

## THE DYNAMICS OF RELIGIOUS MODERATION IN MERGOSONO VILLAGE, KEDUNGKANDANG SUB-DISTRICT, MALANG CITY.

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Rafel J S, Zahrotur R<sup>1</sup>, A. Bayth<sup>1</sup>, A. Nasrullah<sup>1</sup>, Khaerinda N F<sup>1</sup>.

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**Abstract** - *In the midst of the diversity that the Indonesian nation has, this diversity often requires us to always be aware that this nation is a great nation with all kinds of differences, whether in terms of religion, culture, race or customs . And it does not rule out the possibility that these differences will create disputes between fellow members of the nation which will lead to never-ending conflict. Therefore, there is a need for balance and harmony in understanding these differences. Religious moderation is a solution to reduce fanaticism and extremism conflicts that are mushrooming among religious communities, because religious moderation teaches a moderate and non-fanatic attitude and respects existing differences. This research is included in the descriptive qualitative research category, meaning that the data collected in this research is in the form of text, visual representations, and not in the form of numbers. In this qualitative research, Grounded Research or Grounded Theory is applied by reconstructing the theory based on data obtained from the field, namely how religious moderation is implemented in Mergosono Village itself. The results of this research show that religious moderation in Mergosono is not only between religions but also between religious groups, namely between the Abangan and the Putihan. We can also see religious moderation in the Mergosono sub-district from the aspect of the ta'lim assembly, where they respect each other and do not blame each other, there is no feeling of fanaticism or envy between them.*

**Keywords** : *Religious Moderation, KKN 111 Mergosono Village*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The consequence of diversity is the large number of differences, the large number of differences does not rule out the possibility that there will be friction or even conflict between communities, so Religious Moderation is very important in the state and religion, because it can strengthen national unity. Being moderate is also more suitable for the culture of society which has a lot of diversity, especially nowadays.

Moderation means the middle way or the best way, where moderation is between two bad things. In terms of religion, this is also the case. Religious moderation means practicing religion in the middle way, not being too excessive in religion so that you are too fanatical about what you believe in and blame what other people believe in (Lexi, 2000). People who practice religious moderation are called Moderates. However, people often assume that religious moderation is only between religions, even though religious moderation also occurs between groups of schools of thought, sects of belief, and also in terms of a person's religious practices.

In Clifford Geertz's research in his book *The Religion Of Java* Geertz divided Javanese Islamic society into several parts or what we often call *the trichotomy* (Lexi, 2000), namely santri, priyayi, and abangan. However, abangan and priyayi were combined into one group. which means that the Islamic community in Java is divided into two large groups, namely Abangan Islam and Putihan Islam. The religious practice of Abangan Islam is that it focuses on ancestral rituals rather than Islamic law, while White Islam or Santri is the term for pure followers of Islam which means implementing Islamic law in their religious practices. From the other side, Abangan Islam and Putihan Islam have two object areas, namely village and city areas. Abangan Islam for rural areas and Putihan Islam for urban areas (Saifuddin, 2019).

Mergosono Village is one of the sub-districts in Malang city. The majority of Mergosono people are Muslim and experience the phenomenon of Abangan Islam and White Islam, where there are differences in views between ordinary people (Abangan Islam) and local Islamic students. Where the students feel that they are better and higher in the religious field, while the abangan Islamic community in Mergosono Village feels that religion does not have to be fanatical but rather there must be cultural elements from ancestors or forefathers.

## **2. METHOD**

### **Research methods**

This research is included in the descriptive qualitative research category, meaning that the data collected in this research is in the form of text, visual representations, and not in the form of numbers. On the other hand, descriptive research is a type of research that aims to provide an overview or explain existing phenomena, be they natural phenomena or

the result of human engineering. <sup>1</sup>This descriptive research aims to compile a systematic, factual and accurate picture of the characteristics of a particular region. The aim of this research is to understand how the dynamics of religious moderation have been implemented in Mergosono Village, Kedungkandang District, Malang City. Apart from that, this qualitative research applies *Grounded Research* or *Grounded Theory* by reconstructing the theory based on data obtained from the field, namely how religious moderation is implemented in Mergosono Village itself.

Administratively, the village has been designated as a village of religious moderation. However, in this case it is still necessary *to launch* so that the public knows about the existence of the program which is expected to bring positive changes by prioritizing a moderate understanding of religion. In this study, the primary data source in the form of words was obtained from a two-way interaction obtained from the activities of the *ta'lim assembly* in the Mergosono Village between the reviewers or *preachers* and the regular *congregation* of the activity. Meanwhile, the secondary data sources in this study were in the form of KKN activities, and proof of certificates for the inauguration of the Mergosono Village as a religious moderation village and documentation of the implementation of these activities.

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Referring to existing data, the people in Mergosono sub-district on average adhere to several beliefs from Islam with a percentage of 78.5 % . Meanwhile, Christian belief, Hindu Buddhism, and belief in God Almighty only amounted to 17.4 %, 10%, and 0.6% respectively . Seeing this, community service is carried out, one of which is through activities in the religious sector, through efforts to improve the quality of faith through activities, especially in the field of religiosity, in the context of Real Work Lectures, especially in Mergosono Village. These activities include:

#### **A. Education on the Values of Religious Moderation for Early Childhood**

The word "moderation" comes from Latin *Moderation* which means moderation (no excess and no deficiency). This word also means self-control of one's attitudes of excess and weakness. The Big Indonesian Dictionary provides two meanings of the word "moderation", namely reducing violence and avoiding extremes. If it is said, "that person behaves moderately", that sentence means that the person behaves naturally, normally, and is not extreme. Then the word "religious" means having religious principles or beliefs in embracing and implementing religious teachings in accordance with one's own beliefs and beliefs. So, religious moderation is a person's perspective and way of being firm in respecting and responding to differences in religious diversity, as well as differences in race, ethnicity,

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culture, customs, and also ethics in order to maintain unity between religious communities and maintain the unity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. Mahmudi said there are four core values that are important to be improved and internalized through education from an early age. These values include tolerance, fairness, balance and equality (Mahmudi, 2018). Thus, these values of religious moderation must be applied from early childhood education through Islamic religious education.

For early childhood , character education is very important, if they grow in a harmonious, tolerant, peaceful environment, then they will develop healthy and wise behavior and thoughts. Vice versa, if they grow up in an environment full of hate speech, violence, intolerance, it will have an impact on their current and future thoughts and behavior. Character is not only related to the problem of right and wrong, but how to instill habits about the good things in life, so that children have high awareness and understanding as well as concern and commitment to implement policies in everyday life.

In one of our Real Work Lecture Programs "Religious Cadres" which will be held from 24 July - 9 August 2023, where we choose several TPQ or Madin in the Mergosono sub-district, our group teaches at the NU 07 Muslimat Qur'an Education Park and Madrasah Diniyyah Nurul Anwar. Learning activities at the NU 07 Muslimat Qur'an Education Park and Madrasah Diniyyah Nurul Anwar start at 16.00 WIB to 17.00 WIB with three class group divisions, namely the Qur'an class, the Iqro' class, and the Book class. The learning activity schedule that has been determined by the heads of TPQ and MADIN is as follows: at 16.00 WIB, the students are required to first read the iqro' or Al-Qur'an which is handed over to their respective class ustadz in sorogan (one by one) . Apart from waiting in line, the students can do other activities that can explore the students themselves by re-reading the previous day's material. Then, in the last activity, namely learning which is carried out according to each class, such as in the Iqro' class, the learning carried out is memorizing daily prayers or memorizing short surans, then in the Qur'an class, namely studying and applying the science of recitation to reading the Qur'an, then the third is the Book class, where this class studies the books of fiqh. Then, every Wednesday the ustadz/ah at TPQ Muslimat NU 07 and all the students held a routine Maulid Diba' or Solawat Burdah reading, so every Wednesday, all the students were put in one class so our group submitted a request to the head of TPQ Muslimat NU 07 to be filled with instilling an attitude of religious moderation.

Therefore, our group's activities in instilling an attitude of religious moderation in young children at the Muslimat NU 07 Qur'an Education Park (TPQ) located in RW 04, Mergosono Village are carried out every Wednesday using different learning models and methods. at every meeting. In this activity of cultivating religious moderation at TPQ there were three meetings. Meanwhile, at Madrasah Diniyyah Nurul Anwar, it was held in one meeting, namely when farewelling the students of MADIN Nurul Anwar.

At the first meeting the activity of planting religious moderation was by using the lecture and question and answer method with the theme "knowing diversity and differences in the surrounding environment". At this meeting, our group only introduced the differences

in rights and obligations between men and women, how to respect people who have different opinions, how to respect people who are older than us, and other differences. Because the method we chose is the lecture method and the question and answer method only, of course it will be very boring for young children, therefore we also teach uplifting clapping songs such as clapping pious children and others. Apart from that, the language used when teaching is also children's language which contains more invitations than commands. The learning outcomes obtained by students are tested directly through the question and answer method where when students answer questions the Ustadaz/ah, a member of our KKN group, will appreciate them by giving gifts in the form of food, drinks, and stationery.

The question and answer method with the theme "introducing children to their religion and growing their love for Islam". At this meeting, our group entered the class according to their respective job disks, where in the Iqro' class discussed the pillars of Islam, namely by memorizing the 5 pillars of Islam and explaining the wisdom of implementing the pillars of Islam. Then the Qur'an class discussed the examples of the 5 Apostles Ulul Azmi which included miracles and how to preach Islam which is Rahmatan lil'alamin. From these two materials we used the storytelling method in delivering the material, then the learning outcomes obtained were tested using the question and answer method the same as the previous meeting.



**Figure 1.** Teaching and Learning Activities at TPQ and MADIN.

Then the final meeting at Madrasah Diniyyah Nurul Anwar in this activity of cultivating religious moderation was by using the method of playing several animated videos with several different themes and the results of the learning were also tested using a question and answer model like previous meetings. At this meeting, the first video you play is the animated video "The Story of the Prophet and the Blind Jewish Beggar" with the theme "Cultivating a sense of humanity in children at Tpq Nurul Anwar" where this video contains how to help people who need help regardless of religious differences. and differences as well as how to appreciate and respect other people who have different religions from us, this video also explains that there were several religions in the time of the Prophet and the obligations of a Muslim in religion.



**Figure 2.** Farewell Activities with Madin Nurul Anwar.

Religious moderation education is not only carried out at TPQ Muslimat 07 and MADIN Nurul Anwar, but there is also a follow-up by holding a Sholeh Children's Festival with the aim of making the students understand how important it is to understand the good and correct reading of the Koran, awakening the spirit of struggle. Islam and also practice what they have learned while at TPQ and MADIN. The Sholeh Children's Festival is also held to see the extent of their abilities in religious matters as well as improve their skills in conveying the knowledge they have gained and as a forum for the students to express themselves through the various competitions they participate in. One of the branches of the competition held was the Islamic Story Contest where one of the themes raised was Religious Moderation. Instilling religious moderation for young children is very important to maintain national unity and also shape children's character from an early age.

The results of the religious moderation instilled in TPQ and MADIN show that in the aspects of faith, worship, morals and learning the Koran, students are developing well, it can be seen that students are able to take part in every activity that contains these four elements and can internalize every value. taught. Of course, not all of these values are mastered by children, but rather require a process according to their developmental abilities which continues to be taught through several methods and habits as well as example from the examples given by the ustadz/ah as well as various other learning methods.

## **B. Community Social Activities**

Religious moderation is an important approach to religious practice that encourages tolerance, harmony and harmony between various religious groups. In many societies, this concept is becoming increasingly relevant in maintaining social stability and peace, especially in places with diverse religious backgrounds. One effort to foster the value of religious moderation in an area is to create social activities that combine all aspects of society. Mergosono Village, located in Kedungkandang District, is an example that illustrates how social activities can be a form of religious moderation at the local level. Community social activities themselves are various activities carried out by individuals, groups or organizations in society to meet various social needs, promote social welfare and improve

the quality of life of citizens. This social activity aims to build better social relations, help those in need, increase social awareness, and create positive change in the community.

The Real Work Lecture Program (KKN) which took place from 11 July to 25 August had an important role in realizing religious moderation in Mergosono Village. One form of contribution presented through this program is through a number of social activities which have proven to be successfully implemented in an effort to promote interfaith harmony at the local level. Activities such as workshops, health walks, as well as planting togas and ornamental plants, have become a forum for the people of Mergosono Village to dialogue with each other, celebrate differences in religious beliefs, and understand the universal values contained in each religion.

A series of social activities involving workshops, community service, and toga planting at the commemoration of August 17 in RW 03, Mergosono Village, has become an integral part of efforts to promote religious moderation managed by the Ministry of Religion. One of the main activities is the workshop held here, which involves various speakers to stimulate dialogue between residents. The event started with Javanese songs led by PKK women, creating a warm and intimate atmosphere. This workshop not only aims to strengthen relations between residents with various religious backgrounds, but is also an important venue for dialogue and sharing religious understanding and intersecting values. Apart from the gathering, there are also community service activities and planting of family medicinal plants (toga), the aim of which is to foster a spirit of mutual cooperation between residents. These activities involve participation from various levels of society, including those with different religions and mass organizations, who are united in the spirit of mutual cooperation for the common good. This is clear evidence that differences in religion or organization are not an obstacle in contributing to the common good and strengthening unity in RW 03.

The next activity is a healthy walk which was held to celebrate Independence Day on August 13, 2023 in RW 05, which is a real example of the unity and unity of the diverse communities in that environment. RW 05 itself is a heterogeneous area, with diversity ranging from students in large Islamic boarding schools to abangans, adherents of kejawen, and even drunkards. Even though they have different religious and belief backgrounds, this event is a place that allows all elements of society, both Muslims and non-Muslims, to gather in the spirit of universal celebration of independence. Thus, this healthy walking activity is not only a means to improve physical health, but also a symbol of togetherness and unity in the midst of diversity, creating strong social bonds between those who may have previously been opposites.

By combining various social activities that prioritize inclusiveness, cooperation and mutual understanding, a village can create an environment that supports religious moderation. This helps minimize the potential for religious conflict and creates harmony and harmony among villagers who have different religious beliefs. Through this approach, religious moderation can become an integral part of the daily lives of village communities.

### **C. Majelis Ta'lim**

Majlis Ta'lim in the Mergosono area has become an effective forum for promoting religious moderation at the local level. In this context, majlis ta'lim is considered the right target because it is attended by many mothers and fathers from various religious backgrounds. Through a program involving students as facilitators, majlis ta'lim participants are given an in-depth understanding of the concept of religious moderation.

The introduction of this understanding does not only focus on relations between different religions, but also on harmonious relations between groups within the same religion. Village studies, burdahan and tahlilan are an integral part of this program, helping participants understand the importance of respecting differences in worship practices and religious rituals. As the program progressed, majlis ta'lim participants began to realize that religious moderation was the key to creating harmony and beautiful unity, not only in communities with diverse religions, but also within the same religious environment. This program not only increases participants' understanding of religious moderation but also empowers them to play an active role in supporting interfaith harmony in the Mergosono area. Apart from that, this program also has the potential to become a model for other regions in utilizing majlis ta'lim as a tool to promote the values of religious moderation and social harmony.

In addition to increasing understanding and awareness of religious moderation, programs involving majlis ta'lim have also produced positive effects in forming stronger social bonds among participants. The discussions that took place during the majlis ta'lim allowed participants to share their experiences, views, and understanding of religious moderation. This created a sense of solidarity among them, overcame religious differences, and strengthened social relations in the Mergosono community. This shared understanding helps create an environment that supports interfaith harmony and contributes to the formation of more inclusive and harmonious societies at the local level. Thus, the majlis ta'lim is not only a place of learning, but also a place that fosters unity in the diversity of religions.

### **D. Launching KMB**

One of the significant contradictions regarding the existence of religious moderation in Indonesia is on the grounds that Indonesia is a multicultural and plural country. The Indonesian nation consists of various identities, races, religions, cultures, languages and social statuses. It is *sunnatullah* for a country that has diversity, namely that friction arises and conflicts that occur are triggered by differences. This is where religious moderation seems to be significant. Moderation is a middle way amidst the diversity of religions that exist in Indonesia.<sup>2</sup>In general, moderation is an attitude that prioritizes balance in terms of

beliefs, morals and character both when treating other people as individuals and when dealing with state institutions.<sup>3</sup>

In terms of the diversity that Indonesia has, including the city of Malang, which has a diversity of ethnicities, religions and cultures, it once held the number one tolerance level in East Java among religious communities. The background to the formation of the Religious Moderation Village in Malang City was born from a program from the Ministry of Religion of the Republic of Indonesia. One of the priority programs is religious moderation and gave birth to activities including the Religious Moderation Village. The Head of the Kedungkandang District Religious Affairs Office (KUA), revealed that Mergosono Village was chosen as the Religious Moderation Village because it has a background as a village inhabited by various religions and also the level of understanding, regarding different religions. He also added that in part of the Mergosono Village community there are santri and abangan, which in this case is a religious phenomenon which depends more or less on a person's understanding of religion. In this case, it is hoped that the launch of the Religious Moderation Village will be an important step in building harmony and religious understanding in society so that this sub-district will later become a model and become real proof of the power of mutual respect and cooperation.

The launching of the Religious Moderation Village is an important step in building religious harmony and understanding in society which later this Kelurahan will become a model and a real proof of the power of mutual respect, dialogue and cooperation between different religious communities. Religious moderation village is not solely to minimize differences. But so that this program can increase awareness and participation of the community to accept the differences that exist. Another goal is to strengthen the existence of religious instructors in the community and improve the quality of fostering religious moderation. Religious moderation is an era of living in harmony, respecting each other, maintaining and balancing tolerance without having to cause conflict because of existing differences or because of the level of understanding of different religions.

Before the launch of the Religious Moderation Village, the Ministry of Religion of Malang City held a socialization of the Religious Moderation Village which is located at MAN 1 Malang. Furthermore, socialization in Kedungkandang District was previously carried out, where the event was opened directly by the Head of the KUA and attended by the Secretary of the KMB Working Group, and the Kedungkandang District Islamic Religious Counselor, the Mergosono Village Secretary, PKK Representatives, and Community Figures. Ahmad Syaifuddin, SH as the speaker in the KMB Socialization for Kedungkandang Subdistrict conveyed the program for declaring a Religious Moderation Village for Mergosono Subdistrict. The material explains the important value of forming the KMB, the stages and procedures in forming the KMB, the formation of the KMB working group team.



**Figure 3.** Socialization Activities and Launching of Religious Moderation Village.

The activity entitled "Religious Moderation Village as Strengthening of Noble Cultural Values and Local Wisdom in Implementing Religious Methods that Raise Human Dignity" was opened directly by the Head of the Office of Religious Affairs in Kedungkandang District, Malang City, Ahmad Syaifuddin, SH along with extension workers from the Kedungkandang sub-district and the Working Group. KMB Mergosono Village and was attended by 80 participants consisting of elements of religious leaders and community leaders. The KMB launching will be held on Friday, 18 August 2023 starting at 05.00 - 07.00 WIB. Details of activities as follows:

- a. Opening;
- b. Foreword of the Mergosono Village KMB Working Group, represented by Ustadz Isaa Laa Tansa;
- c. Speech by the Head of the Kedungkandang District Religious Affairs Office;
- d. The signing and continued with the cutting of Tumpeng as a symbol of the launch of the Religious Moderation Village;
- e. Documentation and Conclusion.



**Figure 4.** Recitation Activities and Launching of KMB Mergosono Village.

The level of community participation in activities that support religious moderation, such as interfaith dialogue and joint social activities. Measuring the reduction in conflict or

religious tension in the village since the launch of the program. Availability of Worship Facilities, maintenance of existing worship facilities in the village, which reflects religious tolerance. A follow-up to the launch of the Religious Moderation Village is to strengthen the existence of religious instructors in the community to accept existing differences because one of the strengths of the Ministry of Religion program in overseeing this superior program is the religious instructors. In this case, how can Religious Counselors in their preaching be able to provide insight to their target residents to understand their religion as a whole and invite other people without any element of coercion.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

Religious moderation is a person's perspective and way of being firm in respecting and responding to differences in religious diversity, as well as differences in race, ethnicity, culture, customs, and also ethical behavior in order to maintain unity between religious communities and maintain the unity of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. In essence, religious moderation is not only a matter between religions, as we have often heard so far, but religious moderation also occurs within religion itself, whether between groups of schools of thought, sects of belief, and even in terms of a person's religious practices. Looking at the dynamics of religious moderation in the Mergosono sub-district as mentioned above, that religious moderation in Mergosono has occurred between Islamic religious groups, namely the Abangan and the Putih. So, to bridge the two to create harmony in society, religious leaders often emphasize the importance of moderation in religion, respecting the differences that exist in society and the importance of not being fanatical towards just one group.

In Mergosono sub-district itself there have been several efforts to instill the nature of religious moderation, starting from the activities of Burdahan, Tahlilan, Yasinan, studies of ta'lim councils which tend to be very numerous when compared to sub-districts in Malang city, and of course learning at TPQ, which has always been the spearhead for creating a moderate generation that is able to live side by side despite many differences.

Seeing the efforts made by religious leaders in the Mergosono sub-district, the KUA Kedungkandang District designated the Mergosono sub-district as a religious moderation village. The launch of the KMB will be held on Friday, August 18 2023, starting at 05.00 - 07.00 WIB, at the Aqidah Workshop ta'lim assembly taught by Ustadz Isa La Tansa S.T.

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