed in Indonesia and has penetrated the minds of Indonesians for a long time without needing to be reaffirmed as absolute certainty. Islam is not only packaging material of Arabic culture but also suitable for other cultures including Indonesia. Understanding the context of cultural arts as well as building a tolerant attitude towards differences is used to maintain harmony among various religious communities as well. In addition, the mutual cooperation aspect in mass art also needs to be maintained as a reflection of Islamic teachings that are both deep and broad.

Sixth, utilizing information and communication technology to develop the Islam Nusantara movement ([Bilfagih, 2016:65](#)). Progress in globalization need not be completely rejected but must be filtered according to own cultural values. Information moving in all directions still needs a cultural anchor so it will not lose its grip. The analogy is explained because nowadays technology advances often seem to negate the existence of culture, even though the two can go hand in hand. Cultural value is the limit for increasingly instant technological developments. An understanding of deeper cultural and social relations are reflections of the complexities of life in Indonesia that needs more concerns in the current era of globalization ([Asnawi and Prasetiawati, 2018: 246](#)). In addition, Islam Nusantara is also aimed at warding off hoaxes and pseudo-science which tend to only be bombastic justifications rather than strict epistemological investigations. Information that is consumed is what gives a comfortable value, even though it is not necessarily true. By emphasizing Islam Nusantara, Islam can become an intermediary for the culture of literacy in Indonesia by asserting rationality as seen in *maarif* education ([Hamsyah, 2015: 303](#)). Understanding how Islam is understood in Islam Nusantara provides an example of how knowledge should be obtained from deep understanding, analyzed through dialogue and comparisons, consumed for mutual progress, or shared for goodness sake. Any information needs to be reviewed culturally rather than simply literally seen.

Seventh, prioritizing the principle of self-reliance or *berdikari* as a national identity to face global challenges ([Bilfagih, 2016:65](#)). This is considered important today since currently Indonesia is being hit by two mainstreams of transnational ideologies, namely liberalism and fundamentalism. Indonesian identity is different from the two things although not completely different at all. Choices in Indonesian human life reflect a liberal attitude, and fixations in Islam for Indonesian Muslims are the radical spirit of fundamentalism. The two ideologies are not completely different or the same, Indonesia needs to explore continuously between these two extremes. The birth of Islam Nusantara is a reflection of these two polar tensions. Appreciation for Islam Nusantara shows how universality in Islam can coexist with the particularity of Nusantara culture ([Fikri, 2018: 73](#)). Islam Nusantara also demonstrates the uniqueness of Indonesian identity without necessarily leaning entirely on Arabic or Western values.

The seven strategies above actually show how the history of Islam is the history of Indonesia from the beginning to the present. The struggle between religion and tradition will never fade and is maintained in the constructive dialogue of Islam Nusantara ([Fikri, 2018:75](#)). Character education in Islam Nusantara is how humans are not creatures who take things for granted. The Islamic character of Nusantara is human beings who think about the socio-cultural background and could assess contemporary conditions. These characters can determine attitudes in today's increasingly uncertain world, not by following one of the main currents but by considering social culture in dealing with that mainstream. Islam Nusantara answers the issue that religious texts are limited, while problems occur unlimited, so that is where Islam Nusantara plays its big role ([Syauqi, 2015: 332](#)).

Basically, Islam Nusantara is inseparable from the principle of *ahl sunnah wa al jamaah* or *aswaja*. Islam Nusantara is the implementation of *tawassuth*, *tawazun*, and *i'tidal* which actually are the characters of *aswaja* itself. One of the implementation is accepting new things related to culture or thoughts from outside Islam as long as they do not conflict with *sharia* ([Navis et. Al., 2016:406](#)). Thus, Islam Nusantara sees the character empowering system as not too rigid in learning since it can quote many sources but still stick to the Islamic frameworks. It does not emphasize Islam too much but still has Islamic substance in every activity. This is because the Prophet Muhammad once said that one of the deviations in Islam is *tahrif-al-ghalin* or people who cross the line or according to Al-Mubarakfuri are those who are too strict in understanding religion ([Navis et. Al, 2016:386](#)). Through Islam Nusantara, Islamic values are not understood too strictly but also not so far from its core values. Thus, Islam Nusantara can be used as a character empowering strategy amid the strong current of globalization. Islam Nusantara can also be considered as a middle way between fundamentalism and secularism which are dominantly offered by globalization.

In the context of character empowering, Islam Nusantara is a large frame that can be used as a theoretical and practical analytical lens in seeing a contemporary era of globalization. Islam Nusantara is a strategy to understand flexible relations between technological advances, Islamic culture, and Indonesian localities. Islamic culture is not ancient so it needs not be left behind by advances in information technology. Likewise, local values are not just non-sense without meaning but noble

habits in the acculturation of understanding The God Almighty (Almaarif, 2015:284). Islam Nusantara views that a good character is one that understands tension between process of progress and persistent cultural values. Education could not be based on science as free-value. Science still has to hold to certain values by paying attention to the values and norms embedded in society.

Understanding Islam Nusantara is in line with character empowerment. Islam and technology are not intended to bring up Islamic science but science that understands Islamic culture. Everything is not always about Islam, but how Islamic values correlates with the progress of science. Relations with diversity also need to be understood in the form of humanist and cultural tolerance (Almaarif, 2015: 282). Often today the progress of Islam is considered so singular that negates other values that coexist with it. Of course, the frame of Islam Nusantara is not merely Islam, but how Islam can make peace and harmony with other aspects, including oppositions in matters of religion. The economy is not intended to form Islamic capitalism based on commodification of religion, but to accommodate Islamic values in contemporary economic activities. At present, many things are associated with Islam so that what is spreading is Islamic products which tend to be very instant material packaging. Islam is not only like that because Islam is well understood through human culture, not to be attached solely for the sake of capital accumulation (Almaarif, 2015: 283).

A concrete example of reflection on Islam Nusantara in character empowerment is the locality of culture. Re-emphasizing locality-based curriculum can align Islam, scientific progress, and culture. The curriculum, for example, local cultural arts, needs to be further explored as true and Islamic cultural values. The habit of reciting *kitab kuning* is also an important part of understanding the values of Islam through surrounding cultural circles. Islam Nusantara shows that the contemporary industrial revolution does not encourage education to comply with globalization, but understanding it glocalization that going broader and deeper as well.

5. Conclusion

Islam Nusantara offers moderation amid the extreme poles offered by globalization. Islam Nusantara is Islamic knowledge that combines Islamic values with local culture or glocalization of Islam in Indonesia. Like global companies that could adapt to the local culture of the host country, Islam Nusantara is also a strategic manifestation of the development of Islam in Indonesia and can even become such an embryo to spread Islam throughout the world. Moderate character is appropriate everywhere. Thus, Islam is not viewed narrowly only as of the religion for Arabs where Islam was revealed, but Islam can be widely understood by all people in the world while still accommodating respective local cultures.

Islam Nusantara can be a strategy for education, especially character empowerment seen from cultural contexts. Islamic knowledge in Indonesia is not limited to Java alone, but every corner of Indonesia may have different Islamic practices. With this understanding, learners can open their understanding of various perspectives of Islam. Apart from that, with Islam Nusantara, good characters can also contribute to the process of deradicalization and deliberalization because Islam Nusantara offers something moderate. Moreover, Islam Nusantara also offers a perfect understanding of Islam. This is because Nusantara Islam does not only see Islam textually but also synchronizes it with the context. Thus, Islam Nusantara is an Islam that has depth, not Islam that only shows textual packaging.

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