

**ISLAMIC LIBERALISM AND FUNDAMENTALISM AMONG LECTURERS AND STUDENTS
(CASE STUDY AT THE FACULTY OF USHULUDDIN AND ISLAMIC STUDIES
UIN NORTH SUMATRA MEDAN)**

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ABSTRACT

This study analyzes Islamic liberalism and fundamentalism among students and lecturers of the Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Studies, State Islamic University of North Sumatra, Medan. The main focus of this study is to understand the diversity of religious views, the factors that influence them, and the dynamics that emerge in the classroom and academic forums, and their impact on the academic environment. Using a qualitative approach, this study identifies ideological tendencies (liberal, moderate, fundamental) among respondents, as well as the characteristics of religious expression from each group. Factors such as educational and social background, the influence of student organizations and Islamic forums, and religious literacy and reading are analyzed to explain the formation of these views. This study also examines the situation of interaction between groups in the academic environment, the role of the faculty in responding to differences of opinion. The results of this study are expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the positive and negative impacts of this plurality of religious views and emphasize the urgency of moderation to create an inclusive and harmonious academic environment at the Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Studies, State Islamic University of North Sumatra, Medan.

Keywords: Fundamental; Liberal; Islam

INTRODUCTION

Islam is built on five main pillars, namely shahada, prayer, zakat, fasting, and hajj. These five pillars are the foundation that supports the solidity of Islamic teachings as a whole. Religion is a belief system that is followed and manifested in behavior by certain groups, groups or societies in interpreting what must be felt and believed as something sacred (Firda, 2023). Differences in the level of understanding are certainly inevitable, especially due to variations in the level of knowledge, insight, understanding, practice, and cultural dynamics that develop in the community and also among students and lecturers.

In the midst of globalization and modernization, various styles of Islamic thought have emerged that interact with each other and sometimes contradict each other. Two of these patterns that are quite dominant in academic and socio-religious discourse are Islamic liberalism and Islamic fundamentalism. Both represent two different poles of thought in understanding Islamic teachings, especially in the context of interpretation, law, and the relationship between Islam and democracy and human rights. The concept of liberalism originated in the Western world. Liberalism is a school of thought that wants progress in various fields by emphasizing individual freedom, so that everyone can develop their potential and abilities freely without restrictive restrictions (Muhammad, 2023). Fundamentalism is a movement within a school of thought or religion that seeks to return to what is believed to be fundamentals or principles.

Liberalism in Islam emphasizes the importance of reinterpreting religious teachings in a contextual and rational manner, in line with universal values and the development of the times. This approach is often associated with the spirit of modernism and the renewal of Islamic thought that prioritizes rationality and freedom of thought in understanding religious texts (Abdullah, 1999). On the other hand, Islamic fundamentalism tends to emphasize the purification of Islamic teachings and the strict application of sharia based on a literal understanding of religious texts, and often carries an exclusive attitude towards diversity.

This fundamental difference creates tension in Islamic discourse, especially in academic spaces where freedom of thought flourishes. The Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Studies of UIN North Sumatra as an Islamic higher education institution has a strategic role in shaping the perspective of students and lecturers on contemporary Islamic issues. The faculty of ushuluddin and Islamic studies serves as a forum for dialectics between two different poles of thought: on the one hand there are groups that encourage a liberal approach to Islamic studies, namely a more contextual, rational, and open approach to the changing times, while on the other hand there are groups that are more inclined to textual and normative approaches, which tend to maintain Islamic values literally and close to fundamentalist understanding.

In the context of the understanding of liberalism and fundamentalism, it is important to examine in more detail how the dynamics of liberal and fundamentalist thought were formed and developed within the Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Studies. This research aims to explore in depth how the perceptions, understanding, and attitudes of students and lecturers towards these two currents of thought are formed, both through the process of formal education in lecture halls, scientific discussions, and social interactions in the campus environment.

RESEARCH METHODS

The approach used in this research is a qualitative research approach. Which according to Lincoln and Denzin qualitative research is a type of research that uses a natural setting with the intention of interpreting phenomena that occur by involving various methods.

The type of data contained in this study is qualitative data through data collection obtained through observation or interviews conducted with data reduction, data presentation and conclusion drawing is one of the data analysis. According to Moleong, the main data in qualitative research are and actions, the rest is additional data such as documents and others (Mujahid, et al ., 2024)

The data collection methods include:

1. Observation, namely systematic recording and observation of the facts being investigated. This method is implemented simultaneously with learning activities in the faculty of ushuluddin and Islamic studies, by observing according to the conditions and phenomena that exist in the field.
2. Interview, This method is a method that is carried out by communicating with data sources through dialogue or questions and answers, either directly or indirectly, with lecturers and students who are sources for data collection to answer the phenomenon. (Sugiyono, 2010).

3. Documentation. In using this documentation method, researchers investigate written objects such as activity documents/photos, regulations, books, and others

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Diversity of Religious Views

Key Findings on Lecturer and Student Ideological Tendencies (Liberalism and Fundamentalism)

Ideological Tendencies of Liberalism towards Students

The influence of liberalism on the main tendency of students is freedom of opinion and organization. One of the main characteristics of liberalism is freedom of opinion and organization. Students who embrace the values of liberalism tend to develop and express their ideas without fear or intimidation. They also tend to form organizations and communities that focus on social and political issues that they consider important. This allows them to lead a change and take actions that are considered in line with their beliefs. As well as criticism of authority and power structures. Liberal values also encourage students to criticize the authority and power structures that exist in society. They actively question government policies, educational institutions, and social norms that are considered unfair or contrary to liberal values; these actions are often accompanied by protests, demonstrations, and campaigns aimed at bringing about real change to the existing system (Firda, Aridapuspa, & Marundu Daniel, 2024).

From the results of the interview, student Asriani Matondang also views liberalism as the right of individuals who are free to do what they think. However, he emphasized that within UINSU as an Islamic educational institution, there needs to be limits in the field of religion to maintain Islamic rules and requirements. He found it not difficult to balance freedom of thought with a Muslim person, because Islam actually encourages its people to think critically and not taklid. According to Asriani, freedom of thought must be in accordance with its provisions and portions, not questioning things that are certain such as the form of God. He argued that liberalism does not threaten Islamic values because the truth of Islam is certain, and can even enrich it by coming up with answers that are in accordance with logic, Hadith, and the Quran (Interview with Asriani Matondang, 2025).

Fajar Nur Bahri defines liberalism as the assumption that freedom is the highest thing that can be obtained. He observed that students with a liberal attitude tend to be "upset" when lecturers explain their opinions in class and may postpone prayers for the sake of something else, assuming that everything can be excused for personal freedom. Fajar does not find it difficult to juxtapose freedom of thought with religion, because Islam actually tells its people to think as freely as possible, as long as they have the value to find something relevant and good. He argues that if liberalism refers to what is happening in Europe, then it can hinder religion because it goes hand in hand with secularism that separates religious and social life, making people free of values and acting as they please (Interview with Fajar, 2025).

The Tendency of Liberalism Ideology towards Lecturers

The main tendencies of liberal ideology towards lecturers include an emphasis on freedom of thought, pluralism, and human rights, which encourage renewal in education.

Prof. Dr. Ziaulhaq Hidayat, M.A, a lecturer at the Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Studies, said that "liberals are more inclined to no restrictive space, liberals will emerge innovations in new progressive ways of thinking". He added that the advantage of liberalism is the emergence of new and progressive ways of thinking innovations. According to him, the Religious Studies Study Program (SAA) at FUSI is more liberal in nature (Interview with Ziaulhaq, 2025).

Meanwhile, according to Dr. Mardian Idris Harahap, M.Ag. he said "liberals are more inclined and more free to use their minds and are not bound by Nash or doctrine. Liberalism is good at using rationality, then liberalism, its shortcomings tend to be directional, sometimes it can prioritize reason over submission to nash or liberal revelation tends to be more aggressive than free in speech (Interview with Mardian Indris, 2025).

Fundamentalist Ideology's Tendency to Students

Meanwhile, students tend to view Islamic fundamentalism in view and understand various problems, especially problems related to ijihad, precedents (examples) in the early days of Islam, ijma, pluralism and wisdom. They uphold the past romanticism about Islamic law. They argue that the doctrine of Islam (Al-Quran and As-Sunnah) has been completed and cannot be sued again (Qohar, 2016).

Fajar Nur Bahri defines fundamentalism as the assumption that all things have rules and must be applied in all aspects of life regardless of any conditions or conditions. He observed that fundamentalists are usually very obedient to lecturers, do not want to oppose, and pray on time. He added that fundamentalism that is rooted in Europe is a principle used by Europeans, where religious leaders perpetuate power and the image of the state with religious values of their own making.

Students tend to look at Islamic fundamentalism in a way that views and understands various problems, especially issues related to *ijtihad*, precedents (examples) in the early days of Islam, *ijma*, pluralism and wisdom. They uphold the past romanticism about Islamic law. They argue that the doctrine of Islam (Al-Quran and As-Sunnah) has been completed and cannot be sued again.

Fundamentalist Ideology Tendency towards Lecturers

Lecturers with fundamentalist views tend to emphasize the importance of maintaining religious values and traditions that are considered absolute truth. This ideology can limit freedom of thought and discussion in academic settings, creating an atmosphere that is less open to criticism and dissent. There is a tendency to prioritize religious teachings dogmatically, which can hinder innovation and the development of critical thinking among students. Fundamentalist lecturers may show resistance to changes in education that are perceived as contrary to traditional values.

According to a lecturer at the Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Studies, Prof. Dr. Ziaulhaq Hidayat, M.A, said that "This fundamental tends to be more rigid and close to religious texts" (Interview with Ziaulhaq, 2025). And there is also according to Dr. Mardian Idris Harahap, M.Ag, said that "Fundamentalism must be in accordance with Salafi with the life of the Prophet and be more obedient to religious teachings and stricter, thus fundamentalism tends not to be able to express freely then if fundamentalism tends to be more rigid and limited in associating and expressing opinions.

The difference between liberalism and fundamentalism can create tension on campus, affecting the interaction between lecturers and students. Constructive dialogue between the two ideologies is needed to create a healthy and productive academic environment. Lecturers are expected to be able to balance between encouraging freedom of thought and respecting traditional values, thereby creating a harmonious learning atmosphere.

Liberal, Moderate, or Fundamental Tendencies

Based on the findings of interviews with lecturers and students, it can be seen that the Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Studies (FUSI) of UIN North Sumatra Medan has become an arena of rich ideological dynamics between liberalism and fundamentalism. The development of comprehensive thinking insights is essential for students at UIN North Sumatra, especially in dealing with ideological dynamics (Aurelia, Adenan, & Ritonga, 2023). This condition reflects the diversity of thought that exists in the modern Islamic academic environment, where a wide spectrum of religious views, from liberal to fundamentalist, coexist.

Diversity of Thought Patterns in FUSI and Dominant Tendencies

The Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Studies as a whole has a diverse style of thinking and is more welcoming to other thoughts, perhaps because it is filled by many thinkers. This is as expressed by Prof. Dr. Ziaulhaq Hidayat. However, the mapping of ideological tendencies can also be seen from existing study programs, especially the Religious Studies Study Program (SAA) and Islamic Political Thought (PPI) tend to be associated with liberalism. This tendency emphasizes freedom of thought, innovation, and openness to a wide range of views (Interview with Ziaulhaq, 2025). This characteristic is in line with the view of Dr. Mardian Idris Harahap, M.Ag, who states that liberalism is freer to use the mind and is not bound by *nash* or doctrine, and is good at using rational reason (Interview with Mardian, 2025).

Students like Nurul Arifin show the spirit of liberalism by upholding freedom of opinion and daring to criticize lecturers who are considered to impose their thoughts (Interview with Nurul Arifin, 2025). Fajar Nur Bahri also sees liberalism as the assumption that freedom is the highest thing that can be obtained (Interview with Fajar Nur Bahri, 2025). On the other hand, the Qur'an and Tafsir (IAT) and Islamic Faith and Philosophy (AFI) study programs have a tendency towards fundamentalism. This connection is strengthened by the study program's focus on religious texts, classical books, and in-depth sources, as conveyed by Prof. Dr. Ziaulhaq Hidayat, M.A, who said that fundamentalists tend to be more rigid and close to religious texts.

Dr. Mardian Idris Harahap, M.Ag, also explained that fundamentalism must be in accordance with Salafi and the life of the Prophet, more obedient to religious teachings and stricter. Lecturers

with educational backgrounds from the Middle East or who emphasize strict religious teachings, as revealed by Mr. Adenan, also strengthen the fundamentalist style. Leny students feel that liberalism is not in accordance with the ideology of Pancasila and religion, so it should not exist at UINSU, which reflects a more fundamental view.

The Proportion of Ideological Tendencies in the FUSION Environment: Moderate as a Mainstream with Nuances of Contrast

Despite the spectrum of views, the findings show that the majority of students and lecturers in the FUSI environment tend to identify themselves as having moderate views in religion. They generally support tolerance between religious communities, openness to differences of opinion, and uphold inclusive and balanced national and Islamic values. This moderate attitude is reflected in the view of Asriani Matondang who finds it difficult to balance freedom of thought with a Muslim person, because Islam encourages its people to think critically and not taklid, but still within the limits of Islamic rules.

However, behind the moderate identity, the interview results also show a nuance of contrast and ambiguity of attitude. Many of the self-professed informants have, in practice, agreed with some principles or views that tend to be conservative or fundamental. This indicates that in identity they feel moderate, but in practice and outlook, they may support more conservative or fundamental values.

This data reflects that although religious moderation has become mainstream, the influence of conservative or fundamental narratives is still strong. On the other hand, the existence of liberalism, even if not dominant, can reflect challenges in disseminating more progressive or contextual religious views within UINSU.

Distinctive Characteristics That Distinguish Liberal and Fundamental Groups in Religious Expression

Liberal and fundamental groups in religious expression have distinctive characteristics that distinguish their approach and understanding of religion. Fundamental Islam defines that the opponents that must be eliminated are people and groups who do not want to adhere to the religious Text, and that is liberal Islam. While Liberal Islam defines that the People or groups that must be eliminated are those who adhere very strongly to the Text, without reinterpreting the context that is happening around them, and that is Fundamental Islam (Sahrasad, 2014).

Liberal groups tend to prioritize contextual and inclusive interpretations, respecting pluralism and diversity in society. They seek to adapt religious teachings to the times, as well as encourage interreligious dialogue and tolerance. In their view, religion is not only seen as a rigid set of rules, but as a source of value that can be adapted to meet the moral and social needs of modern society. Religious teachings are seen as passing according to the context of time and man. The truth of religious teachings must always be contextualized so that it is really in accordance with human needs in this view, religious teachings are not rigid and static, but dynamic and must always be updated according to the level of human development.

As the results of an interview with Prof. Dr. ZiaulHaq Hidayat, M.A, stated: that if fundamentalists tend to be close to religious texts, if liberal, there will be new progressive innovations in thinking (Interview with Ziaulhaq, 2025).

In contrast, the fundamentalist group emphasizes on a literal understanding of sacred texts and rejects interpretations that are considered to reduce religious authority. They tend to be exclusive, reject pluralism, and consider that the truth of their religion is the only legitimate one. Fundamentalists often focus on preserving traditions and values that are considered pure, as well as seeking to return society to the original teachings of their religion.

These differences create complex dynamics in society, where liberal groups seek to create space for religious freedom and critical thinking, while fundamentalist groups struggle to defend identities and values that they perceive to be threatened. In this context, it is important to understand that these two groups not only operate within the theological space, but are also involved in broader social, political, and cultural discourse. An in-depth analysis of these differences can be found in a variety of academic sources that discuss religious thought, such as articles that discuss the conflict between fundamentalism and liberalism in the context of Islam, as well as studies on religious moderation that highlight the importance of dialogue between groups.

Characteristics of Liberal Groups in Religious Expression

- 1) Contextual Interpretation
Liberal groups tend to interpret sacred texts taking into account the current social and cultural context. They believe that religious teachings should be relevant to the challenges of modern times.
- 2) Pluralism and Tolerance
They value diversity and encourage interfaith dialogue. This group believes that various religious views and practices can coexist and respect each other.
- 3) Doctrinal Adaptation
Liberal groups seek to adapt religious teachings to the development of science and human values. They see religion as a source of moral inspiration that can be adapted.
- 4) Freedom of Religion
In their view, every individual has the right to choose and practice religious beliefs according to their personal will without pressure from others.
- 5) Criticism of Dogma
This group often criticizes dogmas and traditions that are considered rigid, and encourages critical thinking in understanding religious teachings (Udin, 2018).

Characteristics of Fundamental Groups in Religious Expression

- 1) Literal Understanding
Fundamentalist groups tend to interpret sacred texts literally and reject interpretations that are considered to reduce their original meaning. They believe that religious teachings must be strictly followed.
- 2) Exclusivity
They often consider that their religious truth is the only legitimate one, rejecting other religious views or practices that are considered deviant.
- 3) Preservation of Tradition
The group focuses on the preservation of traditions and values that are considered pure, seeking to return society to the original teachings of their religion.
- 4) Rejection of Pluralism
Fundamentalists reject pluralism and relativism, viewing it as a threat to their religious truth.
- 5) Activism Agama
They are often involved in social and political movements to defend religious values in society, seeking to influence public policy in accordance with religious teachings.

The distinction between liberal and fundamental groups creates complex dynamics in society. Liberal groups seek to create space for religious freedom and critical thinking, while fundamentalist groups struggle to maintain identities and values that they perceive to be threatened. Regarding Roles in Discourse, these two groups not only operate within theological spaces, but are also involved in broader social, political, and cultural discourse. Discussions about religious moderation and the importance of intergroup dialogue are becoming increasingly relevant. Then the academic studies carried out related to this discussion are that an in-depth analysis of this difference can be found in various academic sources that discuss religious thought, including articles that discuss the conflict between fundamentalism and liberalism in the context of Islam, as well as studies on religious moderation. By understanding these characteristics, we can better appreciate the complexity of religious expression in society and the importance of dialogue between groups to create social harmony.

Factors Influencing Views

Educational and Social Background

Education is an important part of people's lives. Education is an effort made by adults consciously to individuals or other immature parties in order to achieve maturity. Education has an effect on the progress of thinking of human beings who are indirectly able to improve their standard of living. The development of the times has had various impacts that bring changes to the current era. The social changes that occur can be in the form of positive or negative social changes. Where as we understand that there will always be risks from life and social uncertainty that undergoes a change in a society. Changes that occur in society always pose a risk of social life or social

uncertainty. One example of the education problem faced by the government is the high number of children who do not continue their education at a higher level of education.

The educational background within the scope of the Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Studies generally focuses on the in-depth study of the main teachings of Islam, including the theology of the faith and philosophy of Islam, comparative religion, the study of the Qur'an and hadith, and thoughts in Islam. The faculty aims to produce graduates who have a comprehensive understanding of the main sources of Islamic teachings, are able to critically analyze religious thought, and have the ability to dialogue and understand various religious perspectives. Education in this faculty often emphasizes the development of textual analysis skills, historical understanding of the development of Islamic thought, and the relevance of Islamic teachings to the modern context. Here are some of the lecturer's educational backgrounds.

Prof. Dr. Ziaulhaq Hidayat, M.A.'s educational background shows a strong academic footprint in Islamic studies, starting from the S1 level in the field of Sharia which provides a foundation for understanding Islamic law and principles. Then, he deepened his knowledge at the S2 level with a focus on Islamic Thought, which indicated an interest in the philosophical and intellectual aspects of the Islamic tradition. The culmination of his education in the S3 program in Islamic Studies, with a stronger emphasis on fundamentalism, suggests that his dissertation and research are most likely oriented towards an in-depth study of the primary sources of Islamic teachings and their basic principles (Interview with Ziaulhaq, 2025).

Dr. Hasnah Nasution, M.A.'s educational background shows deep consistency in the study of Islamic philosophy since junior high school in Tsanawiyah, continued to Aliyah, and then specifically delved into Aqidah and Islamic Philosophy at the S1 level. His interest and expertise continued to develop through his S2 program with a focus on Islamic Thought, which enriched his understanding of the various streams and intellectual developments in the Islamic tradition. Finally, his doctoral education returned to Islamic Aqidah and Philosophy, indicating specialization and strengthening of expertise in the field of philosophical thought in Islam.

According to Dr. Hasnah Nasution, the diversity of thought patterns and openness of the Faculty of Ushuluddin to other thoughts are most likely influenced by the number of thinkers in it. He argues that the characteristics of thinkers who tend to be more open and accept various perspectives have helped to shape intellectuals in Ushuluddin to be more inclusive and diverse, so that this context does not directly refer to the dichotomy of fundamentalism or liberalism, but rather emphasizes the modern nature of the academic environment filled by intellectuals (Interview with Hasnah Nasution, 2025).

Factors that cause not attending school include internal factors and external factors:

- 1) Internal factors that cause children to be unable to continue their education or school, namely interest or willingness, lack of interest and willingness of children to go to school such as laziness to go to school looking for various reasons not to go to school, lack of confidence in themselves to go to school such as feelings of hesitation in taking action or lack of confidence in doing the tasks given by the teacher in the school.
- 2) External factors that cause children to be unable to continue their education or school are environmental factors, parents lack support or motivate children to go to school such as scolding their children when asking for money for education fees and snacks, school environment factors, children's discomfort with their friends at school, community environmental factors, children getting along with their friends who do not have education, economic factors, In terms of economy, parental income has a very important role in family life, especially in the cost of handling children's educational facilities.

Dynamics in Classrooms and Academic Forums

At the Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Studies, UIN North Sumatra, the debate between liberalism and Islamic fundamentalism is very much felt in classrooms and academic forums. Islamic liberal groups emphasize the importance of contextual and rational textual interpretation, prioritizing democratic values, human rights, and pluralism. In contrast, fundamentalist groups hold to a literal understanding of the sacred text and reject modernization that is seen as eroding the purity of Islamic teachings.

This dynamic creates an atmosphere of intense discussion and sometimes triggers tension. Students and lecturers from both groups put forward arguments that are sometimes difficult to reconcile, especially related to the issue of the formalization of Islamic sharia and the role of religion

in the state. Islamic liberalism is often seen by fundamentalists as a form of betrayal of Islamic teachings, while fundamentalism is seen as an obstacle to progress and open dialogue (Misrawi & Zuhairi, 2010).

1) Situation Between Groups

In the context of Islamic discussions, especially in the Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Studies, a dynamic of thought has emerged that involves two major poles: liberalism and fundamentalism. These two understandings have an influence on the way students understand religion, freedom of thought, and the relationship with lecturer authority. These differences are not only theoretical, but also affect social relations between students and lecturers, even in the classroom and academic forums. This polarization can hinder productive dialogue if not managed properly, as each group is often caught up in its group's ideologization and interests.

Liberal student groups emphasized the importance of freedom of thought, expression, and criticism of rigid authority structures in the classroom. A student named Nurul Arifin, said that freedom of thought is the right of every student. He criticized lecturers who impose their views on students, according to him, "thinking must be free, because Allah Himself gives us reason and thoughts to use"

On the other hand, fundamentalist student groups believe that Islam has clear limits, and that liberalism risks causing deviations. A student named Leny Marlina emphasized that liberalism is not in line with Islamic values and the ideology of Pancasila. According to him, the understanding of liberalism should not develop in the campus environment because it can interfere with Islamic teachings that are fixed and cannot be interpreted carelessly.

Meanwhile, Asriani Matondang took a moderate position. He stated that liberalism as a thought does not threaten Islamic values, but can enrich. Asriani is of the view that Islam is a clear and solid religion, so there is nothing to worry about from the discourse of freedom of thought. According to him, liberal thinking can help students understand religion from a more logical and relevant approach to the current context.

A student named Fajar Nur Bahri also expressed his views on the difference between liberal and fundamentalist students. He explained that liberal students tend to prioritize individual freedom, even in terms of worship, while fundamentalist students are more obedient to religious rules. He added that Islam actually encourages its people to think, but that freedom must be used to seek the values of truth, not just freedom without direction. He touched on the challenge of balancing freedom of thought and religious obedience. He also emphasized that free thinking is important, but it must remain based on good values and not contrary to religious teachings. In this context, academic forums must provide space for thinking, but also guide so that such thinking remains in the corridor of Islamic ethics and spirituality.

Therefore, the dynamics between liberal and fundamentalist groups in the academic environment of the State Islamic University of North Sumatra, especially in the Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Studies, reflect the intellectual reality that lives and develops on the Islamic campus. Differences in perspective in understanding religion, between freedom of thought and obedience to religious texts, are natural in the scientific space. These differences should not be a source of conflict, but can be a strength if managed with a dialogical, open, and mutual respect approach. Academic forums must be able to be a forum that bridges diverse thoughts, without imposing a single truth, and provides space for students to grow as critical, rational, and rooted individuals in Islamic values.

2) The Role of Faculty in Responding

The Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Studies (FUSI) of the State Islamic University of North Sumatra (UINSU) Medan has a crucial role in responding to the dynamics of Islamic liberalism and fundamentalism among students and lecturers, especially in the context of lectures and academic forums. This role is not only limited to prevention, but also the fostering and development of moderate and inclusive Islamic insights (Gafur, 2015). The approach taken by FUSI tends to balance between freedom of thought and maintaining moderate Islamic values. Here are some responses from lecturers and students.

This moderate approach emphasizes the importance of tolerance, respect for differences, and contextual understanding of religious texts. The faculty also encourages the involvement of students and lecturers in rational discourses that are free from one-party domination, in order to create consensus and harmony among different groups (Irawan, 2016).

According to Dr. Adenan M,A: "The role of lecturers as facilitators of liberalism and fundamentalism in the academic environment is very crucial, but it needs to be done wisely and responsibly." He emphasized that the academic environment should be a safe and open arena for the discussion of various ideas, including those that may be ideologically opposed. Meanwhile, Prof. Dr. Ziaulhaq Hidayat, M.A.: "The main role of determining a lecturer's open attitude must be inclusive of his way of thinking, including accepting things that he himself does not agree with from student sources."

Dr. Mardian Idris Harahap, M.Ag stated: "Lecturers who have a very big role as facilitators of religious moderation, so it provides an understanding to students about how to be the right religion and when we are in a plural environment we moderate religion must be applied with the attitude of *tawasul*, *tasamud* in the sense that we are moderately tolerant of other religions, there is no coercion with other religions and respect the existence of other religions."

In addition, students like Nurul Arifin have a view on this matter, "the role of lecturers in the academic environment is expected to be neutral and objective, acting as a facilitator of thought. They must present a variety of perspectives, encourage critical thinking, create safe spaces for discussion, and teach scientific methodology, regardless of ideological orientation."

This is not much different from Leny Marlina's view, "In the academic environment, a lecturer has the responsibility to create an inclusive and critical discussion space, regardless of the existing spectrum of thought. When dealing with fundamentalism and liberalism, the role of lecturer facilitators becomes very crucial."

The dynamics of Islamic liberalism and fundamentalism at the Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Studies of UIN North Sumatra reflect the broader debate in the Indonesian Islamic community. Tension-filled intergroup situations demand an active role of faculty in facilitating dialogue and building mutual understanding. With a moderate approach and rational discourse, the faculty can create an academic environment conducive to the inclusive, progressive, and harmonious development of Islamic thought. With healthy and ethical management, this dynamic can actually strengthen the character of students as Muslim intellectuals who not only understand their religion deeply, but are also able to respond to the challenges of the times intelligently and wisely.

Impact on the academic environment

The academic environment, as an intellectual center and a forum for the exchange of ideas, is constantly interacting with various spectrum of thoughts. In the midst of today's global dynamics, the existence of Islamic and liberal fundamental thinking in it often causes fierce debates. These two schools of thought, with their different epistemological and methodological foundations, have a complex impact, both positive and negative, on the academic ecosystem. Understanding these interactions is crucial to maintaining scientific integrity and promoting constructive discussions.

1. The Positive Impact of Diversity of Thought

Diversity of thought, including between Islamic fundamentals and liberalism, can be a catalyst for intellectual development in the academic environment, here are some of its positive impacts:

1) Enriching Discourse and Perspective.

Islamic fundamental thought, which often emphasizes sacred texts and classical traditions, can offer historical and ethical depth that might be overlooked in a liberal approach that is more oriented towards modern rationality and individualism. Rather, liberal thought can encourage a critical approach to dogma, promote freedom of expression, and encourage methodological innovation in religious and social studies. The meeting of these two perspectives can raise new questions, encourage interdisciplinary research, and produce a more nuanced understanding of social and religious phenomena. For example, in the study of Islamic law, the fundamental approach can explain the basics of sharia from a theological perspective, while the liberal approach can analyze the social impact and adaptation of such laws in the modern context, creating a more holistic discussion (Al-Mabhats, 2017).

2) Encouraging Critical Thinking and Intellectual Dialectics

When students and academics are confronted with contradictory ideas, they are forced to question their own assumptions, test the validity of arguments, and develop sharper analytical skills. Discussions between fundamentalists and liberals can foster a climate in which strong, evidence-based arguments are valued more than mere doctrinal repetition. This

dialectical process is essential for the intellectual growth of the individual and the advancement of collective knowledge. A healthy academic environment is one that encourages fierce debate while still upholding scientific ethics and mutual respect.

Dr. Adenan MA said that when we are faced with various backgrounds of thought or ideology, it will foster critical thinking and make the classroom situation more active and not passive, this kind of situation is needed by students, especially in the Aqidah and Philosophy study program whose notabene is filled by people who think critically and deeply.

3) Stimulating Research Innovation and Theory Development

Confrontations between different worldviews are often the trigger for giving birth to new paradigms and theories. In the context of Islamic studies, for example, the emergence of liberal thought has encouraged a more in-depth explanation of classical texts, while the existence of fundamentalist thought has encouraged an in-depth study of Islamic traditions and epistemology. This can lead to more sophisticated research methods, such as cross-civilizational comparative studies or intertextual analysis that combines a variety of disciplines. The result is a more dynamic and relevant knowledge production to the challenges of the times.

2. The Negative Impact of Diversity of Thought

Despite its positive potential, diversity of thought, especially between Islamic fundamentals and liberalism, can also have significant negative impacts on the academic environment if not managed (Rahman, 1982) wisely, including:

1) Potential polarization and fragmentation of the academic community

Fundamental differences of opinion can develop into deep divisions, hinder collaboration, and create an intellectual "bubble" in which each group only interacts with its neighbors. This can reduce opportunities for constructive dialogue and reinforce negative stereotypes between groups. In extreme cases, polarization can lead to an atmosphere of hostility and even intimidation against individuals who hold certain views, undermining the climate of academic freedom.

2) Abuse of academic freedom for ideological purposes

Under the umbrella of academic freedom, some individuals may use their platforms to spread ideological agendas rather than advancing objective knowledge. Fundamentalist thinkers may seek to impose a single interpretation of sacred texts and reject critical approaches as "heresy," while liberal thinkers may ignore the significance of tradition or demean religious beliefs as "backwardness." When scientific objectivity is compromised by ideological agendas, the quality of research and teaching can decline, and the credibility of academic institutions can be threatened.

3) Challenges in Maintaining Academic Objectivity and Neutrality

For academics, especially in sensitive fields such as religious studies, philosophy, or social sciences, the pressure to take a position or align with one school of thought can be intense. This can make it difficult for them to maintain objectivity in research and teaching. Students can also find it difficult to distinguish between neutral scientific analysis and a teacher's personal or ideological views, which can influence their understanding of the subject matter and shape their worldview biasedly.

3. The need for Moderation

Moderation means being middle or not excessive, not being soft or lacking a stance, but rather in the direction of finding balance, respecting differences, and avoiding extreme attitudes. Moderation is very important because it has many positive impacts, especially when we are dealing with various ideas, such as fundamentalism and liberalism. If everyone holds their own opinion without wanting to understand the other, or even feels that their opinion is the most correct, then it is very easy to get divided. Moderation helps us to see that there are many different viewpoints, and not all differences have to end in hostility. With moderation, we are more accepting of differences, and this prevents conflicts that damage relationships between individuals or groups. For example, on campus, if there is a heated discussion between fundamentalist and liberal groups, moderation can be a "mediator" so that the discussion continues to run healthy and does not become an ideological fight.

A moderate attitude makes people more willing to listen and try to understand other people's point of view. They do not immediately judge or close themselves off. This opens the door to honest and constructive dialogue, where each side can learn from the other. Rather than blaming each other, the moderate attitude encourages fundamentalists and liberals to sit together, exchange ideas, and find common ground or at least understand each other why there are differences. A moderate attitude also builds a tolerant and inclusive environment. When people are moderate, they tend to be more tolerant of differences.

They do not feel threatened by the existence of people with different beliefs or views. This creates a more inclusive environment, where everyone feels welcome and has room to express themselves. A moderate attitude trains us not to be rigid in thinking. We are better prepared to face change and can adapt to different conditions. This is important in today's fast-paced times.

Dr. Adenan MA said that, in fact, the curriculum at the Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Studies actually makes us a more moderate person, because there is a balance between the sciences of the world and the hereafter, and this makes students able to position themselves as a Muslim who is not only concerned with his hereafter, but can balance with his worldly life.

In the academic world, moderation is essential to maintain objectivity. If we go too extreme on one view, we can become biased and don't see the facts as a whole. A moderate attitude encourages us to always look for evidence, question assumptions, and accept the possibility that there is a lot of truth. In a country as diverse as Indonesia, moderation is the key to unity. With moderation, we can value differences as wealth, not as threats. It helps us to stay united as a nation, despite having many ethnic, religious, and viewpoint backgrounds.

CONCLUSIONS

Students and lecturers with liberal views tend to uphold freedom of opinion, organization, critical thinking, and reinterpretation of religious teachings in a contextual and rational manner. They believe that religious teachings must be relevant to the times and encourage interfaith dialogue and tolerance. Fundamentalist students and lecturers tend to emphasize the literal understanding of sacred texts, reject interpretations that are considered to reduce religious authority, be exclusive, and maintain religious traditions and values that are considered pure. The majority of students and lecturers at FUSI tend to identify themselves as having moderate views, supporting tolerance between religious communities, openness to differences of opinion, and upholding inclusive and balanced national and Islamic values, however, there are nuances of contrast where individuals who claim to be moderate also agree with some conservative or fundamental principles. Factors such as educational and social backgrounds, the influence of student organizations and Islamic forums, as well as religious literacy and reading are analyzed to explain the formation of this view Education at FUSI itself focuses on in-depth Islamic studies, analysis of critical religious thought, and understanding of various perspectives. The debate between liberalism and fundamentalism is particularly pronounced in the classrooms and academic forums of FUSI, creating an atmosphere of intense and sometimes tension-provoking discussions, where arguments are often difficult to reconcile, especially regarding the formalization of Islamic law and the role of religion in the state. The Faculty of Ushuluddin and Islamic Studies is expected to be able to balance between encouraging freedom of thought and respecting traditional values to create a harmonious learning atmosphere, as well as being a forum for constructive dialogue to bridge diverse thoughts

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