HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies
ISSN: (Online) 2072-8050, (Print) 0259-9422

The scale of religious conservatism among Muslim students in Indonesia: A Rasch Analysis

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Dates:
Received: 14 June 2023
Accepted: 15 Jan. 2024
Published: 03 Apr. 2024

How to cite this article:
Jamin, A., Damni, A., 2024, 'The scale of religious conservatism among Muslim students in Indonesia: A Rasch Analysis', *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 80(1), a9134. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v80i1.9134

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This study aimed to develop a 'religious conservatism' scale tailored for university students, employing the Rasch Analysis approach in a four-step process. Firstly, a psychometric scale comprising 29 unidimensional items was formulated based on a thorough literature review. Secondly, items generated from literature studies underwent validation, resulting in the retention of 23 items after eliminating irrelevant ones. Thirdly, a psychometric analysis was conducted using the Rasch Model Approach with a sample of 549 randomly selected students from three universities in Sumatra, Indonesia. In all, 15 items met the Rasch Analysis criteria, with unnecessary items removed because of logit value overlap. Fourthly, an empirical comparison of study results based on gender and student categories (first-year, second-year, junior and senior) was performed, revealing insights into the average logit level of student conservatism. As a result, the study identified the highest logit score based on gender criteria and student categories, contributing valuable information on the nuanced aspects of religious conservatism among university students. The development of this scale provides a valuable tool for future research exploring the dynamics of religious conservatism within the university context.

Contribution: This research introduces a meticulously validated psychometric scale designed specifically for assessing religious conservatism among Islamic university students. Setting it apart from comparable studies, this scale demonstrates distinct advantages, such as its precise focus on the Islamic context, rigorous psychometric validation process, elimination of irrelevant items and contextual applicability within university settings. By providing researchers and educators with a more accurate tool, the scale facilitates a deeper understanding and targeted approach to addressing religious conservatism among Muslim students in Indonesia.

Keywords: Muslims; Islam; radicalism; religious conservatism; Rasch analysis; religious ideology.

Introduction

The attitude of religious conservatism nowadays deserves attention, considering the increasingly massive actions that place religion in an ambivalent manner, for example, the emergence of religion-based identity politics in various countries, such as the United States (O'Brien & Abdelhadi 2020), social prejudice in France (De Orellana & Michelsen 2019) and Islam-based identity politics in Indonesia (Hadiz 2018). This implies that religious conservatism has spread in various aspects of life in Indonesia. For example, conservatism has given rise to new economic forms that rely on ties primordial religion (Kirana & Garadian 2020; Pribadi 2021; Rudiawarni, Sulistiawan & Sergi 2022). In religious life, an attitude of conservatism emerges with a tendency to interpret religion and scriptures literally (Whitehouse 2019). This conservatism is considered not beneficial for religion, especially Islam. Religion is positioned as something rigid, anti-change and modern. Religious conservatism also influences the social behaviour of religious adherents. This can be identified from social media, where conservative people tend to aggressively attack the opinions and interpretations of others on social media to promote reform in Islam (Eady et al. 2019; Kadivar 2022; Whitehouse 2000). Many social scholars have conceptualised this behaviour of religious conservatism. This behaviour is inseparable from understanding and the value structure attached to adherents of religion.

Eady et al. (2019) explained that religious conservatism shapes and even influences the behaviour of adherents of religion through understanding exclusive to one religion's doctrines and teachings. In addition, Vogl and Freese (2020) identified that religious conservatism, which often shows exclusive and anti-change attitudes, cannot be separated from the influence of religious ideology.

This case includes how individuals understand religious teachings. In addition to this study, Bourke (2018) also found a new trend of religious conservatism, where conservative individuals tend to be radical and reject existences that are different from their understandings and beliefs. Responding to various concepts and explanations of the pattern and behaviour of religious conservatism, various scholars have tried to introduce a useful psychometric scale that can measure the level of religious conservatism.

Petersen and Takayama (1984) conducted a study and identified that religion contributed to racial conservatism and was caused by the conservatism of other types. In addition, the relationship between religion and conservative attitudes characteristic is inconsistent, even non-linear (Petersen & Takayama 1984). That is the relationship between religion and conservatism characteristic elution and difficult to identify because of that complex relationship. Nevertheless, Novis-Deutsch et al. (2022) identified that conservative attitudes did not only grow in religion but also in liberal ideology, which made conservative people precise towards religious values. These findings confirm that conservatism is a product of ideology and not only fabricated through religious values alone. In this regard, religious and nonreligious factors cause conservatism. Various findings in this study confirm that conservatism as an attitude is a dynamic, even complex, characteristic. Therefore, it uses an instrument that is characteristically valid and useful for measuring the level of conservatism.

Several studies have offered psychometric instruments to measure conservatism. Walker, Katz and Green (1990) introduced a conservatism scale to examine and measure multiculturalism at the international level. This instrument characteristic is valid when tested on Christian communities in various countries, that is, South Africa, Japan, Israel and Arab-Israeli (Walkey, Katz & Green 1990). In contrast, Wildman et al. (2021) specifically introduced a multidimensional scale of religious ideology, assuming that religious conservatism cannot be separated from religious dogma. The various studies that exist and have been described can be classified into several topics: *Firstly*, studies that position religious conservatism as one of the factors influencing various domains of individual life. In this category, there are several studies with relatively diverse topics. Novis-Deutsch et al. (2022) focussed on understanding the relationship dynamics between conservatism, liberalism and religiosity. This study found a dynamic relationship between conservatism as a worldview and liberalism towards fundamental human values (Novis-Deutsch et al. 2022). In addition, Petersen and Takayama (1984) conducted a comprehensive study on the relationship between religiosity and conservatism. To elaborate on this relationship, these scholars used Gorsuch and Aleshire's (1974) hypothesis and found a somewhat inconsistent influence of religiosity on conservatism as a worldview (Petersen & Takayama 1984). In the same category but with a relatively different topic, Young, Willer and Keltner (2013) identified a relationship between fundamentalism and political conservatism regarding using moral foundations in various applications. In another field, Terrizzi, Shook and Larry Ventis (2012) used religious conservatism to understand the behaviour of Christian believers regarding the 'behavioral immune system' (BIS) and successfully identified that religious conservatism values and views positively influence BIS behaviour. Some studies in this category affirm that religious conservatism is a dynamically influential variable on other variables.

Secondly, studies that attempted to formulate a scale of religious conservatism with various estimation indicators proposed. In this case, Gilbert's (1982) study suggested a scale to measure conservatism among pastors. His study successfully identified a relatively high correlation between prejudiced attitudes, authoritarianism and conventionalism among pastors and even seminary students (Gilbert 1982). Green et al. (1988) identified that the conservatism scale developed by Wilson and Patterson (1968) is based on the assumption that social behaviour at some level is interconnected and not isolated. Several years earlier, Jamieson (1978) also introduced a conservatism scale with 35 items, concluding, based on his study, that conservatism consists of several factors and dimensions that are independent. These two categories of studies on conservatism indicate an expansion of research and simultaneously emphasise the limitations of studies constructing religious conservatism scales, especially when tested at the university or Islamic higher education level.

Departing from the trend of existing studies, as a response, this study aims to introduce a scale of religious conservatism and then uses it to understand religious conservatism among students at Islamic universities in Sumatra, Indonesia. In this context, the study offers novelty or new contributions related to the scale of religious conservatism, through several strategies: *Firstly*, using a Rasch analysis to model individual abilities – religious conservatism, against the characteristics of the items on the scale (Bond & Fox 2013). *Secondly*, using the Rasch analysis approach, this study aims to identify religious conservatism among Muslim students at three universities in Sumatra, Indonesia. These three universities were chosen based on the typology of Islam that developed in the three regions where these universities were established. These three universities grew and developed in the same cultural Islamic setting, namely Islam-Malay (Aljunied 2011; Jufri & Watson 1998; Von Benda-Beckmann & Von Benda-Beckmann 2012). Based on this cultural fact, these three universities were chosen over other universities.

This study chose Muslim students as the object, where the psychometric scale was tested because of several arguments. *Firstly*, millennials, generally Muslim students, are the dominant age group. They are considered dominant because the millennial age group can influence the style and determine the direction of discussion of religious life in Indonesia (Shalihin et al. 2023; Ummah 2020). *Secondly*, Muslim students in Indonesia are currently one of the groups that are very

vulnerable to religious radicalism (Saifuddin 2011; Zularham 2019). Similarly, this group is also vulnerable to religious conservatism. Both have a strong relationship at the level of religious understanding, which is mutually exclusive and eliminates differences in religious understanding (Tanashur 2021). These two arguments are the strongest reason for Muslim students to participate in the psychometric scale testing of religious conservatism.

The researcher's position in this study is explicitly stated, stating that his role is to develop a scale of conservatism relevant to Islamic beliefs and is tested on students at an Islamic university. This study is to formulate a religious conservatism scale and then model religious conservatism using the scale at three Islamic universities in Sumatra, Indonesia. In this regard, the research focus includes two things: 'constructing a scale of religious conservatism' in an Islamic context and 'testing the scale in three Islamic universities in Sumatra Indonesia'. On that basis, the structure of the discussion of this paper includes: *Firstly*, this section elaborates on gap argumentation and research objectives, *Secondly*, the concept of religious conservatism and how this topic is discussed in several existing studies is outlined. *Thirdly,* the methods and how the data are analysed are also described. *Fourthly*, the results of the Rasch test analysis of the items offered on the psychometric scale of religious conservatism are detailed. *Fifthly*, it compares this study's findings with similar studies published previously, reiterates the study's contribution and formulates suggestions that could be considered for further studies.

Literature review

Religious conservatism and its concepts

Conservatism is an uncompromising understanding of globalisation and modernisation (Kemmelmeier 2015; Saroglou 2015). It rejects diversity in ideas, interpretations, beliefs and perceptions of everything. Differences are considered taboo, even prohibited, because establishment must be interpreted literally and continuously occasionally. In addition, conservatism reflects past cultural justifications that must be maintained (Marty 2015). This suggests that conservatism tends to be an ideology over the status quo rather than a scientific ideology. This kind of attitude leads to intolerance towards pluralism and considers pluralism as a real threat to past cultures that must be held (Merrotsy 2016). Conservatism upholds conventional values, and there is no room for differences. Similarities can sometimes be distinguished as being exclusive. Similarities are considered a good thing, but differences are considered deviations from traditions that already exist and are inherited continuously from the past (Clobert 2021). Positive things can be well maintained if they receive support from the ideology underlying their thinking. In addition, negative things are seen as products of deviations from traditions and habits passed down from generation to generation (Hall et al. 2022). In this context, conservatism does not allow room for change. This attitude will stagnate people's lives, religion, economy, culture and politics.

In the field of religion, conservatism will reject anything different from mainstream religious traditions (Zuhdi 2018). Nothing needs to be changed in both faith and religion. Everything must be understood continuously and passed down continuously from time to time. Special conditions and situational contexts are unacceptable in terms of religious conservatism. Religious conservatism makes a person more aggressive and can trigger internal and external disharmony. Even religious experts can be misguided when giving a new opinion contradicting the mainstream view. This certainly causes someone with different thoughts to be more likely to choose silence when they have a different understanding than mainstream thinking. Plus, conservatism is religious and tends to interpret religious teachings based on the literal meaning of scriptures and religious traditions (Kaňuková 2019). There is no room for new interpretations, even those based on scientific logic or philosophy. They speak out militantly and stand up for what they believe is right. This certainly causes religion to be the best locus for the growth of identity politics, which is not very beneficial for multicultural realities and not very good for people with high diversity.

Ideology and conservatism: A relationship

Ideology refers to the norms and values that bind social identity (De Witte 2004; Dubois 2001; Thompson 2001). Ideology also refers to shared or common values considered reasonable and generally accepted in society. Currently, ideology is represented in various domains, for example, religion, understanding, flow, norms, principles and even doctrine (Birdir et al. 2022; DePaula 2023; Hossain, Rjiba & Saadi 2022; Sun, Zhu & Guo 2022; Wu et al. 2022). Despite thereby, ideology until now has not been defined exclusively and objectively (Berkes 2017; Devine 2015; Olwig & Mels 2020). However, some definitions can help us understand the essence of ideology. Some scholars, for example, define ideology as critical thinking (Stern 2022). In another sense, some people think ideology is identity thinking about social life (Kobayashi 2020; Sinha 2022). Reese, Rosenmann and Cameron (2019) identify ideology as the essence of reality in social life. This diversity of definitions can be seen philosophically as a representation that cannot be separated from one's awareness of seeking and formulating 'common values' related to social, political, and even religious life. The pertinent question therefore is: What is the relationship between ideology and conservatism?

The relationship between ideology and conservatism can be traced from two groups. *Firstly*, ideology is the foundation of conservatism, one of the political ideologies within a wider spectrum of ideologies. Ideologies such as liberalism, socialism and other conservatism also provide a foundation for conservatism's beliefs and values (Bourke 2018). *Secondly*, the principles of conservatism, In this context, conservatism has fundamental principles that form the basis of belief in various things, such as politics and religion. This principle includes effort and belief to establish a tradition and anti-change (Bourke 2018; Collins 2013). These two classifications

emphasise that the relationship between ideology and conservatism can be traced from the foundations, principles and values believed to be true and then used as collective ideals. In the context of religion, doctrines and values that arise as interpretations of doctrines become a standard that does not accept change and then become sacred as a collective standard, which must be established and maintained.

Method

Rasch analysis as a study approach

Rasch is a statistical analysis approach based on the paradigm of internal rationality and objectivity concerning reflective measurement norms (Andrich 2005, 2010). This is characterised by the principle of measuring latent variables that are required to have similarities with physical measurements using Log-Odds Unit (Logits). Its main characteristic is the value of unidimensionality related to reflective norms, which measures the items offered on a single scale. Furthermore, this approach requires the statistical correspondence of items to people and people to items (Bond & Fox 2013). In addition, this study used Conditional Maximum Likelihood Estimation (CMLE) and Joint Maximum Likelihood Estimation (JMLE). The CMLE estimates probability parameters based on logit items and people, and JMLE estimates patterns based on items and people. Rasch approximation should be used as the parameter barrier zone for each scale category. This refers to Andrich Thresholds logit and logit category areas. It measures both regular and conventional logits. Some differences in types, mean intervals and median gaps can be understood as probabilities in measuring ideological conservatism (Bond & Fox 2013, 2015). As a result, this study highlights raw scores as ordinal data and converts them into interval data.

Sample and data

In this research methodology, an online survey approach was used to collect data from 572 Islamic students at three universities in Sumatra, Indonesia. The survey was designed to investigate various aspects related to religious conservatism and their worldview. Firstly, survey preparation involved creating clear and relevant questions, focussing on developing the scale of religious conservatism. An online survey platform was chosen in consideration of its ability to handle a significant number of respondents. A respondent database that included contact information and respondent characteristics was carefully prepared. Thereafter, the online survey was distributed through invitations to respondents with an explanation of the purpose of the research and the importance of their participation (Harlow 2010). The survey results were comprehensively analysed to support the findings of this study in understanding the dynamics of the relationship between these factors in the context of Islamic students in Sumatra. In data context, this study applied the data filtering and cleaning stage by excluding 23 unfit data for further analysis for the following reasons: too many blank answers, the answers were the same between one item and another, and the answers were identical to other respondents. In total, 549 students were included in the final analysis. Samples were selected according to the category and sex of the students. It consisted of 174 men and 358 women, 98 freshmen, 56 sophomores, 73 juniors and 27 seniors (Table 1).

Procedures and data analysis

This study used the Rasch analysis approach to check validity and reliability. According to Rasch rules, measurement attributes will be changed in Logits values (Andrich 2005; Engelhard & Wind 2019; Van Der Linden 2010). The resulting scale was unidimensional and statistically fit. In general, there are four steps in this research. *Firstly*, generated items of the conservatism scale refer to three previous studies to produce draft items (Groff 2022; Huber & Huber 2012; Luckmann 2022). The results obtained at this stage included 29 unidimensional items; *secondly*, they were validated internally, both linguistically by experts and by some target populations. This stage allows for identifying feasible items to be proposed after eliminating and revising several items considered invalid. *Thirdly*, randomly selected 549 students at three universities were analysed psychometrically using the Rasch Model approach. Then the data obtained were analysed in terms of performance based on the item-respondent attributes and vice versa using the Rasch model approach (Zufriani, Pitriani & Damni 2022). In all, 15 items qualified following the Rasch model approach after excluding unnecessary items that overlapped with the logit values of other items. *Fourthly*, the participants were measured broadly, comparing by gender (male and female) and student category (first year, sophomore year, junior and senior). The data visualised the probability of conservatism on the Wright map. The classification of genders and students will enrich the research results. Rasch Analysis uses Winstep software version 5.3.4 (by Winstep Software Technologies) and JASP 0.16.4.0 (a statistical and graphical analysis software that is open source and free).

Result

Generating items and population targets

Items were arranged based on three previous studies (Adira et al. 2021; Huber & Huber 2012; Wildman et al. 2021). This

TABLE 1: Respondent demographics.

Respondents	*n*	%
Universities		
IAIN Kerinci	178	32
UIN Imam Bonjol, Padang	201	37
UIN STS, Jambi	170	31
Gender		
Man	178	32
Woman	358	65
Not mentioned	17	3
Student semester		
First-year	222	40
Second year/Sophomore	162	30
Junior	117	21
Senior	48	9

unidimensional scale framework produced 29 Indonesian items after the literature review stage, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 is the product of applying the scale formulation model offered by Sholihin, Shalihin & Addiarrahman (2023) related to Islamic beliefs. In this regard, the procedure for constructing the scale involved a systematic approach, beginning with the careful selection of relevant statements reflecting various aspects of Islamic beliefs. These statements were subjected to preliminary testing among a small sample to identify and address any potential ambiguities. Subsequently, the chosen statements were organised into a logical sequence, and a scoring system utilising a Likert scale was established. The scale underwent pilot testing on a larger sample to assess its reliability and validity, with statistical measures such as Cronbach's alpha employed for internal consistency evaluation. Item analysis helped refine the scale by identifying and addressing any redundant or weakly correlated items. Expert input was sought to ensure clarity and appropriateness. The finalised scale consists of statements addressing diverse dimensions of religious beliefs within Islam, providing a comprehensive tool for measuring attitudes and views on various aspects of the faith. Regular reviews and updates will, however, be essential to maintain the scale's relevance and reliability over time.

TABLE 2: The deep religious conservatism scale *Indonesian*.

Item code	Item statements
1	We must aggressively spread religious messages on social media.
2	Although Islamic traditions have evolved through history, the underlying truths have never changed.
3	Tradition in Islam offers truth to everyone.
4	The teachings of Islam are the deepest, clearest and easiest to understand.
5	God is close to people participating in Islamic events.
6	The Qur'an brings the truth.
7	Requests in prayer are sure to be heard and answered by God.
8	Without a common belief, every Muslim group will suffer.
9	Every Muslim needs to believe in every basic rule of Islam.
10	Teachings in Islam demand that we keep our distance from non-Muslim
11	One must devote oneself to one true religious teaching.
12	Muslim groups have demonstrated religious teachings that suit my personality.
13	Islamic teachings are the truth explicit, not implicit.
14	There is only one path to the correct interpretation of religion.
15	I can overcome daily problems because of prayer and or Islamic religious activities.
16	All Islamic religious traditions must be preserved.
17	Islam is a religion that respects all religions.
18	God is close to him and strictly carries out religious orders.
19	God does not like people who tolerate non-Muslim
20	Nothing needs to be changed from the way we are religious.
21	There is no limit to tolerance.
22	Prayer is the only effort that is useful.
23	Al-Quran can be interpreted literally.
24	People will receive rewards after death in return for their deeds during life in this world.
25	New views in the Islamic world should not exist.
26	Ancestral religious traditions are always useful, and we must preserve them for future generations.
27	Changing the way of religion is the opposite of religious teachings.
28	The translation of the Qur'an is the truth.
29	The younger generation demands too much change in the way religion.

Then, the scale is validated holistically, both in content and linguistics and empirically tested on the population. Psychometrically, a scale is declared valid when it is qualitatively declared valid by the expert and satisfied with the items offered. The scale can then be expanded in the next step. Content experts suggested eliminating six wrong items: items 2, 4, 11, 15, 21 and 26. Linguists suggest improvement and that these items should be replaced with new items because of interpretation problems that may occur on account of the grammar used for the five items, namely, items 1, 3, 8, 14 and 19. Meanwhile, from the target population, seven items must be adjusted so that they are more accessible to identify students, namely, items 1, 3, 12, 13, 16, 17 and 25. The remaining scale consists of 23 items distributed to students in a wider scope of educational institutions in Indonesia.

Validation of the conservatism scale

In this scale, the items were constructed based on inputs from 549 respondents. In this context, there were 23 input data and 23 estimation data. Generally, items and people on a conservative level perfectly fit the criteria the Rasch model requires. The value of person indicates (Pn) and Item (Im) of Outfit (Out) – Infit (In); Mean square (MNSQ) is close to 1, Pn-In MNSQ = 1.03; Pn-Out MNSQ = 0.99; Im-In MNSQ = 0.99 dan Im-Out MNSQ = 0.99. The people and items outfit-fit Z-standard (ZSTD) were close to 0, Pn-In ZSTD = –0.1, Pn-Out ZSTD = –0.1, Im-In ZSTD = –0.3 and Im-Out *ZSTD* = –0.1. The scale has a high-reliability value, namely 0.77 for person reliability and 0.99 for item reliability. The mean and standard deviation (SD) based on standardised residuals are 0.01 and 1.00, respectively; this indicates that the data are normally distributed (Andrich 2005, 2010; Bond & Fox 2013). The details of the statistical description of the scales used are shown in Table 3.

In particular, its item characteristic is smooth in measuring conservatism. All items demonstrated linearity in the

TABLE 3: Description of item and respondent statistics.

Statistic items	549 input		549 measured		In		Out	
	Total	Count	Measure	RealSE	MNSQ	ZSTD	MNSQ	ZSTD
Mean person	86.2	23	-0.86	0.22	1.03	-0.1	0.99	-0.1
SD person	12.2	0.0	0.48	0.05	0.46	1.6	0.48	1.5
Mean item	2058.0	549	0.00	0.04	0.99	-0.3	0.99	-0.1
SD item	270.1	0.0	0.45	0.01	0.29	5.2	0.31	5.0

Note: Standardised residual N (0,1); Mean: 0.01; SD: 1.00.

SD, Standard deviation; MNSQ, mean square; ZSTD, Z-standard; RealSE, Real standard error.

measurements, as shown in Table 4. The point measure correlation (PMC) values are all positive and in the range of 0.4–0.85 (Junker 2015). Except for items 16 = 0, 36, 17 = 0, 25 and 20 = 0.32, the suitability of the items is also extraordinary, referring to the value of the outfit and infit mean square.

TABLE 4: Item validity and reliability.

Item	Measure	IN.MNSQ	OUT.MNSQ	PMC
1	-0.49	0.98	0.93	0.55
3	-0.12	0.84	0.86	0.55
5	-0.28	0.74	0.74	0.57
6	-0.32	0.65	0.61	0.62
7	-0.03	1.01	1.13	0.50
8	-0.96	0.93	0.68	0.59
9	-0.45	0.80	0.81	0.56
10	-0.59	1.02	0.99	0.55
12	0.70	1.02	0.80	0.58
13	0.51	0.71	0.74	0.47
14	-0.34	0.67	0.70	0.55
16	-0.02	0.91	0.93	0.52
17	0.13	0.79	0.82	0.52
18	0.16	0.60	0.67	0.43
19	0.05	0.57	0.59	0.60
20	0.17	1.06	1.01	0.36
22	0.15	1.53	1.51	0.25
23	0.86	1.33	1.43	0.41
24	0.24	1.11	1.10	0.47
25	0.44	1.37	1.42	0.32
27	0.41	1.23	1.26	0.48
28	0.74	1.35	1.38	0.45
29	0.45	1.63	1.70	0.21

MNSQ, mean square; PMC, Point Measure Correlation.

TABLE 5: Final items.

Item code	Logits	Item
1	-0.50	We must actively spread religious news on social media
3	-0.10	Traditions in Islam are good for everyone
5	-0.28	God is close to people participating in Islamic events
7	0.00	Requests in prayer are sure to be heard and answered by God
8	-1.02	Muslim groups must have the same meaning in religion
10	-0.55	Teachings in Islam demand that we keep our distance from non-Muslim
12	-0.73	Muslim groups in Indonesia have demonstrated religious teachings that suit my personality.
13	0.60	Islamic teachings are written truth, not implied
14	-0.33	There is only one path to true religious understanding
17	0.18	Islam is a tolerant religion for all religions
19	0.09	God does not like people who give room to non-Muslim
23	0.99	Al-Quran can be interpreted literally
24	0.30	People will receive rewards after death in return for their deeds during life in this world.
27	0.49	Change in the way of religion is the opposite of religious teachings
28	0.86	The translation of the Qur'an is a truth

The most appropriate thing to agree on is conservative is item 8 (–0.96 logits), and the easiest is item 23 (0.86 logits).

The initial number of remaining items was 23. Point Measure Correlation eliminated three items outside the 0.4–0.85 range (Items 20, 22 and 25) and one item by Outfit MNSQ outside the 0.5–1.5 range of (item 29). Four items overlapped with the logit values of other items (items 6, 9, 16 and 18). The final 15 items were eligible, based on the Rasch model approach. Each final logit item on the conservatism scale are shown in Table 5. The most challenging thing to agree on is conservative is item 8 (–1.02 logits), and the easiest is item 23 (0.99 logits).

The choice of items (strongly agree-agree between agree and disagree-disagree-strongly disagree) significantly affected the overall scale. This is indicated by the Andrich Threshold value, which has shown a concordance between non-negative-positives (Andersen 2005). In addition, Outfit and Infit MNSW show fit statistics at 0.5–1.5. The details regarding the choice of each item are presented in Table 6.

The expected values were well distributed following the Rasch approach. The categories of observations with operational distances for each item corresponded to the distribution of respondents, and the hierarchy of items on the measurement scale demonstrated this. This corresponds to Figure 1.

Items and respondents explained the variance in each measurement item according to the Rasch approach. The natural variance explained by size was 100%, as expected

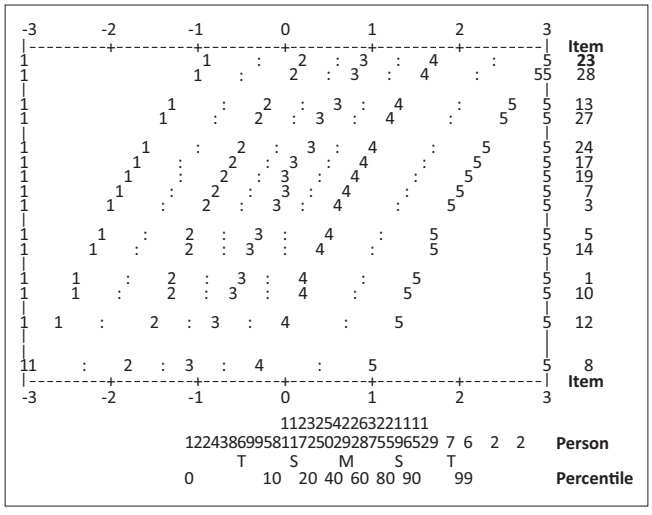

FIGURE 1: Expected score.

TABLE 6: Category structure summary.

Label	Score	Observed		Observed average	Sample expect	Infit MNSQ	Outfit MNSQ	Andrich threshold	Category measure
		Count	%						
1	1	1085	9	-0.12	-0.19	1.10	1.12	None	-2.47
2	2	960	8	0.05	0.08	0.92	0.91	-1.01	-1.05
3	3	2794	22	0.31	0.36	0.89	0.80	-0.85	-0.01
4	4	3014	24	0.68	0.66	0.82	0.81	0.43	1.04
5	5	4766	38	0.98	0.97	1.10	1.11	1.01	2.50

MNSQ, mean square.

in the 100% model. The empirical variance explains 40.5%, which is not much different from what is expected: 41.4%, people 14.3% and expected 14.6%, and items 26.2% and expected 26.8%. The item's natural variance values showing this and the person were 3.6 and 6.6 eigenvalues. The unexplained variance value also reinforces this at the first level, which is not greater than 2 (Larsen & Warne 2010). Further details of the variance are shown in Figure 2.

Conservatism among Muslim students

The conservative level can be classified as moderately low, as shown in Figure 2. The mean person value is outside the mean item. In addition, the mean person score was lower than two SDs of the log items. This shows that the measurement respondents reject actions and perceptions referring to religious conservatism. This low conservative value can be divided into two levels (1.91), referring to the separation value. A detailed map of this religious conservatism variable is presented in Figure 3.

		--	Empirical	--	Modeled
Total raw variance in observations	=	25.2	100.0%		100.0%
Raw variance explained by persons	=	10.2	40.5%		41.4%
Raw Variance explained by items	=	3.6	14.3%		14.6%
Raw Variance explained by items	=	6.6	26.2%		26.8%
Raw unexplained variance (total)	=	15.0	59.5%	100.0%	58.6%
Unexplned variance in 1st contrast	=	2.0	8.0%	26.8%	
Unexplned variance in 2nd contrast	=	1.8	7.0%	11.7%	
Unexplned variance in 3rd contrast	=	1.4	5.7%	9.5%	
Unexplned variance in 4th contrast	=	1.2	4.8%	8.0%	
Unexplned variance in 5th contrast	=	1.0	4.0%	6.7%	

FIGURE 2: Variances in observations.

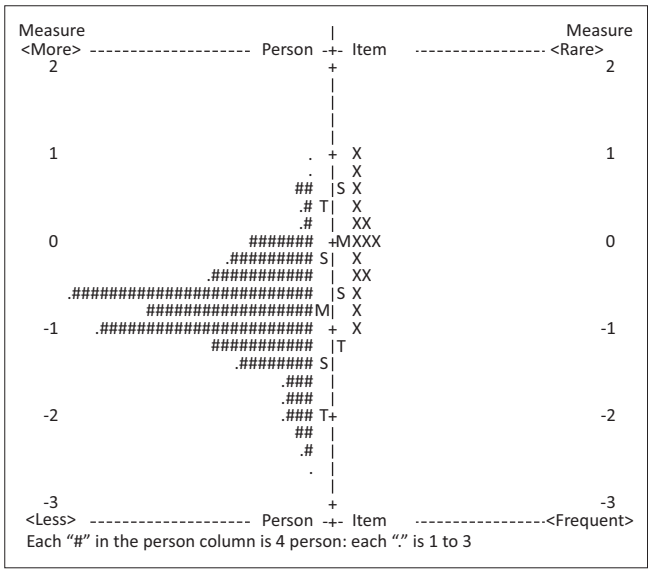

FIGURE 3: Variable map.

The students' average logit was 0.70. The civil servant category had the highest logit (0.96), followed by female (0.75 logit) and male (0.55 logit). The male's 2.57 logit is less than the female 2.70 logit, as shown in Table 7. This evidence is strengthened by the median value (g = 0.71, m = 0.71, f = 0.71, and prefer not to say [PNS] = 0.93), reliability of the pattern (g = 0.78, m = 0.81, f = 0.77 and PNS = 0.48), standard error (g = 0.03, m = 0.05, f = 0.03 and PNS = 0.10) and SD (g = 0.60, m = 0.61, f = 0.59 and *civil servant* = 0.41). Commonly referred to as the separation value (g = 1.91); the level of conservatism can be divided into two levels. The gender category can be divided into six levels: men have three levels, women have two and civil servants have one level (m = 2.03, f = 1.83 and civil *servant* = 0.93). Specifically, this can be observed in Table 7.

Significant differences existed between gender groups (m, f and *civil servants*). The probability value with analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Welch is < 0.05 (< 0.001). Each category compared to one other category also shows the significance of the difference: PNS to m (P_{tukey} = 0.018) and m when f (P_{tukey} = < 0.001) except *civil servant* the f (P_{tukey} = 0.329). The details are listed in Table 8.

First-year students had a –0.81 logit level of religious conservatism with a mean standard error of 0.18. This is 0.04 logit, which is higher than the average value. Sophomores had 2.37 logs, which is 0.29 logs lower than the median, with a standard error of 0.21. Juniors have 2.64 logs, 0.02 logs lower than average with a standard error of 0.13, and seniors have 3.18 logits, 0.52 logits higher than average with a standard error of 0.26. Subsequently, several groups were formed from the split values. 2.13 shows three groups for first years, 1.99 shows two groups for sophomores, 1.25 shows one group for Juniors and 1.13 shows two groups for Seniors. Details can be seen in Table 9.

There was a significant difference between the student categories (1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th). The probability value with ANOVA was < 0.05 (< 0.001). Several categories compared to one other category also showed significant difference: 1st to 3rd (P_{Tukey} = < 0.001), 1st until 4th (P_{Tukey} = 0.017), 2nd until 3rd (P_{Tukey} = < 0.001), 2nd up to 4th (P_{Tukey} = 0.007), except 1st until 2nd (P_{Tukey} = 0.938) and 3rd until 4th (P_{Tukey} = 0.993). Specifically, this can be observed in Table 10.

TABLE 8: Post hoc comparisons by sex.

Category			Mean difference	Standard error	t	P_{tukey}
PNS	→	*m*	0.412	0.152	2.720	0.018
	→	*f*	0.211	0.148	1.424	0.329
m	→	*f*	-0.201	0.055	-3.654	< 0.001

Note: P-ANOVA (< 0.001); P-Welch (< 0.001).
PNS, prefer not to say.

TABLE 7: Logs by gender.

Category	Frequency	Mean in Logits	Median	Separation	Reliability	Standard error	Standard deviation
General (*g*)	549	0.70	0.71	1.91	0.78	0.03	0.60
Male (*m*)	178	0.55	0.71	2.05	0.81	0.05	0.61
Female (*f*)	358	0.75	0.71	1.83	0.77	0.03	0.59
Prefer not to say (*PNS*)	17	0.96	0.93	0.96	0.48	0.10	0.41

TABLE 9: Logit by student category.

Category	Frequency	Mean in logits	Median	Separation	Reliability	Standard error	Standard deviation
General (G)	549	0.70	0.71	1.91	0.78	0.03	0.60
First year (1st)	222	0.62	0.65	2.13	0.82	0.04	0.66
Sophomore (2nd)	162	0.58	0.58	1.99	0.80	0.05	0.60
Junior (3rd)	117	0.92	0.93	1.25	0.61	0.04	0.47
Senior (4th)	48	0.89	0.93	1.13	0.56	0.06	0.43

TABLE 10: Logit by student category.

Category			Mean difference	Standard error	*t*	P_{tukey}
1st	→	2nd	0.035	0.061	0.580	0.938
	→	3rd	-0.304	0.067	-4.521	< 0.001
	→	4th	-0.277	0.094	-2.951	0.017
2nd	→	3rd	0.340	0.071	4.751	< 0.001
	→	4th	0.312	0.097	3.223	0.007
3rd	→	4th	0.028	0.101	0.273	0.993

P-ANOVA (< 0.001).

Discussion

This study successfully generalised several patterns related to respondents' responses to items regarding religious conservatism. These response patterns can be classified as follows: *Firstly*, items related to the sacred text, that is, the Quran, were the most easily agreed upon by the respondents. This is related to the basic dimensions of the Islamic religion, which places the holy book as an important element of belief in the Islamic faith; it contains the stories of the past and the truth and should foretell tomorrow (Brown 2013; Zainol, Majid & Saad 2018). This aligns with previous research on scriptures, scientifically proven to influence a person's religious beliefs, Judaism, Christianity and Islam (Kadhim et al. 2017). *Secondly*, items relating to Muslim groups, in general, were the most difficult to agree on. Presumably, this is linear with Muslim prejudice against non-Muslims and adherents of other faiths (Kretschmer & Leszczensky 2022). *Thirdly*, there are significant differences between men and women in their responses to items on the religious conservatism scale. In this context, women agree less with religious conservatism than men. This is in line with previous research, which considered women to have started and dared to participate in expressing themselves with a conservative ideology (Nickerson 2018). In simple terms, these three response patterns are closely related to three important issues, namely: 'the position of the Quran in Islam', 'reaction to social diversity', and 'reaction to social diversity', 'differentiation gender largely determines the preference for religious conservatism'.

These three responses can be explained sociologically, where the Quran is a guide and a normative source for Muslims that influences their daily behaviour (Hayatullah 2014). In influencing the life of a Muslim, the Quran has a specific role, namely: *Firstly*, as a moral and ethical guide. Qur'an, in this case, becomes the foundation for the morality behind Muslim behaviour (Kadhim et al. 2017; Latief 2017). *Secondly*, the Quran is the identity and glue of Muslims; in this case, the Quran is believed to be the main source for collectively forming the identity of Muslims. The Quran contains a collective code of conduct that fosters unity and togetherness among Muslims. Thus, the Quran is believed to be a bond that can strengthen Muslims as a community. *Thirdly*, the Quran affects the frame of mind of Muslims in carrying out routines and daily life (Izutsu 2002; Kalin 2016). The belief that the Q is the primary source keeps Muslims bound by strict and rigorous thinking methods. This encourages a new attitude called Islamic conservatism (Pribadi 2021). However, this attitude differs and varies among Muslims. For example, this study identified differences in responses among Muslim students to religious conservatism, where men showed a helpful attitude towards religious conservatism. This finding aligns with the study of Lanti et al. (2016), which found that Indonesia is currently facing the growth of religious conservatism (Lanti, Akim & Dermawan 2020). This aligns with the development of various new da'wah movements, such as the hijrah movement (Hidayat, Sholihin & Wanto 2021). This movement emphasises conservatism in understanding and interpreting the text of the Quran, so it tends to be rigid and finds it difficult to accept differences within the body of Islam and is rather exclusive against religious plurality.

Theoretical implication

The theoretical implications derived from this study's analysis of respondents' responses to items related to religious conservatism are profound and multi-faceted. Firstly, the high agreement among respondents on items related to the Quran signifies the centrality of the sacred text in Islamic beliefs, aligning with the foundational dimensions of the Islamic faith. This finding resonates with previous research that demonstrates the influential role of scriptures in Islam, Judaism and Christianity. Secondly, the difficulty in reaching consensus on items related to Muslim groups reflects a potential link to Muslim prejudice against non-Muslims and individuals of different faiths. This aligns with existing literature highlighting societal challenges related to religious diversity. Thirdly, the significant gender-based differences in responses suggest that women tend to align less with religious conservatism compared to men. This aligns with previous research indicating women's increasing willingness to express themselves with a more liberal ideology. Sociologically, these response patterns can be explained by the Quran's multifaceted role as a moral guide, a unifying identity for Muslims and a determinant of mindset and daily routines. The study further identifies variations in responses among Muslim students, particularly men showing a more supportive attitude towards religious conservatism. This aligns with the broader context of Indonesia facing the rise of religious conservatism, exemplified by movements like hijrah, emphasising a rigid interpretation of the Quran and

displaying exclusivity against religious plurality. Overall, these findings contribute to a nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between religious beliefs, gender dynamics and societal attitudes in the context of Islamic conservatism.

Conclusion

This study obtains statistically eligible items following the Rasch model approach. The structure of each item has been shown to meet the Andrich Threshold. The variance in the measurements was also well explained by the measurement scales for each option attached to the article. The results of this scale validation can be used in tertiary institutions to measure student religious conservatism, especially in the Indonesian Islamic Religious Higher Education environment. In general, the results showed that the average tendency of students was lower than that of the intermediate logit measurement tool, the level of female conservatism was higher than that of male studentsiz and the level of conservatism had no significant effect on student semester levels. The limitations of this study lie in the scale and scope of the respondents, which were only among students. Therefore, in the future, these limitations should be considered for other studies to be developed more broadly. In addition to broadening the research respondents, other researchers could include several demographic variables to enrich the research results.

Acknowledgements

This study resulted from intensive discussions with researchers at the Institut Agama Islam Negeri (IAIN) Kerinci, Indonesia. Specifically, the authors have contributed suggestions and efforts to improve the quality of studies and article drafting.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationship(s) that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Authors' contributions

A.J. consistently demonstrated ideas and theories and then gradually poured them into an article draft. Subsequently, A.D. analysed the data using Rasch Analysis.

Ethical considerations

This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

Funding information

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article, as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

Disclaimer

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